

# #SPORTS

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**RONNIE LOTT with KEITH POTTER**  
FOREWORD BY SEAN PAYTON

What I Learned from Coaches About  
Sports and Life

BOOK 01

A THINKaha BOOK

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What I Learned from Coaches About Sports and Life

Book Excerpt

**By Ronnie Lott with Keith Potter**  
**Foreword by Sean Payton,**  
**Head Coach, New Orleans Saints**

## What I Learned from Coaches About Sports and Life

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Foreword by Sean Payton

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## Foreword by Sean Payton

“Winning takes talent; to repeat takes character.” Those are the words of the late, legendary coach John Wooden.

Few can argue that Coach Wooden knew how to win consistently. After all, he won ten NCAA Men’s Basketball National Championships in a twelve-year span. Seven of those championships came back-to-back. Coach Wooden’s legend is a case study in sustaining excellence.

Sustaining excellence is the challenge for everyone who competes. Our 2009 New Orleans Saints won Super Bowl XLIV. It was a journey that started almost four years earlier, after the most devastating natural disaster in United States history hit the city of New Orleans. The story of the revival of a city and a team has been told numerous times. The journey was wrought with adversity—annual evacuations, relocating family members on a moment’s notice, making tough decisions, facing uncharted waters. Those were our off-the-field challenges.

On the field, we built a talented team. After all, you do need talent to win a Super Bowl. But the word that stands out most in John Wooden’s comment is character.

## What I Learned from Coaches About Sports and Life

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Character is the underlying force in our team's success. Character has guided us through those uncharted waters off the field. Character guided us through losing streaks on the field and toward a championship season.

By design, when our team references character, integrity, and discipline, we look to former players and coaches as guides. Ronnie Lott embodies all of those traits. When he told our team in early 2009 that he "smelled greatness," our players listened and believed.

When the final story is written about our New Orleans Saints, the success we can be most proud of will be the character of our players, coaches, and organization. Winning takes talent. That will never be questioned. Winning consistently, however, is built on the character of your team.

**Sean Payton**

Head Coach  
New Orleans Saints





## What I Learned from Coaches About Sports and Life

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## Section I

### Learning from a Legend

More than a legend, Bill Walsh was an extraordinary person and a genius who brought innovation and excellence to the game.

3

Pursue excellence...no, pursue perfection. You might not get to perfection, but the pursuit will take you to the top.

4

Winning is an attitude. It even matters how you put on your uniform.

5

Win with class. And, even though it's normal to hate losing, lose with class.

6

Racial diversity always means something. Think about your teammates; really appreciate each other, and even your differences.

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## Section II

### From a Team of Coaches

Other 49er coaches, like Ray Rhodes and George Siefert, made a huge difference in my game and in my life.

15

Famous coaches, like famous players, aren't the whole picture. There's always someone else bringing something to the table.

16

The coach's job is to teach the game and then to let the players play the game.

17

The head coach is the architect and the mobilizer.

The assistants have to be hands-on and right in the mix with the players.



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## Section VI

### Friday Night Lights and Other Childhood Lessons

Coach Christopher at Eisenhower  
High School, along with my dad,  
fed me the passion and laid out  
the game plan.

73

Dad showed me how to exhaust life;  
how to put it all out there, so at the  
end of the game—or life—you  
have no regrets.

74

“Take care of your brother and sister.”  
I can hear Dad saying it.  
“And provide for your family.”  
With him, those are non-negotiables.

75

I'm still learning, but Dad  
tried to teach me to like  
everything. It reminds me  
of the janitor who considers  
every day an adventure.

76

From the time I first put the uniform on, I never cheated myself. In my mind, the stadium was always packed and the game was a big one.

## About the Authors

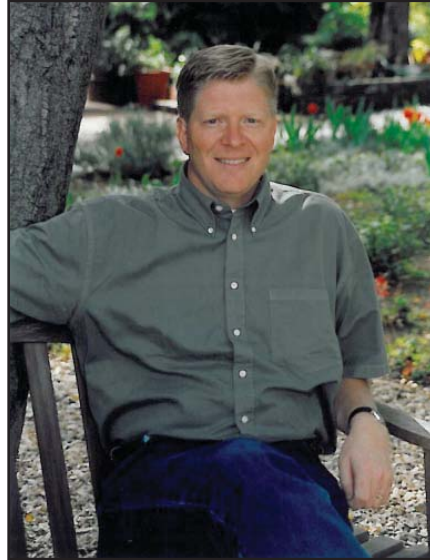


Roger Craig, Coach Bill Walsh, and Ronnie Lott

The name Ronnie Lott screams toughness and excellence. As a ten-time Pro Bowl selection and a first-ballot Hall of Famer, Ronnie is one of the most respected figures in professional sports. Add his four Super Bowl rings with the San Francisco 49ers to what was arguably his best season, leading the NFL in interceptions with the Oakland Raiders, and you've heard only part of the story. Off the field, Lott is known as a tireless advocate for children. His nonprofit, All Stars Helping Kids, has raised millions of dollars to improve the lives of at-risk young people. Even more, Ronnie is a coach and catalyst for other athletes who have a heart for making their communities a better place.

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Keith Potter is an author, faith coach, and inspirational speaker committed to empowering champions, rejuvenating marriages, and revitalizing organizations. After leading and launching nonprofit enterprises for twenty-five years, Potter understands the passions, principles, and priorities that mobilize people for both goodness and greatness. As the creative force behind the nonprofit The Champion Project (<http://www.championproject.com>), Keith Potter coaches leadership teams and emerging leaders internationally. He is the consummate teacher, catalyst, and friend to influencers in numerous fields.

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Ronnie Lott Shows You the Heart Behind the Hit.

"This book is a fun read and Ronnie touches on great points!"  
- Marcus Allen, Heisman Trophy Winner and NFL Hall of Fame Member

"Ronnie is a winner in life. You will learn, as I have, about what it means to be a role model, proud parent, and the hardest working person to better your team. Winning is his life and he embodies greatness."  
- Baron Davis, Star NBA Point Guard

"Growing up watching football, I was always drawn to Ronnie Lott. The way he played, the way he leads, and the way he carries himself has always been an inspiration to me and many of my friends and teammates. Doesn't matter if you're an athlete, a fan, or somewhere in between, bottom line is you can learn from and be inspired by Ronnie Lott's insightful life lessons."  
- Ray Lewis, Eleven-Time NFL Pro Bowl Selection and Super Bowl Most Valuable Player

Ronnie Lott is one of the most respected figures in professional sports as well as a coach and catalyst for other athletes who have a heart for making their communities a better place.



Keith Potter is an author, faith coach, and inspirational speaker committed to empowering champions, rejuvenating marriages, and revitalizing organizations.

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