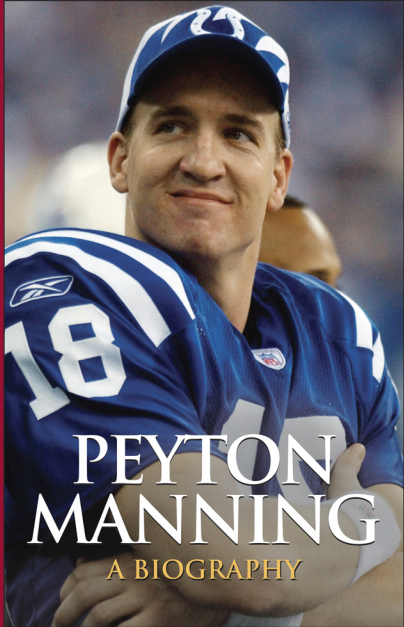


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A Biography

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CONTENTS

<i>Series Foreword</i>	vii
<i>Introduction</i>	ix
<i>Timeline: Events in the Life of Peyton Manning</i>	xiii
Chapter 1 Super Bowl King	1
Chapter 2 His Favorite Toy Was a Football	9
Chapter 3 Becoming a Quarterback	23
Chapter 4 Recruiting a Hot Commodity	31
Chapter 5 A Freshman Star Is Born at Tennessee	43
Chapter 6 Everybody's All-American	55
Chapter 7 The Best in the Country	67
Chapter 8 A Hot Commodity Once Again	81
Chapter 9 Right into the Fire	97
Chapter 10 Becoming the Best in the Business	109
Chapter 11 Dreams Do Come True	121
Chapter 12 Fame, Glory, and Little Brother	133
<i>Appendix: Peyton Manning's Professional Quarterback Passing Statistics</i>	147
<i>Selected Bibliography</i>	149
<i>Index</i>	153

Photo essay follows page 66

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SERIES FOREWORD

In response to high school and public library needs, Greenwood developed this distinguished series of full-length biographies specifically for student use. Prepared by field experts and professionals, these engaging biographies are tailored for high school students who need challenging yet accessible biographies. Ideal for secondary school assignments, the length, format and subject areas are designed to meet educators' requirements and students' interests.

Greenwood offers an extensive selection of biographies spanning all curriculum related subject areas including social studies, the sciences, literature and the arts, history and politics, as well as popular culture, covering public figures and famous personalities from all time periods and backgrounds, both historic and contemporary, who have made an impact on American and/or world culture. Greenwood biographies were chosen based on comprehensive feedback from librarians and educators. Consideration was given to both curriculum relevance and inherent interest. The result is an intriguing mix of the well known and the unexpected, the saints and sinners from long-ago history and contemporary pop culture. Readers will find a wide array of subject choices from fascinating crime figures like Al Capone to inspiring pioneers like Margaret Mead, from the greatest minds of our time like Stephen Hawking to the most amazing success stories of our day like J. K. Rowling.

While the emphasis is on fact, not glorification, the books are meant to be fun to read. Each volume provides in-depth information about

the subject's life from birth through childhood, the teen years, and adulthood. A thorough account relates family background and education, traces personal and professional influences, and explores struggles, accomplishments, and contributions. A timeline highlights the most significant life events against a historical perspective. Bibliographies supplement the reference value of each volume.

INTRODUCTION

From the moment Peyton Manning arrived in the National Football League at the start of the 1998 season, he has been a numbers machine, completing passes at a dazzling rate and throwing touchdowns at a pinball-machine clip. Football fans, Indianapolis Colt teammates, and NFL foes alike have been in awe of what Manning's right arm has wrought.

There was no waiting period before the 6-foot-5, 230-pound quarterback blossomed. He was an instant star. Manning had been an All-American passing leader for the University of Tennessee and was the number 1 overall draft pick in the NFL collegiate draft, so there were high expectations from the first moment that Manning pulled on his blue and white Colts uniform. Yet while stardom is often predicted of rookies, there is usually a break-in period, an adjustment period, and this is especially true for quarterbacks.

Manning defied the odds by stepping into his role immediately to lead the Colts' offense. He did make his share of newcomer mistakes, but the majority of the time he was as poised as any veteran. It had been said that growing up as the son of Archie Manning, a former collegiate and professional star, in a family of quarterbacks and football players, Peyton Manning was as ready-made for the NFL as any player could be. Overnight, he proved the sages correct.

The apprenticeship of a National Football League quarterback is normally considered to rival the education of a medical doctor, with the belief that neither is qualified to operate safely until a few years pass. While playing football can be downplayed with the phrase "It ain't

brain surgery,” stepping into the role of professional quarterback does take some brain power. It also requires athleticism, an ability to comprehend the swift action on the field, sharp reaction time to changing circumstances, and supreme confidence.

Manning started his first game as a professional and all sixteen the Colts played during his rookie year of 1998. In the pros, that is considered akin to being thrown into the swimming pool to learn how to swim and an achievement in itself for a first-year player. For a quarterback it is also seen as an achievement magnified several times because the position is regarded as the most complicated to play in the sport and one of the most difficult to play in all of sports.

There were Manning growing pains, with the usual complement of mistakes committed, but the same young man who threw 28 interceptions that season also completed 26 passes for touchdowns. The same young man who was steamrolled for a truckload of sacks by voracious defenses threw for 3,739 yards. He took advantage with his smarts and took his lumps from his inexperience, but Manning never took a step in retreat.

Almost overnight, Manning was promise fulfilled, the dream draft pick morphing into a brilliant All-Pro, the player who had been on a self-propelled, years-long journey to glory finding the Promised Land as he had hoped. If Manning was almost too good to be true as a player, a leader, an athlete, and a self-effacing personality, he was also not one to rest on swiftly acquired laurels. Manning barely paused with the engine running to soak in the satisfaction of reaching a long-cherished goal. Rather, he immediately emphasized to himself and those around him that he had much more work to do, that he had to improve his skills to keep on getting better.

The easy thing would have been to take a breather, to relish a job well done. It was only when Manning eschewed such a choice that outsiders truly began to understand that he was motivated by more than money or fame, that he was a perfectionist who sought to become the best at his position, that he sought to improve in order to carry his team on his shoulders, that his inner urge was all about winning.

In the years that followed Manning’s impressive rookie year he did work around the clock and around the calendar to become a better quarterback. By the autumn of 2004 Manning was reaching new heights, new levels of on-field accomplishment. That season Manning set a new NFL record with 49 touchdown passes. Three-fourths of the way into the season, after a 41-10 Colts thumping of the Chicago Bears at Soldier Field in Chicago, the football world began realizing just what

type of magic Manning was making. After tossing four touchdown passes against the Bears on a cool November day, he had put up 35 in 10 games.

Even Manning's teammates and coaches were nearly reduced to giggles watching him. They admitted he was so good he was spoiling them to the point they even took his performance for granted. "You really do," said Colts coach Tony Dungy. "We kind of get so we expect these 70 percent completion days, four touchdowns," Dungy said. "We kind of ho-hum it."¹

Manning was blessed with great receivers, such as stars Marvin Harrison and Reggie Wayne, and the way the group bonded and worked together, moving the ball downfield, seemingly at will, boggled the rest of the league. These Colts picked apart defenses with efficiency and found holes in defenses that no one else could spot with a microscope. "He makes it real easy for us," Wayne said of his quarterback.²

Game after game, week after week, the Colts, with Manning in charge, were providing a show that filled the air with footballs and left fans wonder-struck. The only one who wouldn't admit that the Colts made all of their scoring in the aerial circus appear effortless was Manning, who repeatedly said nothing comes easily against an NFL defense. But he conceded something else: "We're just good at what we're doing now."³

Manning added an NFL single-season-record 49 touchdown passes to his resume that season, but in the years since his excellence has come to be even more widely appreciated. He became a world champion and he became a world-class pitchman for products in TV ads. Once perceived as a nerd of a hard worker he loosened up in public, and when Peyton was joined by his brother Eli as an NFL quarterback and Super Bowl champ, they firmly established themselves as part of the first family of football.

Peyton Manning had traveled a long way from growing up in New Orleans known as Archie's son. By the time he led the Indianapolis Colts to a Super Bowl championship in 2007, Manning had become the best-known football player in the game and one of the most famous athletes in the United States.

NOTES

1. Lew Freedman, "QB on Pace to Make History," *Chicago Tribune*, November 22, 2004.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

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TIMELINE: EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF PEYTON MANNING

- 1976** Born on March 24 in New Orleans, Louisiana
- 1976–84** Learns about football from watching father Archie star in the NFL with the New Orleans Saints and Minnesota Vikings.
- 1976–94** Develops love of college football listening to old University of Mississippi tapes of his father's games and by attending Ole Miss games with mother Olivia and father Archie.
- 1991** Becomes starting quarterback for high school team Isidore Newman High in New Orleans where top receiver is brother Cooper.
- 1992** Cooper, a member of the University of Mississippi team, is discovered to have a congenital narrowing of the spine and must give up football.
- 1993** Completes high school as three-year starting star quarterback and is recruited by colleges from all over the country.
- 1994** Surprises football world by selecting the University of Tennessee for college football instead of the University of Mississippi, partly because Cooper can no longer play.
- 1994** Due to injuries to two other quarterbacks, Manning becomes the starting quarterback for the Volunteers during his freshman year.
- 1995–96** Leads Tennessee to a high national ranking and is named Most Valuable Player in the Citrus Bowl.

- 1996 A Tennessee trainer accuses Manning of dropping his trousers in the athletic facilities as part of a lawsuit charging sexual harassment.
- 1997 All-American Manning completes his college degree in three years and is universally expected to turn pro. However, he decides his heart is still with Tennessee and opts to complete his four years of NCAA eligibility instead of going pro. Tennessee wins Southeastern Conference title and earns a chance to claim the national championship with a game against Nebraska in the Orange Bowl. In a surprise vote, Manning is out-pointed for the Heisman Trophy by Michigan's Charles Woodson.
- 1998 Tennessee loses to Nebraska in the Orange Bowl. Manning is taken number 1 overall in the annual NFL draft by the Indianapolis Colts and as a rare full-time starting quarterback sets five NFL rookie passing records.
- 1999 Manning is named to Pro Bowl for first time.
- 2000 Throws for 430 yards and four touchdowns against Jacksonville Jaguars on *Monday Night Football*. Records first single-game passer rating of 158.3 versus New England Patriots.
- 2001 Frequently changing plays at line of scrimmage, Manning and Colts use no-huddle offense for first time.
- 2003 Manning is named Most Valuable Player of the NFL for the first time.
- 2004 In April, brother Eli is the number 1 overall pick in the NFL draft by the San Diego Chargers and in a prearranged deal is traded to the New York Giants. At the end of the season Peyton Manning is named Most Valuable Player for the second year in a row.
- 2007 Quarterback Manning leads the Colts to victory in February at end of season over Chicago Bears and is selected as Most Valuable Player of Super Bowl XLI.
- 2008 Eli Manning is selected as the Most Valuable Player of Super Bowl XLII.
- 2008 Manning suffers first major pro injury in July, has knee surgery, and cannot participate in training camp.
- 2008 Despite sore knee, Manning starts season in September at quarterback and plays every game.
- 2008 In December, Manning becomes the second player to ever win three NFL Most Valuable Player awards.

Chapter 1

SUPER BOWL KING

The rain poured down on unroofed and unprotected Dolphin Stadium, but Peyton Manning ignored the drenching drops as he piloted his Indianapolis Colts up and down the increasingly chewed-up grassy field. On this day, February 4, 2007, Manning was like a farmer trying to nurture his crop, so it was a good rain.

For three-and-a-half hours, in front of 74,512 witnesses to Super Bowl XLI, Manning played his favorite sport with a poker face, making decisions, adjusting to weather conditions, firing bullet passes to his receivers. Yard by yard as the Colts ate up the turf leading to touchdowns, second by second as the clock ticked down, the all-star quarterback inched his way closer to the dream that had driven him since he was a little boy.

The football team he led was closing in on the world championship, far enough ahead over the Chicago Bears to see the goal within reach, yet not so far enough ahead that victory could be taken for granted. With 11 minutes and 44 seconds remaining in the fourth quarter, the television cameras found Manning sitting on the Colts' bench. He wore a team baseball cap and had a cape draped over his shoulders to ward off the raindrops.

The Colts, a team that had not won a championship in 36 years, were leading 22-17. They were on the right side of the score, but were less than a touchdown ahead. One drive, one smooth touchdown pass or breakaway run by the Bears, even if it was a fluke, could easily drop them behind. Games turned on singular plays, a fumble, an interception, a

long bomb pass, like that all of the time in the NFL. The Bears had possession of the ball as Manning watched intently. Once in a while he futilely brushed a towel across his face to absorb the rain.

Rex Grossman, the Bears' quarterback, was Manning's counterpart, the signal-caller for the opposition. Grossman was not nearly as accomplished a leader as Manning. He didn't have either the statistical credentials or the track record of bringing his team back from deficits. But it was prudent to worry anyway. The dream was so close the Colts could taste it, but an abrupt change in the game could make that taste bittersweet. As the Bears tried to spoil the day, tried to claim their own championship 22 years after bringing home their last trophy, Manning stood up on the sideline, his facial expression serious, his arms folded.

Grossman was out there in the hard rain pitching. He tried to hit a receiver downfield, but Colts defensive back Kelvin Hayden plucked the ball out of the air, darted and dashed and ran the crushing interception back 56 yards for a Colts touchdown and the clinching Indianapolis points. A look of determination creasing his face, Manning pumped his right arm as a minor celebration for points that would make his life easier. After the extra point, the Colts led 29-17, and the Bears needed two scores in a hurry to catch up. Manning and Indianapolis had a remedy for that.

Any professional football team with Peyton Manning at the helm is going to be a passing team. With Manning's arm strength and quarterbacking savvy a coach who wasted such abilities would be destined for the unemployment line swiftly. Yet Manning and the Colts—despite a passing attack that made their Hoosier fans ooh and ah regularly—had long ago learned that they could not capture the NFL's biggest prize without a balanced offense.

The Colts had relied on star running back Edgerrin James as an equalizer. Prior to this season, however, James became a free agent and joined another team. There was much hand-wringing among Colts administrators and Colts fans about how the power-back James could be replaced. The solution proved to be double-edged. James was a workhorse along the lines of Earl Campbell, one of the bullish greats of the past who could haul runners through the line on his back when necessary. The Colts did not find another James, but instead replaced him with two backs, alternating rookie Joseph Addai and Dominic Rhodes, and blending their talents. The idea proved to be the prototype for an NFL offensive change and soon several teams tried out a two-back approach.

In the closing minutes of the Super Bowl, when the main aim of the Colts' offense was not for Manning to find a roving Marvin Harrison for another pass deep downfield but to waste time to prevent the Bears from getting any additional chances to score, it was Rhodes and Addai who kept the chains moving for first downs. Manning's white helmet with the blue horseshoe had scratches on its crown, as if Bears defensive players seeking to sack him really did have the claws of the growling grizzly they were named after, but mostly he eluded them.

Manning's drumbeat speech of how it is never easy to score on an NFL defense (yet doing it) might well be a parable for how challenging it had been for the Indianapolis Colts to progress from beaten-down franchise to Super Bowl contender. The Colts' history was checkered. The predecessor Baltimore Colts owned much of the club's positive history, winning what was known as the "greatest game ever played" when they defeated the New York Giants for the NFL title in 1958. The Baltimore Colts were a superior team under Don Shula. The Baltimore Colts were powerfully identified with the revered Johnny Unitas, the quarterback who Manning surpassed in team records but not necessarily in greatness to all minds (including, seemingly, his own).

The Colts' origins dated back to 1947, but the Colts' connection to Indianapolis was much more recent—1984—and forever tainted in some minds because the team was spirited out of Baltimore in moving vans under cover of night in a snowstorm when negotiations over building a new stadium broke down. The rage of betrayed Baltimore fans led to the establishment of a new team, the Ravens, in the city. Indianapolis kept the Colts name, but struggled to build a fresh tradition. They were coming off a 3-13 season when Manning, heralded as the savior and the man who could bring the town a title, arrived. Now Indianapolis and Manning were on the cusp of that hope becoming reality.

At the very end, the contest between the Colts and Bears turned into a game of keep-away, like the children's gym class game. The Colts wanted to hold on to the ball as long as possible and the Bears wanted it back, needed it in a hurry. Time after time, Manning took the snap from center, turned, and handed off. The running-back tandem did the rest. The Bears' vaunted defense could not stop either man and the Bears' hungry offense was relegated to the sideline. Addai and Rhodes did their jobs. They tucked the pigskin into their bellies, cradling the ball safely as Bears would-be tacklers tried to rip it from their grasps and set the ball bouncing free on the turf. All of those desperate attempts failed and each of the twosome's running attempts succeeded.