



The Glory Game

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In 1958 Frank Gifford was the golden boy on the glamour team in the most celebrated city in the NFL. When his New York Giants played the Baltimore Colts for the league championship that year, it became the single most memorable contest in the history of professional football. Broadcast to an audience of millions, it was the first title game ever to go into sudden-death overtime. Its drama, excitement, and controversy riveted the nation and helped propel football to the forefront of the American sports landscape.

Now, to mark the fiftieth anniversary of "The Greatest Game Ever Played," New York Giants Hall of Famer and longtime television analyst Frank Gifford provides an inside-the-helmet account that will take its place in the annals of sports literature. Drawing on the poignant and humorous memories of every living player from the game -- including fellow Hall of Famers Sam Huff, Andy Robustelli, Art Donovan, Lenny Moore, and Raymond Berry -- as well as the author's own experiences and reflections, *The Glory Game* captures a magnificent moment in American sports history. It is the story of two very different cities and teams, filled with the joy, the disappointment, and the eternal pride of a day that will forever symbolize all that is great about sports.

Told with gripping immediacy, *The Glory Game* is an indelible portrait of the NFL's most transcendent hours -- a winter version of *The Boys of Summer*, told by one of football's true legends.

The Glory Game Details

Date : Published (first published October 31st 2008)

ISBN :

Author : Frank Gifford , Peter Richmond

Format : Kindle Edition 305 pages

Genre : Football, Sports and Games, Sports, Biography, Nonfiction

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From Reader Review The Glory Game for online ebook

Chuck says

If I were a bigger sports fan I'm sure I would have enjoyed this book more. But still I enjoyed reading about the early days of the NFL.

Meg says

I'm a Texan, so I pretty much BREATHE football...

Kristy K says

POV: 1st Person

Genre: Autobiographical, Sports

I started reading this book a while ago and just now got to finishing it. It was a very interesting and informative, albeit long and overly detailed read. The book focuses on the 1958 NFL championship game. The look into the players' lives and football culture as a whole enlightens you to a world of football so different than today's. However, I felt that the book could have been condensed. There is almost a play by play breakdown of each quarter and while certain plays effected and changed the course of the game, I felt the complete retelling was unnecessary.

Ken says

Peter Richmond did a terrific job with Frank Gifford's account of the 1958 NFL Championship Game. The detail of NYC nightlife and the blend of personalities of both teams were great insights for fans of the time. The game itself due to TV coverage and played in Yankee Stadium did for the NFL a great deal to advance the league.

Similarly the Univ of Houston vs UCLA played in the Houston Astro Dome with National TV did the same for college basketball. The game played in 1968 featured the countries two biggest stars and undefeated college teams. Lew Alcindor and Elvin Hayes put on a show that became the college basketball, " Game of the Century".

Nascar had the same type of TV coverage that took it from a local southern sport to a national audience with live national coverage of the 1979 Daytona 500. The East Coast is blanketed by snow and CBS airing the Richard Petty win with the Allison brothers fighting Cale Yarborough. All it takes is a great event and a little TV coverage to send an event into infamy.

I am very fortunate to have seen these and many other great events in my life, but it's really great to be able

to read first-hand accounts like *The Glory Game* by the guys who actually participated in the events.

John Orman says

Purportedly, the NFL as we know it now began with the 1958 Championship game, in which Baltimore Colts defeated the NY Giants. Frank Gifford's memoir of that game is not as exciting as being there, or even watching it on TV, but it is mighty close!

The first title game to ever go into sudden-death overtime. The inside story is told by 1956 MVP and Hall of Famer Frank Gifford, who followed up his playing days with a long time career as a sports commentator, most notably on Monday Night Football.

That game was often referred to as "the greatest game ever played"--and it sure sounds like it when reading this book!

Michael says

Rambled quit a bit and wasn't very organized.

Dietrich says

Frank Gifford's *The Glory Game* is a book any Football fan will likely enjoy. Here we get an exciting play-by-play account of the 1958 Colts/Giants NFL Championship game by a participant, and the inside scoop on the tough and colorful men who played it. Gifford's anecdotes are entertaining and at times hilarious. As a Giant, Gifford was on the losing end of this sudden death overtime thriller, often called "the greatest NFL game ever played," but he is gracious in defeat, and gives credit to the Colts and is appreciative of their marvelous players.

Gifford also provides fascinating context which helps enrich the story. He talks about the two franchises: the coaches, the owners, the teams' histories and relationships with their respective cities. He also gives us a feel for what life was like for pro football players in the 50's, and shows us New York City nightlife in a very vibrant period. And at a time when the media goes into periodic uproars over allegations of cheating in the NFL, Gifford's recounting of earlier examples of NFL espionage provides some perspective.

Gifford also opens up personally about people in that special time and place who meant a lot to him: Toots Shore, the popular saloon owner who helped legitimate a shy Gifford on the New York scene and who later offered some good advice at a difficult time in Frank's career; Vince Lombardi, Frank's offensive coordinator and already something of a living legend; Charlie Conerly, the Giants' quiet Quarterback and Frank's best friend; Kyle Rote, the Giants' captain. This "personal" side of the book adds a nice emotional touch. Gifford closes his book with a poem from Rote entitled "To My Teammates" that certainly struck a chord with this reviewer, himself a high school football player many years ago.

The act of researching this book allowed Gifford to learn and relate to the reader facts and details of the lives of those involved with the game as the years have passed. This makes for interesting, though often sad,

reading. The preparation of the book also gave the surviving members of the game a chance to reconnect, and as Gifford makes clear, whether Colt or Giant, they all consider themselves teammates now because they shared in something so extraordinary.

Though I enjoyed this book as a whole, there were some weak points. For instance, Gifford really takes a lot of cheap shots at Jim Lee Howell, the head coach for the Giants at the time. I really know little about Howell or how to properly evaluate him as a coach given the remarkable situation he found himself in with Tom Landry and Vince Lombardi as coordinators, but I know not to trust Gifford's account. I could tell that Gifford had an ax to grind long before he eventually admitted to a longstanding grudge against Howell that was never forgiven. Lighten up, Frank! A lot of water has passed under the bridge since Howell chewed you out in front of your teammates in 1957! Also, Gifford's criticisms of Howell are contradictory. Though he likes to portray Howell as a non-entity who simply turned the reins over to his coordinators, he also wants to blame Howell for decisions relating to the team's offense that Gifford wants to criticize. Gifford wants to have it both ways because he seemingly can't bring himself to make any serious criticism of Lombardi. Once again, Gifford's emotions tend to get in the way of his objectivity. Another small criticism is that although he acknowledges that Landry was a great coach, Gifford's Lombardi worship tends to slight the incredible job that Landry was doing with the defense. Gifford himself provides the facts that to the outside observer make Landry in 1958 appear as something of a miracle worker. On the 35-man team roster, we learn that only 12 or 13 Giants were defensive players! We also learn that the Landry's shortchanged defense was nevertheless the top unit in the league, and constantly bailing out Lombardi's offense, which was near the very bottom of the league in point production. Despite all this, Gifford's emotional allegiance to Lombardi leads him to write about the 58 team as if even Landry was merely something of a footnote to the great St. Vince. Another problem is that Gifford's sunny portrayal of the Giants as one big happy family doesn't quite square with some of the tensions between offense and defense that his story reveals.

Despite some weaknesses, however, *The Glory Game* is still worth the plunge. Though I wish David Halberstam had lived to produce his book on the 58 NFL title game, I imagine that Halberstam would view Gifford's replacement offering like the rest of us: with an appreciative smile.

Chandler says

Fun anecdotes from Gifford and tons of interviews of the players who made this game so special. I learned a lot of the backstory and internal workings to this game that many books glossed over.

Mahlon says

Written in an engaging and conversational style, *The Glory Game* by Frank Gifford and Peter Richmond chronicles the epic 1958 NFL Championship Game between the Baltimore Colts and New York Giants. Eventually won by the Colts in the first sudden-death overtime in the history of the sport, "The greatest game ever played" or "Best Game Ever" cemented the NFL's place at the forefront of American popular culture. There has been lots written about the game over the years, but Gifford, the Giants star Running Back from 1952-64 offers a unique field-level perspective. Relying on his own memories supplemented by interviews with his teammates as well as former Colts players, Gifford gives the reader a down-by-down play by play account of the Colts thrilling march to victory. Along the way he offers anecdotes and insights that I haven't seen in any other books. He also uses the game as a jumping off point to discuss the NFL culture of the

1950's, considered by many to be pro-football's golden era.

Gifford began the book as a tribute to his friend David Halberstam who was working on a similar book at the time of his death.

I've read 6 books on football this year (including two others on this game) and this is by far the best.

Robert says

According to Frank Gifford, even those who played in the NFL championship game in 1958 did not realize that it would later be widely viewed as the greatest game ever played. He acknowledges that he made two critically important fumbles that proved costly to the Giants. Gifford asserts that it was not even well-played until the fourth quarter and then during the first ever sudden-death overtime period before Alan Ameche scored from the one-yard line and the Baltimore Colts defeated the New York Giants at Yankee Stadium, 23 to 17, on December 28, 1958. According to Gifford, David Halberstam, not he, had planned to write this account of the game but Halberstam died in a "horrific traffic accident" en route to meet with Y.A. Tittle. With some reluctance, duly acknowledging that Halberstam would have written an account that "would have beautifully captured our moment of history," Gifford then agreed to write his own with Peter Richmond, "in David's memory, and in the memory of those players who are no longer alive."

The details of the game from beginning to conclusion are best revealed within Gifford's narrative. It seems appropriate, now, for me to note some of the background information that helps to create a frame-of-reference for what happened on the field. First of all, Gifford gives full credit to the Colts for their victory. They had more and better talent, were closer as a team, and led by arguably the greatest NFL quarterback ever, Johnny Unitas. When he and receiver Raymond Berry were clicking, they would not be denied. Gifford also indicates somewhat strained (if not adversarial) relations between the Giants' offensive players and their defensive counterparts led by middle linebacker, Sam Huff. On more than one occasion, after stopping an opponent from scoring or recovering a turnover, the Giants' defense would urge the Giants offense to "do your best to hold `em." Gifford asserts (and many others agree) that Charlie Conerly deserves to be in the NFL Hall of Fame. Wide receiver Kyle Rote was injured that day and, in effect, attempted to play on one leg until he could no longer continue. There was a great deal of mutual respect between and among members of both teams. At a reunion 20 years later in New York's Central Park, those who were still alive and up to it played a "re-match" (of touch football) and the Colts won again.

John Theofanis says

Frank Gifford was a hero of mythological proportions in the late 1950s. Frank played running back for the New York Giants. New York has a way of creating legends, mythologizing sports stars and gilding them with Greek-godlike attributes. Frank fit the bill. He had the looks. Frank ran gracefully as a running back as the New York Giants football team, the team that found its identity in hallowed Yankee Stadium. As a ten year old kid I liked the guy, number 16 on his uniform, and he embodied the traits we liked in our Fifties heroes-- modesty, hard work and a nose for victory. Frank outlines his exploits and the hard scrabble early days of the New York football team in *The Glory Game*, his 2008 book about the NFL championship game of 1958.

He never deviates from his modest temperament across the pages of *The Glory Game*. Gifford, ever the ambassador of goodwill demonstrates equal affection for his teammates guys like Sam Huff and Charlie Conerly and for the Baltimore Colts, the opponents, a team that included Johnny Unitas, Gino Marchetti and Raymond Berry.

Gifford cannot claim to be the last of the great white running backs-- that was my term. Jim Taylor and Paul Hornung achieved great running statistics for the Green Bay Packers in the 1961 season, after Gifford's glory years had passed. And Jim Brown symbolized the future of football. Jim Brown anticipated the arrival of the great African-American running back. Jim Brown, Lenny Moore and Bobby Mitchell, the early black stars, jump out from the cold, hard statistics on rushing yards as the future of pro football. The sport had to accommodate the unquestioned superiority of the African-American running back, for sports by definition are a level playing field.

But Gifford had a certain aura. He as a King of New York in the 1950s-1960s and beyond. He straddled the electronic era, the era of television and football's emergence as the TV sport par excellence. He announced the games on Monday Night Football, poised between Don Meredith and Howard Cosell, the Texas hick and the New York prick. Both guys were funny and they needed the gentler spirit of Frank Gifford to class up the joint.

Gifford got in trouble with sex scandal, a tabloid affair with buxom Suzen Johnson in 1997. His Monday Night Football days were numbered. Frank partook of the electronic landscape for gossip long before TMZ made it an art form. And even that hotel room setup adds to the luster. Suzen did a Playboy spread and you had to sympathize with Frank's fall to temptation. Kathie Lee Gifford, Frank's wife and a powerful figure in daytime TV, struggled to keep the marriage to Frank going despite the massive media circus and the marriage continues to the present day. Frank is now 83 years old.

But Frank should not be forgotten. The son of an oilfield worker, Gifford did not have the grades to get accepted to USC. He eventually made it there. His strong delivery as a TV announcer proves he had no lack of intelligence. Frank was a King of New York, pals with Toots Shor make that a natural fact. Gifford had all the right stuff, really proved himself a natural for the Big Apple spotlight. His book, *The Glory Game*, continues in the vein of grace and modesty. He acknowledges David Halberstram would have been the man to capture the 1958 NFL championship game and all of the sociological implications-- the integration of American life through television and the rise of Frank's favorite sport. Halberstram died in a car accident while pursuing the subject of football's rise from the 1958 championship game. But Frank's version makes a damn fine book, smooth and effortless as a crafty running back cutting through the line.

Hunter says

Mostly just anecdotes and personal memories. Very little 'big picture' and certainly didn't live up to the subtitle and explain how it changed Football forever.

Kyle Winston says

The 1958 New York Giants-Baltimore Colts National Football League Championship game is considered to be "the Greatest game ever played", being the first professional football game in the championship to go into

sudden death overtime. Hosted in Yankee Stadium, it housed more than 64,000 fans that went on to watch the Colts beat the Giants 23-17. Frank Gifford writes this book, with help from sports writer Peter Richmond, as a halfback from the Giants who started and played in that game. Gifford takes the game and expands it beyond football, he goes on to explain what New York was like in those days, and what it was like playing football in New York City. Also he compares how people played back then, to how they play today, and uses examples such as celebrations and small things like when to call timeouts, spiking the ball, and penalty rules. This book is ironic at times, because Gifford explains that he felt the game did not get interesting or that exciting until the fourth quarter, and overtime of course. Gifford also goes on to explain how and why the Colts deserved to win that game, and part of the reason the Giants lost was due to Gifford's two lost fumbles, that proved crucial that led to Baltimore's scores. In the end, the author and his team lost of course, but because of what it consisted of, the time it was in, and the way people acted back then is what makes this game in this book, "The greatest game ever played".

This novel does a great job of not only explaining what went on that day of December 28, 1958 beyond the game, as well as explaining the players that Frank Gifford played with. The only fault with this novel, if it could even ever be considered that is the fact that Gifford has a pretty big bias in regards on how he tells the game and story, but how can he not because he played in that game and represented the New York Giants. This serves as a small problem though because it is difficult to find a non-fiction novel or any type of story that does not have a bias, but it is a bias that proves the point it intends to convey. Lastly, with the help of Peter Richmond, Frank Gifford proves that in his eyes this was a great game and the way he describes it reassures his position.

-The author's purpose in writing this novel is quite simple to prove and emphasize the title of this game and say why it is supposedly the greatest one ever played. Apparently, Gifford was not the first player on that New York Giants team that had an idea to write about it. Due to particular events and circumstances, Frank Gifford took over that idea and expressed their point.

-The theme of this novel is not exactly clear because it is simply just based on one perspective, the explanation of a football game from one player in it and what he thought. It has no official moral or idea meant to convey, but it does continue to enforce that this is the best football game ever.

P.e. lolo says

Good story about the 58 title game from the giants side. Liked how Frank Gifford talked to players from both teams and his honesty in the book. Anyone who likes the history of pro football this is a good book to start.

Catherine says

I just finished reading the Best Game Ever before I read Glory Game. I'm glad that I had read the other book first. Best gave a more balanced account of the players, coaches and the game. Gifford focused on the Giants, as he should have, and gave a great account of all the clubs and bars in NY during the late 50's. I would have preferred less alcohol and more football.

Jan says

I am a little embarrassed to be giving this book four stars, because the story doesn't really quite flow and the

ghostwriting is poor. It suffers too much from the "old sports legend tells a few stories and no one really bothers to cobble those stories together." All that it needed was a few more non-sequiturs and we could have recreated my grandmother at Christmas, saying to all of our guests, "What I think is wrong with this country is that not enough people have roast Capon for dinner." (True story by the way.) However, the stories that Gifford told actually worked for me. This is a guy who is too old to have been a hero to my dad, talking about life becoming a celebrity from nothing, about how pro football really was a bunch of guys living from paycheck to paycheck who would get into a fight before the 1958 championship game about whether an injured player would get a share or not. The picture he paints is amazing, and while I'm sorry the writing didn't hold up, because it read depressingly like a "jottings" column from a deadline sports columnist for a dying newspaper, the anecdotes and the sense of place that Gifford provides really made an impression of what it meant to be a member of the New York Giants or the Baltimore Colts in the 1950s.

(Ok, so I wrote that after reading it, and since have come to realize that this is a book that David Halberstam was working on when he died and Gifford continued the project. So while I stand by my original assessment, at least I feel more like a jerk for actually saying so.)

Nathan Cordero says

This is a good book about the 1958 NFL championship game. This game is considered to be the greatest football game ever played. Author Frank Gifford who really played in this game described well how the game went and each player in it. For those who saw the game they witnessed a great game and something to remember. The Colts ended up defeating the Giants 23-17. It was the first game in NFL history to have an overtime. The game took place in Yankee Stadium. 64000 fans were in attendance at the stadium. Gifford did a good job telling you about the Giant team that he played on. What I disliked was that the book started a little slow and took time to get into the actual game.

Elena says

Very interesting story of the first NFL game to go into overtime. It was also the first hurry-up offense, run by Johnny Unitas. It must have been thrilling. Not a masterpiece of Western literature but a good story.

Tom Gase says

I picked up this book on the 1958 championship game between the Baltimore Colts and New York Giants when I saw it in the bargain section. I was interested in it because it was supposed to be author David Halberstam's last book, but he was involved in a fatal car accident in Menlo Park, CA while doing research for it. Due to Halberstam's death, former New York Giant and Monday Night Football broadcaster, Frank Gifford, took over the project for Halberstam. In the very first chapter, Gifford tells the reader that he is not Halberstam, and to not expect a very well-written book as good as Halberstam was producing. This is true.

Gifford doesn't do too bad of a job, especially with his research, but the problem with this book was his bias. Since Gifford was a player in the game, he doesn't write fairly for both sides of this great contest that would

later be called the birth of the NFL as we know it. Gifford often brings up "what ifs" about his team, the Giants. What if Gifford didn't fumble twice in the game, what if some of the Giants players were healthier, what if a crucial first down was given to the Giants, etc. Well, what about the Colts? Why aren't they given any "what ifs"?

If you have no idea who won this great game, the first televised game of NFL action ever, then this is a decent read. If you know who won the game, but want a better book on the subject, I would recommend Johnny U by Tom Callahan or The Greatest Game Ever by Mark Bowden.

The one thing I really DID like about this book, was Gifford describing the life and times of the players when the game took place. Gifford's description of NY in 1958 was really good. I also liked Gifford's take on how nobody spiked the ball or did crazy celebrations back in his playing days.

charlie says

This is not a brilliant book - but there is something overwhelmingly charming about Frank Gifford's narration. As a broadcaster, he was pretty "Jack Webb", but here we hear the passion he felt for the game of football, and the guys he shared the field with. I have heard about the "greatest game ever played" for my whole life - but knew very little about it - this book told me the whole story and put everything in perspective.
