

Contents

Foreword by Dennis Rainey	7
Acknowledgments.....	9
1 Replays	11
2 Posters on Your Wall.....	20
3 The Motivation to Play Hurt	33
4 The Real Enemy.....	50
5 Allies Every Husband Needs	67
6 A Husband's Nutritional Guide.....	81
7 Become a Thermostat, Not a Thermometer	98
8 The Power to Play Hurt	124
9 New Posters for Your Wall	142
Notes	149
About the Author	152

Foreword

I LOVE SPORTS OF ALL KINDS. Baseball, basketball, football, track—you name it. I inherited it from my dad.

My dad's nickname was "Hook" Rainey, not because he was a Captain Hook look-alike, but because he had a wicked curve ball that would blaze its way to the plate and "fall off the table." He played in the St. Louis Cardinals farm system, and in his prime his crooked curve opened the door for him to pitch a game against legendary Hall of Fame pitcher Dizzy Dean.

Hook was a tall lefty who could have made it to the big leagues, but he never had a coach who really trained him. As a result, he played hurt and permanently injured his arm. Who knows what this talented country pitcher could have done with the right coach?

Truly great coaches, ones who are wise, are scarce.

Life coaches, those who know the "game" and are skilled in truly training another man in life skills, are harder to find than box seats to Game 7 at the World Series. And six decades of living have taught me that every man needs life coaching. He needs training in three relationships that he's not naturally good at—his relationships with God, with his spouse, and with his children. Without such a coach, a man is simply not going to take his life and his most important relationships to the level they were designed to be played.

Gentlemen, may I introduce you to your life coach, Brian Goins.

Foreword

I first met Coach Goins when he and his wife joined a team of over 130 elite communicators who are committed to training the next generation of marriages and families through FamilyLife's Weekend to Remember marriage getaways. It didn't take long to understand why Coach Goins is so effective in helping men succeed in their marriages. His passion to come alongside men and equip them is contagious.

He speaks a man's language, and he knows how to move a man's heart. He is one of those rare leaders who not only understands men, but also has a game plan to develop them.

Men respond and play up to their potential when they rub shoulders with Coach Goins. He isn't a critical, verbally abusive teacher; instead, his winsome style motivates them to get into the game with God and with their wives. His "chalk talks" aren't warmed up leftovers from the Casey Stengel era. His fresh, edgy style is more like ESPN Sports Center, making you move forward on the edge of your seat to hear what he has to say next.

He may get in your face, give you a chest butt, and call you to man up. In the end, you know he's right and all the pain will definitely be worth it.

Brian is a no-baloney man. He doesn't sanitize the stories about his marriage. As you read his book, you'll not only be able to relate to him as an imperfect husband, but you will also benefit from his transparency and the hard lessons he's learned in life.

All of this is why I'm honored to introduce you to Coach Brian Goins and his playbook, *Playing Hurt*. I'm confident that if you listen to the Coach and run his plays, you will get into the game and improve your relationship with God, with your wife, and with your children.

So lace 'em up, suit up, and get ready to step up and break a sweat for the game of your life!

DENNIS RAINEY
President of FamilyLife and
host of *FamilyLife Today*

Acknowledgments

To MY BRIDE— Remember the dream box? One down.

To BRANTLEY— Never forget . . .

To PJ— Keep jumping into cold water.

To GIBBERS— Meet me at the tire swing.

To MY “AND GUYS”— Jim, Walls, Werner, K-Rant, the Good Doctor, Mets, Elder Hartsock, Knepp, Fite, and Crotts.

To THE DON— I need huge royalties to repay all those lunches. Your poster looms large on my wall.

To DAD AND MOM— Thanks for being cycle-breakers and legacy-makers.

To RENAISSANCE— You wake me up with joy every day.

Chapter 1

Replays

NAME YOUR FAVORITE ATHLETE who played hurt. If you're into sports at all, I'll bet someone comes to mind. If not, you can probably find a classic replay on ESPN. Every overproduced pre-Olympic video montage includes sprinter Derek Redmond, at the 1992 Games in Barcelona, limping to the finish line in the 400m on a torn hamstring while he leans on his father for support. You get a little teary eyed whenever you see Kerri Strug nail that vault from the 1996 Olympics—though you would never admit to watching women's gymnastics.

If you're from my parents' generation, you might refer to someone who played hurt by saying, "He pulled a Willis Reed." I had to look the guy up on Wikipedia. Reed, the Hall of Fame center who carried the New York Knicks out of the NBA cellar in the late 1960s, is known for one of the greatest moments in Madison Square Garden history, during the 1970 NBA championship series against the Los Angeles Lakers. Suffering from a torn thigh muscle—an injury suffered in Game 5—Reed stunned the Lakers and fans for both teams by walking onto the court during warm-ups for the deciding Game 7. After conceding the tip-off to Wilt Chamberlain, Reed scored the first two baskets of the game for the Knicks. Though those were the

Playing Hurt

only points he would score that night, his presence on the court inspired his teammates, and they toppled the Lakers 113–99, securing the Knicks' first NBA title.

Not that anyone from Boston would care.

However, any *r*-dropping Red Sox fan will point to the bloody red sock worn by all-star pitcher Curt Schilling after he ruptured a tendon in his ankle during the 2004 playoffs. His season should have been over, but in an unprecedented move, doctors constructed a wall of stitches around the ruptured tendon, allowing Schilling to pitch twice more in the playoffs. The television announcers spotted blood seeping through Schilling's sock during Game 6 of the American League Championship Series against the hated New York Yankees. He soaked the sock again in Game 2 of the World Series against the St. Louis Cardinals, when his gutsy performance helped to finally put the dreaded Curse of the Bambino to rest as the BoSox won their first championship in eighty-six years.

I'm a fair-weather baseball fan. I love going on dollar hot dog night at a new ballpark designed to look old, but I'm probably not going to watch the game on TV. Basketball is more my passion. Still, I'll never forget the 1988 World Series between the Los Angeles Dodgers and the Oakland Athletics. My dad was the Dodger fan; I just jumped on his bandwagon.

In the bottom of the ninth inning in Game 1, the Dodgers were down 4–3, with two outs and the tying run on first base. Perched on the mound for the Athletics was future Hall of Famer Dennis Eckersley, the quintessential closer, who was known to set down batters in the ninth inning like swatting mosquitoes at a picnic. One out away from a save, he awaited the announcement of a pinch hitter for the Dodgers' pitcher.

Over in the Dodgers' dugout, manager Tommy Lasorda was considering his options. The best hitter he had on the bench was outfielder Kirk Gibson, that season's National League MVP, but Gibson was in no shape to bat. He had been held out of the starting lineup because of injuries to both legs suffered during the National League Championship Series, and on top of that he was sick with a stomach virus. Nevertheless, before the Dodgers

Replays

came to bat in the ninth, he had sent a message to Lasorda: “I can hit.”

Now, with the game on the line, Lasorda sent him to the plate.

Gibson hobbled out of the dugout and immediately fell behind in the count 0–2. After Eckersley missed with his next two pitches, Gibson fouled another one off before working the count to full.

Not wanting to put the go-ahead run on base, Eckersley came with his signature backdoor slider, looking for a strike-out. Gibson took an awkward swing and connected, sending the ball high over the right field wall. Home run! My dad and I jumped up and down like we were in the cheap seats while Gibson, barely jogging, pumped his fist back and forth as he trotted slowly around the bases. The Dodgers went on to win the Series in five games.

No one had to tell me, at age sixteen, “Now Brian, that’s a man.” Something stirred inside of me. Something ingrained in every man. I wanted that chance. I dreamed of playing hurt and being the hero one day.

For most guys, though, there comes a day when they realize that the closest they’ll ever come to playing hurt in a championship game is the day they’re home sick from work and making last minute trades in their fantasy league. Nevertheless, you may have some highlight-reel memories of playing through pain in other venues: maybe from the classroom when you pulled an all-nighter to get a paper done. Or maybe in the boardroom when you pushed past your fear and insecurity to challenge a superior. Or maybe you’re a man in uniform who took a bullet but kept moving until you got your buddy back to safety. I bet if we shared a cup of coffee together we could find some replays of you playing hurt.

Especially if we started pulling out game film from your dating career.

Sitting in the Freon Zone

My wife, Jen, grew up in northwest Montana, near Glacier National Park. I grew up in suburban northern Virginia, near a

Playing Hurt

swamp they converted into our nation's capital. Not every guy can say this, but for summer vacations, I love going to see my in-laws. Even the founding fathers fled DC in the summer—and if they'd had the choice, I'm sure they would have traveled to the purple mountain majesty where you need a Windbreaker in the shade and no one knows the meaning of the word *humidity*. When I'm in Montana, I always spend a few days writing in one of my favorite coffee shops.

While I was finishing up a chapter for this book, I noticed a young couple off in a corner in the comfy chairs. They weren't sporting any rings and they both looked as if their metabolism was still working at full capacity. I pegged them in their early twenties. The young lady, with arms folded tightly across her chest, leaned over and asked the guy to switch seats with her. I looked up and saw the air conditioning vent pointed right down her neck. As the young guy promptly moved into the Freon zone, I imagined an announcer saying, "Let's watch that again, Bob. *Bam!* Did you see him jump up and dive into that cold blast of air? He knew he was about to be pummeled, but he took the hit anyway."

It reminded me of one of my own replays from when I was pursuing Jen. Long story short, I had chased her all the way to Bangkok, Thailand. (No, I wasn't a stalker.) She was teaching at an international school, and I had taken a year off from graduate school to go on a "mission trip." (You don't have to guess what the true mission was.) In Bangkok, they have three seasons: hot, hotter, and hot and wet. During the rainy season, you don't go anywhere without an umbrella. One night, Jen and I had saved up enough pennies to take a break from chicken fried rice and pad thai to enjoy some American grub. During a deluge worthy of Noah, we donned rain slickers and headed out to Tony Roma's. After a few racks of ribs, we noticed that the rain had finally subsided, and we took that opportunity to catch a cab back to our apartment complex. Jen said good-night, gave me a peck on the cheek, and then said, "Oh, I left my umbrella at the restaurant."

Of course I responded with something soothing like, "Well,

Replays

I'm pretty sure they have one at . . . about any store in a three-block radius."

Jen shrugged her shoulders, "Oh well. It was one of my favorites. I loved that pattern."

It was the first time I learned that there are people in this world who notice patterns on umbrellas.

Bangkok has about two major highways for a population of around twelve million. Tony Roma's was on the other side of town. It was a thirty-minute one-way trip and a thirty-dollar round-trip cab fare. We both accepted reality. It was time to play taps for that umbrella.

The next morning, when Jen left for school, she found her favorite patterned umbrella propped up against her door.

"Let's watch that one in slow motion, Bob," the announcer might have said. "Did you see how Brian pump faked and then ran the reverse to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat? What determination! What drive!"

In a related story: On a recent rainy day in Charlotte, as we pulled out of the garage with our three kids to head down to the grocery store, Jen said, "Oh, I left my umbrella on the front porch."

"Don't worry," I said, "I'll get you close enough to the store that you won't get too wet."

"Ouch," says the announcer. "He ran away from that hit like a burglar fleeing a crime scene!"

When the game of romance is on the line, guys are willing to move into the Freon zone or spend thirty bucks in cab fare chasing down a five-dollar umbrella. But when the game shifts to marriage, I've discovered that, most of the time, guys would rather just sit on the bench.

Jen would probably tell you that I still open the door for her, gladly take the cold chair, and usually get the umbrella for her in the rain. (My dad calls that "being a gentleman.") And whether they've grown up in Kalispell, Montana, or Alexandria, Virginia, even married men still practice chivalry. Most guys I know are willing to endure a bit of hardship for their bride and would be more than willing to take a bullet for her in a life-and-death situation. But when it's his bride who fires the bullet—criticizing

Playing Hurt

him for coming home late again from work, disrespecting him in public, or ignoring his advances in private—rather than play through the pain, he'd like to see someone pay for those wounds.

When Jen wounds me with a sarcastic remark or a broken expectation, the last thing I want to do is get back in the game. When my own insecurities hinder me from leading spiritually or resolving a conflict, I want to find a bench—preferably with a big-screen TV. I either want vindication for my injury or I want to escape from my fears. In any case, I don't look up to God and say, "Put me in, Coach. I'm ready to play."

Replays from Scripture

Long before SportsCenter on ESPN, people visualized replays from the written word. In a letter to a young church, the apostle Paul showed "clips" to the congregation about playing through pain as he tried to plant churches:

As servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger. . . . We are treated as imposters, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything. (2 Corinthians 6:4–5, 8–10)

If only he'd had a camcorder back in the day. What Paul doesn't capture in those clips are the countless times he was wounded by the very people to whom he was writing. We don't know if Paul was ever married, but in many ways his church plants were like brides to him. And those brides fired their share of bullets. From doubting his leadership, to comparing his gifts, to demeaning him in public, they wounded the man who had poured his life into theirs. But rather than pursue vindication, he pursued them. Rather than dwell on his insecurities, he got back in the game. Paul could model perseverance and love

Replays

because, in his mind, he kept replaying the clip of another classic playing-through-pain moment.

On a hill known as the Skull, Jesus played through the ultimate pain. It had begun twenty-four hours earlier when his closest friends betrayed him. Some had fled, others had lied about knowing him, and one had turned him over to the authorities with a kiss. After being wrongfully accused by three illegal courts, he was stripped, beaten, and scourged with a whip made of multiple cords knotted with bits of metal or bone, designed to lodge in the skin and rip the flesh. The same crowd of people who just days before had shouted praises now spit in his face. Long thorns dug into his forehead as a makeshift “crown” was jammed onto his head. Nails pierced his wrists and feet. As his blood trickled down from the cross, he heaved up and down for hours until he suffocated. During the entire ordeal, his heavenly Father refused to alleviate the pain.

At any moment during the crucifixion, Jesus

- had the power to fight back;
- had the right to demand vindication;
- deserved to be pitied for his wounds.

Instead, he played through.

Why?

The author of the book of Hebrews gives us a clue: “Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the *joy* that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:1–2, emphasis added). Jesus dug deep because something more was on the line than his body, his rights, and his pride—namely, *us*. More than his own life, Jesus valued you and me.

Paul used this same example when he talked to husbands: “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave *himself up for her*” (Ephesians 5:25, emphasis added). Jesus endured the wounds inflicted both by his bride and on behalf of his bride, though he was strong enough to fight back, justified

Playing Hurt

enough to be vindicated, and wounded enough to deserve pity. And yet when my own bride, or my insecurities, wound me in my marriage, my first reactions are to fight back, demand justice, and desire sympathy.

If I'm going to dig deep and play hurt, I first have to realize that more is at stake than my body, my rights, or my pride.

When Derek Redmond, Kerri Strug, Willis Reed, Curt Schilling, or Kirk Gibson faced their decisions to sit or suffer through, something overpowered their feelings of pain. It wasn't medication. People play through pain when their passions overpower their feelings. When my heart starts craving something more glorious than my power to retaliate, my desire for vindication, or my hope for pity, I step up. After Paul replayed his personal clips to the church at Corinth, he wrote, "We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide open. You are not restricted by us, but you are *restricted in your own affections*. In return . . . widen your hearts also" (2 Corinthians 6:11-13, emphasis added). Unlike many pastors, Paul never used guilt to motivate his people to action. Instead, he desired to open up their "restricted" affections. He aimed at expanding their passions more than expanding their lists of *oughts* and *shoulds*. Like a coach shouting from the sideline, he cheered them on: "Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, *act like men, be strong*" (1 Corinthians 16:13, emphasis added). Paul dug into the psyche of the men in the church: Real men play through pain.

In this book, I don't want to guilt-trip you into action. I also don't want to merely offer tips and techniques on being a better husband. Frankly, there are far better marriage coaches out there than I am. More than anything, I want to expand your vision, and I pray that God will open up your restricted passions. I want you to know that you're not alone in the battle. And as you learn to play hurt, I hope you'll discover a few plays you can run to help prevent further injuries.

I hope this book widens your heart and loads some replays into your mind that will capture your soul. When my dad I were watching Kirk Gibson limp around those bases, I was so moved by a man I had never met and never would meet face-to-face.

Replays

Baseball's not even my sport, but because of his one sacrificial action, I craved a chance to play with the same passion. I wanted the chance to dig deep.

In the game of marriage, God is not looking for men who will take the air conditioner seat or grab an umbrella. Those acts of chivalry are all well and good, but what God is looking for are husbands who will “act like men” when suffering a deep bruise to their pride, an assault to their ego, or a blow to their expectations.

When you find yourself in the ninth inning, down 4–3, with two outs and the tying run on first, the question is, Will you step up to the plate?

THE HOT SEAT

Welcome to “the hot seat.” It’s time to answer some questions about your game . . .

1. What are some of your favorite replays of athletes who played hurt?
2. What has been the toughest experience in your life that you had to gut through? What was the result? What did you learn about yourself through that time?
3. When you're wounded by your wife, or by your own insecurities, what is your default response: fight back? demand justice? look for pity? How can you push past your initial reaction and learn to play hurt?