



CASE with ANDREW PERLOFF
KEENUM

PLAYING FOR MORE

Trust Beyond
What You
Can See

FOREWORD BY TONY DUNGY

CASE with ANDREW PERLOFF KEENUM

PLAYING FOR MORE

Trust Beyond
What You
Can See



NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

Copyright © 2018 by Case Keenum
All rights reserved.
Printed in the United States of America

978-1-5359-3979-9

Published by B&H Publishing Group
Nashville, Tennessee

Author is represented by the literary agency of The Fedd
Agency, Inc. Post Office Box 341973, Austin, TX 78734.

Cover photography by Micah Kandross

Dewey Decimal Classification: B
Subject Heading: KEENUM, CASE / FOOTBALL PLAYERS—
BIOGRAPHY / CHRISTIAN LIFE

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are
taken from the Christian Standard Bible®, copyright
© 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission.
Christian Standard Bible® and CSB® are federally registered
trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers.

Also used: New International Version®, NIV® copyright
©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by
permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 • 22 21 20 19 18

Contents

Foreword	xiii
Prologue	xvii
Chapter 1 Playing for More . . . . .	.1
Chapter 2 Pray Hard, Play Hard . . . . .	.7
Chapter 3 Under the Lights . . . . .	.21
Chapter 4 Third Ward Cougars . . . . .	.33
Chapter 5 The Show . . . . .	.43
Chapter 6 Down but Not Out . . . . .	.59
Chapter 7 Kimberly . . . . .	.67
Chapter 8 Chasing History . . . . .	.79
Chapter 9 Draft Daze . . . . .	.91
Chapter 10 Welcome to the NFL . . . . .	.99
Chapter 11 Soaring on Eagles' Wings . . . . .	.111
Chapter 12 Go Rams . . . . .	.125
Chapter 13 Goin' Hollywood . . . . .	.139
Chapter 14 Minnesota Nice . . . . .	.149

Playing for More

Chapter 15	SKOL	161
Chapter 16	Bronco Country.	167
Chapter 17	Why I Play	179
Afterword	. . . . .	189
About the Authors.	. . . . .	197

Foreword

I met Case Keenum for the first time in 2011, when he was a senior in college. I had heard about this great young quarterback who was setting all kinds of records at the University of Houston but I hadn't really gotten a chance to see him play. So I was anxious to spend some time with him and get to know him. It didn't take me long to come to the conclusion that he was the type of person you wanted to lead your football team. He had the sort of outgoing personality that made him easy to talk to, and it was combined with a quiet confidence that people rally around. In fact, my short conversation with Case reminded me of one I'd had a decade earlier with a college quarterback named Drew Brees. After visiting with Case for ten minutes I just knew he was a natural leader and I felt that he would have the same type of success in the National Football League that Drew has enjoyed.

Six years later my eleven-year-old son, Justin, got the chance to meet Case during the week leading up to Super

Bowl LII in Minneapolis. Case's Minnesota Vikings had come up short in the NFC Championship Game against the Philadelphia Eagles, but he had led them on a magical season, including a miraculous last-second playoff win over the New Orleans Saints. Justin's first impression of Case was the same as mine had been. He could tell right away there was something uncommon about Case.

That's the vibe that most people get when they spend any time with Case Keenum. It's hard to describe, but he definitely has the "It Factor" that you look for in a quarterback, or in any leader for that matter. It's the ability to help other people be better. The ability to rally people around you and have them believe that somehow you will lead them to great things. They feel that if they stay with you and continue to believe, you can lead them to victory, even in the toughest of circumstances.

That's the feeling you get when you're around Case for any length of time. He's been a leader and a winner all his life and he's demonstrated those qualities since he was a young athlete. And he's done it that not just during the record-breaking performances and the championship seasons, but in the disappointing times as well. He kept the same upbeat attitude when he wasn't highly recruited coming out of high school and when he got injured. When he wasn't drafted coming out of college, he didn't get down but

Foreword

just became more determined to prove the experts wrong. He signed a contract with his hometown Houston Texans but didn't experience the immediate success that he had in college. The first two years of his NFL career provided nothing but disappointments. Through it all, though, he never lost his desire or his belief in his abilities.

Where does that type of attitude come from? In *Playing for More* you'll learn that attitude came from many sources. It came from a very supportive family and a dad who taught him not only how to play quarterback but how to work hard and sacrifice to be the best he could be. It came from some excellent coaches who helped him develop as a player. But, more than anything, I believe you'll see that the driving force in Case Keenum's life is his relationship with Jesus Christ.

As I've gotten to know Case better, I've learned that his primary motivation as a player, and as a leader, is to point people to the Lord. He loves playing the game of football, loves being around his teammates, and he definitely wants to use his gifts to help his team win. But none of those things are the real reason he plays football and why he competes so hard. More than anything else, he wants to show young people that the most important thing in his life is his relationship with Jesus. That's why he plays. That's why he trains so hard and has sacrificed so much to become an excellent player. And that's why he has written this book.

Playing for More

As you read this book you'll get an idea of the hard work and extreme dedication it takes to become an NFL quarterback. You'll learn about the amazing highs and lows in the life of a professional athlete. You'll see some of the traits that have made Case a great husband, a great teammate, and a great friend. But more than anything, I think you'll see what has really motivated Case and made him such an uncommon person, and that's his love of the Lord. And I know that's what he really wants you to get from reading this book.

—Tony Dungy

Prologue

It had to be Drew Brees. *Drew freakin' Brees*—of all the quarterbacks I could possibly face in my first playoff start. A playoff start that at the beginning of the season seemed unlikely since I was the third QB on the depth chart for the Minnesota Vikings. And yet here we were, coming off a remarkable 13–3 season in which I had just put up the best numbers of my NFL career. I had a chance to help bring the Vikings to the NFC conference title game for the first time since 2009 . . . when, coincidentally, Drew Brees and the New Orleans Saints beat the Vikings on the way to his first and only Super Bowl win. I was thinking I would finally win the big game, finally come through for my team when it mattered most, the playoffs. I was living the dream I had played out in my backyard ever since I was a kid.

First, let's set the table: We were down 21–20 to the Saints in a divisional-round playoff game following the 2017 season, and there were three minutes left. I had the ball in my hands with the game on the line. I knew this was it,

now-or-never. My teammates stepped up in a big way. My big tight end, Kyle Rudolph, had made contested catch after contested catch all year, and he made his biggest of all on this drive. Running back Jerick McKinnon ripped off two great runs for first downs. And Adam Thielen, one of the best receivers I've ever played with, made a catch I couldn't believe. On a scramble drill he turned his slant route back up the field. I lofted a prayer toward the sideline and he jumped up to make the catch with Pro Bowl cornerback Marshon Lattimore draped all over him. The officials called holding and pass interference on the same play, and somehow it didn't matter. Adam hung on to the ball. Up to that point, it was the biggest moment of our season. *Clutch*. That was one of the most memorable drives of my career. We got into field goal range and Kai Forbath drilled a 53-yarder to give us a 23–21 lead.

I went back to the sideline absolutely pumped. My emotions were soaring. Then I looked at the clock.

One minute and 30 seconds left.

Crap.

Drew Brees.

Our defense was one of the best in the NFL. Heck, it was the best. And all we needed was one stop. But then Brees—a quarterback I've looked up to my whole life, a fellow Texan—took the field. I watch his tape every offseason. I've read his

Prologue

book. I even stole his pregame chant and did it with my boys at the University of Houston. Now Brees was driving, and it was time to start doing the math.

The Saints convert a fourth-and-10 from our 46-yard line—40 seconds left. *If they get a first down, can they run out the clock?* Brees completes a short pass—36 seconds left. *Will I get another chance?* Another completion—33 seconds left. We call a time-out. I can't look anymore. If they convert on third-and-one, game over. Somehow, as hot as Brees and the Saints are, we stop them. They have to settle for a field goal. We're down 24–23 with 25 seconds left. It's not over.

I'd like to say I rallied my teammates on the sideline, maybe gave an inspiring speech like they do in the movies. Cue up Denzel Washington in *Remember the Titans*. “Fake 23 Blast with a Backside George Reverse, like your life depended on it.” But that's not what happened. Instead, I'm flipping through the playbook with my receivers, Thielen and Stefon Diggs, looking at our special end-of-game options. There's a set of plays at the back of the book that we practice every three weeks or so. But I can't find the one I'm looking for. “Where is that hook-and-lateral? I know it's in here. I just saw it!” We're all trying to come up with something, but there's no perfect play for driving the length of the field in 25 seconds with only one time-out. The Saints' kickoff sails out of our end zone. Time to take the field, but I still don't know

where that hook-and-lateral card went, and so I just look at my guys, shrug, and say, “All right, let’s just go give this thing a shot.”

That drive didn’t exactly start out in cinematic fashion either. Offensive lineman Mike Remmers, one of my closest friends on the team, had a false start on the first play. Then receiver Jarius Wright fell down on what could have been a big play. Another incomplection and we found ourselves with 10 seconds left, sitting on our own 39, out of time-outs. Throughout the season, we’d studied how long it took to get off another play if we completed a pass in the middle of the field and couldn’t get out of bounds. *Was it 12 seconds? Fifteen? There’s no way 10 seconds was enough.*

Being in the huddle with my teammates has always been very special for me. I still get chills thinking about having ten other guys locked in on my eyes, listening to every word that comes out of my mouth. Your world may feel like it’s falling apart—fans are yelling, coaches screaming, the defense talking trash. But in those ten other guys you can see trust, respect, and love in their eyes. And I’ll remember this particular huddle forever. Everyone was tired. We had fought so hard for four quarters. My receivers had run several deep patterns in a row, and they were *gassed*. The offensive line had been holding back guys like Cameron Jordan, a three-time Pro Bowler, all game. I told the guys the only

Prologue

thing I could muster: “This is it. I’m going to give one of y’all a chance.”

The play call from offensive coordinator Pat Shurmur was “Gun Buffalo Right, Key Left 7 Heaven.” Shurmur, who would be hired as the Giants’ head coach not long after the season, made some incredible play calls that year, but this is one that nobody in Minnesota will *ever* forget. In fact, the next few moments still don’t feel real. Pat Elflein snapped the ball and I dropped back with incredible protection. The line had been so good all season, and my guys were at their best right now, when we needed them the most.

I knew I would probably have to throw the ball to the right side. Thielen was lined up as the single receiver on the left side and had too much coverage. Of the three receivers on the right side, I had to focus on the one going the deepest. I saw Diggs flatten the angle on his pattern, away from the safety and toward the sideline. His route was called a Heaven 7—fitting for a play that many would regard as a miracle. I thought that if Diggs could catch the ball he’d be able to get out of bounds and stop the clock. I knew they would try to tackle him in-bounds if he did make the catch, but I had to take a shot. I took a hitch and let the ball go.

Sometimes the ball just comes out of your hand perfectly, and this was one of those passes. I lose sight of Diggs for a moment, but then I see these white gloves he’s

wearing—Diggsy is always very stylish—emerge out of the crowd. He's reaching up for the ball and I say to myself, "Oh my gosh, he's about to catch this thing!"

And he does. U.S. Bank Stadium erupts. It's the loudest I've ever heard a stadium in my life. But then I see Diggs turn and fall down with one hand on the ground. "Oh no! Get out of bounds! *Whatever you do, get out of bounds!*"

I've watched the replay several times since, but I honestly still can't tell you exactly what happened next. In the moment, I didn't see Saints safety Marcus Williams go for the tackle and miss completely. I assumed there were other defenders back there. I didn't know that nothing stood between Diggs and a game-winning score.

Everyone remembers the rest. Diggs streaked down field, straight into the end zone, threw his helmet, and the place went crazy. I couldn't believe it. *Is this real? Did this just happen? Wait for the replay . . . look for flags. (You never know.) No flags.* But then I looked up at the big screen and saw it again. No doubt. Touchdown.

Go back to the video and you'll see me running up to my teammates and yelling. Once again, these were not the words a Hollywood screenwriter would choose. They weren't words at all. "*Agghhhhggghhh! Agghhhhggghhh! Agghhhhggghhh!*" It was something between gibberish and primal screaming. My mind exploded. Forgive me if I didn't

Prologue

handle it like I'd been there before—I hadn't. It had taken a long time and a lot of work to get to this point. So many family, friends, and coaches had believed in me and supported me even when a playoff win like this seemed like an impossible long shot. I had to let it out.

I'm still running around, grabbing anyone I can find, when Vikings director of public relations Tom West grabs me and tells me I have to do a postgame interview with Fox sideline reporter Chris Myers. *An interview? Now? I can't put a sentence together; how am I going to speak to a national TV audience of millions?* But I said a quick prayer (“Lord, give me something to say—anything”) and accepted that I wasn't going to be able to offer any kind of insight that could come close to matching the sheer madness that was still going on around me.

Myers started off with an easy one: “Can you describe the play?” *Uh, no.* “I don't even know what just happened,” I said. “It's crazy.” OK, not the most descriptive answer, but the words just weren't coming together.

Then he asked where this moment ranked in my life. It's got to be the best moment of your life, right? And that was a question I could work with.

“It's probably going to go down as the third-best moment of my life . . .”

Playing for More

My dad's father left his family when my dad was a kid. As a result, my dad didn't have a positive male role model in his life when he was growing up. By God's grace, he got invited to a Fellowship of Christian Athletes huddle meeting by a coach at his high school. And at that meeting, he accepted Christ as his Savior. This led him to live a very different life than that of his own father.

The choice to follow the Lord changed his life and the entire trajectory of our family for generations to come. I'm sure as a seventeen-year-old kid, he wasn't thinking about the impact this decision would have on his future family, but without his faithfulness as a father, I would not have grown up into the man I am today. My opportunities to grow into a professional athlete, marry an amazing woman, and eventually raise godly children are in large part possible because my dad modeled what it looks like to be a man of God.

As I've grown up, I realize more and more how blessed my sisters and I are. After leaving home and living around the country, I draw back on countless lessons that my parents taught me. I can't imagine going through life without the foundation that I have. My dad's words "*Do the right thing, son*" ring in my head still today when considering situations. Did I always listen to them? No. But as time has gone on, I have learned that even if it's hard to admit, my parents were right about most things.

My grandfather started coming around again when my sisters and I started getting older and participating in organized sports. My dad had reached out and wanted to give his father the opportunity to be in his grandkids' lives. I have some good memories spending time with my grandfather during the holidays and at games, and I really appreciated him coming. As every kid does when he gets older and starts to learn more of the truth about the world, I slowly came to realize that it wasn't all rainbows and roses. My grandfather wasn't very good with money and he got involved with the wrong people time and time again. To this day, I still get phone calls from debt collectors looking for my grandfather.

I may not have had the best example of manhood from my grandfather. But my dad . . . he is a *stud*. It seems like every day I learn something new about Dad and come to

admire him in an even deeper way. I'm sorry-not-sorry about being boastful here, but I have to brag a little about my dad because I think he is the best example in my life here on Earth of what our heavenly Father is like.

I realize that this topic is painful for many whose fathers were not around, who feel rejected or unworthy. I know there are many young men who have longed for the love, approval, and pride of their earthly father. While my dad was in the stadium for every athletic event, I know there are kids who are competing and looking up to the stands to find someone to cheer for them. The gift I have in my dad isn't lost on me, but even in his great love for me, he falls short every time compared to the love of my heavenly Father. That's the power, the secret I want to share with you.

If you remember one thing from this book, make it this: we all have the same heavenly Father who is full of perfect unconditional love that no human could ever give. He is waiting with open arms asking to be in a relationship with each and every one of us. That love, along with unbelievable peace and joy, awaits you. You don't have to earn it! He gives it freely. When you have this relationship like I have, you are eternally welcomed into a family that is far better than anything this world offers. When my father accepted Christ, everything changed. By the grace of God, my father's life was transformed and his heart was filled with love where anger

had once been. In an incredible act of this grace, my dad took my grandfather back into our life and even took care of him in his final years when he came to know Jesus Christ as his personal Savior. What a story of redemption and victory. Pretty awesome. That's my dad. He restored integrity to the Keenum name.

He's a real man. He's a kingdom man. He's my dad.

Growing up, I didn't really think about how much money we had as a family. My dad was a coach, and my mom was a teacher. As a hard-working middle-class family, we never spent any money that we didn't have to. My brother-in-law complains about not being able to share a milkshake with my sister Lauren. She drinks the whole thing down the first chance she gets. That's because when I was a kid, if you didn't get your share when it was passed around the first time, it wasn't coming back to you. We went to Taco Bell on Sundays after church. This was a special treat for us. I didn't think about other restaurants I was missing out on. I may not have had everything I wanted, but I had everything I could ever possibly need and more.

The money I've been fortunate enough to make during my career will affect my family's financial situation for years to come. I find that money is very difficult to talk about.

Recently though, I've been convicted more and more that I can step up in this area of our lives. As our financial situation has changed over the years, I think I do a disservice to myself and the kingdom to not make my use of money a high priority in my life. The Bible not only calls me to lead in all areas of our relationship, but the Bible also mentions money more than heaven and hell combined. How we handle our money as believers is obviously important, so I want to make sure I am in line with Scripture every step of the way. I know I wouldn't be in this position without the Lord, and I'm not going to change who I am because of how many zeros are at the end of my account. I will keep doing what I'm doing, giving my firstfruits back to God—using the influence I have to support others who are using their talents to further the kingdom. Isn't all the money God's anyway?

“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” —Luke 12:34

I've never seen a U-Haul on the back of a hearse. You can't take it with you. I've definitely regretted some purchases I've made for myself over the years. But I've *never*

regretted parting ways with one dollar that I've given to church or a worthy charity.

“From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, even more will be expected.” —Luke 12:48

I've been blessed. In more ways than one. I want to share that with others. I *want* to get deeper into the business of making a difference. I have a platform through professional football. I have a unique opportunity to be part of something much bigger than myself. I can't imagine saying no to that. Just like I can't imagine keeping my faith to myself.

There is nothing wrong, in and of itself, with money. But my dad—and my mom—gave me something much more important than any of that. They gave me what I needed. They gave me a foundation of learning about faith that would guide me my entire life. They set me on a path that has sustained me, even when I couldn't see anything good up ahead. They put me in position to meet the One who would change everything about what I do, and who I am.

They gave me a framework to play for something more.