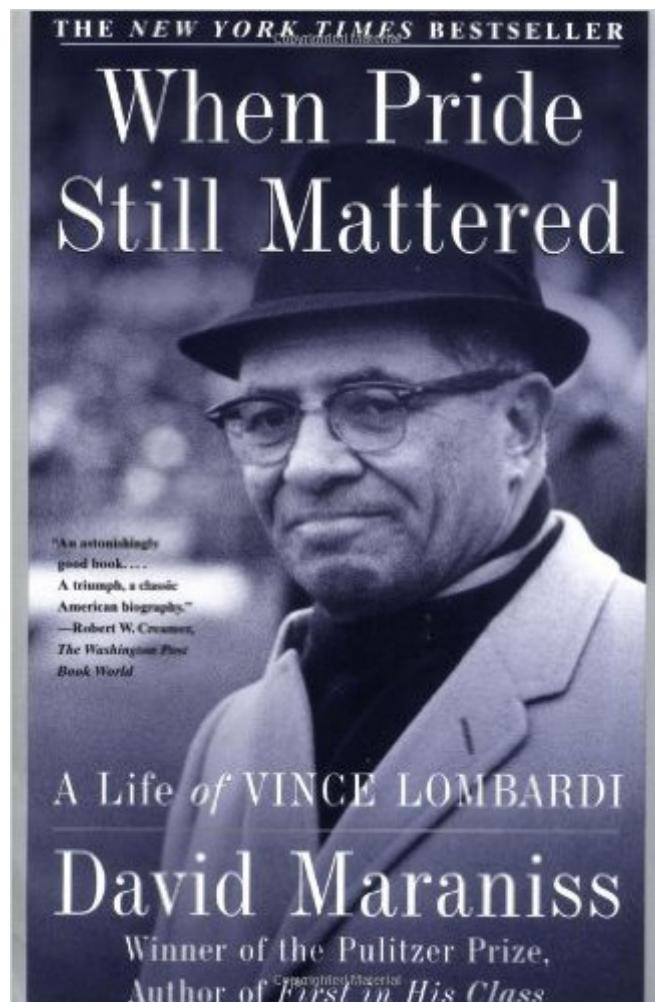


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When Pride Still Mattered : A Life Of Vince Lombardi



Synopsis

In this groundbreaking biography, David Maraniss captures all of football great Vince Lombardi: the myth, the man, his game, and his God. More than any other sports figure, Vince Lombardi transformed football into a metaphor of the American experience. The son of an Italian immigrant butcher, Lombardi toiled for twenty frustrating years as a high school coach and then as an assistant at Fordham, West Point, and the New York Giants before his big break came at age forty-six with the chance to coach a struggling team in snowbound Wisconsin. His leadership of the Green Bay Packers to five world championships in nine seasons is the most storied period in NFL history. Lombardi became a living legend, a symbol to many of leadership, discipline, perseverance, and teamwork, and to others of an obsession with winning. In *When Pride Still Mattered*, Pulitzer Prize-winning author David Maraniss captures the myth and the man, football, God, and country in a thrilling biography destined to become an American classic.

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Customer Reviews

My dad was one of the eight men who played under Lombardi for his entire tenure in Green Bay. In fact he is a frequent contributor to Mr Maraniss's work. Now that my some of bias has been revealed I want to say that this is the finest biography I ever read. Mr. Maraniss filled out so much about a character I thought I knew well. I had heard my dad say the things about Lombardi that are quoted in the book, so in some ways the inclusion of his thoughts in the book were its least interesting parts to me. The author's research into Lombardi's early life and his conclusions from that research, not just names and dates, is a thread carefully woven through every chapter to a

point that near the end the effect is nearly haunting. Lombardi was not really the myth he is often portrayed as, but rather a man acutely aware of his surroundings in nearly every circumstance who was able to absorb enough positive material from each that when his opportunity finally came he seized it and delivered all he had absorbed in a way no one ever had and maybe never will again. The true inspiration that comes from this book is not what Lombardi became but rather the revelation of the power of something so simple as paying attention to what makes great things great and staying dedicated to those values. I am forty years old and there is picture in my office that is one of my most prized possessions. The photo is of my dad, my brothers, Lombardi and me getting off the plane before the NFL Championship in 1960. It was always important to me because of its unique representaton of that part of my family. Though I never thought it possible, Mr. Maraniss made it more precious to me because of what he taught me about the only guy in the picture who was not a member of my family.

Although I grew up in during Lombardi's rise to fame in the 1960's, I have never read any other sports book or biography that dealt with him, up to this time, motivated finally more by Mr. Maraniss's previous books on President Clinton, which I have read, than by any great desire to become knowledgeable about this football great. There is not much that I can add that hasn't already been said in all the other reader reviews that appear on this page. The author's biography presents a no-holds-bared look at this interesting sports coach and personality that fortunately, as another reader said, presents a man whose reality lives up to the myths that have been built up around him. What I would like to add is that this book also provides some very useful historical context around the Lombardi years that makes his life all the more vivid: life in the fifties and sixties, the rise of professional football to its prominence today and the rise and influence of the media in the sports world as well as in all other aspects of late 20th century life. This is a book ANYONE will enjoy, not only because of the subject matter it covers, but also due to the meticulous reporting, fluid writing style, and most of all, for the way the book sincerely tugs on the emotions of the reader, for Lombardi, his family and for a time period gone by. In sum, this is a book that rewards the reader all the way around.

When I was a kid, I read Green Bay Packers lineman Jerry Kramer's book Instant Replay, his diary of the 1967 season, and to this day that era still has a mythical hold on me. Indeed, "When Pride Still Mattered: The Life of Vince Lombardi" continued the magic. After also reading David Maraniss' biography on Bill Clinton, I'm convinced Maraniss is one of the best non-fiction writers of our time.

With Clinton and now Lombardi, Maraniss proves he has the ability to take a person who has reached unimaginable success, and show us their strengths, weaknesses and flaws, without taking away from what made them great in the first place. This is a book that you wish would never end. It's that good.

As I read this book, the thing that kept running through my mind was how much research the author had to do. That is the difference between this book and other biographies, especially when you think that the two best sources of information - Vince and wife Marie - have long since passed away. I commend him for his efforts as not just a writer, but as a researcher. I will say this though, there are volumes and volumes of information about the Packers and Lombardi, making the writer's job not easier, but less time-consuming because of the availability of all the information out there. As for the writing, I loved the way he blended Lombardi's day-to-day life with the football seasons. Just when you thought he was going to give you some boring play-by-play, he took you in another direction, describing Lombardi's relationship with a player, an assistant coach, a business leader, even his secretary, and he did so in a thorough and fascinating manner. He then took you back on the field for the play-by-play, and as a reader you felt like you never left. You don't have to be a sports lover to love this book, because to me it's not really a sport book. Instead, it is a journey into the psyche of a man who was driven to succeed in everything he did. Chapters on his personal appearances, business ventures and other interests were nearly as interesting as the tales of his obsession with football. Lombardi was truly driven to be the best at everything he did. The title of this book says volumes because to Lombardi pride did matter. Everything he did - except perhaps his relationship with his immediate family - he did with the intent of showing others that quality mattered to him. I loved the book and despite his many shortcomings, I love Lombardi.

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