



Big Play: Barra On Football

Allen Barra

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In a follow-up to his *Clearing the Bases*—*Sports Illustrated*'s book of the year for 2002—syndicated columnist Allen Barra turns his eye from America's pastime to America's passion. In this collection of essays, Barra delves into the gridiron's all-time greats, some of the sport's enduring controversies, and suggests new ways to think about the game that holds our attention from August through January, every year.

Barra turns his aggressively intelligent writing to the Heisman Trophy and its controversies and demonstrates why the Bowl Championship Series has not and cannot work. He explains how the infamous tie game between Notre Dame and Michigan State in 1966 changed football forever. He compares the careers of Bear Bryant and Vince Lombardi, George Allen and Don Shula, Bart Starr and Johnny Unitas, and Joe Montana and Steve Young, probing beyond the myths that surround each man and creating a new context to understand their achievements. He explains how Notre Dame embraced a destiny in pads, beyond the Gipper mystique and Rockne speeches. No other writer challenges a sport's myths, untrue truisms, and legends the way Barra does in these essays.

The achievement of a writer who manages a balance between establishment insider and outspoken iconoclast, *Big Play* explores issues and controversies that fire up pigskin fans. Blending statistical commentary with insight and biting commentary with genuine fandom, Barra provides readers with another dose of his passionate, opinionated, and unique analysis of football.

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Linda Meier:

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