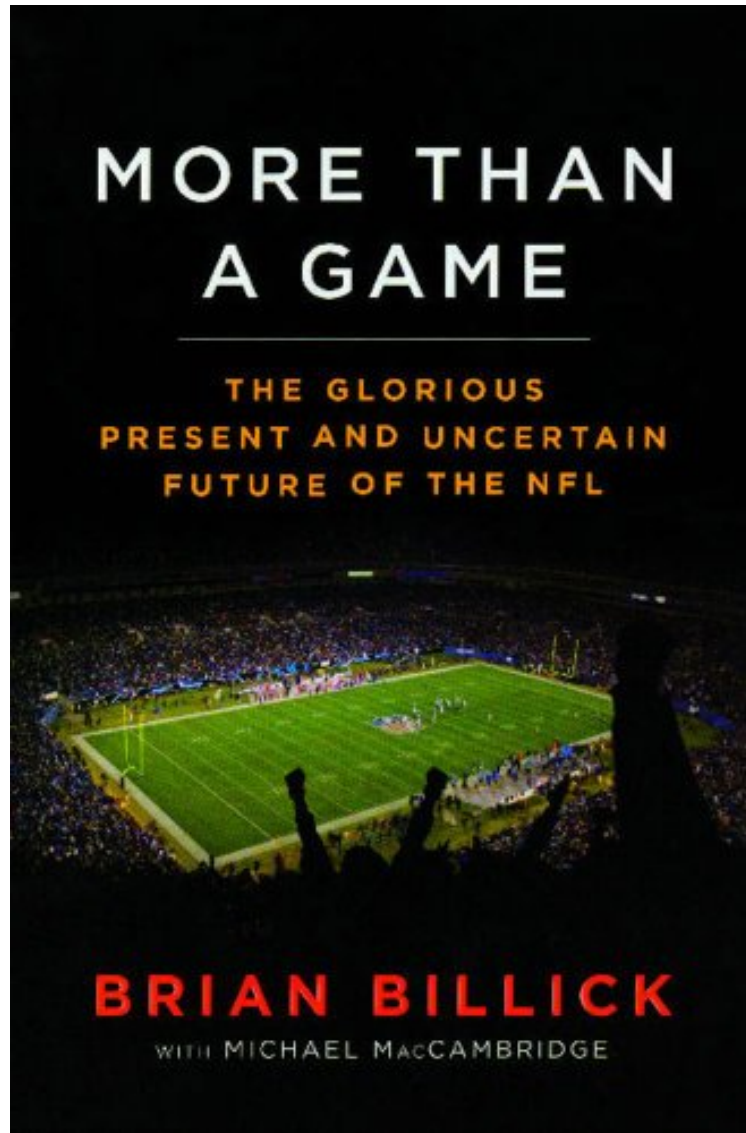


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## More than a Game: The Glorious Present--and the Uncertain Future--of the NFL

*Brian Billick, Michael MacCambridge*  
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**Brian Billick, Michael MacCambridge : More than a Game: The Glorious Present--and the Uncertain Future--of the NFL** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised More than a Game: The Glorious Present--and the Uncertain Future--of the NFL:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Shut up and listenBy WDX2BBIf you subscribe to the HBO television channel, you might have seen its mini-series on the training camp of a pro football team called "Hard Knocks." Several teams have been covered over the years. The first was the Baltimore Ravens, then coached by Brian

Billick. Anyone watching the program could tell that Billick was an exceedingly smart guy, definitely worth listening to, and as a former Super Bowl winner could coach a little too. Billick lost his job with the Ravens a while back -- such is the nature of football -- but he's still smart. That means "More Than a Game" is definitely worth reading. Billick wanted to take a look at the National Football League from the outside looking in for a change, since he had spent most of his adult life coaching from the inside. He had some extra time while he wasn't working as a Fox commentator on NFL games, so he spoke with several people who are involved in various aspects of the game. Then he teamed up with MacCambridge, who has written a few of my favorite books on sports ("America's Game" and "The Franchise.") So you'd expect the resulting book to be worthwhile. Billick breaks the book down into chapters covering a specific aspect of the game -- owners, general managers, coaches, players, offense, etc. It combines into a fine look into the world of pro football today. For example, the problems of putting together a winning team in a salary cap era are very illuminated. Billick, known as an offensive coach for his work before arriving in Baltimore, says the Ravens had to devote much of their resources toward defensive players salaries in order to keep that unit together for as long as possible. Other teams have had the reverse problem. The good teams and executives have learned to rebuild on the fly and capitalize on their draft choices. The game itself has become amazingly complicated. As you might expect, Billick does some good work breaking down the approaches of such players as Peyton Manning and Tom Brady, quarterbacks who are in a sense making things up as they go along ... after studying for a week solid on the possibilities of how certain plays will work in a given week. The books only bogs down a bit toward the end, where there's a discussion of collective bargaining agreements and ways the game might grow its revenue base in the future. It's a tough sell to make that sort of dialogue fascinating to the average fan. But, really, "More Than a Game" isn't written for the average fan. It's for someone who wants to know more about the sports by learning from an insider. Billick took a fine snapshot of the game in 2009, and the sooner you'll read it the more you'll learn.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Good Treatise on Today's National Football League  
By C. Baker  
Brian Billick was the head coach of the Baltimore Ravens for nine years and his team won Super Bowl XXXV thanks mostly to its great defense. Prior to that he was the offensive coordinator of the Minnesota Vikings, at the time one of the most prolific offenses in league history. Having stepped away from the game for a while Billick has written a nice little monograph on today's game. This is not a biography of Billick or the inside scoop of what it's like to be a head coach in the National Football League, although a little bit of that is in here. Instead is a topical "conversation" about issues facing the National Football League today. Billick does a nice job explaining some of the modern day offensive and defensive schemes proliferating around the NFL and gives a nice synopsis of the progression of the now pass oriented game of professional football and how that has changed the modern game. He also briefly discusses the "wildcat" offense where the running back takes the snap directly and can either pass or throw the ball. Billick does not think the "wildcat" offense will be around too long as defenses are likely to catch up with it. The most concerning part of the book is where Billick discusses the collective bargaining agreement between the NFL and the National Football League Players Association (NFLPA), the player's union. If an agreement is not reached there could be a lock out and no football in the near future. Hopefully it will not come to that as professional football has been able to avoid the damaging play stoppage that has plagued other leagues, most notably the National Hockey League, which has yet to recover from its lost season. There are many other tidbits of football knowledge in this book and it is well worth a read by fans of the National Football League.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Complicated but good  
By Jose Nicolas Marin  
Shows you behind the curtains of the NFL a very interesting book for young football fans and old fans who do not understand the game

Today's National Football League is more successful, more exciting, and more popular than ever. But the game in the twenty-first century is also ruled by a constant quest for more money. Super Bowl-winning head coach Brian Billick's *More Than a Game* examines how the relentless competition off the field affects the game on the field, and what it means for the future of America's most popular sport. One of the NFL's most successful leaders, Billick coached the Baltimore Ravens from 1999 to 2007, leading his team to victory in Super Bowl XXXV in 2001. With nearly two decades in the league, and now a Fox game analyst and NFL Network contributor, Billick has experienced the league's enormous pressure to win as well as seen what happens to those who don't. Following the 2007 season, he took a step back from the coaching life and decided to spend a season examining the game he loved so much from other perspectives. Collaborating with Michael MacCambridge (whose book *America's Game* is regarded as the definitive modern history of the NFL), he delved into the NFL from every possible angle, spending time with people at every level of the game. *More Than a Game* explains how the spectacle that dominates fall weekends in America works, and why it has served all of football's interest groups -- owners players, and fans alike -- so well over the years. We get a glimpse of the changing profile and increased influence of the league's owners. We come to better understand the pressure that players are under to perform for their team and for themselves and their future contracts. We see the challenge facing NFL commissioner Roger Goodell, who must balance the concerns of owners, players, sponsors, the league's television network "partners," and the fans, whose devotion and dollars make the entire enterprise possible. Along the way, we see how the financial forces are exerting themselves on every level, working their way into the

essence of the game itself. Billick takes the measure of new offensive and defensive strategies, explains refined scouting and team-building methods, and focuses on the elusive quest for the franchise quarterback that can make or break careers. Packed with the privileged knowledge that comes from a true NFL insider, *More Than a Game* is more than a look inside the complex system that is pro football. It's an attempt to understand why the game is so compelling, and what it will take to keep it that way. Complete with important developments in the 2009 off-season, the book stands as an absolute must-read for NFL fans.