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The Rise and Fall (and Redemption) of Billy Cannon

LSU Press to Publish Biography of Legendary Football Star in September 2015

Baton Rouge—Billy Cannon’s name, his image, and his remarkable athletic career serve as emblems for Louisiana State University, the Southeastern Conference, and college football. LSU’s only Heisman Trophy winner, Cannon led the Tigers to a national championship in 1958, igniting a love of the game in Louisiana and establishing a tradition of greatness at LSU.

But like many stories of lionized athletes who rise to the status of legend, there was a fall—and in the case of Billy Cannon, also redemption. For the first time, Charles N. deGravelles reveals in full the thrilling highs and unexpected lows of Cannon’s life, in ***Billy Cannon: A Long, Long Run***.

Through conversations with Cannon, deGravelles follows the athlete-turned-reformer from his boyhood in a working-class Baton Rouge neighborhood to his sudden rush of fame as the leading high school running back in the country. Personal and previously unpublished stories about Cannon’s glory days at LSU and his stellar but controversial career in the pros, as well as details of his indictment for counterfeiting and his post-release work as staff dentist at Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola, unfold in a riveting biography characterized by uncanny success, deep internal struggles, and a champion’s spirit that pushed through it all.

Charles N. deGravelles spent over twenty-five years ministering to the inmates of Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola, including the men on death row. A deacon and teacher living in Baton Rouge, deGravelles has published in literary journals and anthologies nationwide.

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Football / Biography

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