

The Tale of Brett Lorenzo Favre: America's QB

By Jon Rapoport

Simply stated, Brett Favre is one of the most transcendent figures in modern American history.

Whether you are a football fan, moviegoer or simply a connoisseur of blue jeans, everybody knows the good ole boy from Kiln, Mississippi. You want to know why the famous number four is such a recognized and beloved figure? Because he is the everyman quarterback. While modern-day NFL luminaries like Brady, Manning, Elway or Montana may not be especially relatable to the average workaday person, everybody (and I mean everybody) can relate to at least one aspect of the Favre story. This is a man who is both highly accomplished and deeply flawed. A man who has experienced a seemingly never ending roller coaster ride of high and lows, during his more than 50 years of life. This is the tale of Brett Lorenzo Favre.

Favre was raised in the tiny town of Kiln, a south Mississippi municipality, 60 miles northeast of downtown New Orleans. Ironically, the close to home Big Easy would later play host to shining examples of the aforementioned highs and lows that are always present when strapping into the Favre thrill ride, so stay tuned. Amid growing up with both his mom and dad working as area teachers, Favre attended Hancock North Central High School, with his dad Irvin serving as his head coach. Despite starring in both football and baseball. Favre's lone scholarship offer was provided by nearby Southern Mississippi, who had envisioned the boy with the big arm suiting up at defensive back. With Favre's arrival on the Hattiesburg campus, it would soon be time for the protective arms to be lowered on the never been duplicated Brett Favre roller coaster ride. Here we go!

Favre's days at Southern Miss. are best remembered for two glowing on field moments, as well as an off the field drama that nearly cost him his life. During his junior season, Favre led the Golden Eagles to an upset win versus number six ranked Florida State, two years after assuming starting QB duties as a freshman. A mere 10 months later, Favre was driving near his parents' house, when his car flipped three times after speeding around a bend. The accident's location proved fortuitous, with Favre's brother close enough to the scene to free Favre by breaking a window with a golf club. In the wake of an ambulance rushing Favre to a hospital, his life was saved, with 30 inches of his small intestine removed during the efforts to keep him alive. Miraculously, Favre would return to the field just six weeks after the

near tragedy, leading USM to an upset victory of Alabama, with future national championship winning coach Gene Stallings referring to Favre's performance as "larger than life." Told you this was gonna be a thrill ride. And we have barely left the starting blocks.

Favre was chosen in the second round of the 1991 draft by the Atlanta Falcons, though this arrangement turned out to be the opposite of a match made in heaven, with then ATL coach Jerry Glanville expressing his lack of interest in Favre both before the draft took place and after the future hall of famer set foot at team headquarters. The following offseason, Favre was shipped north to Green Bay, for a first round pick. Packers GM Ron Wolf had been enamored with Favre for some time, even looking passed a potential hip injury detected during his initial Packers physical. Incredibly, the man with the reduced small intestine and questionable hip went on to start 321 consecutive regular and postseason games, establishing an NFL record that will likely never be broken. Favre came off the bench in week two and three of the 1992 season, leading GB to a stunning last-second win over the Bengals in the second of those two contests. After playing a near perfect game the following week versus the Steelers, an NFL star was born. From this point forward, the Brett Favre thrill ride would really hit the gas.

Favre led Green Bay to back-to-back playoff appearances in 1993 and 1994. In '95, he elevated his play to superstar level, amid earning league MVP honors and leading the Packers to an NFC Championship Game appearance, with the club going down in defeat to the Cowboys, GB's third consecutive playoff loss to Aikman, Emmitt, Irvin and company. During the offseason that followed, the Favre roller coaster encountered its most precipitous drop since the car accident, when Favre checked himself into a rehabilitation facility, due to a vicodin addiction. In subsequent months and years, more information would surface regarding other Favre indulgences, which included that of alcohol, partying and women, despite Favre marrying his wife Deanna in the summer of 1996. By the late 90's, only a couple years into their marriage, Mrs. Favre threatened divorce if Mr. Favre did not change his ways.

Once Favre emerged from his 46-day rehab stint, the roller coaster ascended at breakneck speeds, with Favre both winning the regular season MVP and guiding the Packers to their first Super Bowl victory since the 1960's, with the win against the Patriots being even that much sweeter courtesy of the game taking place in New Orleans. Favre and his pals followed up this effort by reaching the Super Bowl for a second consecutive year, losing to John Elway and the Broncos in one of the most memorable football games in history. That season also featured Favre taking home

his third consecutive MVP award, though this one he shared with Detroit Lions legend Barry Sanders. Despite the Super Bowl loss, the Favre thrill ride was at peak performance, with Favre now standing as an unquestioned American superstar.

The 2000's portion of Favre's career represented the absolute most turbulent stretch of this unimaginable thrill ride. While Favre continued to post incredible passing statistics, this era is largely remembered for the bevy of costly postseason INT's he threw, including overtime picks against the Eagles and Giants, with the NYG debacle serving as his final pass as a member of the Packers. There was also a six-pick embarrassment against the Rams, along with a four-pick extravaganza versus the Vikings.

If you're thinking that there was one other monumental turnover that was left out of this section, don't worry, we'll be getting to that.

Off the field, the Favre family was stung by a series of tragedies so horrific, that nobody would ever wish such a fate on their worst enemy. In December of 2003, Irvin Favre died of a heart attack. Not long after learning of this news, Favre took the field in Oakland, playing perhaps the best game of his career, while dedicating the Monday Night Football triumph to his now late father. The following year, Deanna's brother was killed in an ATV accident, which just so happen to occur on Brett and Deanna's property. Not long after that, Deanna was diagnosed with breast cancer. Fortunately, Mrs. Favre successfully overcame the disease and is living a healthy life to this day. In 2005, multiple Favre family residences were heavily damaged by Hurricane Katrina. To say this period of Favre's life was tumultuous, would be the understatement of the then early century.

With a guy named Aaron Rodgers looking squarely over Favre's shoulder, Favre retired from the Packers, only to come out of retirement to spend the 2008 season with the New York Jets. After a second retirement, Favre orchestrated a move to his longtime archrival, the Minnesota Vikings, guiding Minnesota to a 12-4 season that featured the living legend posting perhaps the most commanding stats of his career. After crushing Dallas in the divisional round, Favre and the Vikings headed to New Orleans (of course) for what would turn out to be one of the most noteworthy games in modern NFL history. With Minnesota driving towards a game-winning field goal attempt, Favre threw a completely ill advised interception, sending the game to overtime and an eventual 31-28 defeat. In addition to the completely mind boggling INT, the Saints over the top punishment of Favre would later serve as one of the cornerstones for what would become the Bountygate investigation. If that wasn't enough, in the wake of this game, the NFL changed the rules of overtime,

after the Saints won the toss, gained a huge chunk of yards on a pass interference penalty, and then advanced to the Super Bowl on a subsequent field goal.

After playing one more season in Minnesota, Favre finally called it quits for good. With the roller coaster somehow careening to a complete and final stop, Favre walked away from the game holding the record for consecutive games played, most passing yards and most TD throws, though both of these passing marks have now been eclipsed. In addition, Favre still owns the record for the most career interceptions. The 11-time Pro Bowler also left football with what he believed to be multiple concussions, including one such hit that knocked him out of his very last professional game. Favre's 20-season NFL odyssey will almost certainly never be duplicated by anyone. This is a roller coaster ride that needed to be demolished to the ground after it came to a much needed conclusion, 24 years after it began on the campus of Southern Miss.

Brett Favre is not your prototypical NFL legend.

Tom Brady attended a prestigious Bay Area private high school. Brett Favre did not. Peyton Manning is the signature member of football's version of Camelot. Brett Favre is not. John Elway matriculated at one of the greatest universities in the world. Brett Favre can't say the same. Joe Montana spends most of his time on a vineyard in Napa Valley. Nobody would confuse South Mississippi with Northern California. It is these distinct differences that make Favre such a singular figure in American life. He is everyman, rolled into an ablong laced pigskin of athleticism, testosterone and massive imperfection.

The man from Kiln is responsible for some of the most remarkable and head-scratching plays in NFL history. Never has there been a hall of fame player that has simultaneously succeeded and stumbled as spectacularly as Favre. And that is why he has so few detractors, even amongst fans who spent so much time rooting against him. On and off the field, Favre is relationable, a rare and unique trait in a legendary athlete. That is why his story is the ultimate thrill ride. Sometimes exhilarating, sometimes scary, sometimes stupid, sometimes tragic, but always worth getting back in line to experience again and again. This is Brett Lorenzo Favre, America's quarterback.