

Michael Oriard. *The End of Autumn: Reflections on My Life in Football*.
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"The sports world itself is the particular domain of heroes," writes Michael Oriard in *Dreaming of Heroes: American Sports Fiction 1868-1980*, "and the fiction that describes sports must focus on this essential fact." Oriard's first book, an outgrowth of his dissertation, established his scholarly trajectory. He remains the dean of sport literature scholarship, a position he did not anticipate, even though he was

an ideal candidate. Oriard was a standout high school football player, a walk-on at the University of Notre Dame, where he became a team captain, and a professional football player—first with the Kansas City Chiefs, under Coach Hank Stram, and finally with the Hamilton Tiger-Cats in the Canadian Football League. Oriard was also a Rhodes scholarship finalist and earned a Ph.D. from Stanford University. *The End of Autumn: Reflections on My Life in Football*, Oriard's football memoir, originally published in 1982, presents the cultural foundation for his fascination with American sport fiction. Written with intelligence and passion, *The End of Autumn* should be required reading for every football player from high school to the pros. Now a Professor of English and Associate Dean of the College of Liberal Art at Oregon State University, Oriard transformed himself into an offensive lineman. Football became his sport for multiple reasons; primary among them, the opportunity to excel in a manner different from other sports: "Football players seemed to me ... more heroic than other athletes." Oriard was also lucky. The passion he held for the game was not smothered by coaches or his parents; in fact, his parents were rather nonchalant when it came to his football success. Early on, he understood that there was more to life than "marking time between football games." But Oriard did see football as fundamental, a mythic construct that "pits the forces of good against the forces of evil, with the outcome in doubt." Yet, he never romanticizes the game or his role in it at any level. His career at Notre Dame sounds intriguing, until he discloses that it was his dermatologist, a Notre Dame alumnus, who told the coaching staff of his interest in playing there. Oriard's Gonzaga Prep high school years did not prepare him for serious Division I football, but his academic record did, so he was invited to attend school without a scholarship. A physics major, Oriard found a mentor in an odd place: the English Department. Ara Parseghian was too far removed from a non-scholarship freshman, and Wally Moore, the freshman coach, was a strict football man.

Duffy, though, was something else—a scholar teacher, "a learned man deeply committed to the literature he taught and to the individuals who attended his classes." Duffy did not even attend football games. He became a different kind of hero. While at Notre Dame, Oriard experienced disappointment and triumph. His teammates were players who would become famous as professionals. While at Notre Dame, Oriard still found football to be an emotional experience that satisfied because it was both a personal and a collective experience. When he moved to the Kansas City Chiefs, however, the game became a profession and not an act of self-discovery: "What made the situation bearable was my separate existence apart from football—my graduate studies an eventual career in teaching." *The End of Autumn* is divided into four sections: Seasons of Youth; Under the Golden Dome; Playing for Pay; and The End of Autumn, which opens with the chapter "A Tragedy for Heroes." Its narrative arc resembles the monomyth, the hero's journey. Oriard's memoir traces his own growth and his love for both football and intellectual engagement, and he provides a clear-eyed view of the significance of football before it became a mass-media extravaganza.

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