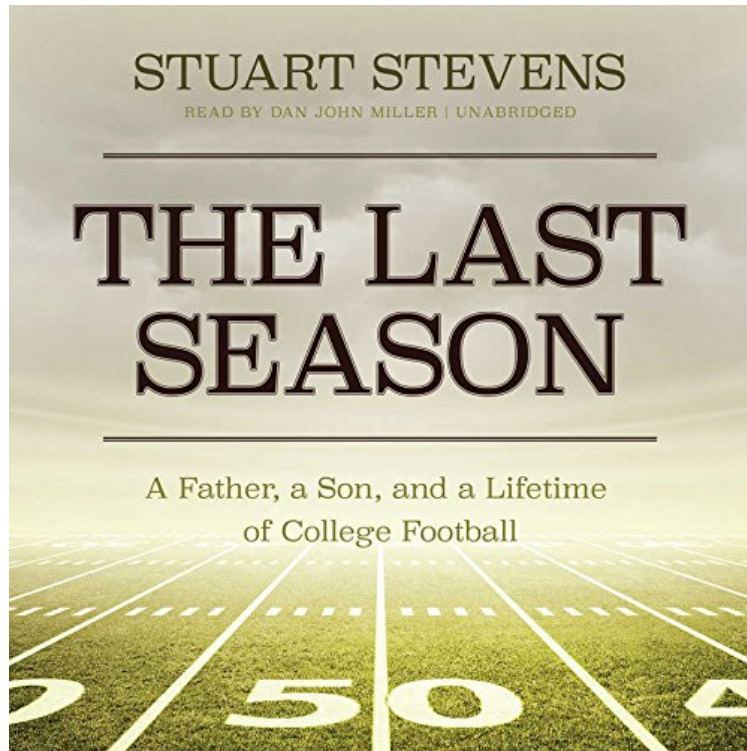


(Download free pdf) The Last Season: A Father, A Son, and a Lifetime of College Football

The Last Season: A Father, A Son, and a Lifetime of College Football

Stuart Stevens

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Stuart Stevens : The Last Season: A Father, A Son, and a Lifetime of College Football before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Last Season: A Father, A Son, and a Lifetime of College Football:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The Gridiron Greater Truths By ArtExcellent ! I grew up in Memphis, Tn., about 70 miles from Ole Miss, so I went to a lot of Rebel games as a youngster in the 1950s. They also played from time to time at Crump Stadium in Memphis. "The Last Season" really brought back memories of my dad and I going to Oxford and seeing games at Hemingway Stadium (now, Vaught-Hemingway). It only held 35,000, but I loved it--and truth be known, I was a big Mississippi State fan, too ! I appreciated, also, the references to Mississippi's struggles to become a more tolerant state. It was poignant writing, and it was a time to remember, so that we can be better people. Thank you, Stuart Stevens--and your father. Art Dlugach Meadowlakes, Tx. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Ending was rushed By DevilDawg76 I thought the majority of the book was wonderful as the author paints a picture in your mind of football with his old man. The sights, sounds, and even smells came to life. I honestly felt as if the ending was rushed, however, jamming the final three games of the season into one chapter. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Family Together Enjoy the University of Mississippi Football. By Roger Adams I really enjoyed the story about a son and his dad in the south and following Mississippi football. It reminded me of those days past when I spent many days with my father going to Springfield College football and basketball

games as well as the Springfield Indians Hockey team which in the '40s was a Boston Bruin minor league team. I loved the book and bought two others for my dear friends.

Fathers, sons, and sports are enduring themes of American literature. Here, in this fresh and moving account, a son returns to his native Mississippi to spend a special autumn with his ninety-five-year-old dad, sharing the unique joys, disappointments, and life lessons of Saturdays with their beloved Ole Miss Rebels. In the fall of 2012, after working on a presidential campaign that suffered a devastating loss, Stuart Stevens, having turned sixty, realized that he and his ninety-five-year-old father had spent little time together for decades. His solution: a season of attending Ole Miss football games together, as they'd done when college football provided a way for his father to guide him through childhood -- and to make sense of the troubled South of the time. Now, driving to and from the games, and cheering from the stands, they take stock of their lives as father and son, and as individuals, reminding themselves of their unique, complicated, precious bond. Poignant and full of heart, but also irreverent and often hilarious, *The Last Season* is a powerful story of parents and children and the importance of taking a backward glance together while you still can.

"Through the lens of college football, Stuart Stevens has produced a poignant tale of fathers, sons, race, and growing up in the South during the late 1960s. Besides being a delightful read, it is a reminder of the joy of relishing what is meaningful in life." --Walter Isaacson, #1 New York Times bestselling author of *Steve Jobs* "It's Ole Miss, it's nuts, it's outrageous, it's got depth and emotion, and it's one of the best father-son books I've read in years. 'Hotty Toddy' is the only phrase you need to know to love this book." --Pat Conroy, #1 New York Times bestselling author of *South of Broad* "The Last Season is a touching, beautifully written story about the love between a son and his father, and their special lifetime bond formed around 'Ole Miss' football. Anyone, man or woman, who does not understand the seemingly insane, intense loyalty and devotion of the college-football fan for his team, win or lose, should read this book. We soon find out it's not just about football; it's about all the good things in life. And just like all good things, I did not want it to end." --Fannie Flagg, New York Times bestselling author of *Can't Wait to Get to Heaven* "The Last Season is an instant classic. This is an absolute gift to sports fans. I don't remember when I have enjoyed a book more than this one. This is a special book, one people will share with their children and grandchildren. This book is truly one for the ages." --Paul Finebaum, sports author and radio personality "A meditative memoir of a son, sixty, and father, ninety-five, bonding over college football...An elliptical, evocative narrative...An affecting tale showing that you can go back home again." --Kirkus "Phineas is quick as a whip and full of one-liners, and he takes center billing with his son playing the straight man. As for the ghosts of the past -- including the Civil Rights movement, racism, segregation -- Stevens combines his memories of boyhood with his sixty years of knowledge to show how far America has come and how far we still need to go. Throughout, Stevens captures the spirit of college athletics, and ties it into his foundation of fun and family." --Publishers Weekly

About the Author: Stuart Stevens is the author of five previous books, and his work has appeared in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Esquire*, and *Outside*, among other publications. He has written extensively for television shows, including *Northern Exposure*, *Commander in Chief*, and *K Street*. For twenty-five years, he was the lead strategist and media consultant for some of the nation's toughest political campaigns. He was educated at Colorado College; Pembroke College, Oxford; Middlebury College; and UCLA Film School. He is a former fellow of the American Film Institute.

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The Last Season PROLOGUE It was the first Ole Miss game that season in Jackson and I'd been looking forward to it all summer. I had an Ole Miss hat, sort of a cross between a baseball hat and a newsboy cap that I wore to bed most nights. I knew the names of every starting Rebel as though they were family members: All American quarterback Glenn Griffing, running back Lou Guy, fullback and linebacker Buck Randall. I knew them all. The way the radio announcers described them was how I thought of the Rebels: "rocket armed" Griffing; "swivel hipped" Guy; "bruising" Randal. They were like titles bestowed upon knights competing on fields of battle. I was ten years old. My parents had a party before most Ole Miss games in Jackson. My favorite was the party before the Arkansas Razorbacks game, which was always a "hog roast" with lots of great barbeque and a big pig. I loved the pig. The opening game of that 1962 season was against the Kentucky Wildcats. You can't roast a Wildcat, but it was still a good party. They always had good parties. The bootlegger came to the house before every party. Mississippi was the only state in the country that had not repealed prohibition so the entire state was dry and everybody had a bootlegger. Ours drove a pick-up truck with cases of booze in the back. Not very discreet but nobody really tried to hide bootlegging. The State Treasurer was even paid a percentage of a bootlegger tax that was collected. You could make a lot of money and one famous candidate for the office when asked how long he intended to serve, said, "I figure it will only take one term." I liked our bootlegger. He was a friendly guy who always gave me an ice-cold Coke. Once I saw a pistol in the cab of his pickup and I asked my father if he was a police officer. He laughed and said that he wasn't but he probably had a lot of friends who were. The pre-game parties always ended with a couple of the Ole Miss chant, "Hotty-toddy" and a dash for the stadium. For evening games, there would be an inevitable clothing ritual with my mother that played out with the predictability of a catechism. "Take a coat. It's going to get cool." "I've got a jacket."

I held up the light Ole Miss windbreaker that had been a birthday present the year before. I'd learned not to fight these things. Submission was inevitable so best to make it speedy. "Is that heavy enough? Shouldn't you wear that nice wool coat we got you for Christmas?" The wool coat was the sort of thing that the lead character in "Sergeant Preston of the Yukon" wore in one of my favorite television shows. Unless the temperature plummeted 70 degrees, I knew I'd want to abandon it on the walk to Memorial Stadium, like heavy equipment on the Russian retreat from Stalingrad. I'd seen pictures of that in the Life Magazine book of World War Two that I kept in my room. Next to the Rebels, I was probably in love with World War Two more than anything. "I'm okay. Really, mom. I've got a coat." As he always did at some point, my father stepped in. "He's fine," he reassured her. Then he held up the overly warm coat he had slung over his arm as a talisman to head off the next round of anti-hypothermia suggestions. My dad and I always went to Memorial Stadium the same way: he'd drive just a couple of miles to the parking lot of Bailey Junior High School and we'd walk. My aunt taught at Bailey and later it was where I went to school. It was a formidable looking art deco structure that always reminded me, not in a positive way, of the Emerald City in the Wizard of Oz. It was about a mile to the stadium from our usual parking spot. I loved that last stretch. Dad and I would hold hands and talk about the different ways the Rebels were going to win. He usually wore a snazzy hat and sometimes when the afternoon sun caught us just right, our shadows fell long and lean on the sidewalk, stretching his hat out in funny shapes that made me laugh. The walk never felt routine. Even from a distance, the band warming up the crowd always seemed impossibly loud. The roar probably had something to do with the sound being funneled by the structure and amplified through the crowd. But it might have been my imagination teased to a frenzy in anticipation. Walking to the game wasn't like going to the Capri movie theater, our neighborhood favorite. Even if you didn't know what was going to happen in a movie, it had already been made. But the game was different. Nobody had made what was going to unfold. No one had any idea what was going to happen. We were walking to history. I imagined families all across the country huddled around radios and big cabinets televisions like the huge Zenith in our living room, listening and watching what we were going to see for real. Going to the game seemed like being on the inside of the most important secret in the world. I knew that my friends at school who didn't go to the game would ask over and over, "What was it like?" Some wouldn't want to believe that I had really been there. I always carried the ticket stubs with me for at least a week after a game. * * * On the way to the game, Confederate flags were everywhere but that was normal. What would Rebel games be without Rebel flags? Cars drove by with guys and sometimes a girl holding flags and yelling, "Go to hell, Kentucky!" I always loved the way the crowds got bigger the closer we got to the stadium. It was like seeing kids on the playground before the first day of school after the long summer. Not that I was friends with my fellow fans, or even knew more than a handful of them, but they were Rebel fans. We were Rebel fans. Perfect strangers would greet each other with, "Hotty toddy," and it was like a password into our special clubhouse. But this time my dad steered us clear of any large groups. There was a crowd in the parking lot shouting, "Hell, no!" and even I could tell they were drunk. At halftime, Ole Miss was ahead 7-0. But my father seemed uneasy, shaking his head and talking about how "sloppy" the team had played. One of my favorite players, Buck Randall, had scored but the refs called it back on holding. "We should be killin' em," my dad told me and I nodded solemnly. At soon as the teams had headed to the locker room, Colonel Reb, the Ole Miss mascot, led out the world's largest Confederate flag, which seemed to cover the field, followed by the Ole Miss band wearing their standard uniforms of Confederate battle dress. This was the ritual of every Ole Miss game: Colonel Reb, the giant flag and when the marching band finished its famous rendition of Dixie, the crowd would rise as one to shout, "The South Shall Rise Again." But tonight, the ritual changed. A podium was placed in the center of the field and a man I had seen before but couldn't have named came out flanked by Mississippi Highway Patrolmen. "It's Ross!" Somebody shouted. "Hey, Governor!" Governor Ross Barnett looked old and addled. People were laughing. Someone handed us a leaflet with the words for "A New Mississippi Anthem." The band started playing the Ross Barnett's campaign song that I'd heard on the radio many times, "Roll with Ross," but now the crowd was singing the new lyrics: States may sing their songs of praise With waving flags and hip-hoo-ray' Let cymbals crash and let bells ring, 'Cause Here's one song I'm proud to sing: Go Mississippi, keep rolling along. Go Mississippi, keep rolling along. Go, Mississippi, you cannot go wrong. Go, Mississippi, we're singing your song, M-I-S, SIS, S-I-P-P-I! A few people near us in the stands looked uncomfortable, but most were laughing and singing. My father pushed his hat back on his head and stared at the paper. I wanted to join in, of course, but his look told me not to. Ross Barnett was now waving his arms like a conductor. The crowd tore into the next verse: We will not yield an inch of any field. Fix us another toddy, ain't yielding to nobody. Ross is standing like Gibraltar, he shall never falter. Ask us what we say, it's to hell with Bobby K. Never shall our emblem go. From Colonel Rebel to Ole Black Joe. That was more than enough for my father. "Time to go," he said and pulled on my hand. I assumed he meant time to get some hot dogs. I loved hot dogs. We started to move down our row toward an aisle. Barnett was bellowing: "I love Mississippi! I love Mississippi! I love her people! Our customs! I love and respect our heritage!" The crowd had stopped laughing and cheered wildly. When we got to the hot dog stands on the ground floor, I stopped because I thought it was hot dog time. My father walked ahead for a few steps then came back. "Half time hot dog?" he asked. He bought me one but he didn't look happy. "Aren't you getting one?" "Not tonight," he said and instead of turning to go back into the stadium he motioned toward the exit.

“Let’s go home.” “Home?” He looked at me and then rubbed his stomach. “I don’t feel good. I ate too much at that party. We can listen to the second half at home.” Then when he saw me hesitating, “There’s peach cobbler left from the party.” I loved the cobbler. I took a big bite out of the hot dog and we walked out. Ross Barnett was still shouting. Twenty-four hours later, the Ole Miss campus was a war zone in the last battle of the Civil War, Federal troops fighting Southerners over integration. Two weeks after that, the US and Russia would come close to war over nuclear missiles in Cuba. But for me, 1962 will always be most remembered as the year my father and I cheered as Ole Miss went undefeated and won the national championship. It’s there, floating in memory, that perfect season in that most imperfect year. There were other seasons, some good, some not so good but always shared with my father. And then life’s wheel began to spin and days and nights spent in stadiums faded into the past. Until one day I woke up at the age of sixty and realized that what I wanted most in the world, was one more season. With my father and football and the Ole Miss Rebels. It didn’t need to be a perfect season. One last season would be perfect enough.