



Life Is Not an Accident: A Memoir of Reinvention

Jay Williams

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New York Times Bestseller

This big-hearted memoir by the most promising professional basketball player of his generation details his rise to NBA stardom, the terrible accident that ended his career and plunged him into a life-altering depression, and how he ultimately found his way out of the darkness.

Ten years ago, Jay Williams was at the beginning of a brilliant professional basketball career. The Chicago Bulls' top draft pick—and the second pick of the entire draft—he had the great Michael Jordan's locker. Then he ran his high-performance motorcycle head-on into a light pole, severely damaging himself and ending his career.

In this intense, hard-hitting, and deeply profound memoir, Williams talks about the accident that transformed him. Sometimes, the memories are so fresh, he feels like he'll never escape the past. Most days, he finds a quiet peace as a commentator on ESPN and as an entrepreneur who can only look back in astonishment at his younger self—a kid who had it all, thought he was invincible, and lost everything . . . only to gain new wisdom.

Williams also shares behind the scenes details of life as an All-American. He tells it straight about the scandalous recruiting process and his decision to return to Duke and Coach K—a man who taught him about accountability—to finish his education. He also speaks out about corruption—among coaches, administrators, players, and alumni—and about his time in the NBA, introducing us to a dark underworld culture in the pros: the gambling, drugs, and sex in every city, with players on every team.

Life Is Not an Accident: A Memoir of Reinvention Details

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Winter Sophia Rose says

Inspirational, Insightful, Shocking & Deep! A Powerful Read! A Powerful Read!

Shawn says

Over the past few years I have read dozens and dozens of books on the game of basketball. This is among the top 5 or 6 that I have read. A very solid and in-depth read that is more than just a basketball book.

Danell Nicholson says

This book is a biography about the life of a promising basketball star who was a high school All-American and attended Duke University where he played three years of Division 1 basketball and in those three years he became a college superstar. After his three seasons at Duke he declared for the NBA Draft where he was picked second by the Chicago bulls. After a successful rookie season with the Chicago Bulls Williams got into a motorcycle accident which ended his promising basketball career.

Kaliki says

Anyone who knows me knows that I'm a memoir junkie, and a huge NCAA basketball fan. I love real stories about real people. I want to know their vulnerability, their insecurity, their fears and failures, and I want to see how they overcome them. I want to know about how they find a way through to embrace who they are and thrive. This book gave me everything I wanted, and more. It may be the most raw, humble, and honest memoir I've read. I wasn't a fan of Jay Williams before I read this book (I wasn't not a fan either, I just didn't have an opinion one way or another). I will now watch him on ESPN with a new level of respect.

Thank you for sharing yourself in this way, Jay Williams.

Alicen says

I first heard about this book and its author via this interview on NPR:
<http://hereandnow.wbur.org/2016/02/12...>

Jay Williams' story seemed so compelling I decided to read his memoir, even though it is about the world of professional basketball and very different from my own, and I am glad I did. The writing style sometimes got a little choppy but overall I found this to be an interesting read.

Nabeel Nasir says

A captivating book by one of the best college-basketball players ever. Jay recounts the reckless lifestyle he lived that led to his tragic motorcycle accident that cost him his NBA career and millions of dollars in future earnings. In the book, he discusses his struggle to recover and find a new purpose in life. After reading this, you can't help but root for Jay that he makes the most out of the rest of his life.

Angela says

From high school, to Duke University, to the NBA, to a motorcycle accident with no helmet, to a brief return to the NBA, and then on to ESPN, Jason David "Jay" Williams, not to be confused with Jayson Williams, had it all, lost it all, and then found it again, but not on the basketball court.

I'm not interested in basketball at all, but my dad gave me Williams' book, *Life Is Not an Accident: A Memoir of Reinvention*, so I decided to read it. Last year I read Dwight Gooden's book, *Doc: A Memoir*. I had no interest in baseball either, but I had read some good reviews about it that piqued my interest. I was pretty much expecting the same story from Jason Williams that I got from Dwight Gooden. Well, it is the same story – but then again it isn't.

It seems that so many books written by professional athletes all tell the same tale. You would think that with all the athletes who have experienced the quick-to-rise-easy-to-fall-from-grace lifecycle that the "newbies" entering the world of professional sports would take heed. But they don't. The cycle continues and we hear to same 'ol story over and over again.

Rags to riches. Single parent home – dad nowhere to be found/don't know who he is/in prison. Running with gangs. Sex. Drugs. Crime. All-night parties. Inflated ego. Groupies. Entourages.

It's interesting to note the way in which the public responds to athletes when they fall from grace.

~Take for instance Michael Vick. He served time for dog fighting. Vick went on to play for three NFL teams after being released. Even after he served his time the level of hate ranks of the charts. Mike has consistently been voted as one of the most hated athletes.

~Then there's Ray Carruth, who had his pregnant girlfriend killed. The baby (Chancellor Lee) survived, but he is severely disabled. He is being cared for by his grandmother who is moving along in age to a point where she may need care herself. So what becomes of this child? Carruth from what I've read has never reach out to either one of them. Carruth is scheduled to be release in 2018. Perhaps once he's out of prison, the reaction will be the same towards him as it's been toward Michael Vick. Or then again maybe not.

~Then there's Ben Roethlisberger with the Steelers who has had allegations of sexual misconduct against him. Ben also was in a motorcycle accident while not wearing a helmet; he thankfully didn't suffer the same fate as Jason Williams. There's John McEnroe and his tantrums that he used to throw on the tennis court.

Pete Rose, Mike Tyson, Björn Borg, Johnny Manziel, and so many more. Some have continued to have success in their chosen sport, while others have reinvented themselves.

I wish every professional athlete, and everyone who wants to be a professional athlete, and the parents of future professional athletes would read this book. Yes, it's kinda the same story, but not quite. There are some really important lessons (and warnings) in this book. Jason's parents were very involved in his college

and NBA decisions. They met with coaches and asked great questions. He shared the story of his meeting with Coach K at Duke. *The things Coach K offered me were values – values that were already in line with the ones instilled in me by my parents. He said he wanted to sharpen them...He added that he came from the old school where being on time is late-that you should be here early and should stay late afterwards. Mediocrity would not be rewarded, so if you came here, you were coming here to be the best. Music to my dad's ears.* (page58) His parents were also involved in helping him be responsible with his money, although he did splurge on some items, including the motorcycle involved in the accident.

Jason also talks about the importance of knowing the business. College sports and professional sports are a business. Players need to know and understand this. He shares of story of speaking with a group of kids at a basketball camp and he asks, *Who wants to be an NBA draft pick?* and then he asks *Who in here loves math?*. No hands are raised for the second question. He walks them through the scenario of being a draft pick- how much money they'll make-how much they'll spend on cars, homes, and gifts-and how much they'll pay in taxes. Jason tells them that math is important. *...they begin to understand that it might be a good idea to pay more attention in math class, to learn a little about the business and economics...* (page 209).

I could relate to Jason on a couple of things- one of those is being an only child. He states, *Being an only child had its obvious advantages-no annoying siblings and a room to myself-but it also got lonely at times. Maybe that's why I overthink things so much as an adult, never having had brothers or sisters to talk to while growing up*(page29). The second has to do with his name. His real name is Jason David Williams. It was decided that he needed to distinguish himself from Jayson Williams, who had been accused of manslaughter, and Jason “White Chocolate” Williams. One morning there was a newspaper article about him in the sports section stating that he changed his name from Jason to Jay. He wasn’t told about it ahead of time. He said it *marked a turning point after which my life no longer felt like my own*” (page 113). I can related to this in the sense that my name is Angela, but numerous people have decided to call me Angie-which I hate.

Towards the end of the book he shares this. It really speaks to my soul.

Someone once told me that people are like trees. Every tree has leaves, branches, and roots. Some people are leaves-hanging there for a minute, but a gust of wind can come along and they’re gone. Some people are branches-holding firm for a while until something more powerful occurs and they snap and break away. Then, if you are extremely lucky, you meet a root. A root is a person who holds firm regardless of the elements. I now have roots in my life. And those roots have anchored me to a very special place that I call home, no matter where I live in the world.

Well said Jason!

Nelson Kemp jr. says

I enjoyed the book, I applaud him for being able to get through his trials and tribulations. Keep up the good work Jay!

Pamela says

A great read. Honest, compelling, and I loved his vulnerability. But I am not a basketball fan and so the play-by-play of so many games went over my head and bored me. I would still recommend this book for the many lessons on learning to be yourself and to believe in yourself and to work hard for what you want. I wish the end of the book was longer (I felt then end was quite abrupt), as I wanted to know about how he developed his sports broadcasting skills. He works hard at everything he desires, so I wanted to know how he did that at ESPN.

Megan says

Absolutely incredible telling of the struggles and triumphs of a young mans life. You'll laugh, you'll smile, you'll even cry on the train on the way to work with this emotional and UPLIFTING tale. Absolutely inspiring story. Huge fan of Jay Williams and basketball - excellent read!!

SunnyBea says

Interesting read. A little heavy on the play-by-play of the games he chose to detail (I'm not really a sports person). I thought it read more like a summary - there was no clear reason, no flow, into why and how he changed as a person. I also thought it ended a bit abruptly. There was a lot of talk through of his basketball years (including the post injury time when he was trying to get back into it) but his time as a broadcaster seemed pretty glossed over and fast.

I read this because my 16 year old nephew asked me to buy him a copy to read (omg, will a buy him a book? Yes and yes and YES! There was a copy on the way to his house before the email was even three minutes old) and I think it's an excellent read for young athletes. He talks about college recruiting, the pressures of the sport while in school and to go pro, the unique influences and lifestyles that come w/ professional player status and how all that is amplified by the youth of the people it affects. Best of all, he talks about all the things he wished he'd known in high school/college/the draft and the NBA. I think this would be relevant regardless of the sport in question. And hopefully, the source of this information penetrates it's way into the skull of any young man reading it =]

And while it isn't so much explicitly stated, the lesson that one should never define oneself entirely upon a single thing that you DO is a good one. I thought it a worthwhile read.

Dustin Ng says

Very quick read, Jay Williams openly talks about life in the NBA and his struggles getting there but displays immense grit in overcoming a major accident in the journey of life. His lessons are a good reminder that there is hope in all situations and that the people surrounding you are keys to succeeding and overcoming any tragedy.

Alan Geygan says

One of the rawest biographies I have ever read. The first two chapters made me cringe the whole time. I could not put this book down. From the insight he shared on the basketball court to the brutal honesty and vulnerability, Jay lays it all out there. He's a clear example that life will have plenty of ups and downs, but it's how you respond to them that makes all the difference. He had to hit rock bottom multiple times, but ultimately he shows that we can overcome any obstacle, no matter how big.

J. says

Superb memoir - highly readable and moving. Jay shares his flaws, doubts, mistakes, and fears in a surprisingly open way that should make us all reflect on how unfairly we judge ourselves and others, and how we can move forward to become better people and do good in this world.

Favian says

Heartbreakingly beautiful. Jay Williams bares it all in his memoir, taking us through the lowest points of his life and the numerous setbacks he had to face during his physical, psychological, and emotional recovery.

“The past should be left in the past or it can steal your future. Live life for what today can bring and not what yesterday has taken away.”
