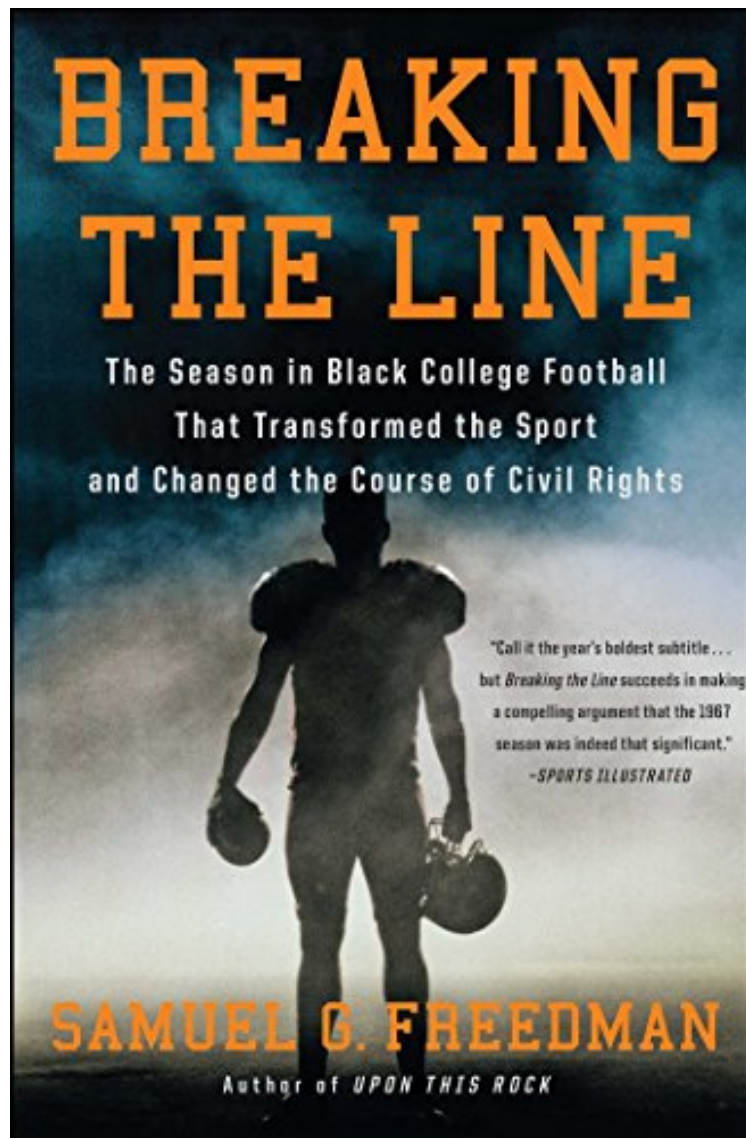


(Free read ebook) Breaking the Line: The Season in Black College Football That Transformed the Sport and Changed the Course of Civil Rights

## Breaking the Line: The Season in Black College Football That Transformed the Sport and Changed the Course of Civil Rights

Samuel G. Freedman

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Samuel G. Freedman : **Breaking the Line: The Season in Black College Football That Transformed the Sport and Changed the Course of Civil Rights** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Breaking the Line: The Season in Black College Football That Transformed the Sport and Changed the Course of Civil Rights:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Compelling Story, Sadly Predictable Ending  
By Paul  
Breaking the Line captures the drama of black football powerhouses Florida AM and Grambling, and their Hall of Fame Coaches Jake Gaither and Eddie Robinson, during the height of the struggle for integration in the South in the late 60s. It's a story well-told, and to most football fans, one they're likely to hear for the first time. As a freshman at FAMU's crosstown university in Tallahassee, Florida State, in 1969, I knew of AM's renowned marching band and the football team's preeminence among historically black colleges. But that was all. Never at one time in the years I was in Tallahassee, did I venture across town to FAMU. To this day, I have no idea what the campus looks like. That was the South then. But things changed quickly, so quickly, that in 1972, Florida State's basketball team, with five black starters, narrowly lost to UCLA in the national championship game. While the plot in Breaking the Line is compelling, the ending is, unfortunately, more of the predictable anguish over the plight of black athletes in colleges today. Freedman talks of the "expedient integration" that "formerly segregated" football teams employ today, "as black athletes are too often exploited for their football talent and allowed to falter in the classroom." "Allowed to falter in the classroom?" Today's athletes have more resources than ever before to make it - if they choose to take advantage of them. Freedman's statement of fact is nothing more than a bromide for what New York Times readers expect to hear - that black athletes are exploited in Southern schools. Nonsense. Either athletes can't cut it academically (then look to their elementary and secondary school performance) or they choose not to place a high regard for academics and pay the price. At some point, athletes, indeed all of us, need to take responsibility for our actions, not look for a scapegoat to blame. Surely Jake Gaither and Eddie Robinson knew and taught this more than anyone. It besmirches their legacy to infer otherwise.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. This book brought players alive who were great players in their day and happened to be playing ...  
By Bubba  
This book brought players alive who were great players in their day and happened to be playing their college ball under the radar at all black colleges. That in itself is eye popping reading but it isn't even the part of this read that made it one of the better history books I have read in a while. It brought together the civil rights story of the 60's and the changing racial face of college football in a real story. I was a young man at the time and I did not get to participate directly in the changing civil rights world until the 1970's and by then so many of the stories had already been written. This book brings some of those stories to life on its pages! This took me back into that world and astutely developed the time into a reality for me. It literally came alive. At the same time Mr. Freedman of course brought the main characters of the story to life as well. There was Eddie Robinson, the legendary head coach at Grambling and Jake Gaither, a forgotten but no less the man of legend, the head coach at Florida A M at that time. He also perfectly researched and then wove the tale which launched the great career as a respected journalist of a local NY/NJ sportswriter named Jerry Izenberg. If you have ever heard of any of these three men in any way, get this book and read it. You will treasure it like I did. There are lots of pieces of jewel information to come across should you pick this book up.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Football in the Deep South before intergration  
By Donald Bannister  
Enjoyed this book about HBCU football and their struggles on and off the field.

1967. Two rival football teams. Two legendary coaches. Two talented quarterbacks. Together they broke the color line, revolutionized college sports, and transformed the NFL. Freedman's dramatic account, highly praised as a contributing part of the movement and a riveting sports story, is now available in paperback. In September 1967, after three years of landmark civil rights laws and three months of devastating urban riots, the football season began at Louisiana's Grambling College and Florida AM. The teams were led by two extraordinary coaches, Eddie Robinson and Jake Gaither, and they featured the best quarterbacks ever at each school, James Harris and Ken Riley. Breaking the Line brings to life the historic saga of the battle for the 1967 black college championship, culminating in a riveting, excruciatingly close contest. Samuel G. Freedman traces the rise of these four leaders and their teammates as they storm through the season. Together they helped compel the segregated colleges of the South to integrate their teams and redefined who could play quarterback in the NFL, who could be a head coach, and who could run a franchise as general manager. In Breaking the Line, Freedman brilliantly tells this suspenseful story of character and talent as he takes us from locker room to state capitol, from embattled campus to packed stadium. He captures a pivotal time in American sport and society, filling a missing and crucial chapter in the movement for civil rights.

From Booklist  
The year 1967 represented a transitional point in the civil rights movement. As award-winning journalist Freedman states, it was a time of soaring hopes and dashed expectations. Integration was being challenged by black nationalism and faced a white backlash, as well. Caught in the middle were the historically black colleges, pillars within the separate-but-equal tradition. Their sports teams, a traditional source of pride to the community, were facing new issues, including competition to recruit black athletes from bigger universities in the North and, slowly, in the South. It was in this environment that legendary football coaches Eddie Robinson of Grambling and Jake Gaither of Florida AM, at the point of establishing their legacies, were to meet in the championship game of black college football, the Orange Blossom Classic. Focusing on these remarkable men, their times, their institutions, and their players, Freedman, who has not previously written on athletics (though he has written about black culture), has

produced an informative book. Though it doesn't quite fulfill the ambition of its subtitle, it does make a solid contribution to sports history. --Mark Levine With campuses and the nation in an uproar over civil rights, two legendary coaches prepared their teams for a football classic. . . . Much more than just a sports book. (Kirkus s, Starred)

Veteran journalist Samuel G. Freedman masterfully sketches the landscape in which Grambling's Eddie Robinson and Florida A&M's Jake Gaither recruited and coached powerhouse teams through the intense 1967 season. (The Boston Globe)"In a book full of smooth prose and jaunty narrative, author Samuel G. Freedman evokes two of the biggest legends of jazz and big bands to compare two iconic powers of black college football and their coaches. ... Freedman has written more than a sports book. It is a valuable and necessary work of social history." (Tampa Tribune)"Breaking the Line is the story of the competition for the 1967 black college championship, told through the lives of the coaches and quarterbacks who endured prejudice at every turn, all while paving the way for integration of the sport of football at all levels. There is plenty of inspiring politics here, but the real pleasure is in the Xs and Os: Freedman describes games with the proper mixture of glory and suspense that football can generate even when it's not being used as a catalyst for social change." (The Daily Beast)A powerful narrative of two men, two teams and the stirring battle for dignity and honor during a single tumultuous season in the 1960's South. Freedman masterfully brings to life the burning ambitions, the cleats on scrubgrass and the struggle for victory by these coaches and players not only as black athletes, but as men and as Americans. A riveting story not only of a season but of a country at the crossroads. (Isabel Wilkerson, author of *The Warmth of Other Suns*)Freedman here looks at the nexus of 20th-century American culture, race and civil rights through sports. This story is expertly reported and engagingly written. Both sports fans and students of 20th-century American history will be drawn to it. (Library Journal)Focusing on these remarkable men, their times, their institutions, and their players, Freedman has produced an informative book a solid contribution to sports history. (Booklist)When history writes people out, it is our job to write them back in. Samuel G. Freedman has done a marvelous job of that in *Breaking the Line*, his illuminating account of football and race in the South. (David Maraniss, author of *When Pride Still Mattered* and *Clemente*)Samuel Freedman is one of our most gifted chroniclers of history recent and present. *Breaking the Line* is as particular in the humanity it portrays as it is important for the conflict it illuminates: an Iliad of college football and social justice. (Diane McWhorter, author of *Carry Me Home*)*Breaking the Line* graphically captures the grim terror of Jim Crow worlds in the South that defined the lives of Jake Gaither and Eddie Robinson during their coaching careers at Florida A&M and Grambling. With his beautiful prose style, Sam Freedman frames black history and the Civil Rights Movement through the lens of football. *Breaking the Line* reads like a novel and offers the reader a deep understanding of how football and black history intersect. (William Ferris, author of *Give My Poor Heart Ease: Voices of the Mississippi Blues*)

About the Author Samuel G. Freedman is a columnist for *The New York Times* and a professor at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. He is the author of six acclaimed books, four of which have been *New York Times* Notable Books of the Year. Freedman also has written frequently for *USA TODAY*, *New York* magazine, *Rolling Stone*, *The Jerusalem Post*, *Tablet*, *The Forward*, and *Salon.com*. He lives in Manhattan with his fiancée and his children.