



BARRY SPRINKLE

QB

U OF MIAMI

NEW YORK

RICH

HOUSTON

WASHINGTON

DALLAS

BROKE

A SERIES BY SAN WILDER



A THEORY, IF YOU'LL HUMOR ME

Sid Luckman. Warren Moon. Andrew Luck. These names belong to some of the greatest quarterbacks in NFL history. Their names evoke feelings associated with well-earned victories in the era of leather helmets, the long odds of succeeding as a black quarterback, and the grit and determination to play through injury. Their names roll off the tongue as if being assigned these monikers guaranteed them success on the grid-iron. BUT, it's not that simple.

Colt McCoy, Sam Bradford, Cade McNown. These men do possess traditionally "quarterbacky" names. But, unlike the above legends, they failed to make much of a mark on NFL history. In fact, they are a cautionary tale for those with quarterback names to be aware of, as success and victory are not guaranteed. The name needs to come with a personality, a presence, if you will. It is for this reason that my late father and I came up with the tried and true theory on quarterback success: QBs with cool names can bust, but QBs with lame names CAN NOT become legend. Just ask Art Schlichter, Jim Druckenmiller, and Mike Phipps. All top picks, each one an all-time bust.

This theory was the perfect jumping-off point for the conception of the man, the myth, and soon-to-be legend, Barry Sprinkle. How funny it is for a QB to suffer so many indignities, on-field gaffs, and off-field catastrophes only to pin the blame for his failures on his silly name. I mean, can you picture a hall-of-fame QB with the name Sprinkle? I'd argue Bob Griese comes the closest but he's an exception to the rule, and honestly, his place in the hall is debatable. Without further ado, I introduce you to the astoundingly, astonishingly, and amazingly arduous, second-act ascent of Barry Sprinkle.

BARRY'S CEILING COMES CRASHING DOWN

Before Barry could even string together whole sentences or go to the bathroom by himself, he had "it". He was always a life-of-the-party kind of kid. When he got to high school, he immediately won the starting QB job on the team thanks to his impressive movement abilities and once-in-a-generation arm. He spent the next four years lighting the state high school record books ablaze while under the watchful eye of his father, Jeff, a former marine, city bus driver, and life-long marginalized black man. Jeff pushed Barry hard because he knew the world - and specifically white people - were going to push him harder. But, Barry's guiding light went out when a stray bullet caught Jeff in the neck during an altercation on his bus. That bullet would hound Barry for the next decade.

Without his father, Barry turned to his best friend and teammate, Clyde. Clyde convinced Barry to join him at the University of Miami. Still young, Barry was able to not only light up the stat sheet for the hurricanes, he also lit up the dance floor of every club in South Beach, the hearts of every swooning girl on campus, and the kind of drugs that tend to ruin futures. Barry was invincible. He left college as the top prospect going into the NFL draft. With Clyde - who took it upon himself to represent Barry professionally - by his side, the New York Jets chose Barry first overall in the draft.

Despite an up and down rookie season, Barry showed plenty of the flashes that made GMs and coaches across the league drool over him. But, without Jeff in his corner, Barry fell for the cheap scams and bad advice that tends to follow a once poor kid who suddenly becomes a multi-millionaire, and Clyde let it all happen. Barry soon found himself the punchline of every joke after leading his teams through the kinds of losses that would break even the most seasoned field generals. There was the "Banana Split", in which Barry bobbled a snap in the final two minutes of a close game and slipped on the ball, straining his groin in the process. Then came the "Rocky Road Trip", which saw Barry blow considerable leads in the final three games of his second season, resulting in New York missing the playoffs. Finally, there was the "Extra Sprinkles" game. Somehow, by the will of the **football gods**, Barry had his team in position to win his first playoff game despite having thrown FIVE interceptions in regulation. On fourth down, with only a few yards to get into field goal range, Barry threw a sixth and final interception.

The rest of Barry's twenties consisted of him being traded from New York to Houston, where he imploded over the lack of talent around him. Then it was on to Washington, where Barry sat on the bench and let his body go the way of his psyche. Finally, Dallas, where Barry was given one last chance but couldn't seem to throw. The cannon of a right arm that defined him was now faltering. Things weren't much better off the field. Barry lost most of his money to some bad investments suggested to him by Clyde, he couldn't get any team to so much as fart in his direction, and whatever bridges he may have had were now irreparably burned. This is where we find Barry at the beginning of our story.

THE HOME TEAM

BARRY SPRINKLE

Refer to the above page, of course, but Barry is a singularly focused individual, who while very immature and blinded by wealth and fame, has emerged from his metamorphosis of failure as a more empathetic and righteous individual with everything to prove and nothing to lose.

ANGEL ANDREWS

Intelligent, loyal, and hardened by years of struggle and sacrifice, Angel will have Barry's back to the bitter end and establish herself as a force to be reckoned with while building her own strength training business.

DESEAN ANDREWS

Marvelously talented yet consistently overlooked and ostracized, Desean will lean on Barry as much as Barry will lean on him and with Barry's help he will carve the kind of unique, mold-breaking path that will change football forever.

SAM SPEED

A hyper-obsessed student of the game, Sam has long-admired Barry's journey and potential, and leaps at the opportunity to help Barry get his second chance, which in turn will catapult Sam to the upper rungs of the front office ladder, giving him the opportunity to make substantial change in the way "business" is conducted.

SHEILAH WEISS

Daughter to two holocaust survivors, widow to a loving husband, Sheilah takes Barry in to her home at his lowest moment and provides him with a stable, maternal energy that he's always lacked.

LILY CHAN

Owner of Sheilah and Barry's favorite Chinese restaurant, Lily puts her decades of business savvy to good use while advising Angel in her entrepreneurial ventures and Barry in his contract negotiations.

RUDY GOINGS "FOR IT"

A brilliant football mind who's outspoken views on race and capitalism have condemned him to a life of position coach purgatory, Rudy finally gets his chance to lead Barry's squad when the current head coach resigns in disgrace due to a series of unsavory scandals.

THE AWAY TEAM

CLYDE FAIRBANKS

Former teammate, current agent, and best friend to Barry, or so Barry thought. The real Clyde is vindictive, insecure, and has made it his life's mission to prove to no one but himself that he is better than Barry Sprinkle.

DAVE "ALL THE WAY" DIXON

The man who replaced Barry in New York and Barry's opposite in terms of play style, Dave is a man that will start out as a massive thorn in Barry's side and eventually become Barry's ally when he suffers many of the same struggles Barry did.

STEPH JONES

The "Cersei Lannister" of our story, Steph is the daughter of Bobby Jones and she does everything in her power to be taken seriously as a GM, but in that pursuit, ends up taking on many of Bobby's worst qualities.

BOBBY "BUCKTALE" JONES

Owner and de facto GM in Miami - the team that signs Barry in episode 1 - Bobby is ruthless, cunning, and very attached to the antiquated, racist practices the NFL has abided by for decades. He believes he can break Barry like a wild horse, but he'll find that to be a losing battle.

VICTOR "THE CONSTRICTOR" PAYNE

A former teammate, now adversary, of Barry's, Victor salivates at the opportunity to send Barry to the hospital when he finds out that twice per season, maybe three with playoffs, he'll get to go toe to toe with the man who had a prolonged affair with his wife.

SENATOR TED GRAHAM

Fly in the ointment, wrench in the spokes, kernel between your teeth, Ted Graham oozes corruption and is the primary tool used by the NFL to avoid consequences when they fail to do right by their players, which is often.

KEMP SMITH

Of the 32 owners, none hold more power than Kemp Smith. He's the richest, owns the most profitable team, and is the stubborn, immovable object that stands in the way of the unstoppable, relentless force of change that Barry generates.

ABOUT THOSE FOOTBALL GODS I MENTIONED

Professional athletes, and the fans that watch them, tend to be a superstitious bunch. When it comes to the NFL, **The Football Gods** are always brought up when miraculous things happen on the grid-iron: The Immaculate Reception, The Helmet Catch, 28-3. If you know, then you know. This series will follow a different theme each season modeled around a specific football god.

The first one up is modeled after hall-of-fame quarterback of the Buffalo Bills, **Jim Kelly**, who fought to get to, then lost, FOUR straight Super Bowls. Barry will have to show a similar **perseverance** of mind, body, and spirit in order to make it onto a roster. Then, he has to keep persevering as his team, his opponents, and some newfound enemies do everything in their power to punt Barry back into obscurity.

Swagger will be the theme for season two, which is modeled after the greatest free safety to ever play the game - **Ed Reed**. Ed won a ring with the Baltimore Ravens with a confidence, wit, and intelligence not matched in his era. Barry made it back to the playoffs in season one. Season two will see him go for the Lombardi while using his restored credibility to raise up the people that make up his chosen family. He'll also land on a hallowed and secretive list of athletes that the oligarchical owners see as potential rabble-rousers, which means they're scared of the positive change Barry may kick into motion. Colin Kaepernick anyone?

Season three, the season of **chance**, will be modeled after **Tom Brady**, the most prolific quarterback in NFL history, and a player who doesn't give the luck of the universe much credit in his success. Even though he plays football, Barry will have to endure an endless barrage of curveballs from the injury bug, tipped passes, bad weather, and multiple cases of genuinely being in the wrong place at the wrong time while off the field.

Season four is modeled after **Mike Webster**, the iron-man center of the dynastic 70s Pittsburgh Steelers, who suffered greatly at the hands of CTE and eventually took his own life - or **despair** for short. The random, almost impossible string of unfortunate occurrences of season three send Barry down a rabbit hole of his own mind, where he falls into the same destructive tendencies that marred the first act of his career. And, to top things off, he'll have to contend with the loss of the matriarch of his chosen family - Sheilah - when she develops stage 4 kidney failure. Season five is where it all comes together for Barry; modeled after the minister of defense himself, **Reggie White**, who embodied **hope**. Barry's shown he can fight, shown he can raise sinking ships, and shown he can take life's punches and get back up. Now he's equipped with the experience and fortitude to lead the greatest work stoppage in American history, when fed up with the greed and racism of the NFL oligarchy, decides to send a clear message: if you want our black bodies for your entertainment, it's going to cost you everything and more than it has cost us up to this point.

BARRY, ANGEL, AND JEFF

Knowing how Jeff handled raising Barry - with an iron fist backed up by good intentions - it will be a bit of a surprise to learn how he handled his relationship with Angel. Like Barry, Angel Andrews comes from humble beginnings. She lost her father early in life and her mother worked all day and most nights, which left Angel with few adults to look to for guidance while she studied, worked, and raised her little brother, Desean.

Angel devoted as much of her time as possible to her mother and brother while at home, so public transportation is where she spent most of her alone time. She always felt safest on the bus due to the driver - Jeff Sprinkle. Angel sat in the seat over his right shoulder and from there would do her homework and listen to the countless stories of struggle and survival that Jeff has accumulated in his life.

Jeff, as he did for Barry, always held Angel to a high standard. He saw very clearly the potential Angel possessed. Having this positive adult figure in her life motivated her to stay focused. And, again, similar to Barry, that guiding light was snuffed out much too soon when an altercation on the bus resulted in Jeff taking a bullet to the neck for Angel. Unlike Barry, who found out from one of his coaches, Angel held Jeff in her arms and watched his light go out.

Fast forward a decade and Angel is now in position to help Barry rediscover his path in life. Working as a subordinate strength coach at the facility Barry decides to train at, Angel drops the truth on him quick when she reveals that the head trainer at the facility has no interest in training Barry as he's just a consolation client for a much bigger fish - Dave Dixon. Angel offers to train Barry herself, which he's hesitant about due to the antiquated sensibilities he's picked up from dudes like Clyde. Angel shows Barry very quickly how good she is when she rebuilds his throwing motion from the ground up.

Angel heard countless stories of Barry's greatness from Jeff. She grew up thinking of him as a mythical figure. When she witnessed his play on the field after Jeff's passing, her adoration for him soured considerably. But, when she met him, she understood right away that Barry was a man filled with infinite talent who's had nothing but the wrong people exploiting him. It is now Angel's mission in life to finish the work Jeff started and help Barry become the man he was always capable of being.

BARRY AND DESEAN

Coming up in the world of organized football can be tough. For some it's a fun activity amongst many, like guitar lessons or coding camp. For others it's the only sliver of light leading to a prosperous life. Desean Andrews, Angel's little brother, is in the latter group. Desean, like Barry, is massively talented and built for the game. Only problem is the world of football has never been and still isn't built for a gay, black, young man. Desean learned that lesson when he quit football after sophomore year due to incessant bullying from teammates and coaches.

Desean occupied his time away from the game educating himself on a wide range of topics and interests. If there's anything a football coach hates, at least most of them, is an athlete who is intelligent in matters beyond the game.

When Desean meets Barry, he's in a lull. Senior year is starting and he's still not playing. It doesn't help that he and Barry get off on the wrong foot when Barry makes some unfortunate comments alluding to Desean's sexuality. You see, Barry is Desean's hero.

Barry was the first player Desean saw that made him believe football can be an artistic pursuit. (he's young, okay? He didn't grow up with thee Barry, and Deion).

When Barry needs to throw for scouts, he's got no one but Desean to throw to after everyone at the training facility refuses to run routes for him. Needless to say, Barry's connection with Desean is electric, like Namath and Maynard or Manning and Harrison. In the span of fifty or so routes, Barry's arm comes back to life and is stronger than ever. Desean's passion for the game is reignited with each pass of Barry's that hits his substantial mitts.

Moving forward, Barry takes it upon himself to better understand Desean's true identity and those like him, as well as illuminating for him the many pitfalls that lay before impressionable black boys with talent.

Desean trains with Barry to get ready for his senior year. Barry sticks with Desean throughout his college career, ensuring Desean doesn't make the same mistakes he made. Their relationship will be tested when life throws wrenches at Barry that distract him when Desean needs him most. But, in the end, Barry sticks by Desean's side all the way to season five, when Desean suits up alongside Barry as the new hotshot rookie in the NFL, and the first openly gay, round-one pick in league history.

BARRY AND THE OLIGARCHS

The NFL consists of 32 teams. Each of those teams has an owner. Those owners are accountable to no one but themselves. Bob McNair, late owner of the Houston Texans - during the social uproar caused by Colin Kaepernick kneeling during the anthem to protest police brutality - said THIS in regard to more players voicing their opinions: "We can't have the inmates running the prison." Any intelligent human can easily discern that this man sees his employees as property, as tools to do with as he pleases - slave owner shit. Just as greedy politicians hate a well-educated citizenry, NFL owners HATE well-educated players.

Barry's been through this grind. He, like many before him, was probed and prodded at the NFL combine in a manner more consistent with police interrogations. (Dez Bryant claimed a GM asked him if his mother was a prostitute). Owners always claim they have their player's best interests at heart. According to the National Bureau of Economic Research, roughly 16% of players go bankrupt within 12 years of retiring. Pretty wild that a league ruled by 32 BILLIONAIRES can't take any time to teach their players how to manage their finances after retirement.

Until LAST YEAR, 2021, the NFL maintained that black - BLACK - players were less likely to receive financial compensation as part of a 1 billion dollar payout to former players suffering mental decline as a result of the game because it was assumed that BLACK players have inherently lower cognitive functioning. That kind of standard DOES NOT exist without the approval of 32 RACIST owners. Barry, knowing his second chance in the league will be precarious and short, commits himself to repairing the relationships he compromised while stepping up as a leader amongst the players and lower-level workers across the league.

By season five, after Barry's already made his comeback, proved he belongs, and rallied his teammates and the fans around him, he will make the kind of decision that will live on in text books decades, even centuries from now.

When Barry sees the continuing decline of the black and brown community due to police brutality, political gerrymandering, and the subtle implementation of laws reminiscent of Jim Crow, he will cultivate and lead a worker strike consisting, at first, of nearly every black athlete in the NFL, followed soon after by the NBA, MLB, Olympics. He will give not just the owners, but America a choice: break bread with us, learn with us, love us, treat us as equals, or you can find someone else to dance for your enjoyment.