

Walter Payton Reading Comprehension

Name _____

Walter Payton is regarded as one of the best players in NFL history. He played for the Chicago Bears for 13 years and earned nine Pro Bowl selections. Payton was nicknamed “Sweetness” for his kind, compassionate demeanor both on and off the field.

Payton was born on July 25, 1954, in Columbia, Mississippi. He attended Jackson State University and played as a halfback. Payton made the starting lineup during his freshman year in 1971, and was named Black College Player of the Year in 1973 and 1974. During that time, Payton also studied education at Jackson State with an emphasis on working with the deaf.

In 1975, Payton joined the National Football League playing for the Chicago Bears. In 1977, he won the League’s Most Valuable Player Award, and achieved a single-game rushing record of 275 yards against the Minnesota Vikings – a game in which he suffered from the flu. Payton delighted fans with his elusive, yet powerful running style and was soon considered the league’s best running back. He was a pioneer of the “stutter-step,” spin move, and stiff arm, and was known to leap over would-be tacklers. In 1986, Payton led the Bears to a 46-10 Super Bowl victory over the New England Patriots. It was the team’s first super bowl victory.

When Payton retired from the NFL in 1987, he had accrued a career rushing record of 16,726 yards and set the record for receiving yards by a running back. During his career, he also threw for eight touchdowns. He was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1993 and the College Football Hall of Fame in 1996. After his exit, Payton explored various business ventures ranging from real estate to race cars, and never stopped trying to improve quality of life for others. He established the Walter Payton Foundation to do just that. In 1999, Payton died of bile duct cancer. He raised awareness for the rare disease leading up to his death. Today, Payton’s organization is called the Walter and Connie Payton Foundation, and his wife leads the effort to help children and veterans in his honor.

- 1. Which of the following phrases from the passage explains the meaning behind Payton's nickname?**
 - a. Payton's talent on the field paired with his caring and supportive spirit
 - b. Played as a halfback, an offensive position that involves carrying the ball in plays that consist of running towards the all-important end zone
 - c. Explored various business ventures ranging from real estate to race cars
 - d. Running while holding the ball to bring the team closer to a touchdown
- 2. Which adjective best describes Payton?**
 - a. Single-minded
 - b. Headstrong
 - c. Altruistic
 - d. Dismissive
- 3. By how many points did the Bears win the 1986 Super Bowl?**
 - a. 10
 - b. 26
 - c. 36
 - d. 46
- 4. Which statement is supported by the passage?**
 - a. Payton never won the MVP award, despite nine Pro Bowl selections.
 - b. Payton's impressive college football career set the stage for his NFL run.
 - c. Payton did not win any accolades at Jackson State.
 - d. Payton focused only on football while at Jackson State.
- 5. Which of the following is an example of how Payton tried to improve life for others?**
 - a. The establishment of his foundation
 - b. His study of education in college
 - c. Raising awareness for bile duct cancer
 - d. All of the above
- 6. A student is looking to learn more about the Walter and Connie Payton Foundation. Which resource is the best place to start?**
 - a. A biography of Connie Payton
 - b. The foundation's informational brochure
 - c. A page to make a donation to the NFL
 - d. A list of Walter Payton's awards

7. Which of the following is the best synonym for “demeanor,” used in the first paragraph?

- a. Face
- b. Attitude
- c. Talent
- d. Posture

Key

1. A
2. C
3. C
4. B
5. D
6. B
7. B