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From the #1 New York Times bestselling author of *This Town*, an equally merciless probing of America's biggest cultural force, pro football, at a moment of peak success and high anxiety. Like millions of Americans, Mark Leibovich has spent more of his life than he'd care to admit tuned into pro football. Being a lifelong New England Patriots fan meant growing up with a steady diet of lovable loserdom. That is until the Tom Brady/Bill Belichick era made the Pats the most ruthlessly efficient sports dynasty of the 21st century, its organization the most polarizing in the NFL, and its fans the most irritating in all of Pigskin America. Leibovich kept his obsession relatively private, in the meantime making a nice career for himself covering that other playground for rich and overgrown children, American politics. Still, every now and then Leibovich would reach out to Tom Brady to gauge his willingness to subject himself to a profile in the *New York Times Magazine*. He figured that the chances of Brady agreeing to this were a Hail Mary at best, but Leibovich kept trying, at least to indulge his fan-boy within. To his surprise, Brady returned the call, in the summer of 2014. He agreed to let Mark spend time with him through the coming season, which proved to be a fateful one for all parties. It included another epic Patriots Super Bowl win and, yes, a scandal involving Brady--Deflategate--whose grip on sports media was as profound as its true significance was ridiculous. So began a four-year odyssey that has taken Mark Leibovich deeper inside the NFL than anyone has gone before. Ultimately, this is a chronicle of what may come to be seen as "peak football"--the high point of the sport's economic success and cultural dominance, but also the moment when it all began to turn. From the owners meeting to the NFL draft to the sidelines of crucial games, he takes in the show, at the elbow of everyone from Brady to Cowboys owner Jerry Jones to the NFL Commissioner, Roger Goodell, who is cordially hated by even casual football fans to an extent that is almost weird. It is an era of explosive revenue growth, as deluxe new stadiums spring up all over the country, but also one of creeping existential fear. Football was never thought to be easy on the body--players joke darkly that the NFL stands for "not for long" for good reason. But as the impact of concussions on brains became the inescapable ear-ring in the background, it became increasingly difficult to enjoy the simple glory of football without the buzz-kill of its obvious toll. And that was before Donald Trump. In 2016, Mark Leibovich's day job caught up with him, and the NFL slammed headlong into America's culture wars. *Big Game* is a journey through an epic storm. Through it all, Leibovich always keeps one eye cocked on Tom Brady and his beloved Patriots, through to the end of the 2017-1018 season. Pro football, this hilarious and enthralling book proves, may not be the sport America needs, but it is most definitely the sport we deserve.

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