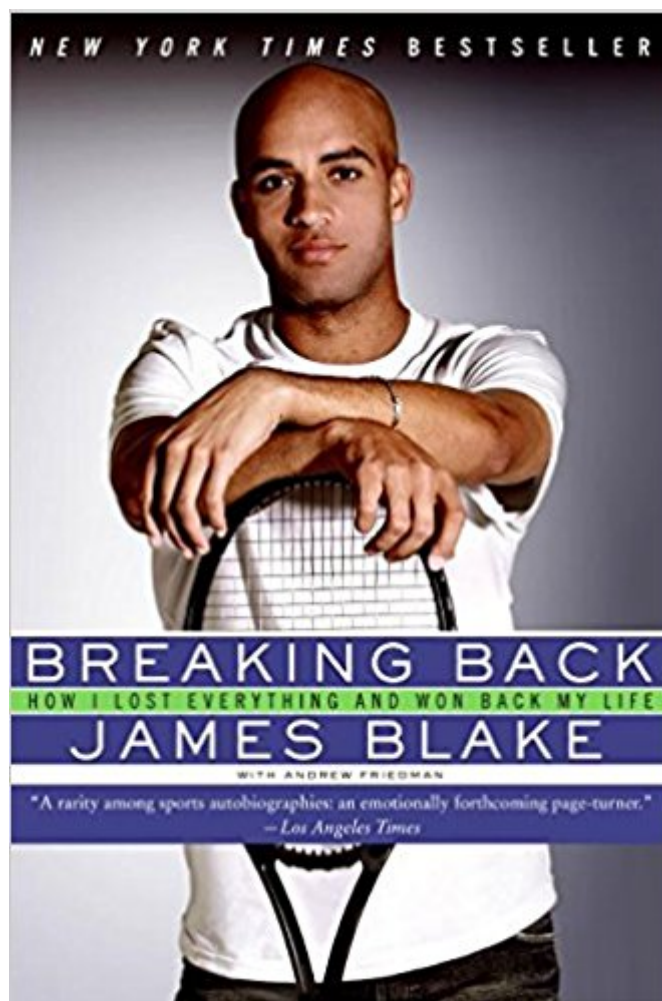


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# Breaking Back: How I Lost Everything And Won Back My Life



## Synopsis

James Blake's life was getting better every day. A rising tennis star and People magazine's Sexiest Male Athlete of 2002, he was leading a charmed life and loving every minute of it. But all that ended in May 2004, when Blake fractured his neck in an on-court freak accident. As he recovered, his father—who had been the inspiration for his tennis career—lost his battle with stomach cancer. Shortly after his father's death, Blake was dealt a third blow when he contracted zoster, a rare virus that paralyzed half of his face and threatened to end his already jeopardized career. In *Breaking Back*, Blake provides a remarkable account of how he came back from this terrible heartbreak and self-doubt to become one of the top tennis players in the world. A story of strength, passion, courage, and the unbreakable bonds between a father and son, *Breaking Back* is a celebration of one extraordinary athlete's indomitable spirit and his inspiring ability to find hope in the bleakest of times.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Tennis champion Blake, who has appeared on Oprah and The Tonight Show, shares his string of hard-won successes both on the court and in his personal health. A child of a black father and white British mother in Fairfield, Conn., Blake hooked into serious tennis playing by age 11, when he was paired with coach Brian Barker, who remained his gentle mentor for the duration of his career.

Having turned professional by his sophomore year of college at Harvard in 1991, Blake had mixed success on the pro circuit for the first few years. Sustaining confidence seemed to be Blake's biggest challenge, as he struggled to follow the advice of his father, Tom, who was fighting a losing

battle with stomach cancer: You can't control your level of talent, but you can control your level of effort. At age 23, he decided to shave his trademark dreadlocks. Soon after, he ran into a steel net post during a practice game in Rome, fracturing his neck vertebrae. Blake was later diagnosed with paralyzing zoster, or shingles. His memoir is an inspirational account of overcoming the odds to return to competitive playing by 2004. (Aug.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

• The grace and dignity that James has shown during some very difficult times has been a source of great inspiration. • (Andre Agassi) • Blake is a champion "in every sense of the word. • (Anna Wintour, editor-in-chief of Vogue) • "I've known James since early childhood...James's rise to international success is as stunning as it was predictable. • (John Mayer) • Through Blake's commitment and passion, he tells the story of the life lessons he learned while facing difficult personal challenges. • (Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe, wife of the late Arthur Ashe) • [James Blake] has inspired young people everywhere with his story of courage and determination. • (former president George H.W. Bush)

Let me preface my comments by saying that Blake is one of my favorite tennis players. After having watched (and enjoyed) him in so many matches I was very interested in what he might reveal about himself in this book. While Blake certainly hasn't missed his calling by not being a professional writer, he nonetheless has crafted a readable and entertaining first effort with "Breaking Back." I was immediately engaged as I began reading this book because of Blake's relentless honesty - with regard to himself, the game, and the important people in his life. No pretense here. Blake isn't trying to impress, he's trying to convey a message about love, loss, and redemption; and in his own way he accomplishes his goal in an effective and emotionally touching way. To state the obvious, all of us either have or will face various adversities in life of one kind or another. But few of us will lose as much as James did, and even fewer will become stronger and better people for having undergone the experience. To summarize: A sudden convergence of events in Blake's life mounted a remorseless attack on everything that held meaning for him. Lesser men would have fallen, but Blake dug deep and he fought back. He overcame. And we're all better for it because he chose to share the experience with us. When I turned the last page of this book I was thankful to have spent some time with this gifted and special young man. As he relates, he has a number of close friends. I'd like to be one of them. Whatever his faults, this man has qualities that made his parents proud,

as they should have been. And you'll be a better person for having invited James Blake into your life through a reading of this moving memoir.

Quick read, and at times, somewhat confusing along the timeline that James tries to set (a lot of jumping back and forth between years and their associated stories). I found the beginning 60 + pages not nearly as engaging as they should have been. The guy breaks his neck, and it's tucked within a chapter. I did not get a hold of his story the way in which Open (Andre Agassi) delivered a truly emotional and connecting text to the reader. Maybe because James' career certainly does not carry the success and visibility of other great American tennis players. Still a good book and a nice read. His story remains a good one among American tennis.

A very interesting story even for those of us who don't know all that much about the world of professional tennis. Now that his playing days at a world-class level are over, I hope that James Blake will consider a second career, this time in public service. He is a young man of great character and intelligence.

Inspiring for tennis or non-tennis fans, this is a human interest story about ultimate hardship and overcoming obstacles. Most tennis fans are familiar with the story, broken neck while his father is stricken with cancer and dies within a year. If that wasn't enough, he then gets a debilitating case of shingles which destroys his ability to play tennis. This is the ultimate story of friends and family and a man who values what they have done for him. TV tennis viewers will remember the cheering section, J-Block. This book fills in exactly how close he was with this group of people and what they did for him. It's always best if you have a happy ending. Well, he's not the No. 1 player in the world but he is now a Top 10 player with a historic NY Open match with Andre Agassi. But more importantly, James is a man his mother can be proud of and that is the story told here. I strongly recommend this book for a feel good story of a man living his life the right way.

Excellent book, give one insight into the tennis pros background and life, I can relate with James' life having a background much the same. I think James should get an acting coach and go onto movies, t.v., ect. besides that once he retires of course he can be a tennis coach. Get this book I especially recommend that Black men get, and read this book, it inspires us.

I liked this book because the writing was engaging and entertaining, and as it is considered one of

the most highly valued sports autobiographies to this day, I do recommend this book for you to buy. His writing had a unique sort of ring to itself, It gave a perspective that was very insightful and understandable. also entertaining from the fact that there was real life dialogue that included funny circumstances. I do hope that this review was helpful! :)

I've followed James Blake on the ATP tour for years, and he's been one of my favorite players of all time - through the highs and lows. I had heard about this book a few years back and decided to download the Kindle version. It's such a quick and fun read, and really gave me a close look at James' struggles to overcome odds, and it paints a great picture of why James is the class act that he is. I gained even more respect for the man, and consider him an inspirational figure in my own life and tennis career. Thanks for the great story, James. Best of luck to you!

An amazing story. Really enjoyed it.

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