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"I will endeavor to retain
the spirit of youth"
—Sigma Chi Creed, George
Adie ΔΔ 1887

The Parents of a NFL Quarterback

What's it like to be the parents of a high profile NFL quarterback? Just ask Carol and John Yates '74 whose son is the Houston Texans quarterback, TJ Yates. TJ is in his rookie season with the Texans and started the season as their third string quarterback. With injuries to Matt Schaub and Matt Leinart, TJ started the last seven games and took the Texans into their first ever NFL playoff game, leading his team to victory over the Cincinnati Bengals before falling to the Baltimore Ravens the following week.

TJ played his college football at North Carolina where he owns 37 Carolina records. As a four-year starter he holds every school record for pass completions, yards and pass attempts. He was a fifth round draft pick of the Houston Texans in 2011.

TJ, a Sigma Chi at NC, comes from a long line of Sigs following his grandfather, Gene Yates, Alpha Gamma (Ohio State 1944) and his father, John Yates, Delta Delta (Purdue 1974). His mother, Carol, is a Chi Omega (Purdue 1974).



TJ Yates, Houston Texans
quarterback

As every parent knows there are many highs and lows that we go through with our children, we just don't often go through them on the front pages of the newspaper. Below are the thoughts of John Yates on his and his wife's experience as the parents of a high profile athlete.

Reflections on Being the Parent of a NFL Quarterback — John Yates '74

Every mom who has cheered her eight-year-old after his first base hit knows the feeling. Every dad whose daughter sprains an ankle on the soccer field knows the feeling. Moms' and dads' emotions rise and fall on every strikeout, every goal, and every time their swimmer touches out the kid in the next lane. The feelings are the same for every sport at every level for every parent. The NFL is really no different, emotionally that is.

When you start injecting reality and reason into the equation you realize that the pay is better, but the stakes are higher, too. Clearly it's one of the best first-jobs-right-out-of-college that a kid can get. You just hope that the business of college football prepared him for the ultimate sports business. It's a job, and the employers are fair but ruthless. Players get cut and signed almost every week through the entire season; some due to injury, others due to performance issues, and some just because of changes in team strategy.

College football is tough on parents, especially for the more high profile positions like quarterback. The highs and lows take you on a real roller-coaster ride. Touchdowns are cheered, and interceptions are replayed and dissected ad nauseum. Players get booted by other parents, and they chant the name of the backup when things go wrong. TJ has been booted at a UNC basketball game and had pennies thrown at him as he left the field after losing to Florida State. He's had his tires slashed, and he got a threatening email from a 12 year old kid. It's great at times and brutal a lot.



Carol, TJ (Taylor Jonathan) and John Yates

Enter the NFL. After the normal drama of the combine/draft process, Carol and I thought we were going to get a break. A fifth-round draft pick and third-string QB, TJ was just going to hold a clipboard and pay his dues for a few years waiting for his big chance. We would be able to go to a few games a year, watch on TV when we wanted and just enjoy football again. That worked well in the preseason and through the tenth week of the regular season. Then Matt Schaub, the starter, went down. TJ was going to get to dress! Very cool. (Sorry, not for Matt.)

Jacksonville was a short drive from Atlanta, so we decided to go down and watch TJ on the sidelines in a real uniform! We had visitors' seats way up in the third level on a very comfortable day. Even cooler! Then it happened. Backup QB Matt Leinart went down with a broken collarbone. TJ was scurrying around on the sidelines trying to find his helmet, Carol was trying to breathe, and I was standing there stunned. We thought, "Here we go again, roller-coaster times ten."

The good news is that expectations for a fifth-round rookie are pretty low. TJ has done a great job in preparing well and performing well enough to exceed those expectations. Now the highs are higher and the lows are not quite so low...except maybe for the strained right shoulder, the separated left shoulder, the dislocated pinkie finger and the huge bruise on his throwing arm. TJ would tell you it's all worth it. Carol? Not too sure.

