

Rudy sat on the bench positioned on the sidelines of the football field, he was drinking Gatoraid from a cup and watching the defensive side of the team play. He was waiting for his golden opportunity to arise. He was the backup tight end for Memphis Showboats and had been playing for them since quitting the Titans many years ago. Rudy's football career has been a rocky journey. Despite excelling in high school and college, his professional career was nothing spectacular. In his senior year of college, he had led the Tennessee Volunteers to an SEC Championship and while they had lost to the LSU Tigers, he was considered his best year with the team.

And after winning the Heisman Trophy, everyone was expecting Rudy's career to flourish. He was selected by the Tennessee Titans in the No.3 draft and was expected to instant sensation. Sadly, it was not to be. In his first season with the Titans, Rudy played very badly. So badly, he was relegated to a backup position during the fifth week. His time in the NFL was not off to a good start. His second season was spent mostly on the bench, waiting for his chance to prove himself.

The starting tight end had taken up all the space, and although Rudy got to play whenever the starter was injured, it wasn't for very long. The starter seemed indestructible, and Rudy seemed to be condemned to the sidelines. This, however, would not be the biggest disaster to plague Rudy's NFL career. It would come in the form of a career-ending injury. During a game against the Kansas City Chiefs, he caught a complete pass only to fall and land on his leg the wrong way, which caused his fibula to snap.

Rudy had to be taken off the field on a stretcher as could hardly walk. This injury caused him to miss much of the season, and he could no longer perform the way he did before. So, seeing how he lost the ability to play at the professional level, he retired from the NFL. He felt lost, devastated, like a failure, feeling as if he completely blew it. Alternatively, he was hired as an offensive coordinator for the Vanderbilt Commodores, but the job was unfulfilling as Rudy preferred to be playing on the field.

After years of inactivity, the Memphis Showboats of the newly formed United Football League offered him a position as tight end on the team. An offer to play football again was not an offer that Rudy could say no to. He accepted the opportunity and signed with the team the following week. Now, here he was, sitting on the sidelines eagerly awaiting his chance to play football. There were only a few times Rudy got to play, so he didn't take opportunities like this for granted. The Showboats were playing against the Birmingham Stallions, and they were down by three points.

All the Showboats needed was a big play to win the game. Rudy watched intensely as the team fought hard for a first down. They then tried a run play on second down, still no luck. On third down, a pass attempt to the tight end was unsuccessful, as the tight end pulled a leg muscle while running to catch the ball. Finally, now was Rudy's chance to prove himself. He put on his helmet and jogged onto the field, joining the team in the huddle. Since there were only five seconds left on the game clock, they were forced to go for it on fourth down. The team broke away from the huddle and took their positions opposite the Stallions on the field.

“Blue forty-five! Blue-forty-five!” yelled the quarterback, “Set hut! Set hut! Hike!” The center snapped the ball into the quarterback’s hands. He backed up, scanning the field for an open receiver. Rudy was open in the endzone, the quarterback threw the ball. Rudy extended his hands to catch the ball. But tragedy struck again. The ball bounced off of Rudy’s hands and landed on the field. The pass was incomplete, the clock had expired, the game was over, the Stallions had won. Rudy was horrified; he had completely blown his chance of making the winning catch. He fell to his knees saddened. The coach came over to him. “How are you feeling?” he asked. “Not too good, coach,” said Rudy, “I cost you the game.” The coach put his hand on Rudy’s shoulder.

“Don’t worry about it, Rudy,” said the coach. “You hadn’t played all week, and this was your first time in the game in God knows how long. You’ll have more time to practice as the season goes on.” Rudy looked up. “Really?” he asked. “Definitely,” replied the coach, “In fact, I’m thinking about starting you a couple of games. How does that sound?” Rudy was excited, “Coach, I’d be honored to start for the team.” “Super!” the coach said, “But you’re gonna need to practice a lot. Can you do that?” “Absolutely!” said Rudy. The coach beamed. They both walked off the field into the tunnel and into the locker room.