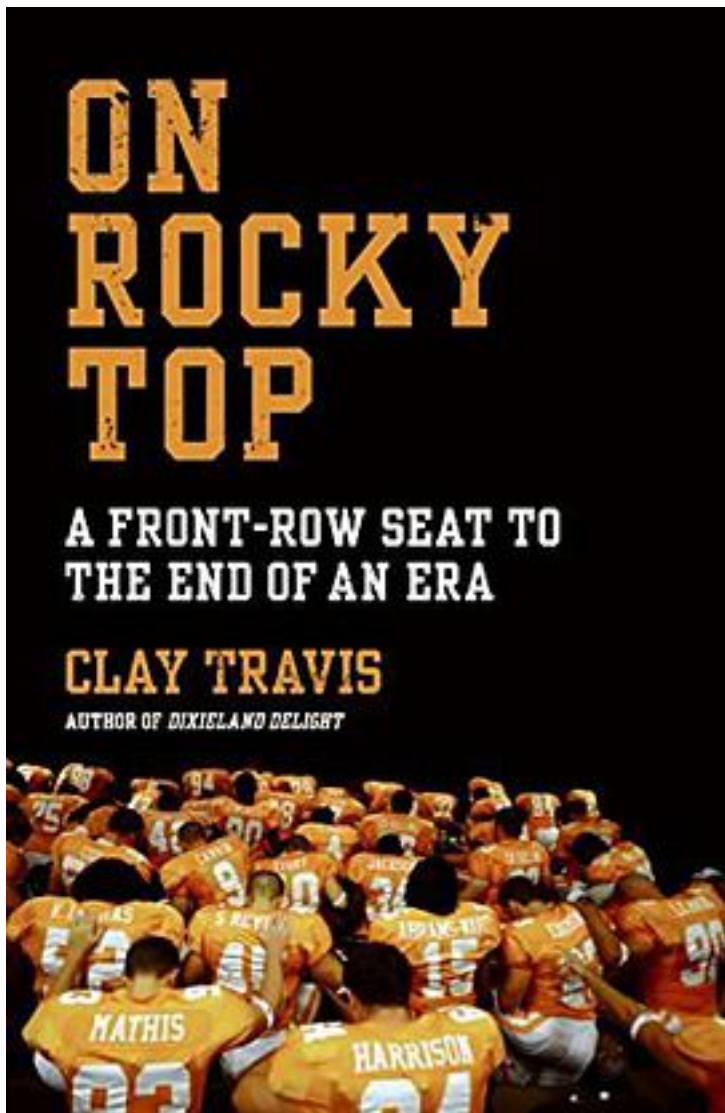


On Rocky Top



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There is no college football team more zealous and competitive than the University of Tennessee Volunteers. When Clay Travis, acclaimed author of *Dixieland Delight*, decided to spend the 2008 season up close and personal with UT football, he—and every other college football aficionado—thought he was in for a rollicking ride with one of the leading contenders for the national title. After all, when the Vols kicked off the season on September 1, the defending SEC East champions were ranked 18th in the country. As head coach Phillip Fulmer prepared for the game, he reflected upon a coaching career that included an astounding 147 victories, two SEC championships, and a national title. With 34 years at UT under his belt as both a player and coach, the Tennessee native had just signed a contract extension that projected to keep him at the university long enough to become the winningest coach in program history. But when the Volunteers lost their season opener and the losses continued to mount, it became clear that 2008 was going to be a season on the brink for UT football. By December, the team had suffered its second-worst season ever, and Fulmer, the most beloved and recognized man in Tennessee, had been fired. Based on exclusive interviews with Fulmer, UT athletic director Mike Hamilton, university boosters, team personnel, players and their families, and fans, *On Rocky Top* recounts in vivid detail how a season of promise tragically ended an era of college football. Enlivening the narrative is a diverse cast of supporting characters, including 65-year-old "Good Time" Charlie Harris, who has driven the UT big rig for almost 10 years; star running back Arian Foster, a fifth-year senior striving to become the all-time leading rusher in Volunteer history; and multimillionaire booster John "Thunder" Thornton, who defended Fulmer till the end. A lifelong Volunteer fan whose grandfather played for the team during the 1930s, Travis reports from the locker room to the sideline, and has created a fascinating and loving chronicle of an impassioned state, a celebrated football culture, a beloved coach, and the sensational collapse of a once-mighty juggernaut.

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