

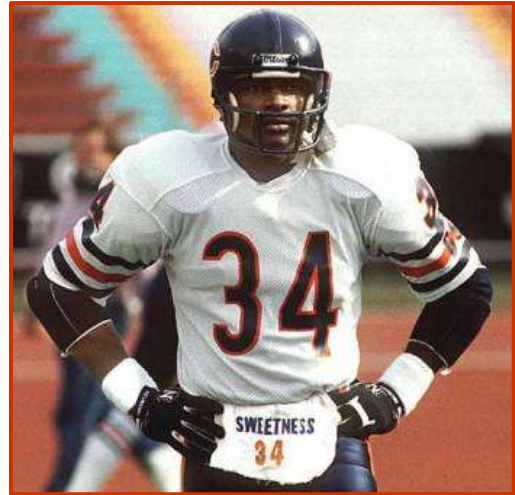
A Hug from Sweetness

Walter Payton was one of the greatest running backs ever to play football. He spent his entire professional career with the Chicago Bears, was a nine-time Pro Bowl selection and was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1993.

Hall of Fame NFL player and coach Mike Ditka described Payton as the greatest football player he had ever seen – but even greater as a human being.

His heart and compassion are shown in a story by Christy Gutowski entitled “Payton’s Was a Shoulder to Cry On,” published in the *Daily Herald*.

After 10 seasons as placekicker with the Bears, Bob Thomas was notified by the management that he was being cut. Thomas, a Christian, waited until he knew the locker room would be emptied of players to clear out his things. He didn’t have the emotional strength to face the players he had grown to love.



His celebrated teammate, Payton, another believer, learned about Thomas’ termination and waited alone at the kicker’s locker.

When Thomas saw Payton, he buried his face in the running back’s chest and allowed his friend to comfort him.

After Payton’s death in 1999, Thomas recalled that emotional moment in the locker room. “To share your grief with a Hall of Fame running back with that kind of compassion, empathy and ability is really my fondest memory of the guy we called Sweetness,” he said.

What about you today? Is there a resident, a family member or a co-worker who needs your shoulder to cry on, your comfort to encourage him or her?

That’s a tender moment with great healing power.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God (2 Corinthians 1:3-4 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter