

# NEIL LEIFER: BOUND FOR GLORY

BY JAMES HUGHES

After batting cleanup with *Ballet in the Dirt*, a collection of Neil Leifer's baseball photographs released in 2007, Taschen goes back to back with another coffee-table book featuring Leifer's remarkable work, this time focusing on images from the gridiron. From its opening pages of mud-splattered Browns and ecstatic Packers to the parting shots of the Baltimore Colts battling under a shroud of Florida palms, *Guts and Glory: The Golden Age of American Football, 1958-1978* is a feast for the eyes. For those steeped in the nostalgia of the game, nothing can top Leifer's end-zone shots of Johnny Unitas under the frieze of Yankee Stadium, while modern-day fans of the Ray Lewis dance can find much to appreciate in the scowls and scrapes of Dick Butkus and "Mean Joe" Greene.

Leifer's work was once a cornerstone of *Sports Illustrated* and *Time*, and he is now a staple of Taschen's forays into the sporting world. Before receiving his own titles, Leifer's photographs of Muhammad Ali, including classics like the 1965 knockout of Sonny Liston and an aerial view of Ali gloating over a canvas-bound Cleveland Williams (taken from the rafters of the Astrodome), were featured prominently in *The Greatest of All Time*, released in 2003. While *GOAT* is only for the most devoted (and loaded) customer, weighing in at 800 pages and costing up to \$15,000, *Guts and Glory* is a catchable pass at \$500 for a 350-page collector's edition, which is signed by Leifer and arrives in a slipcase. (More costly editions supplied with limited-edition prints are also available.) The release of *Guts*, like *Ballet* (which sold out its initial collector's edition), will be followed by a "popular edition" of the book, intended for readers on a budget. Either way, you'll win the coin toss.

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