

# BILL WALTON

## Basketball Legend, Broadcaster, Humanitarian, and Survivor

**“Those not willing to risk going too far will never know how far they can go.” – Bill Walton**

### SUMMARY

Basketball legend Bill Walton is one of sports' most recognizable and beloved figures. His success on the court is well-documented; the nation's top college basketball star at UCLA under legendary coach John Wooden, he then played for two NBA Championship teams – the Portland Trail Blazers and Boston Celtics. But Bill's nightmarish challenges off the court are less known. He stuttered so badly he couldn't say a simple "thank you" until he was 28 years old. And a foot disorder led to 37 surgeries on his feet, legs, and back – keeping him sidelined over half of his NBA career. Armed with grit and a positive outlook, Bill improbably overcame it all. He was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame and named to the "50 Greatest NBA Players of All-Time" list. After his playing career, Bill pursued broadcasting; he is currently covering Pac-12 games on ESPN. Bill Walton has led a life of humility in service of inspiring others. His autobiography, *Back from the Dead*, was a *New York Times* bestseller and he is perhaps the best-known Deadhead, having seen over 900 shows.



### SPEECH DESCRIPTIONS

#### RIISING TO THE CHALLENGE

“Those not willing to risk going too far will never know how far they can go.” Those words from Bill Walton sum up his philosophy of life. At 6' 11" in his Grateful Dead tie-dyed t-shirt, Bill Walton is one of the most recognizable and colorful sports legends ever. He also has one of the greatest can-do attitudes you'll ever encounter. It's a mindset he's cultivated and he gives it credit for helping him adapt, persevere, and ultimately succeed in challenges on and off the court. Named one of "50 Greatest NBA Players of All Time," Bill incredibly missed 9½ of his 14 NBA seasons due to injuries related to orthopedic problems. Despite that, his achievements on the court were enormous. When his storied career ended with his 30<sup>th</sup> surgery, Bill's dream was to pursue sports broadcasting. One problem: a severe lifelong stutter that prevented him from even saying a simple "thank you." Undeterred, Bill set about the task of learning to speak. He conquered stuttering and found a place behind the mic - earning numerous awards and honors since. Bill's greatest test came in 2007 when severe back pain confined him to the floor of his home for 2½ years. Finally relenting to surgery in 2009, the grueling rehab and recovery from that 37<sup>th</sup> surgery could well be Bill's biggest achievement. While Bill exclaims regularly, "I'm the luckiest guy on Earth," it's clear his outlook on life helped create that luck. Bill loves to inspire audiences to rise to the challenge of seeing just how far they can go.

#### WHAT GREAT COACHES TAUGHT ME ABOUT LEADERSHIP

Basketball icon Bill Walton was part of legendary college and NBA championship teams: UCLA, the Boston Celtics and Portland Trail Blazers. He was also part of the last place San Diego Clippers. According to Bill, the difference between winning and losing was leadership. The best coaches knew how to get the best out of their players. In Bill's career no one was better than legendary UCLA coach John Wooden. An English teacher who coached on the side for extra money, Wooden focused on the fundamentals. He never talked about winning – and rarely even mentioned the opposing team. Wooden did insist that players work together, not be selfish, execute flawlessly, and be accountable for doing their best. Armed with that approach Wooden went on to win 88 consecutive games (a men's collegiate record which still stands) and ten national championships. Bill, the consummate storyteller, shares tales that are as insightful as they are entertaining – about lessons of leadership he learned from John Wooden, Red Auerbach, Jack Ramsey, and others during his storied career. Bill provides an inside look at how world-class performance is really achieved on the basketball court - leadership and teamwork lessons based on principles that transfer off the court, too.

#### CREATE A TEAM THAT ROCKS

What separates great teams from everyone else? Basketball legend Bill Walton knows and speaks from experience. Bill played on two championship teams under revered UCLA coach John Wooden. Those teams contributed to the Bruins' 88-game winning streak, still the record in men's basketball more than 40 years later. Bill was also a two-time NBA champion; with the Portland Trail Blazers and Boston Celtics. Of course, it's not possible to appreciate great teamwork unless you've seen the other side of that coin and Bill experienced that as well during his time with the San Diego/Los Angeles Clippers. After Bill's playing days ended, broadcasting offered him the perfect perch from which to watch extraordinary teams perform. Throughout his business endeavors, Bill applied the teamwork lessons he learned from sports with astonishing success. In this keynote speech, Bill talks about the essentials of teams that rock - cooperation, friendship, loyalty, sacrifice, discipline, execution, and leadership – with humorous and revealing anecdotes. As one of the most colorful characters from the sports world, Bill Walton delivers an inspiring message for teams looking to take their performance to the next level.

## MY 37 SURGERIES – A JOURNEY FROM INJURY TO RECOVERY

Bill Walton has the dubious distinction of being the most-injured player in NBA history. After 37 surgeries, the basketball superstar knows a thing or two about injuries, rehabilitation, and recovery. He knows what patients go through – and what caregivers and healthcare professionals go through. He can speak to both audiences authentically. In his 14-year pro career Bill missed a total of 9½ full seasons due to injury. Even so, he was inducted into the [Basketball Hall of Fame](#) and won numerous awards and honors for his brilliant play. Imagine his impact on the game had he stayed healthy! Bill's feet, knees, and back - the foundation of his ability to perform as an athlete - let him down. His most serious surgery was to straighten his spine after spending 2½ years on the floor of his home in agonizing pain – literally unable to move and contemplating suicide. Now back in the game of life, Bill remains active on his bike – participating in several week-long charity biking events for groups like Challenged Athletes Foundation. He also speaks to audiences of patients, healthcare professionals, and those from allied fields - delivering an inspiring message about his own healing and recovery.

## VIDEOS

<https://vimeopro.com/speakervideos/bill-walton>

## BILL WALTON'S STORY

Basketball legend Bill Walton is one of sports' most recognizable and beloved figures. His success on the court is well-documented; the nation's top college basketball star at UCLA under legendary coach John Wooden, he then played for two NBA Championship teams – the Portland Trail Blazers and Boston Celtics. But Bill's nightmarish challenges off the court are less known. He stuttered so badly he couldn't say a simple "thank you" until he was 28 years old. And a foot disorder led to 37 surgeries on his feet, legs, and back – keeping him sidelined over half of his NBA career. Armed with grit and a positive outlook, Bill improbably overcame it all. He was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame and named to the "50 Greatest NBA Players of All-Time" list. After his playing career, Bill pursued broadcasting; he is currently covering Pac-12 games on ESPN. Bill Walton has led a life of humility in service of inspiring others. His autobiography, *Back from the Dead*, was a *New York Times* bestseller and he is perhaps the best-known Deadhead, having seen over 900 shows.

As entertaining as he is insightful, Bill is widely considered one of the best speakers from the world of sports. The lessons he learned on the basketball court became life lessons that served him well throughout his sports, broadcasting and business careers. No lesson was more important than the words from the legendary John Wooden, Bill's basketball coach at UCLA, who simply said "Do your best." Wooden never asked players to go out and win – simply to do their best and not beat themselves. Bill never forgot those words which helped him throughout his extraordinary career.

Following a celebrated college basketball career, Bill went on to have a Hall of Fame NBA career. After basketball, he pursued his dream job as a sports broadcaster – but first had to overcome the lifelong stuttering affliction. And then, in 2008, Bill endured risky back surgery for to repair damage done early in his basketball career. Through it all, Bill's determination and positive attitude carried him through.

Bill is an authentic and true original who personifies greatness and is one of the most compassionate figures in sports with an extraordinary record of giving back through his work with numerous charities and non-profits.

Bill was introduced to the game of basketball while in the fourth grade at Blessed Sacrament Elementary School. He then attended Helix High School, where his team won the California Interscholastic Federation High School title two years in a row, while winning their final 49 consecutive games. While at Helix, Bill became the first and only high school player to ever make the U.S.A. Senior Men's National Basketball Team and play in the World Championship and/or Olympics.

Bill enrolled at UCLA in 1970. He played center for John Wooden's varsity team for three seasons (1972-1974), after a year with the freshman team in 1971. He was a member of two NCAA championship teams compiling an NCAA record 88 consecutive game winning streak.

In 1972, '73, and '74 Bill was named NCAA Player of the Year Award. He is a three-time All-American College Player and winner of the Sullivan Award for the United States Best Amateur Athlete of 1973. Bill was named to the Pacific 8 All-Conference first team three times and was conference player of the year for three consecutive years. At UCLA Bill was a scholar-athlete who also earned Academic All-American honors three years in a row. He graduated with honors with a B.A. in history. Bill also attended Stanford University Graduate School of Law in the early 1980's.

Bill's professional career began when he was the number one overall pick in the 1974 NBA Draft by the Portland Trailblazers. He was a member of their championship team in 1977. Nine years later he earned another championship title, this time with the Boston Celtics in 1986. He played with the Trailblazers 1974-1979, the San Diego Clippers 1979-1984, the relocated Los Angeles Clippers in 1985 and The Boston Celtics 1985-1988.

Bill was the NBA's Most Valuable Player, 1978; All-NBA First Team, 1978; NBA All-Star Team, 1977 and 1978; NBA Playoff's MVP, 1977; All-NBA second team, 1977; winner of the NBA Sixth Man Award, 1986. Bill is one of only four players in the history of basketball to have won multiple NCAA and multiple NBA Championships. He is also the second of only five players in the history of the NBA to lead the league in both blocked shots and rebounding in the same season. In 1991 Bill received the NBPA's Oscar Robertson Leadership Awards. In 1993 he was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield, Massachusetts. In 1997 Bill was selected as one of the NBA's Fifty Greatest Players of All Time. Also, in 1997 he was inducted into the National High School Sports Hall of Fame.

After retiring from basketball Bill began his broadcasting career in 1990 as an analyst for the then Prime Ticket Network. Bill worked for CBS Sports in the early 90's and then for NBC for many years, including work on the 1996 Atlanta and 2000 Sydney Summer Olympic Games. Over his career he's also done broadcasting work for ABC, ESPN, FOX, MSNBC, Turner Sports, KCAL, NESN and the NBA. Bill has been nominated for numerous Emmy Awards and in 2001 won an Emmy for Best Live Sports Television Broadcast. The Southern California Sports Broadcasters Association has several times honored Bill with the Best Television Analyst/Commentator Award. In 2009, he was named one of the top 50 sports broadcasters of all time by the American Sportscasters Association.

In June 21, 2001, Bill was named as the inaugural inductee into the Grateful Dead Hall of Honor.

Love of sports runs in the Bill's family. He and his older brother Bruce (UCLA 1973) are the only brother combination in history to have played in the Super Bowl and to have won an NBA Championship. Bill and his third son Luke are only the third father/son pairing to have ever won NBA Championships. They are also the only father/son combination in history to have each won multiple NBA Championships.

Bill is active with many organizations and charities. For his efforts, in 2002 he received the NBA Retired Players Association Humanitarian Award. He is executive chairman of Connect SD Sport Innovators (SDSI), a non-profit, business-accelerating, trade organization that connects and drives the growth of Southern California's vibrant sports economy by offering innovative programs and services for startups, mature companies and service providers. Walton is also a board member for the Junior Seau foundation. Bill is also involved in numerous Internet ventures, providing content and business acumen.

Bill Walton is author of *Back from the Dead* and *Nothing but Net*. He currently resides in his hometown of San Diego with his wife Lori. They are the proud parents of four sons: Adam, Nathan, Luke and Chris, and the lucky grandparents of Olivia, Chase, Parker, Avery, Patrick, Lawson, Wilhelmina, and Wolfgang.