



Rise: A Soldier, a Dream, and a Promise Kept

Daniel Rodriguez

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The unforgettable story of a young soldier who survived one of the bloodiest battles in Afghanistan and lived to pursue his dream of playing Division I college football

At 5-foot-8, 175 pounds, Daniel Rodriguez was an unlikely recruit for the gridiron. But on the battlefield, under the daily rain of sniper fire, he made a promise to his best friend. “When I get out of this shithole, I’m going to play college football.”

Daniel had joined the army just weeks after graduating from high school, having recently suffered a devastating loss. At age nineteen he had no idea what war really was; he just wanted to get out of town. Almost immediately, he was deployed to Iraq (and would later serve in Afghanistan). And he grew up fast — stopped sleeping, started smoking. Killing became second nature. He fought in the infamous Battle of Kamdesh and for his bravery he was awarded a Purple Heart and the Bronze Star. But his best friend was not so lucky.

Against all odds, Daniel returned home — broken, but still alive. Stuck in the clutches of PTSD, Daniel remembered that fateful promise to his friend and knew he had to make good on it. He embarked on a grueling training regimen and when he posted a video of his efforts, it went viral overnight. By some mix of grit, determination, and the power of the Internet, he earned a spot on the Clemson University football team.

A powerfully delivered narrative of a young soldier, his unlikely dream, and how he found his way out of darkness, *Rise* is inspiring, quintessentially American, and will resonate with anyone who has ever fought for what they wanted.



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