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NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE

An Interview With:

CHAD LEWIS

*Q. What is the state of mind for the **Eagles** taking into consideration that the **Eagles** fans don't expect to lose a game, the **Championship Game**?*

CHAD LEWIS: Our approach to this game is that we are getting ready for an extremely tough football team in the **Carolina Panthers**. They have proved that all year. They have won tough, physical games. They have won in the fourth quarter. They have won in a variety of different ways from a variety of different people on their team and they are playing with a lot of confidence.

John **Fox** is just one of the better coaches out there. He's very smart and he gets his team ready to play every week.

Q. Obviously you've made it to this juncture last two years. What gets you over the hump this time, how does that play on guys' minds? How does the last two years enter into this?

CHAD LEWIS: I think mainly by just thinking forward, just pushing on and not really dwelling on, I guess, the past and doing what we do. Just understanding that we have a great football team coming in here, and there's no time to think about too much more than just having great practices and getting the game plan in and just preparing, doing the best job we possibly can in preparation.

*Q. Do you think there is a window of opportunity for teams in the **NFL** now the way free agency is and the salary cap is, do you have to take advantage of your opportunities or they will eventually run out?*

CHAD LEWIS: Individually, team-wise, in every sense you have to take advantage of your opportunities. As a player if someone gives you a chance to play, you've got to take advantage of it, because if you don't do well, then you're not going to get that opportunity much longer.

In football, that's just how it is. When you get an opportunity, you've got to take advantage of it.

*Q. Not too many teams get to three straight **Championship Games**. What do you attribute that to? What's gotten you guys here three straight years?*

CHAD LEWIS: I think it starts with the coaches and their game preparation, getting us ready. They have been very thorough for several years now. They create an atmosphere where they foster great team chemistry, and we have people like **Donovan McNabb** and **Brian Dawkins** who are special talents that are able to be great leaders in the locker room, on the field and get the whole team going in the right direction. That's a gift that they have.

*Q. How would you define the two **Philadelphia Eagles** teams that showed up this season: The team that lost the two first games of the season and the **Philadelphia** team that is just one win away from the **Super Bowl**?*

CHAD LEWIS: I think part of the slow start was us finding our own identity again with the loss of a couple of people from last year's team and the addition of new people that filled in for them. So even though we went through training camp together, we still had to get comfortable with each other on the field.

And mainly, just weather a little storm and keep believing in each other and not panic and not give up. I think one thing that's been consistent for several years is great team chemistry; that we believe in each other and we work our butts off for each other.

*Q. How difficult is it to play against a defense like the **Panthers**'?*

CHAD LEWIS: The **Panthers** have a tremendous defense. They fly around. They are very solid in their -- in everything they do, in their coverages and their blitzes and their defensive fronts. They play together. They play as a unit.

*Q. The forecast doesn't look like it's going to be too bad this weekend, but for a southern team coming up to **Philadelphia** to play in the cold and the wind, how big of an advantage is that for you?*

CHAD LEWIS: I don't really -- I don't really worry about that because they have proved they can play anywhere. They can play indoors. They went to the loudest stadium in **America** and beat the **Rams**. That tells you what you want to know

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about a team, is that they are tough.

So knowing that it's going to be cold, you just already know that you can't let up just because it's cold. We have a great team coming in here and we know they are going to be absolutely prepared in every way.

Q. *Do you feel like there's any psychological advantage for the **Eagles** in this case?*

CHAD LEWIS: With the weather?

Q. *Yeah.*

CHAD LEWIS: Not really. I think they are ready for it and I don't think it's going to be a possible for them.

Q. *What kind of alterations do you guys need to make on offense from the first game you played in this season to this game?*

CHAD LEWIS: We need to execute better and that all starts with preparation today. Wednesday is an important day of game preparation where we put in the base offense and base defense, and it's important that we study and prepare and give all we have today to be ready for **Sunday**.

Q. *As tight as these games have been, how important is it to have a reliable kicker on your side?*

CHAD LEWIS: This team to a man has total confident in **David Akers**. We think he's the best kicker in football right now, and over the last several years, he's won a lot of games for us. He's been extremely consistent. He's got a strong leg. He's just doing a great job.

Q. *On a day-to-day basis, what kind of things does **Donovan** do to foster the team chemistry that you were talking about? **You** called him a special leader, so I'm figuring he's factoring heavily into that chemistry.*

CHAD LEWIS: Yeah, you figured right. He is a special player because he's not a big-timer. He will talk to anyone and everyone on the team and in the organization. He treats everyone the same with total respect. He's very funny, so he'll sit down and swap stories and tell jokes with anyone. You don't have to be a **Pro Bowl** player to get his attention. You just have to be here. And that's one reason why people gravitate to him because he treats everyone with so much respect.

Q. *Do you marvel at that, considering the perhaps lack of respect he's gotten from outsiders at times in his career?*

CHAD LEWIS: Yeah, that's one thing that I wondered why people take a shot at him because he is so consistent in treating people with such class and respect that usually people go after someone that doesn't have those characteristics and qualities.

Q. *What do you think this team has learned from being disappointed the last two years?*

CHAD LEWIS: I think that you have to enjoy the game, enjoy the moment. Football is a game of emotion and you've got to let yourself share in what you've accomplished and while you're doing that, focus on minute-to-minute, day-to-day things like preparing for your game plan. Don't talk about next week because there is no next week if you lose.

Everything is about a great **Carolina Panther** team coming in here. So the focus is even more closed to just going one play at a time in practice and just preparing one play at a time.

Q. *Is that something you guys have learned through the last two years? **Did** you feel yourself looking ahead a little bit maybe the first time you were at this point?*

CHAD LEWIS: I think the first time -- I can't really speak for everyone. I thought we were very prepared and we came very close to beating **St. Louis** in **St. Louis**. I think last year we got beat by the **Tampa Bay Buccaneers** here at home. We didn't take advantage of that situation here at home. They did a better job and they beat us and they deserved to beat us and they went on and they won the **Super Bowl**.

But it's important, you know, just the things that we learned from; that you've just got to take each moment, prepare yourself to the best of your ability and just get ready to fight with all you have.

Q. *What is the key --*

CHAD LEWIS: Just execution and doing things right. Catching the ball, blocking, throwing the ball, tackling, just all of the fundamentals.

Q. *Have you been able to develop a home-field advantage at the new stadium? **We** know the **Vet**, for all its good and its bad, now you're in this nice new clean stadium, is it starting to become a little bit of a pit for the opponent?*

CHAD LEWIS: Yeah, I think halfway through

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the year, it started to pick up as far as being a great home-field advantage for us. Our crowd is loud and wild and crazy, but we don't rely on anything else but what we do on the field to get things done. So that's why today's preparation is so important.

*Q. As a tight end, I'm sure you'll help on those two defensive ends they have, can you talk about **Peppers** and also **Rucker** and what makes them so good?*

CHAD LEWIS: Yeah, both of them have tremendous abilities and they have had a great year. They have speed and range and everything you want in a good defensive lineman. I think **Coach Fox** knows exactly how to use them and they are just doing a great job.

*Q. The last two seasons, how difficult has it been for you as a tight end to protect **Donovan**?*

CHAD LEWIS: Yeah, we need to protect him. We can't let him get hit. It's important that we keep him healthy. He's a very tough guy, but we need to do a great job of always giving him the best protection that we can.

Q. But you have seemed more involved in this protection when they blitz?

CHAD LEWIS: Yeah at times I've been more involved. I've released on routes. It just depends on what we are running.

*Q. Just looking at some of the teams that have gone to three **Conference Championships**, **Buffalo** had the four straight and I think **Dallas** had a run of three or four straight. It puts you guys in some pretty good company. What's the sense of accomplishment in achieving that?*

CHAD LEWIS: There is a sense of accomplishment, knowing what we've done and where we came from as a team over the years and then again this year.

But I think everyone knows that it's going to take all we have to be able to beat the **Panthers** because they are a great team. So that is the total focus, just do everything we can in preparation to get ready.

*Q. A little bit ago, I asked you about the window of opportunity. Do you think in some ways you guys have been able to buck the odds because you've overcome the free agent losses like the **Jeremiah Trotters** and you've overcome all of the injuries and been able to get back here three times, is there actually a window of*

opportunity or do you think you guys can keep this going for a few more years?

CHAD LEWIS: I don't really worry about it. I just kind of go one day at a time, and I really credit the guys who have stepped in for injured players who are just having a lot of poise and a lot of determination to practice to get themselves as prepared as possible and to fit into the offensive and defensive schemes like they have. They have done a great job.

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