

January 16, 2004

NFC FINALS
Carolina Panthers at Philadelphia Eagles
Pre-Game Day Press Conference

An Interview With:

DONOVAN McNABB

Q. How much better are you prepared as a team to deal with Sunday that maybe you weren't in the past?

DONOVAN McNABB: I thought about that for a couple of days this week. Just talking to some of guys that played here a couple of years ago, when we were in St. Louis and at that time we talked about just we made it down to St. Louis no one expected us to be there. It was kind of a feeling that you were happy just to be there in the NFC Championship. Obviously you wanted to win it, but after that game we kind of thought, hey, you know what, we'll have the NFC Championship at our stadium. Then last year obviously we represented it in our stadium, it was kind of that feeling that you know what, we can go to the Super Bowl. It didn't happen. But this year is a lot different. With everything that we have been through, I think it made our team a lot stronger, the experience of going through different things last year to get to the NFC Championship and have it at our stadium, and just the veterans I think have really played a major part in some of things that we have done this year of stepping up, challenging themselves, challenging the young guys making sure all of us are prepared, and we are here again. This year is a whole lot different attitudes, I mean at high with confidence, I think just the coaching staff feels the same way that you know, I think this year is a whole lot different, our confidence level is at a high right now, that you know, we just feel we can go out there and execute.

Q. The Eagles paid a price, they worked hard, been through two other NFC Championship games. There's a learning curve there. Carolina is doing this for the first time; what challenges will they have dealing with this for the very first time?

DONOVAN McNABB: There's a lot of ways that you can go about it. When it's your first time I think no one expected you to be there. Obviously you are the underdogs coming in with the attitude to obviously make an impact, to open up some eyes. I think they have done it. So I don't think that we don't know that; I don't think that we're not going to prepare for a team that's going to come out with a lot of energy, and are willing to

do whatever it takes in order to make that extra step but we're going to have that same attitude as well although we have been in the Championship for the last two years, we're still approaching this thing like nothing has ever happened in the past, that this is our year. So we have prepared all throughout the week you know, with the loose attitude just like we have had during the year, we have prepared watching extra film, just communicating, getting our time in together the way we are supposed to, so you are going to see two teams out there battling, I mean with the same attitude, with the same approach, with the same aggressive feeling, that you know, they are going to put everything on the line.

Q. Troy Vincent was just in he was talking about having lost in the NFC Championship the last two years, how the window can close. You are not going to get opportunity after opportunity. Do you sense any of that among some of your teammates?

DONOVAN McNABB: You know what, you try to stay away from that approach and you try to stay away from that mindset but it's tough. In this game that we play, obviously free agency plays a major part, and you know, so many guys' contracts are up this year; guys that were big names and guys that we need. So this is the time. This is the way we feel that -- this is the time because the window is closing. Not a whole lot of people can say that they have been to one NFC Championship throughout their career. Let alone going to the Super Bowl. This is the feeling that obviously we need to take full advantage of, the opportunity is there, you know, we take care of our job, do what we are supposed to do, things will pan out for us.

Q. How much do you want to know what it feels like to win that title instead of feeling what it feels like to lose it?

DONOVAN McNABB: I don't think you really understand how much I really want to know. As a kid growing up you visualize yourself playing in the Super Bowl and winning it. As a kid you grow up and you are saying this is the last touchdown of the game. I am going to throw it. We're going to win. Everything is going to be fine, we'll be going down the parade, you know, all the other hoopla. But you never really visualize it

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actually happening. It's all talk when you are with your friends. And we're here. You know, so, pretty much I mean, it's funny because you know, we're just days away from stepping out on the field and trying to put everything on the line to achieve that goal.

Q. When the Rams lost, you went back to the field and wanted to watch them raise that trophy. Why did you do that? What feeling did you want to take from that?

DONOVAN McNABB: The reason I did that was because I felt confident that we'll be back in that position and doing the same thing the Rams were doing. Last year we thought it would happen. It didn't. Well, this year, we kind of can make that happen. So it's exciting for me because obviously you know about it, I know about it and the team knows about it, that just getting out there it hurt to see those guys running around the stadium, you had all the confetti flying around, fans are excited. I visualized that happening to us. I continue to visualize that. And the only way we can make that a reality is if we all just come together and play well.

Q. The position you play, and the expectations on you personally, how do you go out there and actually keep your composure and how --

DONOVAN McNABB: I just continue to have in my mind that this is a dream come true. Every time that I step out on the field, a lot of people never would have thought that I would have been an NFL quarterback, you know, so much criticism of what I can't do out there in the NFL, what I won't be able to do. For me to be five years in this thing and being in the NFC Championship three times, I continue to have back in my mind that this is a dream come true. So every time that I step out on the field I look around, you know, look at my guys in the eye; say, hey, you know what? This is just like practice. Let's go out here and play football.

Q. You are described as a running quarterback -- (inaudible)?

DONOVAN McNABB: It's tough because you know obviously when you are in college you hear about athletic quarterbacks, quarterbacks, running quarterbacks, you never know what that definition means, you never know how a quarterback could be looked upon. Being a running quarterback, I have heard that now for the last five years. It doesn't bother me. You hate to hear about that, but I mean, not too many

quarterbacks as you see now are just sitting back in the pocket and patting the ball. If nothing is there, they will try to pick up yards. I think the day and age now of quarterbacks are realizing that we're not going to be hitting dummies any more. It begins to hurt after a while.

Q. What are the breakdowns that led to all the sacks and what do you do to try to fix that this week?

DONOVAN McNABB: It could have been either just not picking up the guys for as many times as we needed to or me holding the ball. We have discussed that. We went over that. I think what we need to do this week obviously is if nothing is there then take full advantage of the opportunity, pick up as many yards as I can, throw it out of bounds, go to the next play, whatever it may be. But it's nothing to the fact that, taking the eight sacks, the most important thing is about winning. So I will take the eight sacks, every week, if we're going to win the game.

Q. The talk of a dream come true; what if it doesn't come true?

DONOVAN McNABB: I don't believe that.

Q. Not a happy ending?

DONOVAN McNABB: I am not even thinking about that. I think positive. I just have positive thoughts in my mind.

*Q. Can you talk about the defensive line and particularly **Kris Jenkins**, what he's brought to the table?*

DONOVAN McNABB: **Kris Jenkins** is one of the top defensive tackles in the game. A young guy who has established himself last year, Pro Bowler, a guy that not a lot of people know about, you know, and for him to make a name for himself is big. We all know about him. I think everyone across the League knows about him, of his size, his quickness, his strength, and just the pressure that he applies on offenses.

Q. You spoke earlier how the team is stronger for what it went through. Can you talk about how you personally are stronger for what you went through specifically the Limbaugh controversy and how you grew from that?

DONOVAN McNABB: That comment was made and there was nothing I could pretty much do about it. I said in my statement that it wasn't about me; it was about the youth, the kids that were watching, the ones that kind of visualize

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themselves playing in the NFL maybe wearing No. 5 or No. 9 or No. 7. It wasn't about me. So it wasn't nothing that -- I kind of used that as motivation, going out to play football because I enjoy playing football. There's nothing that anyone can say or do to take me away from my dream. So every time that I step out on the field I have an attitude that may be a little bit different than others. So the position I play obviously everyone expects you to pass for 300 yards or, you know, lead your team to victories every week, never throw any interceptions, whatever it may be, you know, it just comes with the position. If I may not be playing to the expectations of others, you know, I personally don't care. It's all about winning in this League. If you are a winner, then no one can take that away from you.

Q. (Inaudible)?

DONOVAN McNABB: I definitely anticipate a lot of things that we have seen when he was with the Giants, pressure up the middle, if it's putting seven guys in the box, bringing eight, another down, playing a little bit of man-coverage outside, we anticipate that. We know he's a mastermind on the defensive side so we have to be able to counteract that with offense schemes where we can get the ball up, pick up some rushing yards, kind of set them back a little bit where we are second, third and short and be able to have an opportunity to convert first downs, possibly put the ball in the end zone.

Q. Your dad was quoted today as saying that those Limbaugh comments bothered him; does that bother you that he was hurt so much?

DONOVAN McNABB: Not at all. He's not the only person that feels that way. There are players who are still upset about the comment. I can't let that bother me. I have a game to play. And a dream to fulfill. So you know, I can't let one man's comment take me away from anything that I would like to get done in this League.

Q. 0-2 start, what did it take to come back from that?

DONOVAN McNABB: I was just being myself. A guy that has a smile on his face, continue to approach every game like it's his last and is willing to give everything that he has in order for his team to be successful. So I mean, with everything that was said, you know, I smiled about it, you know, obviously it hurt a little bit, but I just continued to move forward in everything that I wanted to do.

Q. How about the team, how were they able to stay together --

DONOVAN McNABB: I think what it did was it obviously hit everyone to let them know that not everyone likes you. They may smile in your face, pat you on the back, tell you that they are excited about some of the things that you do, but in the back of their mind they may not like you, they may not like what you do on the field. But it's really none of our business, if they like us or not. We are out here to play football. I am here to give all that I have for those other 52 men on my team. If my teammates don't like it that's another thing. Now if another person who may not be on the team or doesn't play football never played football in his life, if he feels that way, so be it.

Q. How long did it take to turn the page on what happened last week and obviously the fourth and 26, all the excitement that surrounded that, when did you feel like that that was completely out of your system and now you can move on?

DONOVAN McNABB: Well, it took to about Wednesday at our team meeting. We had our mindset on what we wanted to get done against Carolina, we knew that the Packers game was over and from then on it was time to move on.

Q. Should you find yourself in another situation like that, though, sometimes plays like that can give athletes an overwhelming sense of confidence, do you think that makes you feel like nothing -- there's no impossible --

DONOVAN McNABB: When you are obviously in that position no one expects you to convert that. When it happened, you know, you are right, the confidence level continued to rise to a point where you felt whatever play was going to be called that you were going to get the ball in the end zone and win the game. I think another point that possibly could have helped us was Monday night when we drove down and scored to win the game with two minutes to go. So I mean, just the little things could really boost the confidence of players and the things you want to get done on the field.

Q. Last game Brian Westbrook played a big role for you against the Panthers. How do you compensate for him not being here?

DONOVAN McNABB: To be able to spread the ball around. Get everyone involved, if they are running lanes maybe for myself pick up as many yards as I can and just execute consistently. I think when you lose a guy like Brian Westbrook who can do so many things for you on offense,

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everyone else has to take their game up another notch. This is the time to do it.

Q. How have you adjusted to having so many different weapons around you? It's not like it's the same person every game, how do you get used to being able to succeed that way?

DONOVAN McNABB: Fortunately, for me, I have been around this group for at least four to five years, with the receiving core, you know, with the running backs, you know, so our timing is where we kind of want it to be at the right time. If it's not then we'll spend time after practice or on our days off we'll come in and throw routs just to be crisper in the game. Unfortunately again the offensive line has been there pretty much from the duration that I have been there. The chemistry and the communication is kind of there when we need it. If it's -- something is not going the way we want to we all come together on the sidelines, talk about it, and go out on the field and be able to execute it.

Q. You draw so much of the media attention. Has that been an issue, you are by far the most famous --

DONOVAN McNABB: We don't have any jealousy on our team. That mainly -- it starts with the coaching staff. Letting everyone know that we're in this thing together. Individual success comes from team success. We know that. Playing the quarterback position obviously you are going to get, you know, all of the notoriety, all of this, all of that, and when things aren't going well you are going to be the goat. So you know, just -- it comes with the territory pretty much, and the guys understand that and I just want to be that guy they can say, well, you know what, things aren't going well right now but Donovan helped us pull it out.

Q. Seems like more of the passing game is going to Chad. Any particular reason that he's getting the ball more?

DONOVAN McNABB: It's all been creating mismatches. Chad, versatile linebacker, we feel good about that mismatch, L.J., running back, and our receivers as well, so, in this game that we play obviously it's all about mismatches. If you see a mismatch you have to be able to exploit it and take full advantage of it. Chad has done a wonderful job for us.

Q. Have you ever felt burdened by -- it's not just your success, your success means a lot more than just what you do for yourself your family, there's always a bigger picture there. Has that

ever felt like a burden and detracted from the fun that you have playing football?

DONOVAN McNABB: At times I think it would be overlooked. When I am out there with my guys, you know, obviously people talk about some of the success that I had, but it's all of us being together and out there being able to execute and when you are having fun doing what you are doing I think a lot of times people really don't understand that when I say it is a dream come true being out there on the field every time, I mean it. It's nothing that you just run off and say, you know, well, he's just out there having fun. It's a little bit more than that. You got 11 guys out there on the offensive side who may not be a star for any other team, or you know, when he's out there on the field he may not get 9 or 10 catches, but a guy could be happy with two or three catches but they could be big catches in a game that they may not get a lot of publicity for. But you don't have to worry about that with our team. It's all about wins and losses. Not a lot of people talk about wins and losses and that's mainly because it's all about stats. If you look at the stats and say, well, you know, he passed for 300 yards, running back rushed for 100 yards, had 15, 16 tackles, but if the team loses nobody cares. So when you have a team like this Philadelphia Eagles team coached by Andy Reid who consistently tells us that, you know, we have to be able to execute in all phases, be very productive, offense has to put points on the board, defense has to stop them. When he says that you have to take it to heart.

Q. All week there was a lot of talk about a team of destiny in the game. With all the things that have happened to this team this year, kind of wins you have had, is it possible that this is the team of destiny?

DONOVAN McNABB: No destiny. Destiny doesn't work for anybody. We were destined last year and it didn't work. We are just a team that's out there to obviously take another step forward.

Q. When the Eagles were 0-2 did you feel that you had been travelling on a dirt road?

DONOVAN McNABB: No. It wasn't clean. (Laughs). But it's just sometimes you know, you go through hurdles in life. Adversities. And it's all on how you overcome it. I think you saw a team that continued to have their chins high, continued to stay positive, and continue to rally around one another, that we were able to execute the way we did.

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