

January 16, 2004

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

An Interview With:

TROY VINCENT

Q. How is the hip?

TROY VINCENT: Feels fine. Feels good.

Q. 100%?

TROY VINCENT: I don't think anybody is 100% at this point of the season but I feel awfully good.

Q. What does it mean to you personally just to be able to play?

TROY VINCENT: Last week was difficult time for me, not being able to play in the Playoffs, first time that's happened to me in my career. To sit and watch the anticipation of the game, pre-game, not knowing exactly what was going to take place, should I play, should I not play being on the bubble, wasn't a really good feeling that I had inside my stomach but it was the best thing for the club at the time. I needed that one week's rest. I came out on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and today, and just had a fine week of practice.

Q. Do you expect the Panthers to find out if you are 100%?

TROY VINCENT: I think they had an idea I would be ready for this week, and I am sure they should come out and find out if I am healthy. I would.

Q. Pressure on you guys this week because you have been there three times?

TROY VINCENT: Pressure or the opportunity to -- the window is closing. Three opportunities in three years. It just doesn't happen in the era of free agency. We just want to seize the moment and maximize the moment before we could start thinking about Houston. We have a tremendous obstacle in front of us and that's the Carolina Panthers. To have that opportunity again here is almost like deja vu, you are back here, not at Veteran Stadium, you are in the hype of going out in Veteran Stadium in style. Now we're back here a year later at the Link, with an opportunity to put the past away from us and move forward.

Q. Could you talk about the mindset after that 0-2 start; did you guys believe you could get to this point?

TROY VINCENT: I believed it. Coach Reid, his response to us after that New England loss and not showing any signs of desperation or panic, throwing in the towel. He just told us get away from the stadium, and go spend some time with our families, and come down for a 14-day season, we are going to take them one game at a time. By him responding that way, we responded.

Q. (Inaudible)?

TROY VINCENT: It's been great to see him develop. Started off last year where there was no pressure for him to play. We were pretty healthy. So they had an opportunity to sit back and learn and really see the game from the outside looking in. This year after week one when Bobby went down at first, it was a lonely feeling then Dawk not being there, being out there with three individuals that you are not accustomed to being out there with, it was difficult for myself. As you see them evolve and the way they have worked and they have stepped up and I don't think any other guys could have done it any better job than what these guys have done for us this football year. They have been tremendous from Lito, Shelton, Clint, they have all stepped up in crucial situations and played some big-time football for us.

Q. Did you watch the film this week and did you see anything different in Steve Smith that he has gone to another level in recent weeks?

TROY VINCENT: No, the same that we have seen all season long when you go back. I think I have watched about nine games and I have watched every play; every ball has been to him, this particular season up until the Playoffs, that was 143 attempts that he had had, and he makes big plays, it all starts up front, them stabbing the line of scrimmage, controlling the clock. When you run the ball successfully it opens up the passing lanes because if you are not stopping the run you are forced to bring the safety, extra safety in the box, create eight or nine in the box opens up the passing lanes outside. It's one-on-one coverage and they are finding the open man and he's coming up with the ball.

Q. What was the reaction when N.D. got

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hurt today?

TROY VINCENT: "Here we go again." You know, "this can't be happening." All season long, at practice, during the games, we just have been hit with the injury bug. It's been devastating to our football team. We have bounced back every week, you know, coach is sticking someone else in the lineup, making adjustments. We have been coming out, not letting that be a distraction in getting the job done.

Q. How different is the scrutiny and pressure from the fans compared to Miami or any other cities?

TROY VINCENT: They want to hang your head here. In Miami it's you lose and -- no one likes to lose, but the city has been just starving for some success, starving for a championship team. Rightfully so. We have brought them to that edge, that edge of their seats on many occasions and we just haven't brought the trophy home. Not only are the fans anticipating and their hopes, we as players, likewise we feel the same way, we want to win just as much as the fans want us to win.

Q. Any concern that where you are in your career and where you might be going, that you will be too emotional this week?

TROY VINCENT: No. I am too old for that, to play the emotional game. Last week was probably the most emotion that I think I have displayed since I have been a professional. I am ready. I think I can't dictate what is going to happen in the future. That's not a concern of mine right now. It is winning this football game. I think that's the approach that all of us that will be free agents at the end of this season that's the approach that we're taking. In particular myself, Bobby, Duce, Carlos is injured, but we can care less about what is going to happen here in the next few weeks. We want to get the job done now.

Q. Can you compare Jake to any other quarterback that you have faced?

TROY VINCENT: Very poised, I don't want to say he's a Peyton Manning, but play-action pass and is poised in the pocket. When you watch him game in game out, does a tremendous job of -- for a young quarterback looking you off. That's being taught, that's been imbedded in him, not giving away where he wants to go. Generally you see young quarterbacks stair down where they want to put the ball or what receiver, back, they are throwing it to. He does a tremendous job of looking you off. That all starts with their running game. He had had -- his success -- not to take

anything away from his talent, but -- because they run the ball so well, you know, it opens up passing lanes and he's an accurate passer, very accurate passer. He's not making the mistakes, you know, with not finding out what coverage you are in or what you are trying to do to him, whether it's picking up the blitz and he's putting the ball in the right place.

Q. What did you think about Coach Vox saying that Green Bay would beat you hear and were you surprised that he didn't back down from that?

TROY VINCENT: He's just confident in his football team and again, that's just his opinion. It didn't happen, and Carolina is now travelling here to Philadelphia. The best team will win, win that game on Sunday. I remember last year at the same time I think the podium was on the opposite side of the room, and I heard Warren talk, he was talking about the defensive, they were talking about what defense is the best at that point in time last year, who has a better defense. He had so much confidence, not that we didn't, that he just truly believed that they were going to come here and their defense was going to play better defense than ours for 4 quarters. We believed that. We believed no, we have not played as well as we liked to against the run, but we believed that our defense will come up big tomorrow.

Q. You said the best team will win. With the weather conditions that are going to be played in this game, isn't there some likelihood that the best team won't win if the game has to be decided by a guy slipping on the grass or something like that that won't happen?

TROY VINCENT: That was talked about last year with Tampa they hadn't beat a team or beat us in temperatures I think that was under 35 degrees, they came here and they whooped us pretty good. The team that makes the least amount of mistakes **tomorrow, the** teams plays closest to mistake-free football will win. Every turnover is crucial. Every first down is crucial.

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