

January 16, 2004

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

An Interview With:

JAKE DELHOMME

Q. Did you sense any emotional lift when Stephen came in the huddle today?

JAKE DELHOMME: No, I can't say that I noticed there was a change or whatnot. Usually Friday-afternoon guys, Friday-morning guys are kind of fired up, whatnot. It's kind of the -- your last day at work and you are excited about getting the work done, but I can't say I noticed anything different about the team just because he was in there.

Q. On draft day did you get any of those phone calls saying stand by the phone, we are going to be calling, you hear -- (inaudible)?

JAKE DELHOMME: No, drafts on Saturday and Sunday. The only calls I was looking forward to are the ones Sunday night hoping to get invitation to go to a camp. Certainly none of those calls came and it was at a point where it looked like I was going to have to go to Kansas. Then the New Orleans Saints called and offered me like a weekend tryout basis, one of those deals and I came in and went through a mini-camp and signed on that Monday following the mini-camp.

Q. What scholastic skills would have provided you with another job had you not made it in football?

JAKE DELHOMME: I think I probably could have done whatever I wanted to. I did very well in school. I don't know what direction that would be. Certainly I was going to play football. I did. I was a major in prephysical therapy so physical therapy school was something that I considered. But coaching was also something that I thought I could maybe do well in and I enjoy it. So you know, kind of glad I didn't have to go down that avenue just yet and just want to stay in this job for a little while.

Q. Any time during your period to get here that you thought you may not get here?

JAKE DELHOMME: Yeah, '98 in Amsterdam, Saints sent me over to play in the NFL Europe and I was a backup. You talk about a blow to your ego, I mean if you can't start in the NFL Europe, how are you going to make a roster. Then

you know, certainly I was behind Kurt Warner, behind a decent football player over there, and that was the toughest point, by far the toughest point and I just kind of came back, went to camp with New Orleans and one quarterback got hurt. Next thing you know I am getting a rep or two. Then a couple more reps, get in a game. Things kind of went my way. Here I am today.

Q. Did you get that much better or were you just overlooked or underestimated?

JAKE DELHOMME: I just think I was given an opportunity over time. I don't think my skills have improved that much since I came out of college. Certainly I am slower since I came out of college. I put on a couple more pounds, but you know, it is just -- the quarterback is the most underdeveloped position in this business. That's why NFL Europe I think is so crucial because you get young guys to go out and play, play in situations whereas you don't get that in preseason. You can have three, four receivers on the field at the time where you only have one quarterback. Your starters are going to get the most and your backup, and you get a lot of guys kind of fall by the wayside. It just took a little time.

Q. Before these last few weeks what would you say is the biggest game you have ever played in maybe before this year?

JAKE DELHOMME: It would be my first start against the Dallas Cowboys, late in the '99 season. That was my biggest game because it was my first pro start and it was a chance to finally see if I could actually play in this League, will the game move too fast in front of my eyes. I was lucky enough that it felt pretty comfortable early on in that game I think at that point I realized, hey, just keep working, given an opportunity somewhere, I think you can make it.

Q. Donovan McNabb -- any advantage or disadvantage to that (inaudible)?

JAKE DELHOMME: Certainly he's been in some big games. I don't know if I have ever -- I have been watching him play since he came in the League. I can't say that I have ever seen him play any better than he's right now. Certainly he's playing with a high level of confidence. They have been here before. They haven't had the success that they would want. Certainly I haven't been

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here before. But you got to start somewhere. You get these guys, the Montanas, Aikmans, the Farves; they have to start somewhere. That's how it was for the first game we played against Dallas. Hey, it's Quincey's first start and my first start in the Playoff game. Lucky enough to win and last week we were able to pull out another one, so I am just trying to be the same guy. I am not going to try to do too much this weekend, just try to do what I have done all season long and that's try to play hard for this team. Hopefully we can pull it out?

Q. Does it bother you when you look in the paper you see the Philadelphia paper it says nickname "Jake Who" or "Guy who couldn't start for the Saints"; do you laugh at that and realize this is a chance to make them know who you are?

JAKE DELHOMME: I don't need to read things to get me fired up to play. Playing this game is -- it's an honor to play this game, especially in the National Football League. I am just -- I don't need to read in the paper if they are saying this or that about me or whatnot, as long as my teammates like me and believe in me and my coaches are happy with the way I play that's all I care about. I am just -- I am having the time of my life right now. I am. I haven't changed this week what I have done the previous 18 weeks, so I am just -- I am enjoying this. This is a lot of fun. It's only fun when you win so hopefully we can go out and play well Sunday.

Q. On that note do you feel like your teammates are starting to believe more in you?

JAKE DELHOMME: I think so. I think without a doubt. I think we believe in each other. I think that started early on. I think **Mike Minter**, he hit it on the head when he said last year he felt it. That's one of the main reasons why I came to Carolina because of what they did to us in New Orleans coming to beat us in our own stadium. They had nothing to play for and we had everything to play for. Strong belief in this team. A lot of high-character guys, along with some decent talent. Things have worked out well for us.

*Q. How did **Stephen Davis** look to you today?*

JAKE DELHOMME: Like he does every Friday, same old Stephen, he's Stephen. Usually takes it kind of easy on practice on Friday. He certainly was in a good mood. He said about two words all practice long, which is the norm for Steve. So you know, he did okay.

Q. Could you talk about what he's meant to you guys this year and what it would mean to be able to have him there on Sunday?

JAKE DELHOMME: He's meant a lot to this team. I don't think there's any doubt. Especially I think he's meant a lot to me because our first three, four, five games of the year, it was Stephen right, Stephen left, Stephen up the middle. A lot of credit goes to him and our whole line and our tight end and fullback, and I was able to grow a little bit, and get some experience, get my feet wet a little bit. Certainly I'd love to have him on Sunday. There's no doubt about that. But if not, you know, we are 20 with DeShaun, with Stephen not dressing out, we have won two games when Stephen had to leave the game because of injury. We kind of like DeShaun too.

Q. What are the challenges presented by a secondary with similar experience to Stephen?

JAKE DELHOMME: They make plays. They are not just decent players. They make plays disguise coverages well, and they play hard. I get caught watching film this weekend, it seems like No. 20 is in on every single tackle. He's everywhere. He makes every play. He comes blitzing and he gets in the vision of the quarterback, he bats balls down jumping up. He seems like he's kind of like the ringleader back there. Now they will have Vincent back; then Bobby came back our first game, first week back and they are good. They play well together. It's going to be a huge challenge, a huge task for us on Sunday.

Q. Your teammates talk about how calm you are.

JAKE DELHOMME: I get excited. I get fired up. I use my hands a lot, whatnot. But I just try to stay as calm as I can be. In between the plays because if I get too rattled or whatnot, you know you might make a decision that's not smart for your team. And if I do make a mistake, I just -- I try to forget about it as fast as I can. Just okay, forget about it, and just be ready to go back in. I just -- you play well when you are not thinking you are just reacting. You play well that way. At least that's what I believe. I try not to think too much out there, and just react. Just take what I have done all week long, in the film room and on the field and in studying your playbook and just react on Sunday.

Q. At what point in time was it when you felt your teammates really started to believe in

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you?

JAKE DELHOMME: I think Jacksonville game that was the start. But I think the biggest game, the turning point would have to be against Tampa the second time, we played them at home, felt we were in control most of the game, and I threw a pretty dumb interception, in the fourth quarter they scored took the lead and we went down and scored on a two minute drive with no timeouts left. I think maybe that was you know, I know that was a big point for me, and I think it was a big point for them also because you know, they believed. We can get it done if we just all pull together. That only helped them believing in me a little bit more.

Q. What have you seen in Coach Fox's personality that makes him successful?

JAKE DELHOMME: He's the same guy day in day out. He's a high energy guy. He likes to have a good time on the field and we're going to work at it, and he's not going to let us get fat and lazy. We're going to practice hard. He's just -- he wants us to be the same guy. He's the same guy also, so that makes it pretty easy. Easiest thing about it is that we know what he expects of us, it's cut and dry. If there's a problem his door is open. You go talk to him. You might not like the answer you hear but he will tell you the truth. As players you respect someone like that. You respect the way he treats his players, you respect the way he coaches because he doesn't change, and you want to play for someone like him.

Q. How are you throwing a cold football, weather make any difference?

JAKE DELHOMME: I have played in a few cold games. I can say it is kind of nice all the heaters they have for us on the sidelines you come and get warm -- I will be honest with you when I get on the field Sunday I will be much more concerned with the Philly defense than I will be with the cold because they bring more concerns to me than the cold.

Q. You and Peyton Manning are old friends, came out the same year in high school. (Inaudible)?

JAKE DELHOMME: I can't really say that I have -- kind of played phone tag Tuesday with each other just congratulating on each other. Certainly I would love to be a part of the Carolina Panthers in the Super Bowl, and it would be kind of great to play against the Indianapolis **Colts** not only him but also Brandon Stokely my receiver from college, but that's -- I hadn't really thought

about that. Peyton, he deserves where he's been. He's been good probably since birth (laughter), you know, and he's just -- he works hard at it. I am glad to see that the success that he's having people finally getting off his back, and you know, but hopefully I can worry about that next week, hopefully maybe I can worry about it or think about it more next week, but as of now I am going to put that on hold.

Q. Talked to Brandon in the last couple of days?

JAKE DELHOMME: I have not. Kind of played phone tag and just kind of gave him my best on the situation there.

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