

January 16, 2004

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

An Interview With:

MUHSIN MUHAMMAD

Q. Do you feel the same about the grittiness?

MUHSIN MUHAMMAD: I am a wide receiver that grew up in Michigan and went to Michigan State for, four, five years although I have been acclimated to the south and I love the south, you know, every now and then you do miss playing in the cold and mixing it up and having that feeling of you know, having the goosebumps go across your back and on your arms, so I like the grittiness.

Q. What kind of reception are you expecting from these fans, the Playoff atmosphere in Philadelphia?

MUHSIN MUHAMMAD: I expect them to welcome us with open arms.

Q. How did Stephen look to you today?

MUHSIN MUHAMMAD: I mean he's the same ugly guy, you know, but he ran around pretty good. His leg looked pretty decent. I guess, he doesn't really go full speed all the time in practice, but he looked like a pretty good, you know, like he was moving around pretty well.

Q. As a competitor, how difficult do you think it would be for him to skip this one?

MUHSIN MUHAMMAD: I think it would be tough. I mean, Steve and I, we came in the NFL the same year together. You are talking about back in 1996, and for both of us this is you know our second Playoff, and I was in the NFC Championship game that year. I think he was knocked out of the Playoffs I think first round. Washington was, so this game is big for him. He really want to play in this game. But I think more important, to reinjure it and not be able to play in a Super Bowl I mean that's even more devastating. He has to do what is best for him.

Q. Going back to '96. You and (inaudible) talk a little bit about the long road coming back and finally back in the Playoffs?

MUHSIN MUHAMMAD: I mean, it has been a lot of ups and downs, it's been a lot of peaks and valleys and a long time coming. This is what you play the game for. 16 games, training

camp, minicamps, I mean, the whole bit, you play for a chance to go to a Super Bowl, and win a Super Bowl. So this is special. I mean, it hasn't happened in a while, you know, and it makes you embrace it a little bit more.

Q. Talk about the quarterback last five games. Jake has just played lights out football. Talk about maybe how he's really developed, especially with you and Steve Smith, the connection that you guys are starting to have?

MUHSIN MUHAMMAD: I will tell you what, yeah, Jake has been doing an awesome job, and I am not just trying to stroke him because he's standing over here to my left, but no, he's been playing above himself, and for a guy who hasn't been here for, you know, three or four years, learning receivers, really didn't get a chance to take snaps with the first team in training camp, and preseason games, I mean, he's doing a phenomenal job of learning where guys are going to be. I think that's the toughest thing for a quarterback is to know and learn each receiver because everybody has their own personality, where they like the ball, how this guy is going to run a route. That's tough for a guy that's dropping back and got 300-pound guys running at him. Over the course of the season he has gotten better and better and better and I think what we have seen lately is that now he's comfortable back there. Our offensive line has given him time to really make good decisions back there and he's playing better and better.

Q. When you went up to Green Bay for the final game in '96 were you nervous?

MUHSIN MUHAMMAD: Yeah, I was nervous. Who won't be nervous as a rookie going in, but I think more than anything, I really didn't understand, you know, what it was all about at that point because I figured it would be good all the time. We had Lamar Lathon, Kevin **Greene**, Sam Mills, you know, we had awesome defense, and you know, our offense was good enough that we were going to get better and better each year. I figured, hey, man we didn't win it this time. We will be back next year.

Q. Do you sense any of that you a from the young players on this team?

MUHSIN MUHAMMAD: Well, it's hard to

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kind of get a take on what the guys are thinking about, what is in their heads, but I think that they are hearing it enough from the older veterans and guys that have been around and you know, have played years and years and years and haven't been to a Playoff, and things like that, or you know, guys who haven't had a ring or guys who actually won rings to know that this is an important game.

Q. Various personalities, some guys don't mind, some guys don't like it. How do you make it that the young guys don't get overwhelmed?

MUHSIN MUHAMMAD: Tell them to stay in the training room. No, I mean, I think it exciting part of the game, actually. Some guys are going to get a lot more media coverage than other guys, and you know, we're not a selfish ballclub. I don't think anybody is really trying to hog the spotlight or say I am not getting the spotlight, or anything like that. I think we have got a good group of guys and a good character of guys, and the media surrounding everything and the hype surrounding the game, I don't think is really affecting us that much.

Q. How good has it felt for you to have such impact in the Playoffs so far?

MUHSIN MUHAMMAD: We are playing good football and that's what is important to me. I want to win the Championship and that's the bottom line. All the media attention and everything can come after that, but up until this point, I was talking to the guys on the way over here they said, well, we ain't getting a lot of respect. I feel like respect has to be taken, you know; not given. So in order for us to get respect we have got to go out and earn it.

Q. Do you use the word respect? Bobby Taylor stood up there a few minutes ago and said he didn't think the Panthers respected the Eagles. What do you make of that?

MUHSIN MUHAMMAD: I think it's ball clubs, I think we both respect each other as ball clubs, actually. We have a lot of respect for what they have done. They won 13 straight. Been in the NFC Championship game two years straight, I mean, how can you not respect a team like that? I think they respect us because we played them tough. I think a lot of teams, you know, have played them tough but we really did when we did play them. Bobby, I played against Bobby in college, and **Troy Vincent** and I are friends, you know, so there's a level of respect on both sides of the coin there.

Q. Any coach demand as much downfield blocking -- (inaudible)?

MUHSIN MUHAMMAD: Not really. Not since probably high school when I was a running back, but no, I mean, I block a lot in this offense, but I don't mind it.

Q. Ever suffer a quad injury and if you did were you able to play again eight days after you suffered it?

MUHSIN MUHAMMAD: No, I didn't -- I have never had to play after having a quad injury but a hamstring injury I had and played the following week after I pulled a hamstring.

Q. How much has Coach Fox's energy does the team feed off?

MUHSIN MUHAMMAD: We have got energy -- I am just probably one of the calmer guys on the team. You got to see Jake when he comes up, you understand what I am talking about.

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