



**BEST OF THE BLOCKERS?**

For a guy who is not exactly a household name, San Diego’s **LORENZO NEAL** has certainly had a notable career. From starting Tennessee’s memorable “Music City Miracle: play in a 1999 Wild Card game to doing what six teams have hired him for – blocking – Neal has an impressive dossier.

It is highlighted by him putting his 245 pounds into onrushing defenders to clear the way for seven consecutive 1,000-yard rushers -- **ADRIAN MURRELL**, **WARRICK DUNN**, **EDDIE GEORGE** (twice), **COREY DILLON** (twice), and in 2003, **LA DAINIAN TOMLINSON**. Chargers head coach **MARTY SCHOTTENHEIMER** calls Neal the best blocking back in the NFL.

The seven consecutive 1,000-yard rushers **LORENZO NEAL** has blocked for, and choices by NFL coaches of the best blocking backs in the league:

NEAL BLOCKED FOR	RB PRODUCTION
Adrian Murrell, NY Jets, 1997	1,086
Warrick Dunn, Atlanta, 1998	1,026
Eddie George, Tennessee, 1999	1,304
Eddie George, Tennessee, 2000	1,509
Corey Dillon, Cincinnati, 2001	1,315
Corey Dillon, Cincinnati, 2002	1,311
LaDainian Tomlinson, San Diego, 2003	1,645

COACH	BLOCKING BACK CHOICE	COMMENTS
Baltimore RB coach Matt Simon	Alan Ricard, Balt.	“I think Alan is one of the best fullbacks.”
Browns head coach Butch Davis	Terrelle Smith, CLE	“We like his style of play and determination.
Bucs LB coach Joe Barry	Mike Alstott, TB	“He’s a punishing blocker.”
Dolphins off. coord. Chris Foerester	Lorenzo Neal, SD	“He has a tremendous desire to block.”
Vikings RB coach Dean Dalton	Tony Richardson, KC	“He’s a pretty physical back with good hands.”
Rams head coach Mike Martz	Fred Beasley, SF	--

**THIRD & ONE, COACH. WHOSE BELLY DO YOU PUT IT INTO?**

When they *gotta* get that one yard, which running back – past or present – would NFL coaches want to give the ball to?

Baltimore Ravens running back coach **MATT SIMON**, for one, would choose one of his own backs for the job – **JAMAL LEWIS**. “I like his strength,” says Simon. “All he needs is a crack and I am pretty sure that he could get a yard on his own.”

Ten coaches pick their third-and-short guy:

COACH	PLAYER
Bucs LB coach Joe Barry	Deuce McAllister
Broncos def. coord. Larry Coyer	Tony Richardson
Vikings RB coach Dean Dalton	Marcus Allen
Browns head coach Butch Davis	Larry Csonka
Titans head coach Jeff Fisher	Walter Payton
Dolphins off. coord. Chris Foerester	Mike Alstott
Rams head coach Mike Martz	Marshall Faulk
Chargers head coach Marty Schottenheimer	LaDainian Tomlinson
Baltimore RB coach Matt Simon	Jamal Lewis
Bears RB coach Tim Spencer	Walter Payton
Packers special asst. Vince Tobin	Jim Brown

**FEW FUMBLES**

Sure hands are something every NFL running back needs to have. New York Jets running back **CURTIS MARTIN** has some of the *surest* hands in the game, committing a fumble every 127.3 times he carries the ball. Of the top five active members in the category, Martin has the most attempts (2,927) and yards (11,669).

“Watch Curtis Martin run,” says Pro Football Hall of Fame running back **JIM BROWN**. “That is the way football should be played.”

Martin, who rushed for 1,308 yards last year, is one of only two players in NFL history (Pro Football Hall of Fame running back **BARRY SANDERS**) to rush for 1,000 yards in each of his first nine seasons.

“My goal is to become what isn’t the norm,” says Martin. “I want to feel like at 31, I’ve learned all the ins and outs that will help me be even better. I know my heart is in it stronger than ever, and I’m gaining a greater love for the game as the years go on.”

Following are the active rushers with the highest carries per fumble average (minimum 1,000 attempts):

PLAYER	ATTEMPTS	FUMBLES	ATT. PER FUMBLE	RUSHING YARDS
Priest Holmes	1,419	8	177.4	6,692
<b>Curtis Martin</b>	<b>2,927</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>127.3</b>	<b>11,669</b>
LaDainian Tomlinson	1,024	9	113.8	4,564
Warrick Dunn	1,425	13	109.6	5,799
Fred Taylor	1,377	13	105.9	6,356