



BIG SANDY’S SMITH MAKES BIG TIME

New Chicago Bears head coach **LOVIE SMITH** hails from Big Sandy, Texas – a town of 1,200 people.

A hamlet small in size but big on football, Smith is not the only famous football name to hail from Big Sandy. The late **DAVID OVERSTREET**, who played running back for Oklahoma and the Miami Dolphins, also got his start in the tiny Texas town.

A hardcore Dallas Cowboy fan growing up, Smith is your typical Texan, with football being a huge part of his life. “You know Texas football,” he says. “Everything revolves around it.”

His love for the game translated into tremendous on-field success, as he helped lead Big Sandy to two state championships in the mid ’70s. From there, he went on to become a second-team All-America at Tulsa University as a defensive back

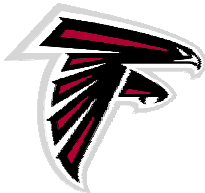
Smith still points to Tulsa – where he also took his first college coaching position after spending several years coaching at his old high school – and his hometown of Big Sandy as “two of my favorite places.”

Though the size of the players, strategy of the game and the atmosphere surrounding it might change drastically from high school to college to the pros, Smith recognizes one constant: “fundamentals.”

“Playing and coaching in high school is about learning and teaching the fundamentals of football,” says Smith. “In every level of coaching, the key to success is making sure the fundamentals of our game are executed properly. Football becomes more complicated as you move from high school to college and eventually to the professional level, but stressing the fundamentals as a coach does not change.”

Following are five interesting pieces of trivia about Big Sandy, Texas:

- Big Sandy got its name because there is a layer of sand several feet deep surrounding the town.
- Though it might sound like a desert, Big Sandy actually grows peaches, corn, watermelon and purple-hulled peas.
- The town formed because it marks the intersection of two major railroad lines and three major highways.
- Mayor **LYNDA CHILDRESS** claims to be on a first-name basis with nearly all of her constituents except for her elders, whom she addresses as “Mr.” or “Mrs.”
- There are 12 different churches located in Big Sandy despite its small size.



MORA THIRD SON TO FOLLOW IN FATHER’S HEAD-COACHING SHOES

There are the Shulas... the Phillipses... and now, the Moras – the third NFL family to have a father and son handle head-coaching roles in the NFL.

JIM MORA, former defensive coordinator of the San Francisco 49ers, takes over the Atlanta Falcons this season. He has said that he learned much from his father, **JIM, SR.**, about coaching through the years. The education he received shows through in his coaching style. He demands a lot from his players and coaches effort, runs all team functions at a fast pace and is considered a “player’s coach” who knows how to handle the modern NFL player.

“That’s how my dad taught me,” Mora says. “If my dad ever saw you standing there with your hands in your pocket or not coaching a guy, God help you. I don’t subscribe to that old theory of, ‘Oh they’re pros, they’ll turn it on on Sunday.’ Get it going right from the get-go. Keep it going.”

But above all, the younger Mora is meticulous. Just like his father, few coaches rival his attention to detail.

“That’s who I am,” says the 42-year-old Mora, who is now the third youngest NFL head coach behind Tampa’s **JON GRUDEN** and Jacksonville’s **JACK DEL RIO**, both 41. “I’m a neat freak at home, and keeping things in order is important to me. I knew that when I interviewed for the job here I had to make sure I showed them how prepared I was.”

In his 17 years as a coach, which included a stay on his father’s staff in New Orleans, Mora has jotted down pages and pages of notes and thoughts to prepare for the day when he would become a head coach. Coaching assignments in San Diego, New Orleans and San Francisco have provided ample preparation for a head-coaching position.

“He was so prepared, it blew us away,” said one Falcons official of why Atlanta decided on Mora.

One player who will certainly ease his transition to the head-coaching ranks for Mora will be the electric quarterback **MICHAEL VICK**, who missed much of last season with an injury. Mora is excited to see what a healthy Vick can do in 2004.

“It’s going to be a lot of fun to see No. 7 run around,” says Mora. “When you’re playing against him, he puts a lump in your throat. I’m extremely excited to be sending him out for my team.”

Following are the records of father and son head coaches to have patrolled NFL sidelines:

FAMILY	COACH	TEAM(S)	RECORD	COACH	TEAM(S)	RECORD
SHULAS	Don	Baltimore, Miami	347-173	Dave	Cincinnati	19-52
PHILLIPSES	Bum	Houston, N.O.	86-80	Wade	NO, Denver, Buffalo, Atlanta	48-42
MORAS	Jim, Sr.	N.O., Indianapolis	125-112	Jim	Atlanta	0-0

