

January 20, 2006



An Interview With:

## BEN ROETHLISBERGER Pittsburgh Steelers

**Q. Can you describe how you feel now, confidence-wise, compared to how you felt at this time last year?**

BEN ROETHLISBERGER: I feel a lot more comfortable this time around. I'm better rested. My body feels a lot better. I'm more comfortable with the offensive understanding and I'm not quite as overwhelmed as I was the first time that I was in this situation last year. So overall, just a lot more confident, a lot more comfortable.

**Q. Can you talk about the confidence and the ease to which this football team is really going at their work, and how much more comfortable are you this year? It seems like everyone has improved all around with this football team.**

BEN ROETHLISBERGER: You know the last five, six weeks it's been do or die for us. We've been playing great football, playing as a great team and clicking on all cylinders.

I think all of us are playing with a lot of confidence in each other, and I think that's important that we continue to believe in each other, and have that confidence that the other guy can get it done with you.

**Q. This is your second year in the NFL and you're playing your second consecutive conference Championship game. Do you realize how rare an opportunity it is? There have been players who have been in the League 15, 20 years and played in only one or two of these, does that change your approach to the game?**

BEN ROETHLISBERGER: I think last year at this time we had a couple of guys stand up and say, listen guys, there is no promise that you'll

ever get back to this place again. I was lucky enough to get back here this year. You don't take it for granted. This may be the last time we ever get a chance to get to the Championship game. We want to make the most of the opportunity and take it for one game, and the game it is.

**Q Last year, a little more motivation into this season, what happened with your game?**

BEN ROETHLISBERGER: I think after what happened last year, after the disappointing loss to the *Patriots* at home, and my performance that wasn't up to par. It definitely motivates you to play better and not let your guys down – especially guys like *Jerome Bettis*, who are in this game to win it – for people like him. You don't want to let him down like I felt I did last year.

**Q. Are you comfortable with what you've learned about the *Broncos* defense this year, and how to attack them?**

BEN ROETHLISBERGER: I tell you, that's a tough defense. It's not going to be easy by any means. They show you a lot of different looks. They're very fast. I've watched a lot of film, trying to pick up things here and there. We're going to have to be on our 'A' game. They show you a lot of little of things. It's going to be a big challenge for us.

**Q. Let's go back to November where you guys had that three-game losing streak. And I know you guys had a players-only meeting where you guys got together for some things going into that Chicago game. Take us back to that moment, and what was said to fuel this six-game win streak that you find yourselves on?**

BEN ROETHLISBERGER: That was the moment that we said to each other, do or die, it's win or go home. Let's regroup, let's come back together as a team, let's start playing like we know how. That was kind of the turn of our season. We felt like from that point on, we really started playing as a unit, offensively, defensively and special teams. We just wanted to try to keep that ball rolling.

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**Q. What do you like about Jake's game when you watch him? Are you going to catch him in the beard department? That seems to be the big thing this week.**

BEN ROETHLISBERGER: That seems to be the topic on everybody's minds. Just watching him play, knowing about his style, you have to respect his athleticism. How he is out of the pocket, on the run, improvising, making plays, throwing the ball, side arm, under arm, overhand, everything. You admire his ability to be out there and really make plays.

**Q. You've had nice chemistry with rookie tight end Heath Miller. Can you give us your thoughts on that? He's also been pretty productive in the playoffs.**

BEN ROETHLISBERGER: He's done a wonderful job for us, stretching the middle of the field, opening it up on the outside for the receivers. He's become a big-time threat for us. And in the red zone, he's really done a good job of becoming another receiver. He's got great hands, he's very smooth. He doesn't make a lot of mistakes. And you know, that's saying a lot for a tight end, especially a young tight end in this system, because of all the motion and things we ask the tight ends to do. I talked to Heath, and I know what he's going through, and physically what he's going through, but he's stepping up big in the playoffs like we need him to.

**Q. You guys have won two straight road games, and now have a chance to finish this off by beating another top seed. How do you keep this roll going, and why is it so difficult to win so many games on the road?**

BEN ROETHLISBERGER: We're going in as the 'under dog.' And it seems we've been playing that role a lot this year. And the thing is, when you go on the road, no one believes you can do it but you. And that's what you need, and that's what I think fuels this team is that we know we've got each others' backs, and we don't have a crowd with us. We don't have the people picking us, but we have each other. And that's all we need.

**Q. They've talked about your improvement now, your second year in the League. Willie Parker has added the home run threat to your rush game. You've talked about Heath Miller as the tight end in the offense. Is this a much more improved team, despite the record than the one you had a year ago?**

BEN ROETHLISBERGER: People ask how do you live up the 15-1 team last year. I said we can be a better team and not have as good a record. I feel we're better on offense. I'm playing better, and I haven't made the mistakes. With the emergence of Willie Parker and Heath Miller, everyone has done an amazing job.

**Q. Is it an advantage or disadvantage that you haven't faced this team before?**

BEN ROETHLISBERGER: That's a good question. I don't know. It's tough. You've got to watch a lot more film, because you've never seen them before and you haven't prepared. We've never seen the defense that they do. It's definitely going to be a challenge for us. We have to be able to adjust during the game, whether that's in between series, at halftime, between quarters, whatever it is. We have to be able to make adjustments, because we're going to have to do it at some point in the game, because of how good Denver is, and the things they'll do for us.

**Q. How do you win this weekend?**

BEN ROETHLISBERGER: We have to come out and play good football. We have to play picture perfect football, offensively, defensively and special teams, because it's a good defense. It's a good team. They didn't get to where they're at for no reason. They played some pretty good teams and they're a good team themselves.

**Q. You came out on the attack using the play action. It seems Ken Whisenhunt is allowing you to do more. And if so, what are some of the things specifically, or more specifically that he's allowing you to do?**

A. I think Coach Whisenhunt has done a good job in the playing calling, of recognizing the talent we have spread out throughout the offense. We've got a lot of weapons on offense. I think we're really starting to utilize that. I think when we do utilize our receivers by throwing the ball and mixing it in, we become a better offense.

**Q. A lot of people have been talking about the altitude. Are you worried about that or is it a nonfactor? Have you ever been to Denver?**

BEN ROETHLISBERGER: My college coach said it's not the altitude, it's the attitude. I played at Colorado State my last year at Miami and I didn't notice it a whole lot. It's one of those things where you go out and hydrate. I think people use

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that as an excuse more than anything. Hopefully we won't be using it.

**Q. What do you attribute the success of the offense in the red zone to this year?**

BEN ROETHLISBERGER: I think we've done a pretty good job of not turning the ball over down there, I couldn't tell you our ratio, but we didn't turn it over much. I think Heath **Miller** is an added weapon. He's got big hands, he's a big target. When you can run the ball like we do with Jerome, the play action works, and we're open in the end zone. There's a lot of keys that keep the defense off balance and help this offense score when we get down there.

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