

January 20, 2006



An Interview With:

JAMES FARRIOR Pittsburgh Steelers

Q. James, can you give us an idea of what the preparation was like this week, and maybe just give us a clue of what the mindset of this football team is right now, as the No. 6 seed going on the road to play where many people believe is a difficult place to win a game in mile high in Denver?

JAMES FARRIOR: Anytime you're on the road and you're facing a tough opponent, it's going to be a tough environment. It elevates that in the playoffs. Our mindset going into the practices was our mind was focused on the job at hand. We have to pay attention to all our details, the scheme, the game plan, and everybody has to trust everybody and stay focused.

Q. The way things have gone this season, the postseason, and the final two minutes in Indianapolis last week, do you get the sense that destiny is involved, the way that things are going, there's something about this team that's coming together, at just the right team?

JAMES FARRIOR: We don't think about destiny and all that stuff. We go out and play hard for 60 minutes. We put all of our effort and all of our hearts into the game. And what happens, happens.

It's been an up and down season. We had a little slump there in the middle and we had our backs against the wall. And everybody just recognized the situation that we were in and we couldn't lose the game. So we went into our playoff mode a long time ago.

Q. When Joey Porter goes into some of his rants like last week, what he says during the week, and even after the game, how do you guys respond to that? And do you feel the sense that -- I don't want to say you have to

back him up, but what goes through your mind when one of your teammates does that?

JAMES FARRIOR: Sometimes it's very funny. Everybody in the locker room knows how Joey is, he's a passionate player. He sometimes says some things that might be taken out of context, and sometimes it's just him blabbing about stuff. He's a hell of a player, and we love him to death. I don't mind what he says, as long as he backs it up on the field.

When he says something like he did last week, he was upset about it. It was coming from the heart, so you can't blame the guy. Just give him a little time, and maybe he'll come up with something different next time.

Q. What is the difference between this team and last year's is team?

JAMES FARRIOR: I think the added pressure was on us last year, being 15-1. We had everybody talking about us winning it all and all that stuff. And this year, it's a little bit different. We've flown in under the radar, so to speak, a little bit, and we don't have that added pressure of being the No. 1 seed, and home field advantage. We're playing football, and that's all we really have to focus on, going out there and taking on the next opponent. And I think that might have hurt us a little bit last year.

Q. Your first two playoff opponents this year had a great quarterback, great running backs, great receivers. Denver is noted for its great running attack. How does that change defensively for you guys?

JAMES FARRIOR: I don't think it changes at all. Jake Plummer is playing probably the best I've seen him play in a long time. They have another good quarterback, and two great running backs this year. I think the challenge is going to be even tougher in this game. We definitely feel like as a defensive team we need to stop the run and try to force them into things they don't want to do. We can't have them running and throwing the ball. We're going to have to take something away.

Q. What would be your perfect start as a defense?

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JAMES FARRIOR: A perfect start would be everybody executing the defense that is called and just letting it play. If everybody executes and trusts, and believes in whatever call we have out there, and lets the defense work for ourselves, we're going to be fine. But a perfect start would be getting them off the field, get the offense back on the field as much as we can and try and get a turnover.

Q. For the linebackers on your team, what is the key to playing that Denver *Broncos* rushing attack. They like to come with that stretch run play, but you know you're going to get the bootleg play on the backside with Jake Plummer. Can you talk about the challenges of facing the rush attack from the Denver *Broncos*?

A. It's going to be a challenge, especially for our linebackers. We have to be patient in case they run the boot. And we do have to come downhill running that stretch play. I think our guys have to do a good job of standing on their feet. We're going to have to use our athleticism and stay on our feet and try to flow to the ball, and that will help us a lot.

Q. No team has ever gone on the road and knocked off the 1, 2 and 3 seeds in the same season. Why are you guys having success?

JAMES FARRIOR: Because we're looking at the challenge in front of us. We didn't go into the playoffs looking at it, we've got to win three road games and all of that stuff, we just went in, took it one game at a time, took each challenge that appeared to us, for that week. We haven't really been focused on the big picture. You have to take little, small steps at a time, and I think we did a good job of it so far.

Q. You mentioned that last year as the 1 seed you felt pressure. Are you saying going into this game there's no pressure to win, despite having missed these opportunities in the past?

A. There's a lot of pressure. It's the AFC Championship, it's the game away from the *Super Bowl*. It doesn't matter if you're 1 seed or 6 seed. It's a big game. And everybody knows what's on the line. We know what we're playing for. There's always going to be pressure in that sense.

Q. Last year you talked about you guys were 15-1, you came in as the No. 1 seed. And I

know last year ended with great disappointment. How did you guys, coming into this season, feel like you were an improved team, that you could actually improve on what we did last year?

JAMES FARRIOR: Well, you know, people always ask us what do you do -- how do you come back from a 15-1 season, what do you do to try to live up that? Our goal was just to try to play better, don't worry about how many wins and losses we have, just come in and play football and give ourselves a chance to get into the playoffs. We did that at the end of the season and we gave ourselves a chance. And that's all we can ask for. It's different in the fact that we all trust and believe we can get it done, no matter what the situation is. We've been through a lot of adversity this year. We're fighting through it and trying to stay focused and keep it one game at a time. Everybody says it, but it means a lot when you stay focused on the job at hand.

Q. The media is going nuts in this town, the fans are going crazy, impromptu pep rallies. You've been through this a couple of times. Do you guys have a chance to step back and look at it and soak in just the whole atmosphere around it or are you so focused, you don't enjoy what's going on?

JAMES FARRIOR: We're very focused, we're not worried about what's going on outside our locker room and outside our practice facility. Let the fans do what they do and have fun with it. We've got to go out and play on Sunday and that's our job. That's what everybody wants us to do. They don't want to see us at these parties and at the tailgates, they want to see us out on the field Sunday playing good football, and that's our job.

Q. Is that stretch play the one play that gives your defense trouble? And why is that because you guys are so good against the run?

JAMES FARRIOR: I don't know if it's going to give us trouble. I think we have the athletes to stop it. But like I said before, the key is going to be everybody staying on their feet and nobody being on the ground to cut that backside off. We're going to have to have great pursuit. We're going to have to have 11 guys running to the ball at all times. We've been doing a good job of that all year, I don't think it's going to be any different this time.

Q. You guys have played so well on the road this year. Why is that? Is that an

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advantage for you guys?

JAMES FARRIOR: That just gives us a little rallying point when we know we're on the road and everybody is against us. We're going to face a hostile crowd, and our job is to try to keep them quiet. That's our focus, is keep these guys quiet and out of the game. We feel like when we're on the road I think it brings us closer as a team because it's just us in the locker room believing we can win, anyway. So I think that's the main thing is just us being on our own, being by ourselves and having nobody but us to trust.

Q. He asked you about destiny a little earlier. When JB fumbled that ball, and you saw the other player for the Colts running down the field and make that spectacular tackle. You didn't get a sense that maybe something is on our side going on right now, particularly when that field goal kick sailed wide right?

JAMES FARRIOR: Actually, when the play happened I was just worried about getting back on the field and trying to stop them. So I wasn't thinking about anything about destiny or nothing like that. It was a crazy end of the game. It was a crazy play and Ben made a spectacular play. But we had a game like that last year in our divisional playoff game. Where we had a guy miss a field goal, and we thought we were the team of destiny so it backfired. We don't want to think about that last time.

Q. When you go into a game where you're trying to keep the quarterback in the pocket, like this one, what kinds of things do you have to do to make sure that you're not vulnerable in the middle of the field?

JAMES FARRIOR: Well, we're going to have to do a good job of our defensive line and our linebackers, whoever is blitzing, to keep and not overload one side or the other. When he gets out of the pocket he's a very good thrower, he's very accurate. He knows how to keep a play alive and keep the play running. Everybody is going to have to play our responsibility when we're rushing, and try to get good penetration in the middle and get the guys something outside to try to contain them like that.

Q. Can you talk about their two running backs, Anderson and Bell, and how they're different and how you go about attacking each one?

JAMES FARRIOR: Anderson is the starter, he's going to get a lot of carries. He's a

little bit bigger than Bell, and I think Bell has more speed. But he has good power. He's got good vision and balance. Both of them run well. I think Mike Anderson might have a little more inside running capability, and Tatum Bell likes to hit it outside a little bit, because he has more or less speed. We've got to be prepared for the typical one, two punch. We've got to recognize which guys are in the game and what do they like to do. That's how we're going to approach it.

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