

January 20, 2006



An Interview With:

MATT HASSELBECK

Q. You took some criticism last year from **Green Bay** during the playoffs. What did getting your first playoff victory do for you?

MATT HASSELBECK: I think it was two years ago in **Green Bay**. You know criticism comes with the job. Unfortunately, the last four years it's come down to the last play for the game for us in the playoffs, but I don't think we were really that close to being a team that could make it deep in the playoffs in years past. I think that's a different story with our team this year.

I'm really proud of the way our team played this year. We've come together and fought through adversity, and I think we deserve to be in this game. I think we've played well enough to put ourselves in position to be in this position. It's been a much different year for our team.

Q. Are there any rituals that you go through before games or as you go through bigger games like this way to sort of calm yourself down and get ready?

MATT HASSELBECK: Not really. The schedule has not changed. It's the same schedule they used in **Green Bay** when I was there. I'm sure it was the same schedule in San Francisco when Coach Mike was there. We do the same thing. Wake up, chapel, pregame meal, drive to the stadium. We picked up a hitchhiker last week named Trent Dilfer, and it was fun. It felt like old times.

I don't make more of the game than it is. It's just I feel very fortunate -- this is kind of a dream come true for me to play professional football, something I've always wanted to do, something I've always dreamed of. It's just fun for me. Sundays are very, very fun.

Q. Talk about the tempo. How does it help you move the ball defensively.

MATT HASSELBECK: It's not something I like to talk about a lot. Obviously that's one of the

things we do well. We switch our personnel groups early and often. We are constantly changing personnel for that reason, just as when we call an offensive play, the defensive has to call a defense. The quicker you can make them think or have to react. The less time they get to recognize what you're doing at the line of scrimmage, the better that is.

We use a quick count a lot. There are six different cadences as a weapon. We use the cadence as a weapon. We don't just mix it up to mix it up, there's a reason why we do it. There are reasons why we go three wides or four wides or five wides. We go three tight ends, we go two tight ends in **Mack Strong**. We do different things for different reasons and we try to be offensive on offense.

Obviously when I first got here, maybe not obviously, obviously to you, but **Mike Holmgren** would say, "I want tempo, I want tempo," I didn't really know what that meant. I wasn't really sure. People had to explain to me. Now that I see how it works, it's great. It's a fast break offense. It's fun. It's fun now that we all get it. You have to be in shape. A lot of times you'll see our offensive line and they're in the huddle ready to go and the team we're playing, they're gasping and winded and they're saying, "Take me out of the game, sub someone else in." And it's a competitive advantage to hurry up the game, to use offense offensively.

Q. Is too much made to have experience in a game like Sunday?

MATT HASSELBECK: I don't know. I'm not an experienced guy in these situations, so I'm not going to pretend I have all the answers, I don't. What I can say is that we've got some guys on our team and some coaches who do have experience. And if you watch how those guys have approached this week or last week, there's some common denominators. They haven't changed anything from what they've been doing all year. They continue to work really hard in the weight room, on the practice field, in meetings. They realize the importance of this game and they're sticking to it. It's been a long season. This will be like our 22nd game or something like that. The **Joe**

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Jureviciuses, the guys that have been in this games, they continue to work hard in the weight room, show up early, leave late, watch a lot of films, work hard. It seems like it's a formula for success for those guys, and so I just try to follow their lead a little bit.

Q. How different is the mind-set of this team versus last week?

MATT HASSELBECK: I think last week, there was a lot of talk about that. To us as players, I'm not sure that it mattered a whole lot. The fact that it was 21 years since the last win. None of us were **Seattle Seahawks** fans 21 years ago, at least I don't think any of us were.

I think what we all did learn last week was that contrary to what you hear, there is a lot of history and tradition and pride in **Seattle Seahawks** football. A lot of times when you think of organizations with history and tradition you think of the **Packers**, the **Redskins**, the **Giants**, the **Bears**, those teams. But there is history here, there is tradition here, it just started in 1976.

It was really neat to see how much us winning that game meant to some of the former players here in Seattle, the Steve Largents, the **Curt Warners**, the Steve Raibles, Jacob Greens, you see interviews with these guys, it means a lot to them. They still have a lot of pride they were a part of something special when they played for the Seahawks. I think that's the thing we learned the most.

This week we have a similar opportunity in that we're hosting a championship game here, something that's never been done. We have an opportunity to win a championship game, something that's never been done with our franchise. The opportunity to be a part of history, we don't take that lightly. That's important.

Q. How much does it help for you and this team to have Mike as your leader and a guy who has been down this road before as you enter uncharted territory?

MATT HASSELBECK: We have a lot of playoff experience on our coaching staff and certainly a lot of Super Bowl rings, if you look at **Mike Holmgren**, Ray Rhodes, those guys, a lot of our assistant coaches. I think it's going to be important for us, those of us who haven't been down this road to follow the lead. And Mike has done a great job, obviously, handling situations this year. It hasn't always been easy and his job is not always an easy one, but he's the man in charge, and he sets the tone and we just have got to follow it. I think we've done a good job of that this year.

Q. What is it that Mike Holmgren is able to do that helps quarterbacks feel at ease?

MATT HASSELBECK: Define feel at ease. (Laughter.)

Q. What is his genius? What is he able to bring to the table that led to the development of Brett Favre, yourself, and all the quarterbacks he's worked with?

MATT HASSELBECK: I don't know. If you asked him he would tell you he learned from some great coaches and he's probably passing down a lot of what he learned to us, and I know that he considers himself to be a teacher first. That's where his background is. He was a high school teacher, and he's always coaching football, but he's also -- I think he's a pretty good teacher on other stuff too, whether it's life skills or parenting or relationships.

And I think that when he's done, the guys who played for him will also say, hey, I learned a lot of football from this guy, but we learned more than that. I don't know, I know that when I got drafted to **Green Bay**, one of the things my dad said to me, was, Hey, you really are kind of lucky to go to **Green Bay**. **Mike Holmgren** is the head coach. Ron Wolf is the GM. This is a good place for quarterbacks to go and you're going to learn a lot from these guys. And I really did.

Obviously being with Mike and coaches that are sort of disciples of his for so long has helped. And now I feel I better understand what it is he's looking for. And when you're out on the field you have to make split-second decisions and your job as quarterback, or Mike, is to make decisions he would make if he could be playing the game.

That's what I try to do. And if you do that, he's going to be pleased and he's going to continue to work with you. If you're not doing that, he's not going to be pleased and he's going to be hard on you.

I don't think -- it's not always easy. He is tough on the quarterbacks, but if you do it his way, things seem to work out.

Q. Matt, there's been plenty of talk about the fans in the stadium making noise for you guys on Sunday. There are fans in Central and Eastern Washington in the Pacific Northwest that can't be in the stadium. What do you say to the fans around the state that love and support you guys that can't be here?

MATT HASSELBECK: We appreciate it. We have our training camp over in Eastern

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Washington in Cheney. Shoot, I think it was **Jimmy Johnson** who said -- this year we played in south Alaska, we have the Alaska fan base and we don't technically play there. I don't know that anybody knows that. We have got Oregon. We did our big scrimmage last year and the year before in Portland. People talk about the **Green Bay Packers** a small market team in **Green Bay**. That's not really true. They're like the Wisconsin **Packers**.

I feel the same way for our team. We're the **Seattle Seahawks**, but we're all the Pacific Northwest. If Hawaii doesn't have anybody that they root for, we would love to have Hawaii too. The more the better. Our fans have been great. When I got here, people talk about the 12th man and the Kingdome and the loud noise. I was skeptical because we were playing at Husky Stadium and it didn't feel like home. We've moved into Qwest Field and it's been totally different. Our fans have been great and that crowd noise is -- people underestimate it, but it's important and our fans take a lot of pride in it, too. They are a part of this thing. They are a real part of this thing. We've talked about it. We raised that 12th man flag before the game. I'm sure other teams try to do something like that. We don't do it to do it, it means something here for our team.

The person who gets to raise the flag, it's a big deal. My mother got to raise the flag last year with some of the other moms. It was a big deal to them. It was a big deal for us. I get goosebumps thinking about it. I don't know who he's going to do it Sunday, but it's an honor. We look forward to that kind of thing. I think our fans should be proud. They've done a great job.

Q. How much is your offense compromised or your preparation compromised by Shaun missing last week and not having Bobby and Darrell until today?

MATT HASSELBECK: It's probably compromised more having Trent Dilfer talk about it on NFL Network all the time. He knows everything there is to know. No offense, Trent. I'm not worried at all about Shaun. I'm not worried at all about Bobby. I'm not worried at all about Darrell.

Bobby and Darrell have missed significant time this year, and other guys have stepped up and played well and haven't missed a beat. In the past, Darrell has not practiced at all, not even with our team, come out and played the greatest games of his career. Bobby Engram and I have a history, a lot of experience together. This is our fifth year together. I don't anticipate any problems there. And like we've all seen, **Shaun Alexander** plays

his best games in the spotlight. When the games are the biggest, he seems to play his best. We've never played a game this big, so I would expect him to have one of his best games, as well.

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