

January 20, 2006



An Interview With:

Shaun Alexander

Q. You've talked a lot about watching opposing running backs while on the sideline. Do you think maybe this week you'll watch what an opposing receiver like Steve Smith is doing out there?

SHAUN ALEXANDER: Yes, Steve is a great receiver. He's so explosive, so there will be times when I'm peeking up on the screen and hoping that he's not doing to us what he has been doing against everyone else. When you play against a guy like that we have to keep him off the field because he just makes plays.

Q. You haven't had one of your signature games in the playoffs yet. Is that the nature of playoff football? Is it what teams do against you guys? What do you think the reason for that is?

SHAUN ALEXANDER: I just think teams have been doing a good job kicking my teeth in. It's part of the game.

Q. Shaun, what concerns, if any, do you have about being fully effective tomorrow or in Sunday's game?

SHAUN ALEXANDER: I think whenever you play football at any time it could be your last play. I think that's the great thing about this sport. Every week and every play you have to play like it's your last. I'll just go out there and play hard and that's the best I can do.

Q. This time last year you were coming off of a playoff loss. There was speculation that Mike Holmgren wouldn't be back or you wouldn't be back. Does it seem amazing to be in this position?

SHAUN ALEXANDER: It's all part of Mike's great plan. We really, after the season was over, after everybody takes a deep breath, we knew that this was going to be a great situation for us and a great team and that we were only a

couple of pieces away from solving the puzzle to get to an NFC Championship. You know, we've come together as a team and we're just really close.

Q. You had a big game against this team last year, 195 yards I believe. How much do you draw on that performance from last year?

SHAUN ALEXANDER: You've got to. You have to be able to pull around some of the things that you've done. At the same time they've seen the tape too. There are going to be some things they're going to do better this time around than they did last time.

Q. Shaun, after last week's game you essentially didn't play a prominent role in the victory. You're the league MVP and you're about to become an unrestricted free agent. How much pressure is on you in this game?

SHAUN ALEXANDER: There's never really any more pressure that any game or any situation could ever put than I put on myself. There is no title that someone can put on me that would give me more pressure. I put extreme amount of pressure on myself to go out there and perform and try to be better every play. I'm just going to go out there the same way I always do, and that's to try to do something that's even more amazing than some of the things I've been able to do before.

Q. Mike addressed this earlier. How difficult will it be to stay focused on this game and to not look ahead?

SHAUN ALEXANDER: It's easy to stay focused on this game because you know one play could change the whole game and you're not playing anymore. So for us, you know, every play counts. Every series counts. Of course I had a turnover last week, and then that one play could have changed everything for us. It all counts. It's really easy to stay focused when you know every little play and every little mistake can become big for your team.

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Q. In what way is Carolina's defense different than the Washington team you played last week?

SHAUN ALEXANDER: I think just as a group, I think that they're just a little bit different. Both the Redskins and Carolina have a very aggressive defense, but I think Carolina is just a little different. Their two defensive ends are amazing so that changes both of them, the stuff that Redskins could do compared to what Carolina can do. They are a little bit different. It's going to be a new challenge for us.

Q. Shaun, I know you guys are trying to keep the same routine. This isn't just another game. How do you personally try to block out all the hype? Do you avoid watching TV or reading newspapers, or do you not go out as much?

SHAUN ALEXANDER: I don't really change anything. I don't really watch too much TV, and I don't read a lot of papers. It's funny because somebody could write something bad about me or my teammates and I might not know who they are. For me, we just play football. I stay focused on my family and all on my teammates and we go out to the game and play with all we've got.

Q. There's been a lot of talk about your coach's relationship with the quarterback. I know he talks to the other guys on the team too. What's the most important piece of advice Mike has given you in the last few years?

SHAUN ALEXANDER: When I get in the red zone, score every time. Great advice.

Q. Seriously, anything?

SHAUN ALEXANDER: Mike, I think the best thing that he's done this year for every one on our team is because he's so focused and so passionate, it's been just to have fun. By the time we get to the game, it seems we know the Xs and Os. We know about passion and we know he's fired up and he just said, "I've done all my screaming and yelling, you guys go out there and have fun." And it's been working for us.

Q. There's probably a lot of people in this room and just around Seattle that have never been here before. Is it nice to feel you've put Seattle on the map with football this year?

SHAUN ALEXANDER: It's funny because Matt is one of those guys who always brings it up, brings it to my attention, like, "Man, we're doing something special here." I remember when we first got here, we were 6-10 and teams would come

here and be dancing on the sidelines and have a good time beating us to death. That year was rough, and then going from that to being respected and then to being a playoff team to win our division to being here. It's been unbelievable but a satisfying thing to be able to know that when teams play against us, they have to play pretty well to beat us. It's a great accomplishment for us.

Q. That Carolina defense you talked about has done a pretty good job of shutting down the first two running backs they played in the postseason. Have you seen anything on films that gives you confidence heading into this game?

SHAUN ALEXANDER: There isn't anything that gives me confidence. There are weaknesses and strengths. I wish I could see more weaknesses, but there just isn't. We've got our work cut out for us. We know it's going to be one of those long games. It's the championship game.

Q. You have made your mark during the regular season, what about the postseason? Do you really feel like you still have yet to show people what you can do?

SHAUN ALEXANDER: It would be great to have a big game in the postseason, but I don't care as long as our team wins. If I have to have nine yards again for another victory, so be it, I'll take the nine yards and see you in Detroit.

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