

An interview with:

JOHN MADDEN

JOHN MADDEN (*Opening statement on entering the Pro Football Hall of Fame*): It's just so big, it's hard to imagine. You know, when I was voted in, it was the day before the **Super Bowl**. I had that, then the excitement of it. I thought I was going to get a call before. When I didn't get a call, I didn't think I made it. Then I'm watching the **NFL Network**, **Rich Eisen** is up there announcing it. He goes **Troy Aikman**, **Harry Carson**, then he said **John Madden**. I don't remember anything for the next eight or 10 hours. Then the next day we had the **Super Bowl**.

So you have all this time to think about what happened, your whole career, all the players and everyone. You have the election, then you have all the time to think about it. Now it's in a couple of weeks. That's going to be one of the biggest weekends of my life.

Q. What influence did **Al Davis** have on you and your career?

JOHN MADDEN: **Al Davis** has been the biggest influence in my professional football life. I mean, he was a guy that gave me an opportunity, one, to get into professional football in 1967 as an assistant coach, and then at the age of 32, giving me the opportunity to be the head coach. That was something that was very special. I mean, there weren't a lot of people that thought **John Madden**, the linebacker coach, is going to be the head coach of the **Raiders**. **Al** believed in me, then gave me the opportunity.

During the time, the 10 years I was head coach, he gave me everything. I was never turned down for one thing that I ever wanted for football by **Al Davis**.

Since I've been out, we're still friends. We still see each other all the time. I just had dinner with him last week on his birthday. He's just, you know, one of my best friends, one of my best friends in life.

You know, if it weren't for **Al**, you don't know where you would have gone.

Q. How did he shape the league? If **Al Davis** weren't in this league, would it be a much different place?

JOHN MADDEN: You know, you wonder. If **Al Davis** had his way, I don't know that there still wouldn't -- if he was commissioner of the league or had his way, I don't know that there still wouldn't be an **American Football League**. He was head coach of the **Raiders**, '63, '64, '65, then went to become commissioner of the **AFL**. He really wanted to establish the **AFL** forever, keep that as a league. The owners voted to have the merger and so on. That's where he started to shape it.

He was so influential in everything they did because he was an owner who knew football, was a member of the Competition Committee, just very powerful.

Q. **Pete Rozelle**, your feelings about **Pete** first when you were with the **Raiders**. It's no secret he and **Al** didn't get along then. Then **Pete Rozelle** after you joined the networks, how did you feel there?

JOHN MADDEN: I thought **Pete Rozelle** was a great commissioner. I thought that when I was coaching and I thought that after I got out of coaching. He and **Al** had the thing back and forth. It went all the way back to when **Pete** was the commissioner of the **NFL** and **Al** was commissioner of the **AFL**. That was something that just continued on.

In the history of all sports, I think one of the best commissioners ever was **Pete Rozelle**. I got along with him fine when I was coaching. A lot of people don't know that after I retired, **Pete Rozelle** offered me a job. He offered me a job to work in the **NFL**, in the league office. They were looking for kind of a football guy at the time. I didn't want to move back to **New York**.

That was the kind of relationship I had with him.

Q. Can you remember the moment when you figured out you were not going to be a player, you were going to be a coach? Do you remember the first time you knew of a Pro Football Hall of Fame?

JOHN MADDEN: Well, first of all, it wasn't a specific day. I got injured and I didn't know how bad the injury was. I knew it was surgical, then I got the cast, got an infection, I was in the hospital

for a long time. It didn't look very good. I knew I wasn't going to play that year. But I stayed the whole year with the **Eagles**.

As I look back on it now, that was really a transition time for me because I used -- I had to go in early for treatment, then after treatment the only other guy there was **Norm Van Brocklin**. He was in the locker room. In those days we didn't have meetings rooms. He was watching film in there. I would sit in the back and watch film. Then he invited me up to the front. So every day I would just go and kind of sit up in front and watch the game film with him.

It was the first time in my life that I really looked at the overall part of football. Then the longer that season went, the more I knew that I better start getting serious on this coaching thing because it doesn't look like I'll ever be playing again.

Then the **Hall of Fame**, you know, just from the start. I'd always followed football. You would hear guys going in, their names. The history, the whole thing of pro football being so important to me, that the **Hall of Fame** was always important to me.

Then I guess the first real recollection is when you would see it when they started having the **Hall of Fame** game. I remember that's when I was coaching the **Raiders**. It used to be on Saturday, the first Saturday before the preseason. The next week everyone started preseason. We would have family day on that day. We'd have a scrimmage in the morning, then family day, then I'd come back to training camp and watch the **Hall of Fame** game. You would see the induction, the whole thing. That was back in the 1970s. I think I've probably watched every induction, most of the **Hall of Fame** games since then.

Q. Can you talk about that 1976 season, what that meant to you and the whole organization. You'd been so close so many times, then finally to get to the Super Bowl and win it the way you did.

JOHN MADDEN: Well, the thing I remember after that game, the next week I was at a banquet. **Roger Staubach** was there. He came up and shook my hand and said, 'One thing about it, they can never say you can't win the big one again for the rest of your life.' And that was pretty strong because **Roger** had gone through that same thing. I mean, everyone does. **Bill Cowher** was going through it. Everyone kind of goes through that, where you have a good team, you're getting close, but you haven't won it. **Dan Marino**

went through it. That's your, 'Yeah, but.' They have a good record, yeah, they win a lot of games, win divisions, but they never won the **Super Bowl**. When you win the **Super Bowl**, that eliminates all your 'Yeah, but's.'

It was just a great year, a great time. It was in **Pasadena**. Everything just fell right for us. Not only that year, but that day. It's still something that is imprinted on my mind. I can see most of the plays of that game.

Q. Can you talk about your days growing up in Daly City. You donated the lights at Jefferson High School. When you go to Our Lady of Perpetual Help, everyone wants to see the picture of you as an altar boy. Talk about growing up with John Robinson.

JOHN MADDEN: Yeah, that was a great thing. We used to play down at March Banks Park all the time. Before that, we played in an empty lot next to my house, atop of the hill in **Daly City**. **Daly City** is right next to **San Francisco**. Our downtown was really **San Francisco**.

But it was a great time to grow up, a great place to grow up in. I love **Jefferson High School**. My high school football coach was **Joe McGrath**. **Mike Orlick** was my basketball coach. Those are the guys that really got you started in what you are, what's important to you in life, how you go about doing those things.

Daly City, starting off with **Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Jefferson**, that was kind of the foundation of sports in life.

Q. It strikes me you might be a man without any enemies, or very few. Have you made any enemies in the course of all your years?

JOHN MADDEN: I hope not. I mean, there may be some, but they're not my enemies. I don't have any. I don't think, boy, there's that guy back there, I really hate him. I don't have any.

Q. One of the most incredible games you were ever involved in, since NBC is televising the NFL for the first time in eight years, is the Heidi game. What can you tell us about the Heidi game?

JOHN MADDEN: That was a bigger story and a bigger thing to people that were watching on television than it was to people that were there because whether you were there as a player, a coach or a fan, you were just watching the game. It was a great game against the **Jets**. We make this comeback. You don't know what the people

on television are seeing or not seeing. Then they pull the plug at the end of the game, they didn't see the end of the game where we came back and won.

That was a story that at the time of the game you didn't know. It wasn't a story. But then the next day it was a pretty big story. The second day after that, it became even bigger.

I think probably in that era, we have more games with names than anyone in the history of the **NFL**.

Q. As somebody that's lived in the Bay Area, when were you first aware of Tom Brady? Before he was at Michigan or when he entered the pros?

JOHN MADDEN: Really when he entered the pros. After he entered the pros, **Drew Bledsoe** gets hurt, **Tom Brady** becomes the starter. We did his first **Super Bowl**, we did that one. Then you start to learn about **Tom Brady**. **Tom Brady**, you kind of go backwards. **Tom Brady** at **Michigan**, then **Tom Brady** was a local Bay Area guy, went to Serra High School. You kind of learn all those things later.

To say I knew of **Tom Brady** in high school or even at **Michigan**, I really didn't.

Q. A lot of guys who have been top coaches or even guys who were just mediocre coaches, when they go into broadcasting, they say they always miss coaching. Has that ever been the case with you?

JOHN MADDEN: Yeah, I did miss it. It was one of those things that broadcasting really took its place. I'm not saying it's the same. People say, 'Is broadcasting the same as coaching?' I say, 'Hell, no.' Coaching, you win and lose. Broadcasting, you don't win and lose. Coaching was a lot bigger than broadcasting.

I went from a player to a coach to a broadcaster. I just enjoyed each part of it. I really never wanted to go back. To say I missed it, I probably missed the camaraderie, I missed the players, I missed that part of it. Other than that, it was just a pretty normal transition.

I did have opportunities to go back early, and I never even took the second step towards it.

Q. When is the last time you were on a plane?

JOHN MADDEN: The last time I was on a plane was the Sunday after Thanksgiving in 1979.

Q. Where to where?

JOHN MADDEN: I was going home. I had done a game in **Tampa**. It was my first year with **CBS**. **Tom Brookshire** had taken off. They had done the Thursday game on Thanksgiving, he and **Pat Summerall**. **Tom Brookshire** took off. He had a wedding in the family. They asked me to work that Sunday game in **Tampa** with **Pat Summerall**, which I did. It was after that game. My flight was from **Tampa** to **Houston** to **San Francisco**. It was the third time I had a panic attack. The flight attendant closed the door, that feeling came over me. I said, 'If I get through this, if I get to **Houston**, I'll never get on another airplane as long as I live.'

I got to **Houston**, got off the plane, took a train home. I haven't been on a plane since.

Q. Can you talk about your first day with the Raiders and Dwayne Benson? He was the only linebacker for you there to coach.

JOHN MADDEN: Yeah, I was all fired up. I was going to be the linebacker coach. I had all these drills. Every assistant coach, what he brings is his drills. I got all my drills. I got all my coaching. I'm going to coach up these linebackers.

I go to my first camp and I only have one guy, and it's **Dwayne Benson**. I ran him. I look back at it now, he looks back at it now, we both laugh at it. Usually you start off in training camp, maybe you have 15 linebackers. So I was doing the same amount of drills at the same speed and pace with one guy as I would had I had 15. I damn near killed **Dwayne**.

Q. I wanted to ask you about your video game. Did you ever expect it to get as big as it has? What does that do to your legacy, especially for those teenagers that may not remember you as a coach?

JOHN MADDEN: Well, I started the video game before there were video games. When we first started, we were going to make a computer game. When I got out of coaching, I had taught a class at the **University of California**, an extension class on football for fans. I was looking for tools. I was showing them films. I was going to write a textbook. **Trip Hawkins** came to me about making it a game for computers. I said there has to be 11 guys on a team. I figured it would be a good teaching tool, a good coaching tool. I didn't know anything about computers then, where they were going. No one did.

Anyway, we started and worked on this game for a few years. It came out in a computer version. Then, boom, lo and behold, here comes

the hardware for video games and we already have the software. There we go.

To say when I started I knew it was going to happen, I didn't know. But no one else knew. It was just something that we happened to be there first. We stumbled upon it. We're still going. It just gets bigger and bigger.

Q. This year's *Hall of Fame Game* between *Philadelphia* and *Oakland* includes both of your former teams.

JOHN MADDEN: I was talking when I first started about how great it was when I was elected into the *Hall of Fame* the day before the *Super Bowl*. So on Saturday, I had the *Hall of Fame* election. I don't remember anything for 10 hours. I just kind of went numb, was running on adrenaline. Then I had the *Super Bowl* the very next day. Now we're having the induction on a Saturday, induction into the *Hall of Fame*, which is the biggest personal thing in my life, then the next day or the next night will be the first game we do with *NBC*, *Al Michaels* and I with *NBC*. That will be the *Raiders*, the team that I coached obviously all those years, and the *Philadelphia Eagles*, the team that I was with that one year.

Everything kind of aligns right and feels pretty good, to tell you the truth. If a guy my size can float, I'm floating.

Q. Can you tell us what is bigger, to win the *Super Bowl* or being inducted into the *Hall of Fame*?

JOHN MADDEN: That's a tough question. I think you have to separate them because you really can't say one's bigger than the other. I think as a coach, as part of a team, I think winning the *Super Bowl* is. Then as an individual, going into the *Hall of Fame* is. Even though I recognize when you go into the *Hall of Fame*, you go into the *Hall of Fame* because of people, because of someone like *Al Davis* who gave me an opportunity, all the players who played for me, all those things.

I've thought about that. I know what the feeling was winning a *Super Bowl* and I know what this feeling is. It's going to get more intense. I'll be a hog and pick both of them.

Q. What do you think has been your biggest contribution during your career as a coach and analyst?

JOHN MADDEN: I don't know. I think that's something that other people look at as a contribution. I'm not real sure. I've been in it all

my life. I'm lucky. I'm the luckiest guy in the world. I never really had a job. I was a football player, then a football coach, then a football broadcaster. It's been my life. Pro football has been my life since 1967. I've enjoyed every part of it. Never once did it ever feel like work.

Q. Your *Raiders* teams were always kind of known as a cast of characters. Talk about your approach to those guys and how much fun you had being around those different personalities.

JOHN MADDEN: Yeah, you know, if they played on Sunday, that was a big thing with me. I had great players. We had fun. I always felt if it's a game, it has to be fun.

We used to have a longer preseason because we played six preseason games. We would have two-and-a-half month training camps. If you didn't have fun, just to break the monotony, people were going to jump overboard somewhere.

The thing I think people missed a lot is I have a core of not only great players but great people. They were solid people. *Jim Otto*, *Gene Upshaw*, *Art Shell*, *Willie Brown*, *Dave Casper*, *Fred Biletnikoff*. Those were solid, solid people. When a character would come in, he didn't lead the band; the band was being led by pretty solid guys. You had that. It was just a break in the monotony. *Ted Hendricks* was probably the biggest combination of a guy that was a character, great player, *Hall of Famer*.

You don't want characters just because they're characters – 'Boy, I got a whole bunch of characters, none of them can play football, but they're funnier than hell.' I got *Ted Hendricks*, who was a great player, a *Hall of Fame* player, now he's a character. I liked that, too.

Q. Can you tell me about *Pat Summerall*, what he meant to you.

JOHN MADDEN: *Pat Summerall* was great. I mean, I came in, it was my second full season, it was my third season with *CBS*, but my second full season. *Pat* accepted me. I didn't really have any idea what the hell I was doing, what television was all about. We went all those years, we never had an argument. I've always said, if you can't get along with *Pat Summerall*, you can't get along with anyone. He's just one of the nicest guys in the world, and a talented guy.

You just felt so confident with him because you knew that he had been a player, he had been a coach, he's been an analyst, he's a play-by-play guy. No matter what came up in the game, he was

going to know about it, he was going to know how to handle it. He was the greatest at putting a period at the end of a sentence. I could babble on and on and on. He in one sentence could make sense of what I said, which gave me a lot of confidence that I didn't have to worry, 'Geez, is this going to make sense?' I never worried anything about what he did. I just hoped I never became a burden on him.

Those were fun years. The years with **Pat Summerall** at both **CBS** and **FOX** were great years. I have as much admiration for **Pat Summerall** as you can have for anyone.

Q. Do you think it would be easier to coach nowadays than it was before?

JOHN MADDEN: No, it's harder to coach today than it was before. I tell coaches this all the time. I say, 'What you're doing now is tougher than what I did.' I think it's because of free agency. We used to be able to draft players, develop them, take an offensive lineman and put him on a 10- or 12-year program. This guy won't play for two or three years, but once he starts, he'll start eight or 10 years for us.

That's what I had. I had the same line, **Art Shell**, **Gene Upshaw**, **Jim Otto**, **Dave Dalby**, **Mickey Marvin**, **George Buehler**, **John Vella**, **Henry Lawrence**, I mean, the same guys, **Dave Casper** at tight end, **Biletnikoff** flanked out right, **Cliff Branch** flanked out left. You have those guys year after year after year, and football is not that way today. Everyone knew who my players were, the same guys.

MODERATOR: **John**, we appreciate your time, spending the past 30 minutes with us. We'll see you in **Canton** in three and a half weeks.

JOHN MADDEN: Thank you and I can't wait.

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