

January 17, 2007



An Interview with:

CHICAGO BEARS LB BRIAN URLACHER

Q. What do you think of the game coming up? You're in the NFC Championship game.

BRIAN URLACHER: I'm excited. It's the biggest game of my career so far. This is where we wanted to be when we started the season. It's a big test for us with the Saints coming in. We're just excited to have a chance to be in this game.

Q. How about the challenge of facing the No. 1 offense in the NFL?

BRIAN URLACHER: It's a big challenge for us, the things they do on offense. They move the ball around a lot. They have a great quarterback, pretty good running backs, good receivers, and a good offensive line. It's a huge challenge for us.

Q. What about the diversity in their running backs with the power and strength of Deuce and the speed of Reggie Bush?

BRIAN URLACHER: Our number one concern is stopping Deuce McAllister. We want to stop the run every week. So he is our main concern right now, especially after what he did last week. When they throw the ball, we'll rally to it and hopefully make the tackles. We have got to stop the run. Reggie is an explosive guy. He catches the ball well and he's pretty good in the open field. So we've just got to try and get eleven guys to the football and make some plays.

Q. Can you talk about how Coach Smith has got the program turned around there after you all had success early in your career and you have got the two young coaches, him and Payton, one step away from the Super Bowl?

BRIAN URLACHER: He's done a good job. Obviously the last two years we've been in the playoffs. His first year, we kind of were bit with some injuries, but the last two years, this is where we want to be. He's turned everything around, the way we do things, and the players we have here now. He's brought in pretty much everyone new, except for myself and I think two other guys, pretty much all new guys.

But he is a good coach, he is a player's coach. He takes care of us for the most part during the season, training camp, and it's paying off. I think as long as we keep winning, he'll keep letting us -- we don't really do two-a-days during training camp. We do one-a-days and have a special team practice, but he takes care of us. He played the game so he knows what it's like to be a player.

Q. How do you stop Drew Brees this weekend?

BRIAN URLACHER: Pressure on the quarterback is always nice. If we can get some guys in his face, put him in some bad situations, 2nd and long, 3rd and long, we think we'll have a chance to make some plays. He's a good quarterback. He's done it all season long, made plays. He's going to make plays on us, we just have to tackle the guys when they catch the ball and get them on the ground.

Q. You say Coach Smith turned things around. Anything specific you can name?

BRIAN URLACHER: Just the way his attitude is. He told us we were going to be good from the day he got here. He said we're going to be a good team. We're going to be good on defense. We're going to be a physical team on offense and we're going to run the ball. We're going to stop the ball on defense. And we've done everything he said.

His number one goal was to beat Green Bay and win the division. We've done that. And the next goal was to win the Super Bowl. So he's done everything he said so far, we just have to get that third one finished up.

Q. There's been a lot talked about Rex

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Grossman throughout the season. How nice was it to see him have such a good game last week?

BRIAN URLACHER: This is our problem. Rex was 14-3 at the start of this year. I don't know how many guys in the NFL can say that this season. I don't care what his numbers are, what people write about him. He's 14-3. That's enough said for me. I'm just tired of people talking about him, especially our media around here. The dude has won 14 games at the start of this year. That's pretty good if you ask me.

Q. The Bears have such a great football tradition. Do you have any sense what the town is like here, what the mood of the fans are and so forth, now that you're one step away from the Super Bowl?

BRIAN URLACHER: It's a little crazy right now. I was listening to the radio on the way to work, just the regular music stations, and all they talk about is us now. The fans are excited. It's been a while since we've been in this position. So everybody is pretty pumped up around here. We have to stay level headed as much we can this week and don't get caught up to much in the hype because there is still a football game to be played.

Q. So they're not playing music, they're just talking about the Bears?

BRIAN URLACHER: Yes, talking. The morning shows, all they do is talk anyway, but now all they talk about is us.

Q. Can you talk about the job Roberto Garza has done and just his development?

BRIAN URLACHER: Garza is great. He's tough to practice against because he's not very tall. He always gets under me, but he's done a good job. Our whole offensive line has done a good job. If you look at how many sacks we've given up and how we run the ball, we've been in some bad situations at times this year, and they've done a good job running the ball.

Garza, I don't think he made the Pro Bowl. I think he should have made it. He had a great season. He stepped up. He's been hurt the last few years, but he's played great for us this year.

Q. What comparisons do you think we can draw from the 1985 Super Bowl team?

BRIAN URLACHER: Nothing. The season is over.

Q. Do you feel the pressure of the great Bears teams to get back to the Super Bowl now?

BRIAN URLACHER: Do we feel pressure?

Q. Because of the tradition of the Bears?

BRIAN URLACHER: There was one season where -- it was '85 the last time it happened. Obviously you guys know that. We don't feel any pressure. We're just happy to be in this position. This is where we wanted to be from training camp, summer workouts, this is where we wanted to be. There's no pressure. We're having fun with it. We felt we've earned the chance to be here. We just have to go take advantage of the opportunity.

Q. Many kids growing up want to emulate their offensive stars. Do you think maybe you've showed some kids that it's cool to play defense as well?

BRIAN URLACHER: I hope so, because I love defense, obviously. I love it. The thing about defense, I think, you don't have to have someone else call the play for you to get the ball, like you do on offense or someone to throw you the ball. If you don't make plays it's your fault. So on defense you kind of do your own thing.

The number one thing I try to do is have fun. You see that when we're playing as a defense. We have a good time when we're out there. And I hope that's the number one thing that kids take from this game, is fun.

Q. Have you had to adjust your game with both Harris and Brown out?

BRIAN URLACHER: No. I've said this before. Our defense has stayed the same. We have had different guys in there who have stepped up. You're not going to replace either of those two players. They're great players. But we've had some guys step up and do a good job for us while they've been out. Our defense has stayed the same. We've had the same calls, just had different personnel in there.

Q. Brian, the Bears obviously have had a couple of good middle linebackers before you, Dick Butkus and Mike Singletary. How does it make you feel when people compare you to those two guys?

BRIAN URLACHER: It's pretty good. They played for 10, 12 years, so I have got a ways

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to go. I know winning a World Championship would definitely help put myself in that category. But it's an honor to be thought of with those two. But I have got a long way to go. They are in the Hall of Fame. This is my 7th year. I have got a long ways to go.

Q. What do you think is going to be the difference this weekend that puts you guys over the top against New Orleans?

BRIAN URLACHER: If we're more physical than them and we stop the run, we think we'll have a chance to win the game. Like I said earlier, they are going to make plays. We know that. They're too good on offense not to make any plays. If we're more physical, if we can stop the run and slow those guys down a little bit, we have a chance to win the game.

Q. How do you prepare for a running back like Reggie Bush who lines up at wide receiver in the slot as the regular running back?

BRIAN URLACHER: We have a good game plan. That's what our coaches get paid for, to put good game plans together. They have done that for us so far, and we just have to go out there and execute it.

Q. How big of a difference will home-field advantage be, especially considering the support the fans get from –

BRIAN URLACHER: I think it's going to be loud. Our fans are behind us right now. It's going to be loud as heck. People want to talk about the weather. I don't think weather is going to have a big deal to do with this game. It's going to affect both teams. The eleven guys on the field will win the football game, not the weather. But we're excited we're home because of the fans.

Q. Do you feel like you've made any adjustments for this weekend because you are playing the most high-powered offense in the NFL?

BRIAN URLACHER: We do all season long. There's times it has hurt us, there's times we've been successful. We're not going to change. We don't double anybody. We don't really change. Our defense is pretty simple. We do what we do and we try to make the offense adjust to us.

Q. How did you guys regroup after losing a guy like Tommie Harris early in the season?

BRIAN URLACHER: We lost him, I think it was the 12th or 13th game. Like I said, you're not going to replace Tommie. We have a bunch of good D linemen. Our guys have stepped up and do a good job. The pass rush hasn't been the same because Tommie did such a good job on the passing game. Our run defense is still about the same with the guys we have in there, but you're not going to get a guy who can rush a passer like that anywhere I don't think.

Q. What does it mean to get that first playoff win and move on to the NFC Championship?

BRIAN URLACHER: Get that monkey off our back I hope. In my career, we were 0-2 before last week. We had the bye in the first-round home game, or second round, whatever it is, and we lost twice. Both times I've been in that game, we lost. It's nice to get over that hump to show ourselves that we can play in the playoffs and we are a good football team. So that was big for us to get over that hump.

Q. Do you feel that they (Saints) feel like they have nothing to lose in this situation, that they're going to come out and play because they've never been to the Super Bowl?

BRIAN URLACHER: I don't really know. That's how we feel too. No one on this team, on my team, has been to the Super Bowl with the Bears. We can say the same thing. I know they had a tough season last year going through everything they went through, but we can say the same thing. I think pretty much every team in the NFL, when you get to this point, has got nothing to lose. You want to get there and win that big game.

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