

**January 19, 2007**



An Interview With:

## **CHICAGO BEARS REX GROSSMAN**

MODERATOR: Questions for Rex.

**Q. Rex, more than anything, a lot of people talking about Mushin Muhammad, we know Bernard Berrian deep. Tell us how much you rely on Rashied Davis in big-play situations as well?**

REX GROSSMAN: He comes up big. There's three instances that he's come up huge for us. There was a game-winning touchdown pass against Minnesota, overtime against the Bucs and overtime against Seattle. He's come up big in crucial situations and he's an unbelievable guy for the slot. He's quick. He's fast. Got great hands. Got a good feel for the game.

So we've got three receivers right now that are playing really well.

**Q. Rex, how does it help you having two number one type running backs as opposed to having the traditional workout horseback?**

REX GROSSMAN: They're both great backs. Thomas is an experienced veteran, and he does a great job in pass protection and catches the ball well and can make people miss in the pass game as well as being a cutback type runner that can also hit it in the hole. But he has great vision, and then when you mix that in with Cedric, who basically when he comes in, he goes right at you and just pounds you and knocks people over. So the combination of those two guys give us a great one two punch.

**Q. Rex, is there any disadvantage of this game being at home in terms of having to deal with everything going on here instead of being isolated off and just being able to stick together as a team and kind of holed up in the hotel?**

REX GROSSMAN: This event here is the only difference of any home game. By Saturday night comes we'll go to the hotel have our meeting and go to our hotel room and everything should be the same, just like every normal home game.

As far as distractions, family coming in and things like that, you know, we've tried to limit that as much as possible. Coach Smith has talked about dealing with that stuff earlier in the week.

And, you know, that hasn't been a problem for me, personally. So I think it's a huge advantage. You get the crowd on your side and play out doors and all those things.

**Q. Rex, you go against your defense every day in practice. How do you think they're going to match up against the Saints offense everyone keeps talking about?**

REX GROSSMAN: The Saints have a great offense, a great attack. They're well coached and they've got some play makers, but I think we are extremely well coached and have some of the best play makers that have ever played the game.

I think Urlacher is a Hall of Famer, and everything kind of revolves around him. Got Lance Briggs, two-time Pro Bowler. We've got some big guys over there. Defensive ends can really make some things happen.

So we're excited for the challenge and just speaking for them I know they're pumped up.

**Q. Rex, piggybacking on that a little bit, talking about the offense for you guys, the need to score points and score them in bunches this weekend against the Saints, and doing so through sustained long drives, can**

**you talk about that?**

REX GROSSMAN: You're saying our game plans should be sustaining long drives? I think our approach this week is going to be no different than any other week. We're running our offense against the Saints defense and trying to put up as many points as possible. We're not going to try to hold the ball or anything like that. That doesn't make sense to me.

I think we've been coached to do what we're supposed to do on that given play and make the best of it.

**Q. For everything you had to endure with the injuries, is this a surreal feeling that you're now sitting one game away from the Super Bowl in your first full season as a starter?**

REX GROSSMAN: It's really fun. I'm having a blast. This situation is what we worked for. In the off season and, you know, all the meetings and all the practices and, you know, basically your whole career, ever since I started playing football in the second grade. I mean, this is what it all comes down to is these types of games.

And I think everyone has that feeling of we're so close. Everyone make sure you focus and just everybody come out and play your best game you've ever played in your life.

And we're all ready for that.

**Q. Rex, do you read the sports section? Do you listen to sports talk radio and do you watch ESPN?**

REX GROSSMAN: You know, I have before, not much this week. I think that if you listen to too many people's opinions, it can be distracting.

So I've tried to limit that distraction as much as possible.

**Q. Do you think the criticism of you has been fair?**

REX GROSSMAN: No. In some cases yes. Some cases no. I'd like to just not talk about that, to tell you the truth.

**Q. Rex, there's a lot of Gator karma out there with the Florida football team and basketball team winning national championships. Are you feeling that? Are you going to look to tap into that on Sunday?**

REX GROSSMAN: Yeah, I'd love to tap into that. We've got the number one basketball team. Number one football team, a lot of good things are happening with the Gators, I'm excited about being affiliated with that university and that sports program down there, and they've been extremely impressive.

We've got some Gators on the Bears. We'd like to continue that.

**Q. Rex, I realize you don't want to talk about the criticism, but have you been able to take the criticism and turn it into a positive?**

REX GROSSMAN: I take criticism from our coaches. I don't pay much attention to media criticism. They don't really know exactly what I'm supposed to be doing.

I take criticism from our offensive coordinator quarterback coach and try to get myself better from that and that's the only thing that I really need to concentrate on. Everyone else's opinions doesn't affect how I approach anything.

**Q. Are you surprised that nationally everybody seems to be picking the Saints in this game?**

REX GROSSMAN: No, they're a hot team right now. They've got all pro quarterback, Reggie Bush, Heisman winner last year and has made some great plays, Deuce McAllister, a lot going for them, everything that happened in New Orleans. It's a big story.

I think it's a feel-good story and all that and they deserve a lot of attention. It doesn't matter again what people think. We as a team are going to get in that locker room and really look each other in the eye and make sure we go out there and play our best game for our teammates and everyone else and it doesn't matter what people think about the game or the outcome. We're going to come out and play our best game.

## THOMAS JONES

**Q. You're really look forward for this one. Is it hard not to think about the game and keep it as regular as routine as possible with such a big game looming?**

THOMAS JONES: Yes, it's hard to just think of it as a regular game because, you know,

it's not, we worked really hard this year and putting a lot of time and effort to get to this point in the season and we put ourselves in a really good predicament. So we know the magnitude of this game. We really practiced hard this week, a lot of guys stayed extra doing a whole lot of different things to make sure we're mentally ready and focused.

We know what this game means and we're ready to play.

**Q. Thomas, all four teams that made these two games, all of them seem to have two number one type running backs. As a running back, what are your thoughts on that and are you the kind of guy that likes to get all the carries or do you see the advantage of having two guys like that?**

THOMAS JONES: Well, I mean, any running back likes to get the ball 20, 25 times a game. But at the end of the day you want to win football games. And the system we've had has helped us this year as far as keeping Cedric Benson and myself fresh throughout the game and it's been effective for us.

So with all four teams in the playoffs having that type of system, I think it's definitely helped them win football games and gives you an opportunity to wear a defense down, third and fourth quarter football game, when guys are tired on the defensive line and linebackers are tired and rotate can backs in and out. Especially with me and Cedric, we have totally different styles.

It's hard for a defense to adjust to that. So our one-two system has been really well. It's been good for us and helped us to be successful this year.

**Q. Tom, just to add on to what you just said, do you and Cedric ever get involved or think about a running back duel? For example, this week with Deuce McAllister and Reggie Bush, that you want to outdo what they do?**

THOMAS JONES: We don't think of it that way. We focus on what we have to do. Our coaches have us well prepared for this game. Pass protection, running the ball. Everything that we're supposed to do we know what we're doing, and we've had a great week at practice. We're focused on what we're going to do when we go into the football game and we'll let our defense worry about Reggie Bush and Deuce McAllister.

**Q. Thomas, what was your first reaction when you heard the Bears had drafted Cedric and how do you guys get along and everything?**

THOMAS JONES: Well, I mean, that wasn't my decision to draft a running back at that pick, and, you know, I had already signed a contract here for four years. And I knew what my job was. I get paid to go out there and make plays. That's all I can control.

I can't control what the team does as far as draft picks and things like that. Sometimes when you get caught up in that type of situation you lose focus on what you have to do.

So I've just focused on me trying to be a better football player, trying to do what I get paid to do and go out there and make plays and help us win football games. And we have a great relationship. We know what our goal is and that's to win the Super Bowl, and we're both willing to do whatever we need to do to help us achieve that goal.

**Q. Thomas, how have you guys talked about the best way to slow down the Saints' offense by keeping the ball for long stretches yourself, obviously ending in a touchdown or field goal?**

THOMAS JONES: We're not focused on the Saints' offense. All we can do is control what we do as an offense. That's score points. Everybody has a job to do. The defense is to stop them and score points regardless of who we're playing against. We're not caught up in what the Saints' offense can do or what they're capable of. If we want to go out there and score points, we have to stay focused and worry about our own jobs, every time we go out there and every play and play four quarters of focused football. We let the defense worry about the Saints' offense.

**Q. To counter that in, your offense attack and Saints defense, is there a certain area certain things you know you have to do to get the job done against the challenges they pose as a difference, every team has strengths in some areas not so strong defensively? What kind of areas do you see that in from the Saints, from an offensive perspective?**

THOMAS JONES: They have a nice blitz scheme. The linebackers do a great job of blitzing their defensive line does a good job of twisting and

doing things that causes confusion. That's definitely something that we have to focus on making sure that we're 100 percent in pass protection, and like I said our coaches have done a great job of showing us everything that we're going to see, and you know it's just a matter of us going out and doing it on Sunday.

**Q. Thomas, with Julius also in the same role in Dallas with Marion Barber, have you talked to him during the year about how you guys have used that same system?**

THOMAS JONES: I haven't really talked to him that much as far as him and Marion Barber. But my brother, he had a really good season, and you know with the opportunities that he had, and I was definitely proud of him. Our system has worked well, especially the past couple of weeks.

As the season goes along, you know if you're a feature back, just naturally your body is going to wear down a little bit. When you have another guy that can come in and make plays and offset how you run at the same time, I think that's great for your football team.

Like I said it's been very effective for us this year.

**Q. Thomas, the forecast Sunday is for possible snow. You and Cedric are accustomed to playing under those conditions and obviously Deuce and Reggie aren't, playing indoors, how much of an advantage will that give you in the game?**

THOMAS JONES: We're used to playing on our field. Our field is kind of slick sometimes. And even our practice field is pretty much the same as Soldier Field. So we're used to running on that. We know how to exactly approach each play. We know it will be slick. You have to have your feet together and have a nice base. But once you get into the game and you know everything is kind of heating up a little bit, I don't really know how much of a disadvantage that will be for their backs.

This isn't the first time they've played on a slick field. So I expect them to come out and play well.

**Q. Thomas, can you talk about how the veterans on this team have kept the team focused or done anything in particular that got the team back to where you guys need to be at this point in the season?**

THOMAS JONES: I guess just the loss to Carolina last year gave us motivation to get back. It was a great feeling to make it to the playoffs despite some things we had to go through and a lot of people didn't think we could make it. And once we got there, I just don't -- I just think that -- I don't think we were happy to be there, but at the same time, we didn't take advantage of the opportunity that we had playing Carolina at home.

And going to this season, you know from the beginning of the year our goal was to win the Super Bowl. And every game counts. Every game counted. That was our mentality. Every time we went out there we didn't want to lose a game. Last week we knew the magnitude of that game, we knew we were at home. We really wanted to win that football game. We didn't want to leave Soldier Field with the same feeling we had with the Carolina Panthers. Veterans we future in a lot of time, a lot of extra effort and the younger guys just followed our lead, and I think that's really been a major reason why we're back in this situation again in the playoffs and having an opportunity to win one football game and go to the Super Bowl is something we've worked for.

**Q. Ideally what kind of weather conditions would you like to see Sunday?**

THOMAS JONES: I'd love for it to be five degrees.

(Laughter)

Not that we're used to playing in five degree weather but we know what to expect. And it's kind of hard to simulate that type of cold weather. But whatever the weather is on Sunday, regardless, we'll be ready to play football, and go out there and stay focused for four quarters and try to win.

**Q. Thomas, I'm interested to know what it's like to have to talk about this and have to wait to play the game?**

THOMAS JONES: It's tough. It's tough, because you know you just anticipating it so much. And you constantly are seeing yourself in the game, constantly hoping at the end of the game everything is going your way. So it's definitely tough but it's exciting, too. You have to learn how to enjoy the process. We worked really hard to put ourselves into this situation. We deserve to be here, and at the end of the day we're playing at home. The great home crowd.

And it's a great opportunity for us to take

advantage of something that we worked really hard for. So the anticipation is high. But it will be here soon enough.

## LANCE BRIGGS

**Q. Lance, you're in an ideal position where you wanted to be but just talk about late in the fourth quarter over time what you guys were saying what was the mind set that you wouldn't be denied because you came through with a couple of big plays but everybody seemed to take it to another level, is that the case?**

LANCE BRIGGS: I think the most important thing about that fourth quarter and going into overtime is that no matter what happened defensively from a defensive standpoint to us during that game when we needed to stop, when we needed the ball back, we provided it. We were there. So I would say that's the most important thing about that fourth quarter and that overtime.

**Q. Do you feel like you guys are the underdogs, the favorites in the game?**

LANCE BRIGGS: Do I feel like we should be? We're playing at home. The championship game in Soldier Field, we have the best record in the NFC. An underdog is nothing new to us.

**Q. The reason I ask that is nationally most people have picked the Saints in this game. I want to know if you feel like you're the favorite?**

LANCE BRIGGS: Absolutely. In the locker room where we are in our family, amongst our family we know who we are. No number from anyone else outside of us is going to matter. The fact that we are underdogs in most people's books is -- like I said, is nothing new to us. So all we do is continue to do what we do.

**Q. Lance, last week there were 6,000 fans that didn't show and one of your teammates talked about how they felt the fans could be louder throughout the game. Do you feel you've convinced the fans to believe in this team?**

LANCE BRIGGS: The thing about Chicago it's kind of like it really is a family in Chicago. So when you're doing well they're there

to pat you on the back; when you're doing bad, they're there to tell you how bad you really did. They're not going to hold their tongue. They never hold their tongue about how they feel about what's going on.

So I think that obviously Chicago, the family across America is there and they're rooting their team on.

So not really, they say 6,000 wasn't there but I heard 6,000. I heard the 6,000 plus, I mean, in the fourth quarter during the overtime.

**Q. When you look at some of the things you need to do against the Saints on Sunday, can you list off some of the main points for the defense?**

LANCE BRIGGS: Read your keys, break on the ball. You get opportunity, get the ball out. I mean, create some opportunities for our offense. Defensively getting in your hole, get in your gap. You have to swarm to the ball, get over the top. Punish them on every play. As far as I can see punish this offense on as many occasions as you can.

**Q. You play alongside a pretty well-known linebacker?**

LANCE BRIGGS: Brian.

**Q. I think that's his name. But you're a back-to-back Pro Bowler yourself. Do you see this week and possible Super Bowl a showcase for yourself?**

LANCE BRIGGS: I think it's a showcase for everyone, just the stage it's on. It's an opportunity for everyone to be on the national scene. Everyone to see what you're capable of. But more importantly if you do your job along with the other ten guys on the defense we'll be successful. As long as we're successful, yes, it is a showcase for every person that's on that field.

**Q. Lance, what are some of the things that maybe you've learned from Brian, some of the things maybe you've taught him about playing defense?**

LANCE BRIGGS: Brian has been teaching me since the moment I got out here. The one thing I can remember, you know, is when I was out there, there are things I wasn't thinking about on the field. Right before the play Brian would spit it out. He would say, Watch out for the



short pass and first thing I would do is think okay. I wasn't thinking about that and the ball was snapped and I was jumping on top of it. And besides that I think the one thing that me and Brian do well is we keep things relaxed. We keep things kind of candid out there on the field.

You don't want to get too uptight. You want to -- if you don't know it by Friday or Saturday you're not going to know it come Sunday. When it comes game time, Lance is good about coming into the huddle, tells a joke, everybody gets light. It's fourth and one. It's the most important play in your life don't get too uptight. We know what we gotta do and we're going to do it.

**Q. What's your major concern about offense, the weapons that they have?**

LANCE BRIGGS: Be successful. If you feel like you're doing what you're supposed to be doing defensively and they're moving the ball up field and scoring at will, obviously that's the biggest fear. If I have any nightmares this year that would be the one.

If I have any nightmares, it's seeing all of those different Saints players in the end zone doing a dance. I probably worked on because I want to get into the end zone I won't be able to do it because they're doing it.

**Q. What's been the difference in you guys' play on defense early in the season when you were all so dominant and then late when you all gave up a lot of points?**

LANCE BRIGGS: I would say it's a very little, very little. It's the little things. Just this last game watching film, there were a lot of guys that were in position that didn't make -- like myself, I was in position on a play where Shaun Alexander cut the ball back, all I had to do was make the tackle.

It would have been one yard gain. No yardage at all. But I didn't make the tackle. He gained nine, ten yards, gained a first down. Comes down to that. You do your assignment, stay fundamentally sound, things tend to work out for you, work in your favor.

And besides that, you know, getting back to what we do is getting to the ball, creating turnovers. Not creating enough turnovers defensively and we're not making the most of our opportunities.

**Q. Lance, is it more of a challenge having to contain two number one type running backs as opposed to your traditional workhorse running back?**

LANCE BRIGGS: The thing about having two number one running backs, they both can't have the ball at the same time if Deuce McAllister has the ball, that's who we need to get ahold of. If Reggie Bush has the ball, that's who we need to get ahold of. They both pose a threat when they're on the field obviously, but we have to cover them both down. But defensively we have the guys that are capable of doing so. We just have to be sound.

**Q. Lance, from the other side of the ball, what's been your reaction to the season-long criticism directed at Rex Grossman and have you seen a tough mindedness that's allowed him to get to this point and rise above that?**

LANCE BRIGGS: Yes. Rex is a character guy. I've been proud of the way that Rex has handled the media. Couldn't imagine how I would have to -- how I would be if I had to go through the same thing. I've never seen scrutiny to a teammate the way it's been for Rex.

And, you know, it's kind of like he lets it brush off his shoulders and continues to play, because he loves this game the way that it rivals no other, and Rex continues to do what he does. Regardless if Rex is thrown six interceptions or not, he's trying to win a game.

## COACH LOVIE SMITH

COACH LOVIE SMITH: This past season, last year we had an opportunity to get a taste of playoff football, National Football League. Came up a little short. But it really prepared us for this coming season, as we initially started our meetings, we talked about finishing the job this year.

Our players have worked extremely hard. You've had a chance to talk to three of them here today. We're excited about the opportunity. We have a chance to play a very good New Orleans Saints team that's overcome a lot and had an outstanding season. But we're excited about the

opportunity.

Our formula for winning football games is about, of course, the three phases: offense, defense and special teams. But here in Chicago we talk about the fourth phase also: our fans.

I think it matters playing at home. We're excited about playing at home this week. And again we're a little bit closer to that day. So I'll take your questions.

**Q. Lovie, we hear a lot about how you motivate players and how you have a calming effect. Is that instinctive or something you've learned along the way with all the coaches you've been with?**

COACH LOVIE SMITH: David, you know, it's probably a combination of both. I had a chance to be around my father was a calm man. And I've been around some coaches that have been able to do it a little bit different way.

I think players want you to treat them like men. When storms come, I think they want to see you, the look on your face that it will be okay. They want you to treat them like real men, we try to do that and coach them hard, teach them and hopefully we'll put a good product on the field.

**Q. Lovie, in those days when you were working with Derrick Brooks and Shelton Quarrels, was there ever a conversation with Tony (Dungy) that, who knows, one day we might be coaching against each other in a Super Bowl?**

COACH LOVIE SMITH: Well, those are fond memories, I might add, of my time in Tampa. Most of the conversations back then were just about it's a time where we were building a program of taking it to that next level. As I had a chance to work down, I knew I was with a special group. We knew we were doing it the right way and we just saw a light at the end of the tunnel and good things happening.

It was more talk around that as much as anything else.

**Q. During the season, you made, the team made it below 40% of the third down conversions. So do you have concern about that for this game?**

COACH LOVIE SMITH: I think, first off, third downs, there's some statistics that aren't real important. Third downs are. We do put a big emphasis on it. I'll just say that in order for us to be successful, of course this weekend we need to

do a good job. But we've made improvement offensively with our third downs. And I think by the play that we've been getting from Rex, what we got from Rex this past week, we talked about our receivers, had a chance to see Thomas Jones, offensive line has done an outstanding job with that. I think our third down conversions will be up this week. Defensively on the other side is real important. And we've done a pretty good job on third downs with that.

**Q. Ideally what kind of weather conditions would you like to see Sunday?**

COACH LOVIE SMITH: We're in Chicago and up at Halas Hall, first we had to wipe the snow off of the field. I've had on a coat, stocking caps and all of that. So to answer your question, though, we want Chicago Bear whether, exactly what we're going to get down there. I think it's different playing up here in the cold.

But, again, the conditions don't really matter. But if we have to play, we'd rather play in our conditions and that's what we're going to get this weekend.

**Q. Lovie, we all know quarterbacks are always discussed anywhere at anytime. But what is your overall sense of the amazing amount of discussion that took place during the course of the season about your quarterback in this town?**

COACH LOVIE SMITH: Well, you know, you have to think about it for a while. I've never seen a player go through as much criticism as Rex Grossman has had to this year a quarterback that led us to 14 wins, a quarterback who is a married guy that's outstanding off of the field, does everything anyone would want him to do. Did he have 17 perfect games? No, but I put a lot of stock in a guy being a leader, convincing the rest of his teammates he can get the job done.

Rex has done that. So it's puzzling a little bit to know exactly why a player has to go through that. But a lot of times when guys go through tough times like that, you see their true character. That's what we've got a chance to see with Rex Grossman. He's a stand-up guy and I think it's been documented that I like him leading our team and I have all the confidence in the world that he can get the job done.

**Q. Lovie, a lot of your guys haven't**

**been to this level with you being the calming force and all the other things. What do you tell them as they get ready for a game of this magnitude coming up?**

COACH LOVIE SMITH: What we've talked to them about this week is just guys just think back what got us in here. I believe in routine, staying with that routine. I think when you get to a game like this, you don't need to do anything else. We won a lot of football games this year. So we have, I mean we have a formula that works.

I mean, I heard Thomas talking earlier about us doing what we're doing, that's what we're going to do. Offensively we need to be able to run the football. Defensively we need to get take-aways and play hard. We need to get some production from our special teams.

We've talked about that and trying to keep all of the outside distractions away and still just comes down to our basic week that we've gone through, the same routine we'll use Saturday night before the game, and then just going out and playing the best game you played in your entire life.

**Q. Lovie, along those lines, so much is made about the Saints offense and rightfully so. They're very explosive. But as a defensive coach, a guy leading your team, do you talk about how are they going to -- how are they going to face us, we're a tough defense, rather than we have to stop them? Do you ever discuss that with your team?**

COACH LOVIE SMITH: It's all in how you look at things. First off, I can see why so much has been talked about, the New Orleans Saints' offense. I mean, Drew Brees had an outstanding year. Their two running backs are excellent players, passing game has been outstanding.

But we have a couple scholarship players on our defensive side, too. We have talked to our players about that. We look forward to the challenge. But once you get down to final four, all the teams are good. I mean they're good offenses, good defenses.

We expect a tough game and defensively we know we have our work cut out for us, but we played some good offenses. This would be another. But I'll just say we're healthy and we're looking forward to the challenge.

**Q. Lovie, do you think it's important that your team puts together some**

**time-consuming drives to keep the Saints' offense off the field?**

COACH LOVIE SMITH: Not at all. And I've heard that. I would like for our offense to score as much as possible. Quickly. It doesn't really matter. We want scores. Does that mean we'll be scoring quick in our defense? We'll play a few more plays, that's fine with us.

I talked earlier about our team talking about finishing this year. Another part was about scoring. Our offense has done a great job. We've put up good numbers. We want as many scores as we can get this weekend.

**Q. I'm not sure if you heard Lance back stage or not, if you were listening to him, but he gave us what he called his nightmare scenario?**

COACH LOVIE SMITH: I didn't hear that.

**Q. He said he has a nightmare when he visualizes or his nightmare would be visualizing the Saints' play makers dancing in the end zone, doing the dances he would practice himself. I'm wondering if you have a nightmare scenario or conversely a dream scenario?**

COACH LOVIE SMITH: Well, my glass is half full always. So the dream I've had this week is Chicago Bears being presented with the George Halas trophy at Soldier Field, Ms. Virginia McCaskey getting a chance to accept the George Halas trophy on our field. My dream has been more along those lines this week.

**Q. Lovie, the Saints are the sentimental favorites for obvious reasons. Have you had to talk to your team about not getting caught up in that, and can you also talk about the job Sean Payton has done this year?**

COACH LOVIE SMITH: First off, Sean Payton has done an excellent job. I've known Sean for a long time.

Like everyone else, I acknowledge the job he's done. But as far as him being a sentimental favorite -- we're concerned about what's going on on the inside as much as anything and again I'll just leave it at that. Our football team we give the Saints their due. But what everyone else really thinks about who is supposed to win and things like that, we have a lot of confidence in our ball club and for good reason. And we'll go from there.



**Q. Lovie, I know you meet with your captains and you take their roles very seriously. Did you meet with them after last week's game and what was the message you wanted them to pass down to the rest of the team?**

COACH LOVIE SMITH: I met with the team. And I've met with most of our guys individually, and first off we celebrated. I think as you're going on this journey, you have to enjoy the trip along the way. So we talked about that and all that we've accomplished so far. But beyond that, we talked about what our initial goal was as we -- as I took the job three years ago, and ultimate goal was about us winning the world championship and we're still in the game with an opportunity to do that. Yes, we've talked quite a bit about that this week.

**Q. Coach, there's been a lot of discussion the last four or five games about how many points the defense is surrendering, how much is tied to the loss of your Pro Bowl nose tackle Tommy Harris?**

COACH LOVIE SMITH: Tommy Harris is a special player. Mike Brown also. And we miss those players. But we've played without them for a while. We didn't play as well as we need to at the end of the football season for whatever reason. I think we got back closer to what we are as a defense last week, really pleased with how we played the fourth quarter and how we played the overtime here. That's closer to what we are as a defense. We talked more on those terms than anything. We realize the challenge coming up and we're looking forward to it.