

**February 2, 2007**



**AN INTERVIEW WITH:  
WALTER PAYTON NFL MAN  
OF THE YEAR AWARD WINNERS  
DREW BREES  
&  
LaDAINIAN TOMLINSON**

MICHAEL HAYNES: Good morning and welcome to the Walter Payton NFL Man of The Year Award ceremony. The Walter Payton NFL Man of the Year Award is the only League award to recognize off the field community service as well as player excellence. I played 14 years in the NFL and Walter Payton was one of the toughest men I ever competed against. There's no question I'd want **Walter** on my team.

**Walter** was a great teammate to many of the people who lived in the communities where he lived and for many of us who got to know him as a player. He was a true Hall of Famer in their eyes.

The Walter Payton NFL Man of the Year Award was established in 1970 and has had quite a list of impressive winners, from Johnny Unitas in his first year; to Walter Payton in 1977; to Peyton Manning last year.

In all, 14 members of the Pro Football Hall of Fame and five Super Bowl Most Valuable Players have won the award.

This year we have an outstanding group of 32 finalists, one player from each team, but more importantly, each has demonstrated an outstanding balance between his civic and professional responsibilities this season.

Now I'd like to introduce Mrs. Connie Payton who will talk about what community service meant to Walter Payton and this year's winner.

CONNIE PAYTON: Good morning. First of all, I'd like to say that it's always exciting presenting this award at the Super Bowl weekend. But this time around with **Walter** and my extended family of the Chicago Bears being an active part of it is totally indescribable this year.

And secondly, this was the first time for me that when casting my ballot for the recipient of the Walter Payton NFL Man of The Year Award, I just couldn't decide between Drew and LaDainian. And by the time I finished submitting my ballot, it looked like a two year old had been messing with it, with all of the whiteout that I plastered all over it, changing my mind every time I wrote one of their names as my number one pick.

Obviously, I wasn't the only one who had this same experience. And with all of that being said, I couldn't be more pleased and thrilled that you are both here sharing this platform with me and my family.

Today I speak not just for myself, but for Jarrett, Brittney, and the Payton family as well, that this award is very close to our hearts. My children and I marvel at how **Walter** is continually loved and acknowledged, as confirmed by this award that bears his name.

The Walter Payton NFL Man of The Year Award is a tribute of achievement that recognizes a player not for just his excellence on the field, but for his commitment to community service, as well.

This award proudly carries the name of a man who personified goodness, a virtue he profoundly demonstrated every day to everyone he met and whose lives he touched.

**Walter** strived to be the best athlete he could be, and with his God-given and nurtured athleticism, he brought excitement to the game of football.

**Walter** was a humble person in wanting to make things right for the less fortunate. And he possessed a strong desire to make a difference in the world. Like **Walter**, both LaDainian and Drew excelled as masters in their position they play in the game of football, the game that they all love.

And as far as humanitarians go, both of you have not only stepped up to the plate, but you've gone way beyond the plate. And you continue to do so every day.

LaDainian, though I know you shy away

from accolades and from the work that you have done and continue to do through your foundation in your hometown of Waco, Texas, along with the place you now call home -- San Diego, California. Your time, efforts, generosity and funding programs for children of all ages are nothing short of admirable.

Everything you do is hands-on, and it focuses on the well-being of today's youth who are tomorrow's future. And yet you say you have so much more to accomplish, not just as a player, but as a giver. And how fortunate for those who know and will get to know the likes of LaDainian Tomlinson.

And Drew, you worked diligently through your foundation in the hope to one day find a cure for cancer, by helping with the quality of life and pursuit of happiness with patients of cancer.

You also promote the progress, the success, and the education of our youth through scholarship programs and other events that provide growth opportunities and aid in the development of our future leaders.

And now that your NFL career has brought you to my home city and state -- New Orleans, Louisiana -- you have taken an active interest in rebuilding a city that was devastated by Hurricane Katrina.

Your efforts and everything you do and the lives you touch make Drew Brees a special kind of guy.

Aside from being NFL greats in every sense of the word, it is also due to your expression of kindness and genuine caring that you both are here today.

May God bless you both and be at your side and continue to bring joy and happiness to so many people that are blessed to cross your paths. You are thoughtful, inspiring individuals and Jarrett, Brittney, and my sister-in-law, Rica, and I are proud and extremely honored in presenting you with the Walter Payton NFL Man of The Year Award.

DREW BREES: First of all, when I found out that I would be receiving this award and sharing it with my former teammate and dear friend, LaDainian Tomlinson, I was truly speechless.

I think what this award stands for, and obviously the namesake of this award, it means so much and it's something that I think that when I first came to the league and saw the previous winners of this award announced from year to

year, I just thought, what an incredible honor; maybe truly the biggest honor that you could receive.

And I think that that is really a statement that is because of the man that Walter Payton was; and obviously his legacy and what his family has done to carry on that legacy and really to make an impact and a positive difference in not only their community, but towards cancer research and finding a cure for cancer. Through the **Walter** and Connie Payton Foundation and through the Walter Payton Cancer Fund I know that they're changing lives every day.

It's truly an honor to be associated with that and to be receiving this award. And I just hope to be able to give back to this game of football what it's given to me. And also to be able to understand the role that I have as an NFL quarterback, a player, and as a member of the community.

And I feel like there's so many ways that I can make an impact and my teammates can make an impact as players in our community, especially New Orleans and everything it's gone through in recent history and will continue, as we go along, here.

It's going to be a long process, but I know that we're going to stick together and obviously try to carry on the legacy that Walter Payton established for us.

So thank you again. Thank you to the Payton family. It's a tremendous honor and one I'll carry with me for the rest of my life. Thank you.

LaDAINIAN TOMLINSON: Likewise, I was almost speechless when I heard that I was winning this award along with Drew Brees, obviously a good friend of mine. I was very happy to be sharing this award because I know what he and Brittany put into their foundation. And likewise, my wife, LaTorsha and I try to be model citizens in the community to do the same. So it is something that's very dear to our heart.

There's a lot of people that I should thank first. Obviously, I mentioned my wife, LaTorsha. She's as much a part of it as I am, our foundation. And so I really believe behind every good man is a good woman. And in the case of Mrs. Payton, it's the same way. And also Lamar Andrews who runs our foundation, he really does a great job of buckling down and getting things done for us. And so I'd also like to thank him, because it's his hard work that really allows us to give a lot to the

community.

As well as I think the Spanos family in particular, Dean and Susie, who has believed in me and the things that I've tried to do, not only on the football field, but I think in the community, in San Diego. They've always been supportive of me and our family, I think it's just tremendous that they're here supporting this award and us.

Also the things that I just try to do back in Texas, just giving back to the community there. Because for me, growing up, Walter Payton was the reason why I wanted to play football. I remember as a little kid, I was five years old, seeing him play, and from that point on I told my mother that I wanted to be a football player, just watching him play.

And obviously as a kid you see so much stuff, you just see the football side of it. But as I started to grow up, I started to realize how big of an impact **Walter** had on so many people, not only me, but other people around the world, not only on the football field, but off the field.

People just -- they gravitated to him. And he was -- he was truly special. I know what he meant to me. And so I've tried to really just kind of take my role very seriously in doing what was to me the right thing to do in the community, and that's give back to our younger generation.

That's why I think this award for me is so special. Because it's not about the stuff I do on the field and everything, but for me it's about the community that I'm trying to impact, the younger generation. Because truly, after I'm gone, they're going to be still here living in this world.

So with that, I just really appreciate this award. There's so many people to thank, the Payton family. Once again, just a tremendous honor. And so thank you for all that you do and we're going to keep on trying to change the world, one day at a time. Thank you.

**Q. How much did you guys miss each other this year? You train in the offseason together, you do a lot in the offseason and you both had such tremendous success. Talk about that relationship and truly how much you did miss seeing each other this year?**

DREW BREES: I'll start. You know, it was -- I think LT was one of the hardest reasons I had to leave San Diego. Obviously the time we had together, and I knew what a special player he was and a special guy. And it was one of those things, though, that you had to believe that God had a

plan for you and everything was happening for a reason. And obviously that's always the case.

And that's definitely turned out to be true. But it doesn't mean that I still don't follow him and give him that phone call and say, "Man, four touchdowns again?" That kind of thing. But obviously I'm a big LT fan, and always will be.

LaDAINIAN TOMLINSON: The first thing you have to remember is that when Drew and I got to San Diego, I haven't mentioned it to many people, but we made a pact to each other to bring San Diego a Super Bowl Championship. And so that was very special. And every day that was our goal.

And so even though that he's in New Orleans and I'm in San Diego, we see each other and workout together during the offseason, but that goal is still there. That's our ultimate goal is to get to the Super Bowl. And so during the playoffs I was really a New Orleans Saints fan. I was living and dying with every play. And it was so special to see them, because when you're around a person, you don't realize how special they are until they leave.

And just seeing him on TV and talking to him throughout the season, you just realize how special a person that Drew is. And missing him is not even a question. But I think, like you say, God always has a plan for us. And obviously his plan was to be in New Orleans to help with the rebuilding process that's going on there.

**Q. How do you feel now that Clarence Shelmon will be the offensive coordinator for the San Diego Chargers?**

LaDAINIAN TOMLINSON: Clarence Shelmon, for those of you who may not know, is my running back coach. And he's moved up to offensive coordinator. I guess that means I'm going to get the ball a little bit more (laughter). That's my thinking.

But, no, I think he's going to be just fine. Obviously I think the great job that Dean and A.J. (Smith) and Marty have done is kept the in-house coaching staff, and that's the one thing that we don't have to change the offense at all. Clarence knows the offense. So I think we're going to continue to hopefully score points.

**Q. Going back to your days at Purdue, could you tell us how you first met Peyton Manning and any relationship you developed**

**there; and what do you think about him getting to his first Super Bowl and how you size up Sunday's game?**

DREW BREES: I met Peyton, it probably would have been -- it was his -- right after his rookie year in the league, and I was a sophomore at Purdue. And obviously Indianapolis is down the road and Chicago is right up the road. And I hoped to be a Colts fan, largely in part because of Peyton Manning. I always looked up to him as a player and a person. And obviously he's had a tremendous career and has really had a lot of pressure put on him at times, sometimes unfairly. But the fact is he's here and he's playing in this game against those Bears.

And I think that obviously both teams have been through some adversity throughout the season. Both teams are very deserving to be here. And it should be a tremendous game. Obviously I think that there's a ton of story lines and a large one being the fact that Peyton Manning has an opportunity here, and I'm sure he'll take advantage of it.

End of ASAP FastScripts.....