

NFL EXTRA

WEEK 22

<u>SEGMENT</u>	<u>TRT</u>
NFC Championship	1:38
AFC Championship	1:45
Lives They Lead	7:52
Ride of a Lifetime	6:36

01:00:00 – NFC CHAMPIONSHIP

SO IT IS THE PACKERS AND BEARS AND IT'S NEVER MEANT MORE THAN THIS.

BEEN A HELL OF A JOURNEY. IT AIN'T ENDING TODAY!

THERE IS NO TOMORROW.

HOW DO YOU WANT TO BE REMEMBERED?

COME ON NOW, WE GOTTA TAKE THIS DOWN AND SCORE. COME ON.

RADIO – RODGERS TAKES, FAKES THE HANDOFF, GORDON LIGHT'S LEFT. HE TAKES IT INTO THE END ZONE HIMSELF, DIVING FOR THE PYLON!
TOUCHDOWN!

THAT A WAY TO START!

WE GOTTA TACKLE BETTER.

HEY LISTEN. I GOT A CHALLENGE FOR YOU. LET'S GO OUT THERE AND GET THIS BALL AND TAKE IT BACK.

RADIO – TERRELL LETT BOUNCES IT, AND IT BOUNCES RIGHT INTO THE HANDS OF A BEAR IT APPEARS. LANCE BRIGGS HAS AN INTERCEPTION. 3RD QB OF THE GAME FOR THE BEARS. CALEB HANNE.

THEY CAN'T GO 90 ON OUR DEFENSE, MAN.

RADIO – PRESS COVERAGE SNAP TO HANNE. THROWS IT OVER THE MIDDLE. OH!! INTERCEPTED!! INTERCEPTED IN THE END ZONE!!

BIG J! GIVE ME ONE NOW!!

WE GOTTA PLAY BETTER.

A LOT OF GAME LEFT. LET'S GET GOING NOW.

HEY, JUST KEEP THE PRESSURE ON THEM NOW. KEEP THE PRESSURE ON THEM.

IT HAS TO BE DRAMATIC MAN.

RADIO – 4TH DOWN & 4. IT'S BALL GAME ON THE LINE! SNAP TO HANNE. LOOKING AROUND IN THE POCKET. THROWS IT OVER THE MIDDLE. INTERCEPTED! IT IS G.B. ON THE WAY TO S.B. 45! GOOD LUCK IN THE S.B. MAN. GO GET IT.

THE PRESIDENT DON'T WANT TO COME WATCH US TO THE S.B. GUESS WHAT? GUESS WHAT? GUESS WHAT? WE'LL GO SEE HIM!

01:01:45 – AFC CHAMPIONSHIP

IT'S TIME TO GO HOME.

YOU GOTTA MORE THAN LIKE IT ALRIGHT. YOU GOTTA LOVE IT. YOU GOTTA LOVE IT MAN. YOU GOTTA LOVE IT. GO!

IT'S JUST ANOTHER BALL GAME. THAT'S ALL IT IS.

RADIO – 1ST & GOAL AT THE 1. BEN TAKES. HE GIVES OFF THE RIGHT SIDE. TOUCHDOWN. MENDENHAHL AND IT'S TD. PITTS.

KEEP THE DRIVE. THAT'S AWESOME. WAY TO GO.

HEY YOU GUYS...KEEP GOING ALL 4 QUARTERS. DON'T LOSE THE FOCUS.

HERE WE COME. GREATEST COMEBACK EVER.

RADIO - SANCHEZ LOOKS DOWNFIELD TOWARDS THE END ZONE FOR HOLMES! HE'S GOT IT! TOUCHDOWN!!

I NEED SOME MORE NOW! YOU GOTTA FIGHT WITH ME! YOU GOTTA FIGHT WITH ME!

RADIO – BEN ROETHLISBERGER UNDER CENTER. MENDENHAHL IN THE END ZONE. ROETHLISBERGER, QB SNEAK. HE LOST THE FOOTBALL. HE FUMBLED. IT LOOKS LIKE HE FUMBLED THE FOOTBALL.

THAT'S A SAFETY. THAT'S A SAFETY. YEA!!

YOU GOTTA BE KIDDING ME MAN!

HEY, WE'RE GONNA TAKE THIS HOME! TAKE THIS RIGHT HERE AND TAKE THIS HOME MAN!

RADIO – IT COMES DOWN TO BIG PLAYS. 3RD DOWN & 6.

NO WAY IN HELL THEY'RE GONNA THROW THIS – BALL.

RADIO – HE'S BACK. HE'S SCRAMBLING RIGHT. HE'S GONNA THROW IT. AND A DIVING GRAB AT THE 31 YD. LINE!

DAMN IT!

WE BACK AGAIN.

...AIN'T NOTHING WRONG WITH THAT MAN. WE'VE BEEN THROUGH A LOT.

I'M SURE THE NEXT TIME WE PLAY THESE GUYS IT'LL BE PERSONAL FOR THEM, AND THAT'S O.K. BREAK IT DOWN.

ONE MORE GAME. LET'S GO. TEAM ON 3. 1, 2, 3, TEAM!

01:03:43 - THE LIVES THEY LEAD

THE RIDE OF A LIFETIME. A 50 YR. JOURNEY, AND GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN, TODAY ON NFL FILMS PRESENTS.

LATER IN THE SHOW WE'LL FIND OUT WHAT IT'S LIKE FOR A COACH TO TAKE THE ULTIMATE RIDE. BUT UP FIRST, A MAN WHO'S BEEN ON A VOYAGE WITH THE VIKINGS SINCE THEIR INCEPTION.

FRED ZAMBERLETTI IS A HERO IN THE STATE OF MINN.

CAN I GET MY PICTURE WITH YOU? SURE. 1. 2. GO VIKES!! THANK YOU SIR.

2010 MARKED THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE TEAM, BUT FOR FRED, IT WAS JUST ONE MORE DECADE AT THE OFFICE.

THANK YOU. YOU'RE WELCOME.

50 YEARS THOUGH FREDDIE. YOU'VE SEEN EVERY ONE.

NEVER MISSED A GAME? AWESOME DUDE. PRESEASON, WHOLE REGULAR. I KNOW.

FRED, HOW BAD IS IT? I THINK HE CAN THROW. IF I SEE THAT BALL START FLUTTERING...

FRED WAS MINNESOTA'S HEAD TRAINER FOR NEARLY 40 YRS. TODAY HE'S A CONSULTANT WITH THE TEAM.

RELAX. EVERYTHING' S GONNA BE O.K. I KNOW. YOU'VE BEEN HERE FOR SO LONG. I KNOW YOU CAN RELAX!

IF FRED NEEDS A REMINDER OF WHAT HE'S MEANT TO THE TEAM, ALL HE HAS TO DO IS LOOK ACROSS THE FIELD. HE'S ONE OF ONLY 18 INDUCTEES IN THE VIKINGS RING OF HONOR; ALONG WITH MEN LIKE CRIS CARTER, CARL ELLER AND ALAN PAGE.

OFF THE FIELD, THE PERSON THAT COMES TO MIND THAT EMBODIES THE SPIRIT OF WHAT IT IS TO BE A MINN. VIKING. THAT PERSON IS FRED ZAMBERLETTI.

YOU REALLY HAD TO BE TOUGH TO BE A MINN. VIKING, AND I THINK THAT THAT'S A WORD THAT ACTUALLY FRED USED QUITE A BIT. HE LET YOU KNOW THAT REALLY WE WERE COUNTING ON YOU, AND IF YOU WERE MADE OUT OF THE STUFF THAT VIKINGS ARE MADE OUT OF, YOU'LL GET UP AND GO.

FOR FREDDIE, HE KNOWS THAT HE'S ON A MISSION.

KEEP COMING.

BUT IT'S EASIER WHEN YOU FIND YOUR LOVE. AND THAT'S WHAT HE FOUND IN FOOTBALL WITH THE VIKINGS.

FROM 1961 ON, AND THROUGH 1031 CONSECUTIVE GAMES, FRED KEPT PLAYERS GOING WITH MORE THAN A BUCKET OF ICE AND A ROLL OF TAPE.

HIS WORDS WENT WELL BEYOND SIMPLY CARING FOR WHATEVER INJURIES THERE MAY HAVE BEEN.

CARED ABOUT THEM AS PEOPLE.

YOU KNOW HE WAS KIND OF A CONFESSOR AND CONFIDANT. CONSCIOUS. I CALL HIM A LOVING GUY. HE KNEW HOW TO CONSOLE JUST BY HIS PRESENCE. HE WAS WISE, AND HE UNDERSTOOD THE PLAYERS.

FRED ZAMBERLETTI!

THERE'S A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO DESERVE THIS BALL HERE TODAY BUT I WANT TO SAY ONE THING. YOU GUYS SURE KNOW HOW TO MAKE IT EXCITING!

IT WAS TOUGH. I'M DYSLEXIC. DYSLEXIC PEOPLE HAVE A LOT OF, I THINK, HAVE A LOT OF INTUITION. YOU'VE GOT TO DEVELOP THOSE SIDE SKILLS.

WHO'S BEEN PLAYING LONGER, FRED? YOU.

AND I THINK IT GAVE ME A LOT OF EMPATHY. PLAYERS WILL TELL ME, THEY'LL SAY, "YOU TREAT A GUY THAT'S ON BOTTOM BETTER THAN YOU DO THE GUY ON TOP." AND I ALWAYS FELT THAT PART OF MY JOB WAS TO LIFT THAT GUY, OUR PLAYER, UP; AND MAYBE THE GUY THAT WAS ON TOP THAT HAD TOO BIG OF A HAT SIZE, TO MAYBE GET HIS ATTENTION AND LOWER IT.

HOW MANY TIMES DID YOU GET TO MEREDITH THE LAST TIME YOU PLAYED UP IN MINN.?

HE WAS A CALMING PERSON BUT I SEE HIM MORE OF A PSYCHOLOGIST, BECAUSE I'D COME INTO THE L.R. WITH ONE THING IN MIND, AND THEN I'D LEAVE WITH SOMETHING TOTALLY DIFFERENT!

MY DAD WOULD SAY HE'S THE LUCKIEST MAN IN THE WORLD. HE'LL TALK ABOUT DIFFICULT TIMES IN HIS LIFE, AND NO ONE'S LIFE IS PERFECT.

FACING THE ISSUE OF ALCOHOLISM IN HIS OWN FAMILY, FRED LEARNED A PERSONAL LESSON IN COUNSELING.

I WAS UNFORTUNATE BUT FORTUNATE TO BE INVOLVED WITH ALINON. AND ALINON TAUGHT ME A LOT OF BASIC PRINCIPLES. I DON'T HAVE TO BE RIGHT. IT TAUGHT ME ABOUT FEELINGS. IT TAUGHT ME ABOUT LISTENING. WHEN A PLAYER WOULD COME IN AND HE'D BE VERY IRRITATED, AND I WOULD SAY, "YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO BE ANGRY. THAT'S RIGHT, AND I'M GLAD YOU CAN TRUST ME WITH YOUR FEELINGS."

HE'LL LOOK AT A PERSON MAYBE DEEPER THAN WHAT THEY APPEAR TO BE.
HE'LL WANT TO UNDERSTAND YOU.

IN 1990, CRIS CARTER WAS CUT BY THE EAGLES BECAUSE OF HIS
SUBSTANCE ABUSE.

MY LIFE WAS IN SUCH A SHAMBLE. I MEAN I WAS REALLY STRUGGLING, AND I
KNEW I NEEDED SOME HELP; AND FROM DAY 1 WHEN THE VIKINGS ACQUIRED
ME, FRED, HE SHOT IT TO ME STRAIGHT. I MEAN HE WAS SAYING ALL THE
RIGHT STUFF AS FAR AS KEEPING MY NOSE CLEAN. TALKING ABOUT MY
POTENTIAL; AND HE REALLY BELIEVED THAT I WAS A SPECIAL PLAYER.

RADIO – THROWS AND IT IS TIPPED AND ...FOR A TD. CRIS CARTER!
GREATEST CATCH I'VE EVER SEEN!

FRED REALLY KNEW THE HUMAN SPIRIT. HE REALLY HELPED ME BE THE
BEST ME. I MEAN HE REALLY DID.

I WANT TO SAY ONE THING. YOU GUYS, I APPRECIATE HOW HARD YOU'VE
WORKED...

WITHOUT FRED, THERE'S BE A LOT OF LITTLE YOUNG BOYS JUST BEING LOST
IN THE NFL. NEVER GROW UP.

I'VE KNOWN THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE WHO HE'S MADE A DIFFERENCE IN
THEIR LIVES. HE BELIEVES IN THE RIGHT THINGS.

AND I'M GONNA SAY ONE THING ELSE. WE'RE NOT GONNA RUN 350'S
TOMORROW.

FREDDY! FREDDY! FREDDY!

IT'S ABOUT LIFE. IT ISN'T JUST ABOUT X & O'S AND WINS AND LOSSES. IT'S ABOUT PEOPLE. AND I THINK ..THAT'S WHAT'S MADE THIS JOB..50 YRS.? IT SEEMS LIKE YESTERDAY.

YOU'VE BEEN OUR BEST FRIEND. YOU'VE BEEN OUR COUNSELOR. YOU HAVE TRANSCENDED THE GENERATIONS OF VIKING FOOTBALL PLAYERS, OF COACHES AND FAN. YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN THERE. YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN THE EVEN-KEEL VOICE. YOU SURVIVED 5 COACHES AND PROBABLY YOUR GREATEST CHALLENGE, YOU SURVIVED ME.

JUST THE MEMORIES OF THAT BRINGS EMOTIONS OUT OF ME. HAVING MY NAME UP THERE NEXT TO BUD GRANT, ALAN PAGE, ALL THOSE NAMES. DID I EVER THINK GROWING UP THAT I WOULD BE IN A RING OF HONOR? NO. NO.

NOBODY'S MORE IMPORTANT TO A FOOTBALL TEAM THAN THE TRAINER; AND TONIGHT I'D LIKE TO PRESENT HIM WITH A FOOTBALL. THE CHAMP., FRED ZAMBERLETTI MOST VALUABLE MINN. VIKING EVER!

WE HAD ONE PLAYER WHO HAD A STROKE. ..THE BEST UP HERE TO BE UP HERE. THAT TEARS ME UP. AND I WANT TO THANK... THE WINS AND LOSSES, THEY'RE ALL GONNA BALANCE OUT. THAT'S THE WAY THE GAME IS. BUT YOU DON'T EVER WANT TO LOSE A FRIEND.

01:11:45 – RIDE OF A LIFETIME

THIS IS FORMER LIONS COACH RICK FORZANO. AND THIS IS THE GREATEST DAY OF HIS CAREER.

WHENEVER A COACH IS CARRIED OFF THE FIELD, IT'S THE ULTIMATE APPRECIATION.

I MEAN YOU ARE ATOP THE PROFESSION.

YOU'RE ON CLOUD 9.

JOHN MADDEN'S GRIN IS FROM EAR TO EAR! HE LOOKS LIKE A SLIT WATERMELON!

IT WAS ONCE A PRACTICE RESERVED FOR POPES AND KINGS. HELD ALOFT BECAUSE THEY REPRESENTED SOMETHING LARGER THAN THE GENERAL POPULACE.

BUT IT HAPPENS IN FOOTBALL TOO, WHERE THE HEAD COACH IS THE FACE OF A FRANCHISE. AND THE SWEETEST VICTORIES ARE PUNCTUATED WITH THE RIDE OF THEIR LIVES.

THE SAINTS HAVE WON THE SUPER BOWL!

AT THE END OF S.B. 2, THE PACKERS PRETTY MUCH KNEW THAT WAS IT FOR LOMBARDI. JERRY KRAMER SAID, "LET'S DO THIS ONE LAST TIME, COACH." AND LOMBARDI'S RESPONSE TO HIM WAS, "THIS IS THE ONLY WAY TO LEAVE A FOOTBALL FIELD."

WHEN IT WAS OVER, VINCE LOMBARDI LEFT THE FIELD ON THE SHOULDERS OF HIS MEN. ACCLAIMED THE GREATEST COACH OF FOOTBALL'S GREATEST TEAM.

THE COACH IS ALWAYS PREACHING TEAM, TEAM, TEAM. WE'RE ALL THE SAME LEVEL. THAT'S' WHY WHEN HE'S ELEVATED ABOVE THE REST OF THE TEAM AND THEY'RE CARRYING HIM OFF, YOU ALWAYS SEE THEM

PROTESTING, "NO, NO..PLEASE...YOU COULDN'T POSSIBLY." BUT THEY ALWAYS ACQUIESCE AND IT'S A NICE MOMENT.

THANK YOU. THANK YOU. YEA. THAT'S IT BABY! THAT'S IT! YEA! THAT'S IT BOYS!

HANK STRAM ALMOST HAD AS MANY RIDES AS HE HAD TOUPEES. HE WAS CARRIED OFF AFTER THE 1962 AFL CHAMPIONSHIP; AFTER SUPER BOWL 4; AND AGAIN IN 1976 WHEN HIS SAINTS DEFEATED HIS FORMER TEAM.

THE ONE I REMEMBER THE MOST WAS THE CHICAGO BEARS S.B. WHEN THEY NOT ONLY CARRIED MIKE DITKA OFF THE FIELD BUT THEY CARRIED BUDDY RYAN OFF THE FIELD.

THAT WAS OUR TEAM. THERE WAS BUDDY AND THERE WAS MIKE. THE DEFENSE AND THE OFFENSE. THAT WAS THE PERFECT ENDING TO THAT SEASON.

THE ONE I REMEMBER THE MOST IS PROBABLY MIKE HOLMGREN.

THE VINCE LOMBARDI TROPHY IS COMING HOME!

I WAS THERE FOR THE MIKE HOLMGREN ONE. I'M A PRETTY BIG GUY BUT I WASN'T SURE HOW THEY WERE GONNA GET HIM UP. THEY DID, AND THEN HE GOT NERVOUS UP THERE. I MEAN ..HE KIND OF GAVE IT ONE LITTLE...AND THEN, "PUT ME DOWN."

IF YOU'VE EVER BEEN TO A JEWISH WEDDING, YOU KNOW IT'S NOT THAT EASY TO LIFT A PERSON IN A SITTING POSITION. ESPECIALLY IF THAT PERSON IS A BIT LARGE, LIKE JOHN MADDEN, OR ANDY REID.

LET'S SAY THE EAGLES GO AHEAD AND WIN THE S.B. THIS YEAR. YOU GUYS THINK YOU'RE GONNA TRY TO CARRY ANDY?

I'M NOT. SHHH. DID YOU SEE HOW BIG ANDY IS?!

JOHN MADDEN GOES ON THE SHOULDERS OF HIS PLAYERS!

I NEVER THOUGHT THAT I WOULD BE LIKE A FEATHER. I THOUGHT I'D BE LIKE A LUMP. BUT WHAT HAPPENED, THEY DIDN'T DROP ME AS MUCH AS THEY TRIPPED OVER A PHOTOGRAPHER...AND IT WAS JUST LIKE AN AVALANCHE.

I KNOW BILL WALSH, IN HIS S.B. YEAR, ACTUALLY HAD HIS PLAYERS PRACTICE CARRYING HIM OFF THE FIELD.

ALL THE PRACTICE IN THE WORLD CAN'T PROTECT ONE FROM HIDDEN DANGERS.

I GOT CARRIED OFF THE FIELD ONCE. IT WAS THE CHAMP. GAME AGAINST THE DALLAS COWBOYS THE YEAR THAT WE WENT TO THE S.B. THAT FIELD WAS JAMMED WITH PEOPLE. THEY CAME FROM EVERYWHERE, AND THEY GOT THOSE BANNERS WITH THOSE WOODEN STICKS. I'M GETTING STUCK WITH STICKS. I'M GETTING BANGED. I'M GOING, "I JUST WANT TO GET OUT OF HERE ALIVE MAN. THESE PEOPLE ARE GONNA KILL SOMEBODY!" I HAD CHUNKS OUT OF MY FACE. I MEAN I DON'T WANT TO EVER BE CARRIED OFF AGAIN.

WINNING THE S.B., THE PERFECT SEASON. THEN TO BE CARRIED OFF THE FIELD. I WAS HAPPY. THEN I LOOKED DOWN AND I NOTICED THAT MY WRISTWATCH WAS GONE. I SAID, "LET ME GO. I GOTTA GO FIND MY WATCH."

WHEN GEORGE ALLEN WAS CARRIED OFF AFTER THE 1972 NFC CHAMPIONSHIP, SOMEONE STOLE HIS LUCKY HAT. ONE OF THE FEW TIMES LOMBARDI DIDN'T GET CARRIED OFF, SOMEONE TRIED TO STEAL HIS. BIG MISTAKE.

YOU SEE WHAT HAPPENED TO ME? I HAD A FISTFIGHT. YOU SHOULD'VE SEEN ME CHASE HIM! THEY'RE GONNA GIVE ME A HARD TIME. DID YOU GET IT BACK? DID YOU HIT HIM? YES SIR. WAS HE BIGGER THAN YOU?" YES SIR. YOU HIT HIM?

CLEARLY, IT'S NO FUN TO EXPECT A RIDE AND NOT GET ONE. JUST ASK GEORGE SEIFERT, WINNING COACH OF SUPER BOWL 24.

YOU CAN THINK OF ALL THE COACHES, YOU KNOW, BEING PICKED UP AND CARRIED OFF. IT'S VIVID IN MY MIND. BILL WALSH WITH HIS FINGER UP IN THE AIR, #1. SO NOW WE HAD JUST WON THE S.B. HERE COMES MY MOMENT OF GLORY THROUGH THIS WHOLE DEAL. YOU KNOW, FINALLY. I'M KIND OF STANDING AROUND WAITING. WHO'S GONNA PICK ME UP? EVERYBODY JUST KIND OF RAN OFF THE FIELD!

AND IT'S OVER. S.F. 55 AND THE DENVER BRONCOS 10.

LONESOME GEORGE YOU KNOW.

THE NINERS MAY HAVE BEEN FIRST CLASS, BUT THE BEST RIDES ARE IN COACH. AND IT'S EASY TO GET SWEEPED UP IN THE MOMENT. THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED TO RICK FORZANO IN 1974 WHEN HIS 1-4 LIONS BEAT THE SUPER BOWL BOUND VIKINGS.

RADIO – BECAUSE OF THE VICTORY, RICK FORZANO ...THE RIGHT TO WEAR WHITE SHOES IN THE STANDS.

IF YOU'RE PUTTING TOGETHER SOMETHING AND YOU'RE GONNA SHOW THE WAY IT USED TO BE, YOU CAN SEND IT TO MY TEAM BECAUSE I'M GONNA SHOW THEM, "HEY, WHEN WE GET THERE, AND WHEN WE WIN, THIS IS HOW I WANT IT DONE. THIS IS HOW I WANT IT DONE. IT'S A WHOLE LOT BETTER THAN GETTING SOMETHING DUMPED ON YOUR HEAD."

FOR THE BIGGEST VICTORIES, THE GATORADE BATH JUST DOESN'T CUT IT ANYMORE. IT'S COLD AND STICKY AND FLEETING. A RIDE IS FOREVER. A HERO'S PASSAGE INTO HISTORY ON THE WINGS OF PEGASUS. ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS.

(SONG: "LOVE LIFT US UP WHERE WE BELONG")

(END)

COLUMNIST JIM MURRAY ONCE WROTE THAT THE RAMS' MERLIN OLSEN "WENT SWIMMING IN LOCH NESS – AND THE MONSTER GOT OUT."

IF NESSIE COULDN'T HANDLE THE HALL OF FAME DEFENSIVE TACKLE, IMAGINE HOW THE MERE MORTALS OF THE NFL FELT.

BIG NUMBER 74 WENT TO 14 PRO BOWLS IN 15 SEASONS. THE ONLY PLACE HE WENT MORE WAS THE OPPONENT'S BACKFIELD.

OLSEN MAY HAVE BEEN THE MOST FEARSOME OF THE RAMS' FRONT FOURSOME. BUT OFF THE FIELD, HE WAS A GENTLE GIANT.

AFTER FOOTBALL OLSEN BECAME AN ANALYST, ACTOR AND SPOKESPERSON, ENDEARING HIMSELF TO MILLIONS WITH A BIG BRAIN AND A GOOD HEART. NFL FILMS WITNESSED BOTH WHEN HE LET US COME ABOARD HIS BOAT.

OLSEN WAS PLANTING KELP TO FIGHT BEACH EROSION ON THE CALIFORNIA COAST.

IT DIDN'T EXACTLY MAKE FOR EXCITING TELEVISION, BUT IT WAS CLEAR THAT MERLIN OLSEN THE MAN WAS BIGGER THAN HIS PLAYING PERSONA EVER WAS.

OLSEN SOUGHT TO RESTORE WHAT TIME HAD TAKEN AWAY. BUT SOMETIMES AGE HAS A BEAUTY ALL ITS OWN.

GEORGE BLANDA'S LIFE IN PRO FOOTBALL WAS WRITTEN IN THE LINES ON HIS FACE. HE SMOKED, HE DRANK, HE ATE RED MEAT AND POTATOES –

AND HE PLAYED FOR 26 YEARS. HIS CAREER BEGAN IN 1949 AS A PLACEKICKER AND OCCASIONAL QUARTERBACK FOR THE CHICAGO BEARS.

BLANDA DIDN'T REALLY GET THE CHANCE TO PLAY FULL-TIME UNTIL 1960, WHEN HE JUMPED TO THE NEW AFL. IN HOUSTON BLANDA BLOSSOMED, AND HELPED GIVE THE LEAGUE A REPUTATION FOR HIGH-FLYING, SPACE-AGE PASSING.

WHEN THE OILERS RELEASED BLANDA AT AGE 39, ONLY THE RAIDERS' AL DAVIS THOUGHT HE STILL HAD "THE RIGHT STUFF." AND DID HE EVER – IN 1970 HIS STRING OF GAME-WINNING PASSES AND KICKS BECAME LASTING IMAGES OF THE GRAND OLD MAN.

KING GEORGE RETIRED FOR GOOD AT AGE 48, DESTINED FOR THE HALL OF FAME. HIS CAREER WAS AS LONG AS TOM BROOKSHIRE'S WAS SHORT. THE DEFENSIVE BACK PLAYED ONLY SEVEN SEASONS WITH THE EAGLES, BUT HE MADE ENOUGH OF AN IMPACT THAT HIS NUMBER 40 WAS RETIRED BY THE TEAM.

BROOKIE WAS PERFECT FOR PHILADELPHIA – HE LOVED THE TOWN SO MUCH HE'D RUN THROUGH A WALL FOR IT.

PHILLY ADOPTED HIM, AND SO DID NFL FILMS. HE AND BEST FRIEND PAT SUMMERALL HOSTED THE HIGHLIGHT SHOW "THIS WEEK IN PRO FOOTBALL" FROM OUR ORIGINAL STUDIO ON 13TH STREET – WHERE THE LOCALS WERE NEVER FAR FROM HIS MIND.

BROOKIE ALWAYS MADE IT FUN, WHETHER HE WAS IN FRONT OF OUR CAMERAS, OR CBS'. WE FOUND THAT OUT FIRST-HAND WHEN WE WIRED HIM COVERING A GAME AT RFK STADIUM IN WASHINGTON.

NOBODY DID BOOTH BANTER QUITE LIKE DON MEREDITH. HE CALLED GAMES TO A COUNTRY WESTERN BEAT, AND AMERICA TUNED IN TO SEE HIM BUTT HEADS WITH HOWARD COSELL'S ONE-MAN BRASS BAND.

BEFORE HE PLAYED A COWBOY IN THE BROADCAST BOOTH, MEREDITH PLAYED FOR THE COWBOYS IN DALLAS.

HIS GAME WAS INSTINCT AND FUN – THE EXACT OPPOSITE OF WHAT TOM LANDRY WANTED IN A QUARTERBACK.

DANDY DON PLAYED THROUGH BROKEN RIBS AND PUNCTURED LUNGS, AND GOT THE COWBOYS TO SOME BIG GAMES. BUT COACHES, WRITERS AND FANS SEEMED TO PLACE THE BLAME ON HIM WHEN THE TEAM FELL SHORT. HE WAS ONCE EVEN BOOED OUT OF A DALLAS RESTAURANT.

HIS CAPACITY FOR JOY OPENED HIM UP TO PAIN. HE WALKED AWAY FROM THE GAME AT AGE 31 – AND EVENTUALLY WALKED AWAY FROM THE BROADCAST BOOTH, TOO. I ALWAYS HOPED HE'D FOUND PEACE.

NOBODY WE REMEMBER IS EVER REALLY GONE. THOSE WE LOST IN 2010 WILL REMAIN FOREVER YOUNG IN OUR FILMS AND OUR HEARTS – WAITING FOR US TO BRING A BYGONE SUNDAY BACK TO LIFE, SO THEY CAN COME OUT AND PLAY ONCE MORE.

JANUARY 21, 2011
ESPN/NFL FILMS PRESENTS
2010 SEASON/SH. 22
BENNETT VISELTEAR

THE RIDE OF THEIR LIVES

THIS IS FORMER LIONS COACH RICK FORZANO. AND THIS IS THE GREATEST DAY OF HIS CAREER.

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