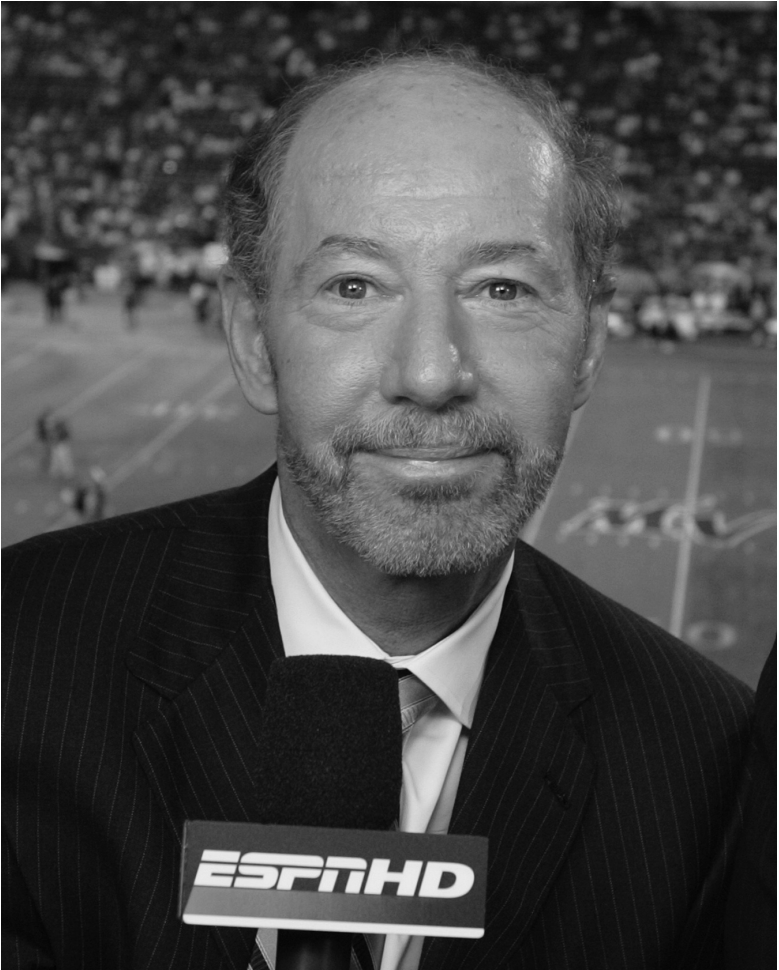


Then Tony Kornheiser Said...

Over his 35-year career, first as a sportswriter for the *Washington Post*, where his "Bandwagon" columns immortalized the Washington Redskins' 1991 Super Bowl season, and later as cohost of ESPN's *Pardon the Interruption*, Kornheiser has a style all his own. Acerbic but not abrasive—he is the gentle grouch. His knack for funny, idiosyncratic observations has garnered him legions of supporters. In 2006 Kornheiser became only the third non-jock color commentator to join the famed *Monday Night Football* broadcasting team since its premiere back in 1970. After three seasons in the *MNF* booth, Kornheiser stepped down last May, citing his fear of flying as the reason for leaving. (Well, I guess that beats the "Spend Time With My Family" excuse.) While not everyone mourned his departure—okay, a few haters were downright cheerful—Kornheiser remains one of the most enjoyed sports personalities in television. He took some time out to talk about that dominant Redskins championship team, filling the big shoes of Howard Cosell, and why Frank Gifford is the most handsome man ever. (He's less crazy about bloggers, or "little toads," as he once referred to them.)

In 1991 the Washington Redskins had one of the greatest seasons of any team in the history of the NFL. After the team pasted the Lions in Week 1, 45–0, you began chronicling every step of the team's epic run in a string of columns called "The Bandwagon." It became such a phenomenon in Washington that there were even bumper stickers, hats, T-shirts, and for a grand finale, a 33-foot "Bandwagon" RV that you drove all the way from the Capitol to the Super Bowl in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Phenomenon is really an overblown word. It started the first game when they beat the Lions 45–0. People said, well, they don't have Barry Sanders, and I thought, *He was going to score seven touchdowns?* So after Week 1, I said, whimsically, they're going to the Super Bowl. By Week 3, I had this sense I could pull this off for a while and began talking about a "bandwagon." The coverage of football didn't matter. The only thing that mattered was this cocoon-like village we pushed along each week.



Former Washington Post columnist Tony Kornheiser joined the Monday Night Football broadcast booth in 2006. He was replaced by Jon Gruden in 2009.

But that Redskins team did have a pretty great season.

Yeah, but I never expected that they would go 11–0. Not in my wildest dreams.

In the “Bandwagon” columns, you referred to Joe Gibbs in a loving, somewhat derisive way as “Coach Joe.”

He never called himself Joe Gibbs. He always called himself Coach Gibbs, which is idiotic. These coaches take themselves far too seriously.

What do you recall about the road trip to the Super Bowl in the mobile-home-turned-bandwagon?

The No. 1 memory was that there was a bed in the back, and as soon as I went to lay down on it, the RV was swaying all over the road. So we never went in the back again. None of us. The No. 2 memory I have is going to a hotel in Indiana. Freezing cold. I mean, like, sub-zero. And this was not the Ritz-Carlton. This was just a regular roadside motel. And they had put on the welcome sign out front, "Welcome Tony Kornheiser and The Bandwagon." (*laughs*) I thought that was a hoot. And then they had an apple on my bed that had frozen solid.

What happened when you got to the Super Bowl in Minneapolis?

The television news crews from D.C. were all there when we stepped off this crazy RV. And it was, like, are they kidding me? Are you people serious? Is this what being a rock star is like? (*laughs*) This is insane.

What about the "Bandwagon" bumper stickers and T-shirts?

In those days, nobody used the phrase "feel-good story." And neither had I. And this was a real feel-good story. It allowed me to be subversive and sarcastic, which are the two ways I like to write most of all. And at the same time, have a great amount of fun and do something that people responded to in an incredibly—and with unanimity—positive way. It was great.

Were you worried that the Redskins might lose to the Buffalo Bills and ruin your happy ending?

No, no, no. If they lose, I blame them. If I win, I get all the credit.

Tough Start

Roughest head coaching debut? In 1971 **Dan Devine** began his tenure in Green Bay by losing a heartbreaker to the Giants 42–40. But that wasn't the most painful part. While rooting on his troops in the fourth quarter, he suffered a broken left leg in a sideline collision.

Have you heard from any of the guys who played on that Super Bowl champion team?

Mark Adickes was a substitute offensive lineman. These were in the days of the Hogs, when the Redskins offensive linemen were the stars of the team. He would say all the things that [All-Pro] Russ Grimm wished he could say, but he wasn't as glib or as smart as Mark Adickes. He called me about 10 years ago to tell me that he had just graduated from Harvard Medical School. He's now an orthopedic surgeon. A football player: 6'5", 320. Harvard Medical School! I mean, I couldn't have done that. That's great.

How do the Hogs rate among the great units in NFL history?

The Hogs were great. And none of them are in the Hall of Fame. Come on, how can Russ Grimm and Joe Jacoby not be in the Hall of Fame? Look at the Redskins over that 10- or 12-year period. Four Super Bowl appearances. Three wins. They're comparable to the 49ers. They're comparable to Dallas. They have a thousand guys in the Hall of Fame. How can the Redskins not have any Hogs? It's an injustice.

Why did you call Russ Grimm "the Flea" in your columns?

Because it's such an insane nickname. He's 6'2", 340. He's not the flea. That's crazy! But you know, he was a quarterback in high school. He was actually the Redskins emergency quarterback. Russ Grimm, baby.

How about a current player who belongs one day in the Hall of Fame?

Kurt Warner is going to the Hall of Fame. By getting to a Super Bowl with a second team. By becoming only the second player [quarterback] to do that. By having what F. Scott Fitzgerald said you couldn't have in America, "a second act." By having a second act, especially after the way Kurt Warner was drummed out of St. Louis and drummed out of New York, and basically told you're going to fill in for Matt Leinart until he is ready. By then getting to the Super Bowl, he walked into the Hall of Fame.

His story is uniquely compelling.

He was bagging groceries in Iowa. He was an Arena League quarterback. He was a minor league quarterback. He was a Europe quarterback.

And then he lit up the sky in St. Louis. And he wasn't even going to be the starter. Trent Green was. You were tempted to say the system worked for him. He was just a meteor. And then he faded and cooled off and he left. But you can't say that now.

What do you think of 2008's Super Bowl champion Steelers?

Pittsburgh went through the most brutal schedule of anybody last year and came out of it by winning games close and winning games late. So I really respect that Pittsburgh team.

When you sit around with your pals, do you talk about football?

No. We talk movies, politics, great novels. I don't sit around and talk about sports. I do that for a living. So I don't sit around with my friends and do that. I don't.

Top five best NFL players-turned-actors?

I don't know. Were any of them in any good movies? I'm not a guy who makes lists of great sports movies or great athletes in sports movies. I can tell you there have been movies that I loved with sports themes like *Bull Durham*, *Raging Bull*, and *Chariots of Fire*.

Any football-related ones?

North Dallas Forty.

Growing up in Long Island, who was the NFL player you most idolized?

When I was really young, it was Frank Gifford. Because the Giants were the only team. And when the AFL came around, it was Namath.

I don't think people now realize what a huge and glamorous star Frank Gifford was in the late '50s and early '60s.

Handsome man in the history of the world. He's it. Matinee idol. Handsome man ever. Frank Gifford.

You and Frank Gifford have both had stints in the legendary *Monday Night Football* booth. What do you think is the legacy of that show?

Jilted Gilbride

Just before halftime of the Houston Oilers' nationally televised 1993 season finale against the Jets, Houston quarterback Cody Carlson fumbled the ball on a pass play. How did Oilers defensive coordinator **Buddy Ryan** express his displeasure with the play call? On the sideline, he socked offensive coordinator Kelvin Gilbride in the face.

This wasn't the first time Ryan flashed his red-hot temper, almost coming to blows with Mike Ditka during a 1985 Dolphins-Bears game in which Chicago lost their bid for a perfect season. Later, as head coach of the Philadelphia Eagles, he once said of his running back Earnest Jackson, "Trade him for a six pack. It doesn't even have to be cold."

You have to go back to Roone Arledge and Howard Cosell and the decision to take sports out of the weekend to put it in a primetime setting—that's had a profound effect on the way television is scheduled and on the integration of sports into the culture at large. It was something that could no longer be consigned to afternoons on the weekends. Or in the male province of the den. It changed everything. It's very hard now for a man or a woman who has no knowledge whatsoever of sports to get into a whole bunch of conversations in America. You better know sports because sports is the currency of the country.

You mentioned Cosell. Now, you got to meet him many years ago. What did you find most surprising about him?

The most surprising thing about Howard Cosell from people who met him was how tall he was. He was about 6'3", and nobody expected that. Big, strong, broad-shouldered guy. Cosell.

Did you feel any pressure to live up to Howard Cosell?

I'm not Howard Cosell. I mean, I'm not a jock, but I'm not Howard Cosell. I've been a sportswriter for 40 years, so I have some sense that you get six points for a touchdown and three for a field goal. I don't need to be taught that. But I'm not him, and if people think I'm him, they're wrong. He's, as they say in Latin, *sui generis*. One of a kind.

When Cosell died, you wrote, "He carried a glow that always suited television. In his passing, the picture is already a little dimmer." What do you think was Howard Cosell's most memorable on-air moment?

Cosell's greatest moment or the thing you remember most is when he announced that John Lennon had been shot. It was December 8, 1980. I'm sure if Howard were alive today, he would say of all the moments on *Monday Night Football*, that was the one that meant the most.

Where were you when you heard Cosell make the announcement?

I remember exactly where I was. I was sitting in my living room watching the game in Washington, D.C. Within five minutes, I got a phone call from the editor of the *Washington Post's* Style section. He said, "Can you write?" And I said, "What's the deadline?" He said, "Twelve-thirty." I said, "Yes, I can."

How hard was that column to write?

That's what you do. You push aside all the personal feelings of loss you have, you push those aside until you're done. And when you're done, you think about those things. As they say in *The Godfather*, "This is the business we've chosen."

Tom Brady

Days before Super Bowl XLII, Michael Strahan was asked his opinion of the quarterback he'd be facing that Sunday. "I love Tom Brady," he said. "I'm jealous that I'm not Tom Brady." He's not alone. After all, the Patriots' two-time Super Bowl MVP has been named to *Forbes'* Top 100 Celebrities, landed on *People's* Most Beautiful People list, and took home *SI's* Man of the Year in 2005. He earns around \$10 million in endorsement deals—he could earn twice that amount, but he's too classy to oversaturate himself. Oh, and did we mention he's married to Brazilian supermodel Giselle Bündchen? But you knew that. What you might not know about Brady is that he has shit luck.

Back when he was just "another" student at the University of Michigan, he couldn't get laid to save his life. Maybe that's an exaggeration—he was on the football team, after all. Still, Brady had a crush on this cute girl who wouldn't give him the time of day. He would drive by her house, hoping to get a glimpse of her, maybe even work up the courage to strike up a conversation. When the chance arose for actual human interaction—like at a local club—he blew it. She just wasn't interested. Brady explains his Peter Parker-like personality. "I'm very confident as a football player; I have no problems. I'm not natural with cameras and pictures. Put me in a room with my family, and I'm the one cracking jokes. Put me in a room with people I don't know, I'll be a little shy for a while until I can figure out what to say. What it comes down to is that I just want to be a great football player."

So, let's get to that bad luck. The string of unfortunate incidents began when the coach who recruited him to Michigan left for Stanford. "This is a month after he signed, and the two people who wanted him there are gone," recalled his father. "And he's screwed, but he didn't know how screwed he was."

Next came the attack of appendicitis. He lost 30 pounds his freshman year. Desperate to get his life together, he went to see a counselor in the athletics department, Greg Hardin. "So he tells me that he's going to be the starting quarterback at Michigan," said Hardin, "and I'm looking at him, and I'm thinking, *Okay, I'm not going to rain on his parade.* But he's all broke down and emotionally worn out." Only one other Michigan player, recalled Hardin, had ever committed himself to the

psychological-based program—Desmond Howard, the receiver and kick-off returner who won the Heisman Trophy at Michigan in 1991.

Brady worked his way back into shape and even outperformed Brian Griese during training camp. It was a foregone conclusion that Brady would start the season, especially after Griese got suspended for throwing a barstool through a saloon window. Yet the son of the Hall of Fame Miami Dolphins quarterback got the job, leaving Brady relegated to the sideline. Brady remained calm. He kept working and working, and he always kept his sense of humor. “He’d do an imitation of Al Pacino’s Tony Montana that sounded like Donald Duck, and he’d laugh at himself as loudly as they would,” explained Charles P. Pierce in *Moving the Chains*. “This guy, they thought, better make it to the NFL because he’d never get work as an actor.”

Having climbed his way up from seventh on the depth chart, and with Griese graduated, it was finally Brady’s time to shine as a starter. But like a plot straight out of an episode of *Friday Night Lights*, the local boosters pressured coach Lloyd Carr to start incoming freshman and local son Drew Henson. So in Carr’s infinite wisdom, he decided he’d have Brady play the first quarter and Henson the second one, and the quarterback who performed better would start the rest of the game. Once again, Brady hung tough, earning vindication late in his senior year, breaking several Orange Bowl passing records in a pressure-filled overtime victory over Alabama in 2000.

Then came draft day. The 49ers had shown strong interest in the California golden boy. Dwight Clark, one of Brady’s childhood heroes, was working in the front office and liked what he saw from him. In the third round, the 49ers picked Giovanni Carmazzi, a quarterback out of Hofstra. “Dwight Clark—unbelievable,” recalled his father. “It just killed us. Tommy was sitting there, and he was like, ‘I don’t understand this. I do *not* understand this.’”

In the living room, where his family had gathered around the television, all eyes turned to Tommy as he calmly walked out the door. His mom, Nancy, recalled, “He just wanted to take a walk, and he grabbed a bat.” Brady proceeded to demolish the backyard, clobbering toys, whatever he could hit. While Brady was going postal, the phone rang. It was the Patriots. “You don’t want to say, ‘Well, he’s not around,’” said

Vinatieri's Last Stands

Adam Vinatieri's road to Super Bowl glory started with a trip to Wal-Mart. After not getting drafted, he bought \$20 worth of blank videotapes at the store, went home, and made a homemade pre-YouTube audition tape. He mailed out the video to teams around the NFL, but nobody was interested. Soon after, he got an unexpected offer from the Amsterdam Admirals of the NFL's World League in Europe, who had got a hold of the tape. After watching it, they asked if he would come and play for them.

Later, Bill Parcells discovered Vinatieri, presumably not on a recruiting trip, where he and the kicker hit the coffee shops and red light district. Patriots fans can rejoice that Vinatieri decided, years earlier, not to accept an appointment at West Point. If only his family ancestor, a military bandmaster, had decided not to follow his military leader, Colonel Custer, into battle.

It's poetic justice that Vinatieri had the two most successful last stands in Super Bowl history. The first came with seven seconds left in Super Bowl XXXVI in the Louisiana Superdome when he kicked a 48-yarder to lift the 14-point underdog Patriots over the Rams for their first title crown. When, two years later in Houston's Reliant Stadium, Vinatieri kicked another last-gasp field goal, this time to beat the Carolina Panthers in Super Bowl XXXVIII, he became the first player to be the deciding factor in two different Super Bowl wins.

his father. "I'm trying to cover this thing as fast as I can, so I said, 'Well, he's in the shower.' And they say, 'Well, Coach Belichick would like to talk to him for a second.'" New England made Brady their sixth-round selection. The 199th pick. As for the six QBs picked ahead of him, only Chad Pennington and Marc Bulger remained in the NFL by 2005 (Chris Redman resurfaced in 2007 after being out of the league for three seasons). Giovanni Carmazzi ended up never playing a down in the NFL. Guess Brady was one "catch" Clark failed to make.

When Brady joined the Patriots, he was once again stuck at the bottom of the depth chart. He soon became the leader...of the practice squad! Still, Belichick and offensive coordinator Charlie Weis noticed how the subs rallied around the NFL newbie like he was a seasoned veteran—this was a man whom other men followed into battle. "I'm always reminded of my mother's dictum—pride and arrogance come before the fall. Numerous times in my life, when we kind of had

things going, it would all get knocked out from under me. Pride goeth before the fall. It's as true in life as it is in religion as it is in sports," Brady said. When Drew Bledsoe got knocked out of a game in 2001, Brady stepped in and led New England all the way to the Super Bowl, where they faced the high-powered St. Louis Rams, who were favored by 14-points.

Brady once again proved that he wasn't much for paying attention to odds. With 90 seconds left in a tie game, Brady started on his 17-yard line with zero timeouts. In those 90 seconds, he delivered pin-point passes as he drove his team into field-goal position, where Adam Vinatieri then delivered the game-winning kick as time expired. In those 90 seconds, he had joined entry into the most elite club of Big Gamers. Joe Montana was there to unclick the velvet rope, then Joe Namath ushered him into the VIP room, where Sid Luckman was there to hand him the Lombardi Trophy (and a glass of champagne). The patrons in the club were so in awe of his golden smile, they didn't see the gritty determination in his eyes. Same mistake they had all made since he was a kid.

Then Frank Gifford Said...

As the NFL's most glamorous and popular player of his era, Frank Gifford moved back and forth between two completely different worlds. On Sunday, it was grass stains, mud, blood, and bruises. At night, dry martinis, French cuffs, well-shaven men, and beautifully fragrant women. But it didn't matter if he was on the football field or the Manhattan cocktail circuit, nobody could keep their eyes off him. That especially holds true for defenders assigned to stop the rusher, who was as elusive as he was fast. Over his 12 seasons with the New York Giants, he was named to eight Pro Bowls—at *three different positions, including defensive cornerback*. He also won the league's MVP honor in 1956 as he led the Giants to a championship crown. After he retired from the game, the Hall of Famer entered yet another completely new world, television, where he became one of the first athletes to conquer the broadcasting booth. The NFL's one-time "golden boy" told us about playing in the Greatest Game Ever Played, hanging with the Rat Pack, and why the infamous Bednarik hit has been seriously overblown.

Jerry Rice

Jerry Rice has caught more touchdowns than any other player in NFL history. But growing up in Oktibbeha County, Mississippi, he spent his time catching bricks, not footballs. "My brothers and I would bring the bricks to a worksite and pass them from one to another until handing them to my dad for placing," Rice remembered. "Often, when my father had moved to the second floor of a structure, I would balance myself on the scaffolding two stories up and catch the bricks my brothers would throw to me from the ground." However, the idea that his great hands as a receiver came from his brick-laying days is a myth, as Rice told John Brenkus of FSN's "Sports Science:" "Brick-laying requires hard hands and an aggressive approach; catching a football requires soft hands to cradle." All that didn't matter to his dad, who depended on his son to help him run the business: "He handled bricks better than any worker I ever had. I was sorry to see him go."

Rice might still be working on some construction crew had he not played hooky from East Oktibbeha County High School. One day in 1978 Rice, a sophomore, and his friend decided to sneak off campus during the middle of the day. While making their getaway, they were spotted by their principal, Ezell Wickes. Rice and his accomplice high-tailed it down the hallway. "Mr. Wickes never caught up to us, but seeing that it was a small school, he easily recognized my face and clothing," recalled Rice. "Suffice to say, I knew what I had coming when I returned. He had a big old leather strap in his office, and he gave me five hard hits with it. It was painful. But Mr. Wickes witnessed how fast I had sprinted away from him, and realized my speed could be put to good use to keep me out of trouble."

After meeting with Rice, the head coach told him to come out and try to make the varsity team. Rice made the team, despite, in his words, "running the wrong route, dropping easy balls, and even putting on my pads the wrong way." Rice knew that he could not match the skills of his more experienced opponents, but like the U.S. Olympic Hockey Team that two years later would upset the veteran Soviet squad in Lake Placid, he was determined to be the superiorly conditioned athlete. That meant running 10 miles home after a grueling practice. It meant running up and down hills in the Mississippi heat long after his teammates had

packed up their gear and left. It even meant running across the dusty pasture, chasing down untamed horses with his brothers. “I ran with no real purpose or goal. I just enjoyed running,” said Rice. “If the movie [*Forrest Gump*] had come out when I was a kid, they would have nicknamed me Forrest... Run, Forrest, run!”

When he first arrived in San Francisco, the workout freak met his match in running back Roger Craig. “When I did decide to join him for a run up a two-and-a-half-mile hill, I could barely keep up,” Rice said. He was in no rush to join Craig for another run up the Hill. “I had to look for him for two to three weeks to try to convince him to try again,” recalled Craig. Eventually the Hill became part of his famous grueling off-season regiment—one that helped him to become one of the most durable players in history. “I dare anyone to come out and hang with me,” he told *Sky Magazine* in 1996. “Full-out, no holding back.”

It’s hard to believe, but Jerry Rice dropped around 15 passes his rookie season. “That year, I didn’t know what was happening,” he remembered. “I even resorted to wearing gloves, something I never did.” The problem was nerves, which the small-town kid had suffered from since the very first trip to San Francisco, which also happened to be his first airplane flight ever. “The reality was that I was more scared to board the airplane to San Francisco than I was to play with the Super Bowl champions.”

No one can question Rice’s amazing stamina or desire, but plenty questioned his speed after he ran a 40-yard dash in the months before the draft. “That’s not an incredible time,” explained Timothy James Gay who has a PhD in physics. “It’s fairly typical for a wide receiver. What separates Rice from the pack of his peers is his ability to get open, and that has to do with quickness, only one aspect of that 40-yard time.” In other words it was his burst—his force of acceleration—that made him

The NFL School of Business

Through a program launched in 2005, the NFL has sent more than 350 active and retired players to four of the country’s top business schools: Harvard Business School, Stanford’s Graduate School of Business, Penn’s Wharton School, and Northwestern’s Kellogg School of Management. Another league program, started in 2002, reimburses players up to \$15,000 per year in college or university tuition.

so dangerous. "Jerry's got game speed," San Francisco safety Ronnie Lott told *SI's* Ralph Wiley in 1987. "He's 4.2 in games. Hard to explain, but nobody outruns Jerry in a game." Or as former teammate Terrell Owens put it: he could "get off the line faster than any player in the history of the game. He shot out of his stance quicker than anyone and was impossible to cover one and one." So how quick did Rice get off the line of scrimmage? The average human reaction time is .19 seconds. Rice's was clocked by the *Sports Science* team at .13 seconds—an incredible 31.6 percent better. "The average bolt of lightning is .15 seconds," said the show's narrator. "So in fact Jerry Rice can get off the line faster than a bolt of lightning."

Rice didn't like being called slow, but he was called worse by his 49ers teammates, like "Fifi." How did he earn this nickname? It was his poodle cut—buzzed on the sides, high on top. "I didn't like the nickname," said Rice. "I especially hated it when they called me Fifi during meetings." Perhaps he preferred his other nickname: Bert from *Sesame Street*.

Rice managed to snag runner-up on the *Dancing with the Stars* competition, but Craig recalled that the 6'1", 200-pound receiver wasn't taking home any trophies with the touchdown dance he performed early in his career: "His one routine was 'The Cabbage Patch,' which was a popular dance move in the mid-1980s. We didn't embrace Jerry's dance too well, but he was in the end zone so often, we got to the point where we didn't mind him doing it."

Barry Sanders

The only thing more elusive than Barry Sanders, who spent his entire career whirling, spinning, and cutting on a dime for the Detroit Lions, is Barry Sanders the man. Here's a guy who walked away from the game in 1998 with plenty left in the tank and Walter Payton's all-time rushing record all but in his grasp. He's perhaps the most dynamic and electrifying running back to ever wear an NFL uniform, yet one of the most unassuming and humble superstars you will ever meet. Which is not to say that Barry Sanders is dull or apathetic—in fact, he has a sharp sense of humor and a deep passion for his faith. Beneath his quiet exterior, Sanders possessed a fierce competitive streak, something that was not