



ONE OF A KIND

Pittsburgh Steelers photo

Bradshaw Gives ‘Pre-game’ Talk on Football, Life

By Rebecca Patrick

Right off the bat, during our 30-minute phone conversation, it was evident that Terry Bradshaw is anything but the bumbler he portrays himself as during the *Fox NFL Sunday* telecasts. It’s merely another role the four-time Super Bowl champion has played to the hilt.

Like many, his outlook has been shaped by his upbringing. In his case: Humble roots in Louisiana that were long on values and pushed him to always strive for his best – and helped him keep perspective.

Bradshaw shoots from the hip with honesty and self-deprecation.

When he addresses the Indiana Chamber’s 22nd Annual Awards Dinner on November 17, the Pittsburgh Steelers great promises good stories and frequent laughs. Until then, consider this his entertaining warm-up.

NFL memories and mindset

During his 14-year career with the Pittsburgh Steelers, Bradshaw won back-to-back Super Bowls twice (1975-76 and 1979-80). He was also the starting point for what is considered by many to be the most famous play in NFL history – the “Immaculate Reception.” So what does he consider his most memorable moment?

Terry Bradshaw: “The first and only thing that comes to mind is playing in the Super Bowls because that would easily be the most important thing. The rest of the career matters not; nothing comes close.

“Also, I’m not a guy that walks around looking back at what he’s achieved and the reason for that, No. 1, is you’re never as good as you or people say you are; No. 2, it’s been pounded in me since I can remember that you need other people, and I guess it’s just a way for my family and our coaches to always keep us humbled and to focus on all the other people on the football team.

“My attitude was, ‘What was your best play? I need another game.’ I think there’s such a great fear factor in me. I’m always – I don’t want to say insecure, but I never feel totally worthy of anything that I’ve done or any business that I’m involved in. I do work a little bit harder and go a little bit extra, because I do want to be successful and feel good about myself.”

Thanks, but no thanks for the memorabilia

Bradshaw was NFL MVP in 1978, MVP of Super Bowl XIII and a first ballot Hall of Fame inductee in 1989.

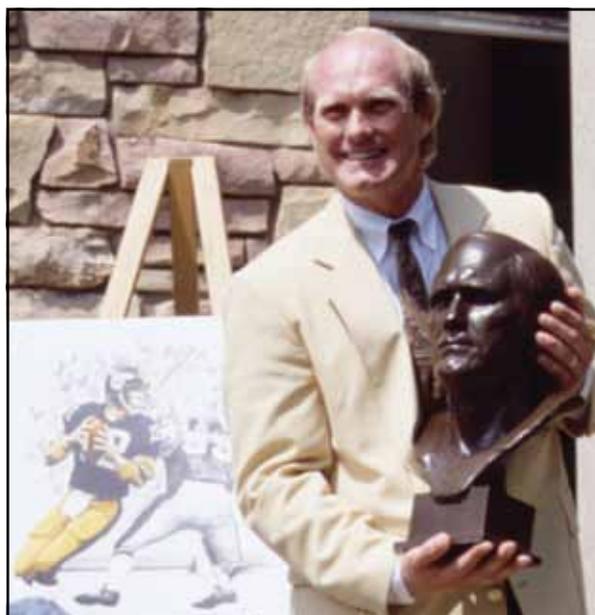
TB: “I absolutely care nothing about or have any interest in it, nor is there any memorabilia in my house or in my office – not one piece. That’s as good an indicator (as anything) as to how I was raised. Football was the most important thing to me; and the day that it ended, it was the least important thing to me.

“I’ve never ever dwelled on the accomplishments. Quite honestly, they’re not that impressive anyway (he laughs). So I’m a little bit embarrassed by it. I really give no thought to any of it. And I kind of like that.”

What did he do with the NFL memorabilia? All the “important” items from the Super Bowl and Hall of Fame induction are on display at his alma mater, Louisiana Tech. The rest – what he terms “silly plaques, pictures and those things” – are in a warehouse.

He does, however, have a soft spot for a recently discovered blast from the past.

TB: “I found my Super Bowl X football shoes. Actually, my uncle found them in his horse basket as he was cleaning it out. Not sure what I’m going to do with them; they’re stiff as a board and all wrinkled up. But it was the only time I ever wore these shoes and I was paid \$2,500 to wear them. That \$2,500 flew my mom and dad to Miami so they could watch the game, because I didn’t have enough money to get them there, so that’s kind of cool.”



Bradshaw is all smiles at his Pro Football Hall of Fame induction, but says such honors mean little to him (Pittsburgh Steelers photo).

Football circa 2011

The current atmosphere in the NFL is a far cry from 1970 when Bradshaw came into the league. Now there’s intense media attention, huge paydays and big-time TV contracts and programming options.

TB: “The American people have spoken and they said there’s nothing like professional football: Golf is boring, baseball is boring, hockey is boring, basketball is boring. For all of those sports, it’s wait ‘til the playoffs and championships, and then people might have some interest in them. (NFL football is seemingly everywhere), but they’re bouncing around from networks to networks and cable channel to cable channel.

“I don’t blame the players today for hating the media. You would get tired. I’m the kind of person that I like to isolate myself for

my focus. All the media and constantly having to do interviews would drive me crazy. But then again, I would think I’m making \$15 million or \$18 million bucks. Bring the next interviewer on in here (he laughs).

“I couldn’t wait to get what money I got because I was poor. . . . I’m strongly against these rookies coming out and becoming instant millionaires; they haven’t earned the right. Cam Newton coming out of Auburn with all the crap that’s been circling him and in one year he’s supposed to make \$50 million guaranteed (before the current labor agreement changed the rookie pay scale). If he falls flat on his face, (the) Carolina (Panthers) will be so far back in the hole they’ll never come out of it in my lifetime. I’m totally against that.

“The football now is definitely better. More skilled people, more talent, more speed, better coaching, more coaching – and it’s a huge full-time business, so it’s changed.

“I’m kind of a slowdown guy; while I love business and how fast it moves, my life in general is pretty much in double low (gear). I walk slow, I talk slow, I think slow. I don’t like to be rushed and it doesn’t roll over into the way the game is played or the way it’s covered today.”

Bradshaw readily admits he’s “very much old school” and doesn’t like to compare quarterbacks then versus now because the game is so different. However, he says, the Colts’ Peyton Manning could have played in any era.

“Peyton’s one of the quarterbacks that could have certainly played in the ‘50s, ‘60s or ‘70s. He’s a guy that doesn’t need the (now popular) West Coast offense to protect him. He’s big and strong, and he’s accurate as all get out. He’s extremely competitive. He’s a pretty special guy, pretty special

guy. I love watching him play.”

It’s a contact sport

Bradshaw went public this spring about his deficits in short-term memory and impairments in hand-eye coordination, stemming from concussions he suffered while playing in the NFL. He sought treatment at the Amen Clinic in Newport Beach, California. Does he think the NFL should do more to protect quarterbacks?

TB: “No, hit ‘em (he laughs). They’re continuing to pass rules (against hits) above the shoulders, leading with the head and so forth. They’ve done all they can do. What they’ve implemented rule-wise is good.

“The helmet itself is the most important piece of equipment, and it’s gotten better. It’ll continue to get better; it’ll get lighter and more shock-absorbent. If players continue to misuse it, there will be more stringent rules applied.

“But I don’t want to see the rules change. If anything, I like seeing these guys get hit. I got hit. I’m just like sitting back as a fan, and I’m like, ‘Hit him!’ And I think a lot of my colleagues, from the ’70s especially, we all feel the same way. You know, you pay these guys millions of dollars and we’re a little bit jealous of that. Go ahead, smack ’em around a little bit. That’s cruel, but I do like (to watch) that.

“People who like football like football for what it is. Football’s greatness is because of the contact.”

Interviewing players

For the past 18 years, Bradshaw has been a familiar face to viewers of Fox NFL telecasts – interviewing players, exchanging barbs with his studio colleagues or being a part of trophy presentations to the champions.

TB: “The wonderful thing about this business is I have met some of the more colorful personalities. My favorite interviews were always with (the recently retired, yet again) Brett Favre. He was always someone that I really enjoyed sitting down with.



The cast of Fox NFL Sunday at last year’s Super Bowl: (left to right) host Curt Menefee, Bradshaw, Howie Long, Michael Strahan and Jimmy Johnson (PictureGroup photo/Frank Micelotta).

He was fun; he made it fun. There are players you sit down with and they don’t want to be there. You know they don’t want to be there, so the interviews aren’t any good. Basically, I would say this: Interviews for the most part with players are a waste. You might as well go in there and have fun – laugh and cut up with them – and let the fans see them laugh. Because if you ask them about this week’s game, it’s gonna be the same old rhetoric, same old spin.

“It used to be, 10 years ago, if a player did something, you could go sit down with him; you could get into it and there’s certain players out there that they would get into it with you.

For the most part now it’s a spin zone, so we don’t do that many interviews. I interviewed (current Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Ben) Roethlisberger for the Super Bowl last year; what a waste of my time. (The interviews are) blank, they’re bland, they’re boring. People say, ‘Ask the right questions.’ Well, when you do, you don’t get answers. So I just enjoy simply meeting the players.”

I may be a redneck, but...

Fox NFL Today colleague Jimmy Johnson has said that Bradshaw’s redneck persona is exaggerated and the Louisiana native knows exactly what he’s doing.

TB: “I’m kind of the butt of all the jokes at Fox and my personality leads that to happen. And, it’s fun. It’s really a play on my image as a player being dumb, and when I came into broadcasting that was always something that’s followed me. It’s been like that for 26, 27 years now. I learned that when there’s something very personal that hurts you and you can’t get around it, you can’t defend it. And in my case, I didn’t think enough people defended me, especially in Pittsburgh, so the only way I could survive was to turn it and make it work for me.

“And so that’s what I’ve done. The ‘dumb’ image has been part of it and I get a kick out of it; it’s just fun. When the cameras come on, for me it’s not time to talk X’s and O’s, because who cares? I don’t want to watch that stuff. Do you? It’s time for people to come home from church and sit back in their old sofa and watch their Colts on television. My job is to sit there and kind of set things up a little bit, have some fun, let them know I love them.

“That’s always been my approach. I’m from the south; I grew up around watermelon farming and cotton farming because that’s what my family did. I worked the farms in the summertime and weekends – all these things that establish your foundation as a person. That’s how my family raised me, on the simple things. That’s what I bring to television: simple.

“If I talk serious, I’m going to fall asleep – so I’m all about having fun. If there’s an issue that strikes a chord in me, I can get after it pretty good. I do not hold my tongue when I’m upset or feel strongly about something. I prefer not ever having to do that. I prefer laughing, having a good time and entertaining the people and putting a smile on their faces. That’s my job. That’s what I like doing. You’ll see that when I speak. I’m all about laughing and having fun, but with a message.”

Loving life

Over the past 40 years, Bradshaw has taken up various professions not related to football. He’s been a country singer and an actor (perhaps most famously in the 2006 feature film Failure to Launch), and is

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Terry Bradshaw

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the only NFL player to receive a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. His two ongoing endeavors are real estate and horses. The latter he's enjoyed for 30 years.

TB: "I stand stallions here in Thackerville, Oklahoma. That's what I enjoy. I breed quarter horses. We train them, we show them, and we sell them all over the world.

"I'm also in the thoroughbred business with Steve Davison over in Ruston, Louisiana. We own a horse called Mission Impazible who ran in the (Kentucky) Derby last year, and he's doing really good. I do thoroughbred racing under the name Blond Bomber Stables; that was my nickname."

Bradshaw calls himself the "most blessed human being in the world."

"I'm really happy, really happy. I don't think, honestly, that I've felt this good in my life. But I've taken care of myself. I've lost weight, I went to the Amen Clinic for the concussion thing, and that's been really good. They put me on medicine and I'm doing proper exercises. I bought a ping pong table and Jimmy (Johnson) gets a kick out of that. He says (imitating Johnson's voice), 'TB, if you have a really special Sunday morning on our show, does that mean you played really good ping pong that week?'

"I called him from the airport one day and there was a big crowd in the back and he said, 'Where the hell are you?' I said, 'I'm at a seniors ping pong tournament in Mobile, Alabama, can't talk to you right now,' and he started laughing so hard he had to hang up the phone.

"I would just like to continue trying to be a good person. That's a struggle for me because I get short with bad people. I'm happy and one of the things I've learned from the Amen people is accentuate the positive. And that is so true; we say it

Bradshaw welcomes former Presidents George Bush and Bill Clinton to the Fox set at Super Bowl XXXIX (Fox Sports photo).



U.S. Air Force airmen assigned to the 816th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron, deployed to Southwest Asia, speak with Bradshaw prior to conducting an airdrop mission in November 2009. The Fox NFL Sunday team flew with the aircrew and witnessed how the U.S. Air Force supports ground forces (U.S. Air Force photo/Staff Sgt. Angelita Lawrence).

and read about it. But, boy when you just think good and avoid all the bad people in your life, you feel good. I'd just like to continue down that road, like to be healthy.

"I've got two precious daughters and I love them to death. My accomplishments after football are not as important as probably they used to be. I pretty much like the consistency of what I'm doing and that pleases me. I enjoy with a passion working for Fox. I absolutely love what I'm doing."

Super Bowl preview

Bradshaw has covered the recent Super Bowls on the Fox network and seen up close the impact the event has on the host city.

TB: "Oh, Indianapolis is going to love it! Your business people are going to love it; the shops are going to be full and restaurants will be packed. Hotels will be overflowing – and not only in Indianapolis, but the surrounding towns. The big excitement and the buzz go on about a month before.

"And then there's civic pride and you showcase your town. You're going to put your best foot forward and this is your one time for the world to know where Indianapolis is. It's a special, special year for you and the world is going to be watching; it's a cool thing.

"People will write wonderful things and more business will come to the city because of the Super Bowl; it's a powerful event."