



**Super Bowl XLI: Indianapolis Colts vs. Chicago Bears**  
 Time: 6 p.m. Sunday TV: WISH-Channel 8 Radio: WFBO-94.7 FM



# From humble beginnings ...



Indianapolis Colts head coach Tony Dungy grew up in this home in Jackson, Mich., about 75 miles west of Detroit.

## Dungy's modest ways have roots in hometown of Jackson, Mich.

By LARRY LAGE  
 THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

**JACKSON, Mich.**

Tony Dungy was back in his hometown, attending a ceremony to name Frost School's library after his mother, a former teacher. A black plaque with silver lettering read: "Cleo May Dungy Library. In honor of her many years of dedicated service to Jackson Public Schools. Dedicated, May 2001."

One problem: Dungy's mother's name is spelled Cleomae.

The Indianapolis Colts coach didn't point out the mistake, a decision befitting a man whose reputation as a gentleman rivals his acclaim as a coach.

"He probably didn't say anything because he's so nice," gushed Frost School sixth-grade teacher Mary Anne Gough, who's known of Dungy since they were in middle school nearly four decades ago.

In Jackson, about 75 miles west of Detroit, the mere mention of him makes people smile.

"This is great for our city, because we're losing jobs and people every day," said Jackson High School athletic director Russell Davis, who played football against, with and for Dungy. "Tony's story is really giving us a shot in the arm that we desperately need."

Sunday night, the 51-year-old Dungy will lead his Colts onto the field at Dolphin Stadium in Miami to battle the Chicago Bears in the Super Bowl.

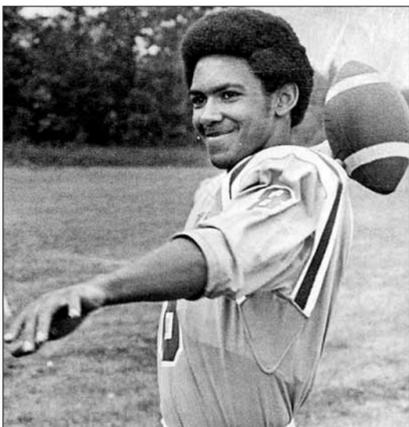
"Tony Dungy is the talk of the town," mayor Jerry Ludwig said. "He's all people are talking about, no matter where you go. It doesn't matter if you're old or young, it's exciting for all of us."

Dungy's hometown needs a pick-me-up story. Jackson — like the entire state of Michigan — is hurting because of a sagging economy that keeps taking hits from the Big Three's automobile woes.

Michigan's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 7.1 percent in December, second highest in the nation behind Mississippi and well above the national average of 4.5 percent. The rate was only slightly better in Jackson County, in part because of the state-funded prisons and prison hospital, as well as Consumers Energy.

Dungy's story and the spotlight it has put on Jackson — which touts itself as the birthplace of the Republican Party — won't pay the bills, but it gives many of the 35,000 residents a reason to be proud of their town.

The city council declared this week "Tony Dungy Week."



As a teen, Tony Dungy played quarterback for Jackson Parkside High School's football team.

"He was friends with everybody," said Peter May, who has known Dungy since the seventh grade and will be one of his personal guests at the Super Bowl. "He didn't have an enemy. He's got that 'it' that special people have."

"I don't think he has a skeleton in his closet," said Sherrilyn Sims, Dungy's older sister, who still lives in Jackson.

There's no dirt on Dungy? "Well, we had our brawls over toys, and he got spankings like the rest of the kids," Sims said. "He wasn't a complete angel when he was little."

He was a complete athlete, talented on the football field, basketball court and track. When Dungy was 14, he earned a spot in Sports Illustrated's "Faces in the Crowd," before he even was in high school at Jackson Parkside.

Anthony Kevin Dungy was born Oct. 6, 1955, in Jackson, the second of four children Wilbur and Cleomae raised in a household built on a foundation of faith and education. One of his siblings is a doctor, one is a nurse and another a dentist.

Dungy's deceased parents were both popular educators, his father at Jackson Community College and his mother at Jackson High School.

With two ministers in the family — Dungy's grandfather and uncle — and a deeply devoted mother, attending services at United People's Church was part of the routine, as well as simply treating people well.



Chicago Bears coach Lovie Smith was raised in Big Sandy, a town in eastern Texas

## Lessons learned in small Texas town still serving Smith well

By JAIME ARON  
 THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

**BIG SANDY, Texas**

Damontray Darty is bouncing on a trampoline outside his trailer home, parked amid the run-down houses in this one-stoplight town.

The 9-year-old is wearing a blue football jersey, clutching a big white teddy bear, and even bigger dreams.

"I want to play football," he said, "then be a coach in the NFL."

Why not? A guy who grew up 100 yards away did exactly that.

Lovie Smith is living proof that a little boy's dream can come true in small-town America.

"Everyone talks about him, looks up to him, wants to be like him," said 17-year-old Vanity Darty, Damontray's sister. "If he can do it, I can, too."

Sunday, Smith will be calling the shots for the Chicago Bears in the Super Bowl, across the field at Dolphin Stadium in Miami from Tony Dungy, who will be doing the same for the Indianapolis Colts.

Let anyone think the folks in Smith's hometown regard him differently now, perhaps as someone unapproachable, forget it.

"Around here, he's just Lovie," high school classmate Marie Rogers Dotson said.

"About the only thing that's changed in Lovie is his Afro," said Big Sandy elementary school teacher Lynda Childress, who befriended Smith during his year working there.

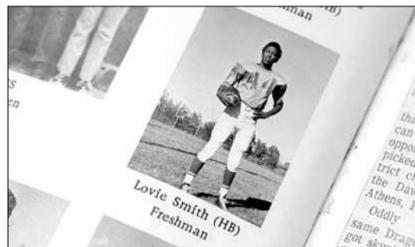
"What you see with Lovie is what you get," she added. "He's always been that way. He never had a bad word to say about anybody, just a positive attitude that would boost your spirits — always. I cannot think of a better goodwill ambassador for Big Sandy."

To make sure he knows how important he still is back home, Childress faxed him some handwritten letters from her students.

Said one: "I'm so glad you are from Big Sandy. You have shown me that if I set goals, I can be anything I want."

Said another: "Everyone in Big Sandy is excited that you became the first Black American coach in the Super Bowl. It will be even better when you win the Super Bowl."

Heck, there's no telling how folks will respond if that happens. This little town hasn't had this much attention since murder suspect Jerry "Animal" McFadden escaped from the county jail in 1986, prompting the largest manhunt in state history.



Lovie Smith played halfback for his high school football team as a freshman, but moved to linebacker and tight end when the school won state titles in the early '70s.

Smith grew up in a house two blocks from where the Darty children live, on what was called Church Street until two years ago, when it was renamed Lovie Smith Drive.

Only 250 yards long, the street is a mess of scrubby woods and chain-link fences. The Smith home burned down years ago. The lone house left is boarded up, with a "Keep Out!" sign on the door.

Mae and Thurman Smith raised all five of their children in this neighborhood. While Mae was pregnant with Lovie, Thurman's Aunt Lavana vowed the child "won't never want for nothing" if the baby was named after her.

"Then when Lovie came, he was a boy, so I had to change that around. I couldn't name him Lavana, you know," Mae said, laughing. "I just thought, 'Lovie Lee sounds like a boy's name to me.'"

Smith, a member of the National Honor Society, was voted "Most Likely To Succeed" by the other 33 members of his graduating class at Big Sandy High.

But he stood out most on the football field. Smith was a linebacker and tight end on Wildcat teams that were unbeaten from 1973-75, winning three straight Class B state titles. The '75 team scored 824 points, a national record that lasted 19 years. Their opponents only managed 15 points the entire season.

Joe Fitzgerald, whose mother worked with Mae, helped Smith get a scholarship to Tulsa. A solid college player, he got a look from the Atlanta Falcons but didn't make the NFL as a player. So he returned to Big Sandy in 1980 and went to school superintendent Charles Penney looking for a job.

"I said we didn't have anything but a junior high coaching job," Penney recalled. "He said, 'I'll take it.'"

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