

# He's done it his way

## Low-key approach helps Smith revive Bears' glory

By Rick Gano  
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### MIAMI

Lovie Smith's first day as coach of the Chicago Bears brought a big smile to his face and a Texas-sized promise to those who hired him, even to those who didn't know him.

First, he vowed to beat the archrival Green Bay Packers. That was a real crowd pleaser. Then he turned his sights on something greater.

"I will do everything possible to bring back the pride, tradition and excellence of the glory days of past great Bear teams," Smith said on that January day just more than three years ago. "We want to win a world championship. Just like our '85 Bears, led by a great coach that I deeply admire, Mike Ditka."

Ditka was as fierce prowling the sidelines as he was catching passes over the middle during his playing days as one of the NFL's most rugged tight ends.

Snarling at times and often showing his emotion openly, he coached the Bears to their only Super Bowl where they overwhelmed New England 46-10. He'll always be "Da Coach."

Now Smith is one victory away from making good on his promise to reclaim the NFL title for the storied franchise. And he's doing it with a style that is very unDitka-like. He's hardly confrontational, very low-key and doesn't holler or yell.

Not even about being the lowest-paid coach in the NFL, at \$1.35 million per season. (That compares to the \$8 million per season Mike Holmgren reportedly earns.) Smith asked about a contract extension before the season began, he said, but didn't get one; now in the third of a four-year deal, he's expected to finally get that extension after the Super Bowl.

"There is this stereotype of how all coaches have to behave, what you are supposed to be, and that isn't the case," Smith said. "I just think guys should be who they are. You can win a lot of different ways and whatever your approach is, just believe in it, get the guys to buy into it, and of course you can accomplish anything."

Smith's ability to stay calm and keep his composure on the sideline mirrors the personality of his good friend, Colts coach Tony Dungy. It was Dungy who gave Smith his first NFL job in 1996, and it is Dungy whom he'll face in pro football's biggest game on Sunday.

The two have already made history as the first two black head coaches to compete in the Super Bowl in the event's 41 years of existence.

"I take pride in that," Smith said. "Me being in this position right here will just open the eyes of a lot of young African-American men to see what you can



Chicago coach Lovie Smith led the Bears to their first Super Bowl since 1985. Chicago players say Smith's even-keeled approach has earned him respect.

accomplish if you have a goal. Really, it should be about what you have inside, not the color."

Tackle John Tait noticed that Smith was more animated than usual when Robbie Gould made a 49-yard field goal in overtime to beat Seattle in the opening round of the playoffs. He lifted his arms in joy on the sidelines following what was, at that time, his most important win as a coach.

"He showed that emotion you don't see that very often," Tait said. "When you have a coach who is really even-keeled and doesn't get really upset, when he does say something, it gets your attention. I enjoy his coaching style as an older player who's been in the league a few years. I think it's good, a good fit for our team."

Tait's been around long enough to be able to compare coaching styles.

"I've had a couple other coaches and they've kinda been on the opposite end of the spectrum, yelling and kinda carrying on and stuff like that, which is good, in some ways, because I think it is a motivator," he said.

"But Lovie's not that way. He kind of treats his guys like we're grown men. Shows you a lot of respect, and in return I think we give a lot of respect to Lovie."

For defensive end Adewale Ogunleye, Smith's style has earned him respect.

"His word is his word, and whatever he says goes. But he's a realist. He doesn't have bigger expectations for us than we have for ourselves, and I respect that," Ogunleye said. "He treats all the players like men. He treats Brian Urlacher the same way he might treat a guy who's on the practice squad."

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John Tait

Chicago Bears tackle on coach Lovie Smith

# Colts, Manning have respect of Saints QB Brees

The Associated Press

### MIAMI

Drew Brees wanted to be the other quarterback opposite Peyton Manning in this year's Super Bowl. Since he's not, Brees will root for his fellow star passer.

Brees helped lead New Orleans to the NFC Championship Game, which the Saints lost to the Chicago Bears, who will be lining up against Manning and the Indianapolis Colts on Sunday at Dolphin Stadium.

Brees is in south Florida anyway this week, appearing at a number of events instead of playing for a title.

"I'm looking up at these signs right now and seeing the Bears," Brees said Monday afternoon as he walked through the Super Bowl media center in Miami Beach, underneath huge banners carrying the Chicago logo. "And I'm trying to imagine what they'd look like with a Saints logo on them. But that's the way it goes."

Brees expects the Super Bowl to be decided by quarterback play — "It always is," he said — and because he calls Manning and New England's Tom Brady the two best in the game, he's obviously giving the Colts an edge over the Bears and Rex Grossman.

"Peyton's been one of the best for a while now, a future Hall of Famer," Brees said. "Hey, I hope he gets a ring. I think he's a guy who you respect so much for not only what he does on the field, but off the field because he handles himself very well. I really respect him as a player and a person."

### Disrespected Bears

Chicago is a 7-point underdog, and the Bears aren't hiding how that, combined with the notion

### NOTEBOOK

that the NFC was far weaker than the AFC as a whole this season, is a significant motivating factor in their Super Bowl preparations.

"I don't really listen to the experts, because if the experts were right, we wouldn't even be here today," Bears defensive end Adewale Ogunleye said. "We were supposed to lose to the Saints (in the NFC Championship Game). ... This team's not going to let anybody put us in a box and say we're the JV of the NFL."

Minutes later, though, Ogunleye acknowledged the Bears actually enjoy being underdogs, noting, "We play well in that role. We've been doing it all year."

Come again? The Bears were underdogs only twice this season: a game against the Giants they won, and a loss at New England.

### By the numbers

Maxim magazine, for its February issue, compiled a list of some interesting Super Bowl-related numbers that go beyond yardage and touchdowns.

Among the highlights, according to Maxim's research:

- There'll be 670 pounds of confetti dumped onto the Dolphin Stadium field during the postgame celebration.
- Workers will use 400 gallons of paint on the field for Super Bowl team logos.
- Want a 12-person luxury suite? It'll cost, on average, \$14,583, and that's per person.
- Counterfeit tickets are much cheaper, about \$1,500 apiece. Officials confiscated 96 phony ducats before last year's game.

## • Worth

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE B1)

well," Bears wide receiver Muhsin Muhammad said. "For a guy that played in his first season, historically throughout the NFL there have been very few quarterbacks that have played their first season and gone to the Super Bowl."

"There has to be something there."

For Grossman, the proof is the fact the Bears are in the Super Bowl.

And he plans to enjoy it, a process that began with Sunday afternoon's arrival in Miami, a full day before the Colts' arrival Monday evening.

Chicago's players spent much of Sunday taking in the sights and

sounds of South Beach and then had what Grossman called a "great" practice Monday morning.

Then came the afternoon media session and repeated questions about his uneven season. The only query that took him aback was when a reporter asked if he had to match Colts quarterback Peyton Manning statistically for the Bears to win.

Grossman's answer summed up his season-long approach to competing.

"Do I have to match Peyton Manning?" he said. "I feel like I have to do exactly what the coaches are asking me to do: Run the offense, do what I'm supposed to do, make the great reads, and when the guy's open, hit him and score as many points as possible."

"Our defense is going to play great, and we're just excited about going and playing the Colts."

## • Sharing

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE B1)

Initially, Rhodes wasn't sure what they were. Had the Colts lost faith in his ability? Was a rookie going to get the job he coveted? Would he even be on the roster past training camp?

Rhodes did, after all, miss the 2002 season with a torn ACL. He had only 130 combined carries during the past three seasons was six years removed from his 1,104-yard season in 2001, when he became the first undrafted free-agent rookie in NFL history to top 1,000 yards.

Rhodes soon had his answer. He not only figured prominently in the Colts' offensive scheme, but he was the opening-day starter and veteran leader of what coach Tony Dungy had planned all along, a two-back rotation.

"Joseph's done a great job, and Dominic Rhodes has done a great job," Dungy said. "We felt it was going to take a couple of people to replace Edgerrin, that you weren't going to get a guy who could carry the ball as often as he did and hold up."

In that regard, Rhodes welcomes, or is at least at peace with, the situation.

Backfield-by-committee is the trend in the NFL, in part

because it allows teams to exploit different strengths of different backs and reduces wear and tear on each.

"The good part of it is that right now me and (Addai) are still real healthy," Rhodes said. "(Our) bodies are feeling really good, and we are able to get out there and run faster than other people that took a pounding all year."

"This two-back deal, I never would have expected it to be this way, but it's been an awesome thing."

Addai, who ran for a team-high 1,081 yards in the regular season, also embraces the time share. And he credits it for his successful rookie season.

"A great running back like

Edgerrin is going to be hard to replace," Addai said. "I didn't have a lot of pressure on me because you still have a veteran like Dominic Rhodes that understood the system. It wasn't coming in like, 'OK, you have to start.'"

"Dominic kind of helped me out. We kind of took the load off of each other. We kind of fed off of each other."

They still do. Indianapolis has outrushed opponents 413 yards to 220 in the postseason. Addai has 57 carries for 217 yards; Rhodes has 41 for 193.

The collective effectiveness not only gives defenses different looks to prepare for, it creates opportunities for quarterback

Peyton Manning and his explosive receiving corps to carve up secondaries.

"Usually the team that runs the ball the best wins. There are very, very few games where that doesn't take place," said Dungy, noting that the adage is magnified in the Super Bowl, where the Chicago Bears also will employ an effective rotating backfield of Thomas Jones and Cedric Benson.

"They have two excellent backs, guys who can not only pound the ball, but they can cut back and make people miss," Dungy said. "We have guys that are energetic and are running well. (Two backs) is going to be the standard."

"I think whatever defense does the better job on the other

team's running backs is going to win it."

If recent history is an indication, Rhodes expects the Bears to wear down first. He and Addai have been that good.

"You can see when the defense is getting tired out there," Rhodes said. "They're not making the same plays they were making at the beginning of the game. By the end of the game with me and Joe ... we're still rolling like we were in the beginning while everyone else is tired."

"Me and Joe get along real well, and we kind of feed off each other and tell each other what's going on out there on the field. It's been a pretty good and unique situation."

## • Wayne

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE B1)

As the Colts celebrated their first Super Bowl appearance in the Indy era and prepared to face the Chicago Bears on Sunday, Wayne reflected on his bitter-sweet season.

On Sept. 24, Rashad Wayne's delivery truck hit a guardrail near Wayne's hometown of New Orleans. The 32-year-old was pronounced dead at the scene.

Wayne, 28, learned of the tragedy after the Colts defeated Jacksonville 21-14, and it hit hard.

Wayne immediately flew home to help the family make funeral arrangements. The Colts sent a delegation of players and team officials to Louisiana for the services, and RCA Dome fans have been chanting "Reg-gie, Reg-gie" more regularly since the death. That cheer has generally been reserved for Indianapolis' other

Reggie, Reggie Miller.

But even with all the support of family, friends and fans, Wayne still mourns the loss.

"I talk to him before I go to bed, and I talked to him at halftime of the New England game," Wayne said somberly. "I think he set all that up to make it interesting."

Back in the locker room, Wayne found supportive teammates and coaches who endured similar experiences.

Among them are linebacker Gary Brackett, who lost both of his parents and a brother in an 18-month span after his rookie season, and coach Tony Dungy, whose oldest son, 18-year-old James, committed suicide in December 2005.

Both talked to Wayne about their experiences, and Dungy, who instructs players to put faith and family ahead of football, gave Wayne as much time as he needed before returning to the team.

While Wayne's absence lasted three days, the grieving process has lingered.

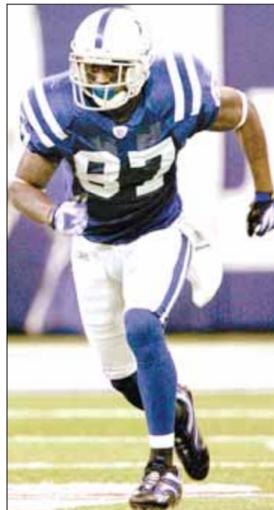
"People think that because we're on TV, we're bigger than life," Dungy said. "But football is not bigger than life. We go through the same things everyone else does. I think that helps me counsel the team because I can tell them that they're not immune to it."

Getting back in football mode still proved challenging.

Wayne considered sitting out the next game, against the New York Jets, before eventually deciding his brother would have wanted him to play. He caught four passes for 74 yards that day, a game he later acknowledged tested his concentration.

The next week against Tennessee, Wayne caught three passes for 24 yards, including the game-winning, a 2-yard TD pass that gave Indy a 14-13 victory.

He believes his brother played a role in that result and said he felt his spirit last week as the Colts pulled off the greatest comeback in conference championship game history against the Patriots.



Wide receiver Reggie Wayne played for the Colts just a few days after his brother, Rashad, was killed in an auto accident in Louisiana.

## • Ride

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this. You just have to take it and be thankful for it."

Practice squad players don't see action during the games but serve as scout teams, imitating opponents' schemes and formations.

For this reason, Halterman and the seven other members of the practice squad headed south with the team.

They will practice all week with the team, participate in all Super Bowl activities and will watch the game from the sidelines with the rest of their teammates, although not wearing jerseys or equipment.

"I'm really excited about it. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for me," he said. "Hopefully it's not once-in-a-lifetime, but if it is, I'm glad to be a part of it. I couldn't be part of a bet-

ter team, a better group of guys. And it's great that I get to experience that with them."

Halterman, a standout tight end at Indiana University from 2001-04, spent time with the Houston, Miami and San Diego practice squads this season before landing back home in Indiana.

Home is where Halterman is used to watching the Super Bowl. He watched the games on TV with his family: father, Rick; mother, Jan; and brother, Andy. And the four would pair off and pick a team to root for.

"Watching was always fun," he said. "It would be me and Mom vs. Dad and Andy, and you pick your team."

Aaron and his mother, Jan Abraham, usually sided with Dallas, and with three Super Bowl titles in the 1990s, the Cowboys usually served Halterman well.

This year, there will be no pairing off within the Halterman family. It's safe to say they're all in the Colts' corner this time around.