

Bears' GM one up on Polian

By DAVE GOLDBERG
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MIAMI

Bears general manager Jerry Angelo has a much shorter résumé than his Colts counterpart, Bill Polian.

He also owns the one thing Polian still hungers for: a Super Bowl ring.

That shiny piece of hardware on his hand — he scouted for the 1986 New York Giants — may be why Angelo seems more relaxed about Sunday's Super Bowl, even joking when asked about the quarterback matchup between his erratic Rex Grossman and the acclaimed Peyton Manning.

"If this was the old West and the game was decided by a gunfight, I wouldn't feel real good," Angelo said.

At least Angelo showed up for Wednesday's team media session.

Polian was a no-show. So far his public appearances during Super

"Each year, Bill seems to find a player he has strong convictions about."

Tony Dungy
Colts coach on GM Bill Polian

Bowl week have consisted of about five minutes at media day as an adjunct to Colts owner Jim Irsay's session.

But that's mostly his modus operandi. He prefers being interviewed one-on-one rather than subjecting himself to the kind of free-for-all that can develop at this event.

He might be especially nervous this year because of his past Super Bowl experiences, all losses.

Polian became GM of the Buffalo Bills in 1986, taking over a team that had been 2-14 each of the two previous seasons.

He had two building blocks: Jim Kelly at quarterback and Bruce

Smith at defensive end. He filled in around them with the likes of Thurman Thomas, Andre Reed, Cornelius Bennett and numerous supporting cast members with the help of a staff that included two future San Diego general managers, the late John Butler and A.J. Smith.

By 1988, the Bills were in the AFC Championship Game. By 1990 they were in the Super Bowl and got there again the next three years, although by 1993 Polian had left to build the expansion Carolina Panthers.

The Bills lost all four, but the one that hurt the most was the 1991 loss to the Giants and Scott Norwood's field goal miss, known simply in Super Bowl lore as "Wide Right!"

Polian brushed off the Colts' disappointment last season, when they held the top seed in the AFC but lost their first playoff game to Pittsburgh on another wide right, a game-tying field goal by Mike Vanderjagt. Then Polian went right into his 1991 replay.

"That was different. There were a

lot of circumstances to that," he said, noting the death of coach Tony Dungy's son as one, injuries as another. "But if we'd won that game in Buffalo against the Giants ..."

Polian has long been one of the NFL's more complex personalities.

He has a temper that has occasionally gotten him in trouble, and he keeps team employees on their toes, especially at the mid-management level.

But he also has hired two coaches — Marv Levy in Buffalo; Dungy in Indy — whose quiet, undemonstrative temperaments and outside interests make them different from the average NFL coach and very different from Polian.

In any case, no one doubts his credentials as a personnel evaluator or scout.

Dungy gives Polian credit for finding two of the Colts' most important defensive players.

"Each year, Bill seems to find a player he has strong convictions about," Dungy said of Polian.



Colts general manager Bill Polian, right, poses with team owner Jim Irsay, center, and quarterback Peyton Manning in Miami on Tuesday.

Bears enjoy playing the role of Super Bowl underdogs

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MIAMI

Pardon the Chicago Bears for having a collective chip on their shoulders.

They won 13 games in the regular season and have a better record than the Indianapolis Colts and yet are projected seven-point underdogs in the Super Bowl.

Brian Urlacher isn't sure why. Maybe it's because the Colts are flashier, or maybe it's the perception the AFC is stronger than the NFC.

Either way, Urlacher embraces the underdog role and is confident the NFC champion Bears will use it to their advantage.



URLACHER

"We're like the stepchild, the NFC for the AFC," the Pro Bowl linebacker said. "It's been like that all year. We like the underdog role."

"We've done well in it so far this season."

Cornerback Devin Hester prefers the role, too.

"Most definitely, because it only gets you fired up," he said. "It puts a chip on your shoulder, and that chip just being on your side sitting on your shoulder lets you know that we have something to prove."

"That's the way we've been playing all year."

When quarterback Rex Grossman appraises the Bears' season, he's baffled why they're being cast as the weaker opponent.

Although he's struggled personally in several games, the offense has been explosive at times, and the defense has been consistently ranked among the league's best.

So Grossman has no idea why the team with the best record is expected to lose.

"I don't know. We don't really care," the former Bloomington South High School star said. "We are just going there to play a great football game and see what happens."

The fact the Bears aren't regarded as the favorite is in line with a season-long trend of being overlooked, a trend that apparently won't end unless they defy the odds makers again.

"We're one game away from winning a world championship," Grossman said. "You're going to have to

respect us if we win this game.

"You don't have any other option."

The Bears like their chances, so long as they're not given much of one.

"We're the underdog in this game, and that's the way we like it," Hester said. "And that's the way we're going to play."

Urlacher agrees.

"If you look at most of our games, we've been underdogs," he said, "unless we are playing at home, and then we'll be 2½-point favorites. So that's nice. We enjoy it."

"We're the underdog in this game, and that's the way we like it. And that's the way we're going to play."

Devin Hester
Bears player on underdog status in Super Bowl

Colts' Harper sits out practice; Bears QB Orton shines in workout

The Associated Press

DAVIE, Fla.

Cornerback Nick Harper missed the Indianapolis Colts' first Super Bowl practice in South Florida on Wednesday while rehabbing his sprained ankle.

In sunny, 73-degree temperature, the Colts had a 2-hour, 7-minute workout. Defensive tackle Anthony McFarland complained, "It's not hot enough."

Harper was injured in the first quarter of the AFC Championship

NOTEBOOK

Game. The six-year veteran is listed as questionable.

"Nick's pretty iffy right now," coach Tony Dungy said. "We'll see how he progresses as the week goes along. As of now, the best-case scenario is he'll practice Friday, but we'll have to see how he feels."

Also listed as questionable is safety Bob Sanders, who has

started all three playoff games after missing 12 of the final 14 regular-season games with a knee injury. Sanders practiced Wednesday.

Peyton Manning's passes didn't seem affected by the bruised right thumb he suffered in the win over the Patriots 10 days ago.

Orton looks good

Third-stringer Kyle Orton worked with the scout team Wednesday simulating Colts quarterback Peyton Manning as

the Chicago Bears had their first extensive practice this week for Sunday's Super Bowl.

The practice lasted 1 hour, 50 minutes, with temperatures in the mid-70s at the University of Miami.

"It's paradise right here," Bears coach Lovie Smith said.

Orton, the Bears' starter for most of 2005, didn't throw a pass this season. He wears the same number as Manning, 18. Orton tried to mimic Manning's mannerisms at the line of scrimmage

with a lot of gesturing and moving around. He did throw two interceptions during drills, one each to Nathan Vasher and Lance Briggs.

The Bears won 10 games with Orton as their starter last season.

"Kyle Orton has done a great job all year with every one we've asked him to simulate," Smith said. "He's extremely bright and knows his role."

Smith said the entire roster was healthy and everyone practiced. The Bears will be back on the practice field today.

Good cause

Dungy and Smith found some time this week for a good cause.

The Super Bowl coaches will appear in a public service announcement for Big Brothers/Big Sisters about the importance of mentoring. The 15-second spot will air during the Super Bowl.

In the PSA, Smith mentions the relationship he has with Dungy, whom he considers a mentor. Dungy gave Smith his first coaching position in the NFL.

• Moore

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE B1)

Zen-like influence on Manning is widely regarded a major factor behind the Colts' success.

The coach and player have a unique rapport that benefits the entire offense.

But Moore, again, defers most of the credit to Manning for the player's development.

"He's special; let me put it that way," Moore said. "He's a great football player. He's worked hard,

he continues to work hard, and he'll continue to work hard next season to get better."

"That's his makeup."

In total, Moore has been a college and pro assistant for 43 years. He was an assistant coach for the Pittsburgh Steelers during their wins in 1979 and 1980 Super Bowls and also had stints with the Minnesota Vikings and Detroit Lions.

Despite his championship pedigree, Moore never got an opportunity to be a head coach in the NFL, and he has no plans to pursue one.

But as he prepares for his third

Super Bowl as an assistant coach, he has no regrets about an otherwise lengthy and fulfilling career.

"I don't worry about that stuff. I have to be me," Moore said. "I have not been cheated because I haven't been a head coach. Nobody owes me anything. I've been 30 years in this league, and it's a privilege to coach in the National Football League."

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