

Blast from the Past: Howard Twilley

Contributed by pawfectgent
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Howard James Twilley #81 Wide Receiver/Flanker 1966-1976

Born in Houston Texas on Christmas Day, 1943, Howard Twilley was an original Dolphin draft pick. In 1966, Miami was a first-year expansion team and in the AFL, and competition was stiff between the NFL and the 'upstart' league for draft choices. Twilley was enticing to both leagues because he was the Heisman runner-up at Tulsa (eventually being inducted into the College Hall of Fame in 1992), and both the Dolphins (AFL) and Minnesota Vikings (NFL) called his name.

Miami drafted 20 players in that first draft, with half eventually signing with the NFL. Twilley stayed with the Dolphins, and endured the first four years of his career under Wilson in the original regime. Wilson was 15-39-2 in that time, but Twilley hung on. He logged 83 receptions for 1204 yards and 4 TDs.

He was building a rapport, however, with another rookie, quarterback Bob Griese. Another master stroke for the team was the hiring of Don Shula. With a winning attitude and practice habits, the Dolphins found warm waters and the next seven years of Twilley's career saw him make 129 receptions (including the first score of SB VII during the perfect season) for 1860 yards and 19 TDs, despite being lower on the depth chart than such notables as Paul Warfield, Nat Moore, Freddy Solomon and Marlin Briscoe.

Twilley displayed a knack for the big play despite his 5'10' 185 lb. frame, posting an excellent 14.5 yard per catch average for his career in an era where the fast, little guys like him were still known as Flankers. He also remained with the Dolphins for his entire career, retiring in 1976. In an ironic twist, his last game was against the Minnesota Vikings, the pre-merger NFL team that drafted him and the opponent he faced in his third SB (VIII).

He has remained close to the Dolphins, following their progress, and counts himself as an avid fan. He is good friends with Griese, and both he and his son, fellow Dolphin-QB Brian, have visited with him in his home. He also lists Tim Foley and Tim Matheson as guys he has kept up with. His wife Julie and he have three grown sons, and reside in Tulsa.

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