

Different Paths

Contributed by pawfectgent
Monday, 25 August 2008

The unfortunate news of JT's injury this wknd reminds me of just how things have changed, including our perceptions of players and the team in general.

A statement JT made during his recent 1-to-1 with Warren Sapp struck me as indicative of what the offseason has meant in terms of philosophy, direction and desire for this team. When asked about missing camp, his reply was 'I know what my body needs to get in shape'.

The simple meaning of a statement like that is "I don't want to go through the Rookie-oriented, hot-as-the-Summer-Sun 'suicides and 'gassers of minis and OTAs. Just let my proven-veteran skill set enjoy my offseason and come in when I need to".

Now, first off, I still have my aqua 99 jersey, which I will wear proudly when he goes into the ROH, but minis and OTAs and camp is as much to get a TEAM in shape as it is the Players themselves. I was for the DWTS thing actually, but missing camp? Having been 1-15?

It's getting to know your teammates and how they think and react.

It's being at the right place and time because you've practiced it in Davie.

It's learning it by rote until it is natural and comfortable...and effective on Gameday.

Shula's regime was hard work, hard work and more hard work. It gave us respectability and we were always decent-to-good-to-excellent. We were never mediocre, even though we occasionally were pedestrian. It was a product of Paul Brown, no-nonsense old school rigidity and toughness coaching.

Since that regime, which is the only one aside from JJ's that ended with a Playoff game, we have seen a diminishing series of returns.

It is becoming evident that trend is over.

This team is being returned to old-school, team-first, Shula-Brown-Landry-Halas-Lombardi hardcore. There is no place for individual BS. Everyone works as hard as they can to get better. Anyone not on that page is gone.

Favoritism is never appreciated by the masses.

It sounds almost ridiculous to say a player of that caliber could be detrimental in any way, but in terms of philosophy, I believe it. Everyone has to earn their lunch from the crack of dawn to sunset. Entitlement has no place in Team Sports. Not if you are to win consistently.

A quick scan of the current 70 players to have made it this far finds 23 "D"s under 'How Acquired'. These are players that were drafted by us. Of them, the greybeard of the bunch is Vernon Carey ('04). We are young and stand with open minds, ready to be molded into a physical, punishing machine on all three sides of the Ball. JT was drafted by us, too, and we hit the mother lode.

However, the local philosophy has changed, and it's for our betterment, if not for JT's to escape what he claimed he didn't want to be a part of. I hope he heals fast and enjoys his remaining career. I will be yelling and cheering like everyone else when 99 goes into the ROH. However...

Watching the results of this new dogma for the last few games has not lessened the sadness I felt that JT's path is now different than ours, but it has reaffirmed my satisfaction with OUR path.

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