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"God knows I try, Mr. Csonka" ↙

"You're looking good, Mr. Kiick"

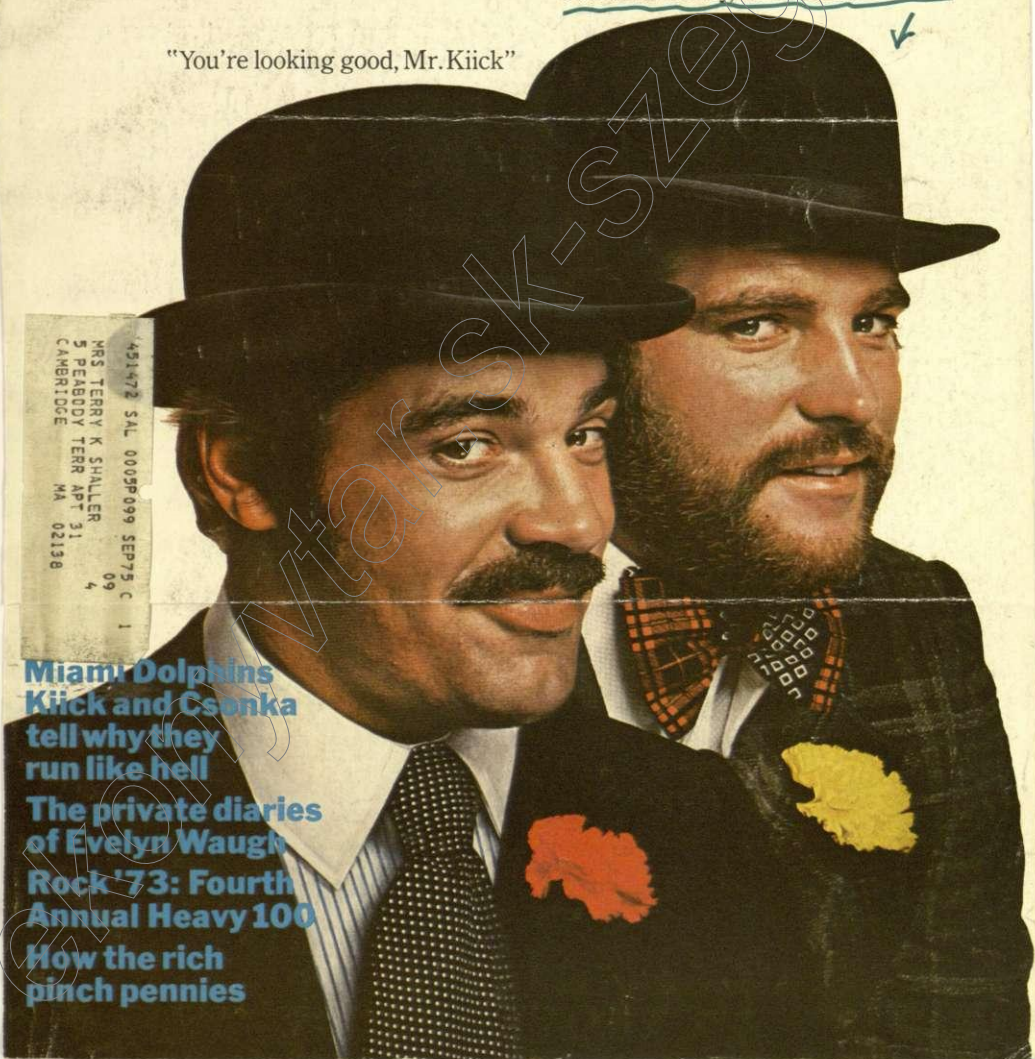
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**Miami Dolphins
Kiick and Csonka
tell why they
run like hell**

**The private diaries
of Evelyn Waugh**

**Rock '73: Fourth
Annual Heavy 100**

**How the rich
pinch pennies**



Two Miami Dolphins discuss how to run and how to deal with Don Shula

by Larry Csonka and Jim Kiick with Dave Anderson

EDITOR'S NOTE: Lawrence Richard Csonka and James Forrest Kiick are running backs for the Miami Dolphins. Mr. Csonka plays fullback, number 39; Mr. Kiick plays halfback, number 21. To teammates, Mr. Csonka is Butch Cassidy, Mr. Kiick the Sundance Kid.

Jim Kiick: I'd like to have a TV camera in my helmet, and a microphone, so the fan could really understand what it's like to be a running back. There are things to hear as well as to see.

Larry Csonka: The noise is great. At the snap, the first noise you hear is the crack of the defensive ends slapping their taped hands against the helmets of our offensive tackles. At the same time, there's the clack of the shoulder pads hitting all along the line and the grunting of the linemen as they collide. It's really neat.

Going through the middle with the ball, you hear all that noise and you see guys being blocked. They're going down with this wild look in their eyes behind their face masks.

"Why so hasty, Mr. Csonka?"

*Csonka, Larry
footballist*



They're clawing and scratching, reaching out at you. But you know they're not going to get you. You have this tremendous feeling of being protected by your offensive line. You see those guys clawing and scratching but they're walled off and that's a great feeling.

If you had time, you'd chuckle, "Ha ha, you can't catch me." If your blockers have done a good job, you get five or six yards. Maybe eight. Sometimes one or two. Sometimes none.

Running a sweep, I'm just trying to get away. But running up the middle, I'm challenging them. I prefer that. Because up the middle, I know they're going to be there waiting.

Watching a sweep, fans can see more of what's happening. But if they could see into the inside, where it's really happening, where the guys are getting the hell knocked out of them, then they'd really appreciate what it's like to be a running back.

But they don't see that and they don't hear the noise.

"Look behind you, Mr. Kiick!"



They don't realize how many tackles you're breaking.

Running up the middle is like being a sneak thief. You're stealing yardage. You're defying them. The defense sees you do it but you're still defying them and getting away with it. Eight yards might not seem like much until you put eleven defensive players in the eight yards.

That's my line.

Jim said that originally but when I said it, some writer quoted me. I steal all his best lines.

Eight yards is a long way running up the middle.

Most people don't think of it that way. They just think of it as eight yards. From here to there. Eight yards. Like the length of a room. Shula sometimes thinks of it that way too. One time at a meeting he bitched at us for not breaking any long runs.

"We can't be content," he said, "with gains of six or eight yards."

All the players just looked at each other and wondered what the hell did he want. But by the time he got it out, he realized what he'd said. He almost cracked up laughing. There are teams in the N.F.L. whose coaches would trade their wives for six or eight yards.

When you're running with the ball, you have eleven guys trying to get you, just you. If you get six or eight yards, you've beaten them.

When you're going through the middle, you don't look at one tackler. You see the whole thing as it's spread out in front of you. And you're looking for open space. Some of those defensive guys are mountains, 6'8" and 280. You're trying to run between the mountains. But when those mountains fall on you, they knock the hell out of you. When you run against the Kansas City Chiefs, all their players are so big, you feel they're all looking down at you. And they really are.

Running is instinct. I don't really watch films of the team we're about to play. To me, a running back can't get that much out of films. Running is something that's natural.

You can get something out of a film for a blocking analysis. Like if I'm leading on a sweep, I want to know if the linebacker will be coming over to force the play. As a blocker, you should have some idea of what to expect.

I just look at films for blocking.

I thought you slept through films.

I do, except for watching the linebackers. Like when I have to block for the passer and the linebacker blitzes, I want to know his style. If he'll try to run over me, or if he'll try to dodge me. Most of them try to run over me but Larry Grantham of the Jets tries to dodge me. If you know what they're likely to do, then you can cope with it. The rest of the film, I sleep.

Coaches look at films and tell you what you should've done. But when you're running, you don't have ten minutes to look at a film backward and forward and decide. You don't have an aerial view of what's developing here or there. You do what your instinct says. When you run the ball, your mind is a blank. You don't think. You react to what you see. There's no time to think. If you think, you're caught. That's the nice thing about being a running back.

I think a running back gets more satisfaction out of doing his thing than a quarterback does. If a quarterback throws a good pass, he still needs somebody to catch it. But when you're a running back, you're more on your own.

Except for your blockers. The day of the big dumb

offensive lineman is over. Offensive linemen have to be big, fast, agile, quick. They're no longer just pass-blockers. And they have to be smart. Fans don't realize how intelligent linemen have to be, how they have to work at figuring things out quickly. Linemen don't get the publicity they deserve. I always make it a point to tell the sportswriters something about the offensive line. Not just to pacify them or to be nice to them, but because I believe it. No running back goes anywhere without his linemen.

It was Zonk's idea for us to buy each of the offensive linemen a present after the season.

We got them diamond stickpins after we won the Super Bowl. The year before we gave them huge bottles of champagne. I mean, they were huge.

Those bottles of champagne cost about \$100 apiece, but the linemen got that money back for us.

When the Dolphins set the N.F.L. rushing record last season, the linemen were just as excited about it as the running backs were. They knew they were just as important in setting the record. They'd probably like to be running backs but they were blessed with different gifts, like tremendous size and strength. Running backs have to be big and strong, and they have to enjoy the chase, like kids do. If you were a kid who loved to have people chase you, you've got the beginnings of a running back. If you were scared of being chased, there's no way you could become one. Show me a kid who's ten years old and I'll tell you right away if he can be a running back. I'll know if he's got the soul of one.

As kids, me and Zonk were like that. We loved to run. But even more, we loved to be chased.

On our farm in Stow, Ohio, somebody was always chasing me. When I'd come in the door, my mom would say, "What's chasing you now?" It was always somebody. Like in the winter we liked to snowball cars, even police cars. They didn't arrest you, but if they caught you, they'd cuff you and send you home. We liked to hide down this bridge near the road. We'd pepper the cars until somebody called the police. When the police came, we'd snowball their car too. Then they'd jump out and chase us. Big deal. We wanted them to chase us. That was the fun.

That's the point. Not throwing the snowballs but knowing that you're going to get chased, knowing that you possibly could get caught. But deep inside, you know that you can't get caught, that you'll get away. When we played tag as kids, some kids would hide. Not me. I wanted to be chased.

You can always run faster when somebody is chasing you. I remember running on snow in sneakers and being amazed how fast I was going. When you're a kid, you can run forever.

One time in Lincoln Park, New Jersey, me and another kid were goofing around on a little bridge over the Passaic River when an older guy came paddling down in a kayak. He was bigger than us but we knew he wasn't fast, so we started throwing dirt bombs at him. He got out of the kayak and started chasing us . . . and he chased us . . . and he chased us. We found out later that he was on the cross-country team. He caught us and beat the hell out of us.

When we played hide-and-seek on the farm, I always was the last one caught. I'd run right through anything. If there was a big briar patch, that's exactly where I'd head. I didn't mind running through a briar patch. I'd go after cows into them. To run through a briar patch full blast was nothing. It didn't hurt. But other kids wouldn't do it because they'd get scratched up.

Out where I lived, we ran mostly in the town. That's different. You've got to know the backyards and the back alleys.

Damn right it is. One time I was about thirteen, old enough to ride my bike into town. All my life I'd run in the woods and the fields. But now I was in town with my buddies from school, running down alleys and around houses. Some cop chased us down an alley into a backyard and I took what I thought was a shortcut across the yard. I was going full tilt when a clothesline snagged me across the neck and flipped me on the ground. I didn't know what hit me. That cop caught me and cuffed me. He had me by the shirt but I took off anyway.

My shirt ripped right down my back. He started to run after me but I put a helluva move on a rose arbor, one of those big fan deals with the thorns on it. I just brushed it and cut my arm, but that cop hit that thing full blast. Whack, crash, he went down with it. I thought I was away clean. But when I went to run through the garden there, the lady had quart milk bottles over her flowers. I barrel-assed into about three of them. I got all cut up. I got away, but I'd learned that running in town was different than on the farm.

Me and Zonk are still really kids, doing the same thing we did as kids. It's still the same feeling.

Inside, a running back feels he's somebody who can't be caught. He's the gambler who's always got the odds going for him. He's got tremendous confidence. One way or another, he knows he's going to get the touchdown or the first down. You've got to feel that you can do it. If you have the feeling that you're going to be stopped, you will be.

It's not feeling. It's knowing. Like when we're near the goal line and the play calls for me to carry the ball, the whole team feels this play will score a touchdown. So if I don't score, I've let all these people down. I don't want to do that, so I know that I just have to score. Anytime we're inside the ten-yard line, I always feel that I should score on the play. I don't always do it, but I always feel that way. I think a good running back always knows where he's going without thinking about it.

It's a gift. Like when I was at Syracuse, a guy I knew who was studying to be a psychiatrist, he told me, "You're in a certain group of people who are always banging their hands on things as they walk through rooms. You wouldn't be able to describe a room to me as well as you could tell me how many steps it is from here to there." He's right. Like when I get up in the middle of the night, I'll walk through the house without turning a light on.

I can do that, too. I find my way.

Or when the kids leave those little toy cars around the house, I've stepped on one, jumped up in the air and come down on another one, jumped up and come down on a third one. And they're not nice little soft convertibles, they're little tow trucks with sharp points sticking out. One of those points stuck right in my heel once. I was hopping around the house in the dark, trying to pull it out when I hopped on another one.

I don't step on things like that. As soon as I touch it, I'll jump away. As soon as I touch it, I'm off.

That's a good point. Watch a good running back, or a running back who's been around awhile, like Bill Brown of the Minnesota Vikings. Very seldom do you ever see him get hit with both feet on the ground, or even with one foot planted. As soon as he sees the impact coming, he jumps, breaks contact with the ground. He wants to be in the air, because then he's

less likely to get hurt. Like when I go to hit a defensive back who's coming at me, I'll take a long stride. I want to hit him in between strides.

Zonk just wants to hit him. Zonk is the only running back ever to get a fifteen-yard penalty for a personal foul.

We were playing in Buffalo a few years ago and I got through the line. I figured I was finally going to get a long run but one of their safety men, John Pitts, came running up to stop me. He was straight up, coming in at about a forty-five degree angle from the right side. I always carry the ball in my left hand. So my right arm was free.

Zonk leveled him with a forearm shot.

Forearm, my ass. It was a right cross.

But nobody ever taught me to take that long stride when I saw a defensive back coming at me. Even in high school, I never hit a guy with my head down, driving. I was always gliding. It's something you either do naturally or you don't.

It's another instinct. Half the time you don't know who's there, but you can feel the guy coming at you.

As great as he was, Gale Sayers didn't glide much. I don't know if that was because he had so many moves, or if it was because his legs were always spread out. But he got hit a lot when he was pushing off into his stride. That's the worst possible time. When he got his first knee injury, he was running a sweep and he had one leg planted when Kermit Alexander cross-bodied him across the knee on the leg that was planted. Maybe he just had weak knees. But it seemed like he was always getting caved in when he had one of his legs planted, trying to push one way or another.

If I could go into a store and buy something to make me a better runner, besides speed, it would be longer strides. I've never been able to run with long strides. And if I could be like any runner, it would be like Gale Sayers. He cut at full speed. Not short choppy steps, he cut without shortening his stride. It looked so beautiful. But the most amazing thing to me about Sayers is that he always ran great in the mud. Because of his long strides, you wouldn't think he could. The game he scored six touchdowns as a rookie was in the mud.

But when Gale took his long strides and cut, he'd cut flat-footed. He didn't cut on his toes. He'd put one foot down, his ankle would bend real hard and his foot would be almost at a right angle to his body, and he'd cut with a long stride to that side. Most guys push off their toes but that shortens your stride. Anytime I saw Gale on TV or in films, he always had that foot planted. I really believe that's what finished him. When he got hit with that foot planted, his knee took the force of the tackle. With his foot planted, his knee had no give to it. The force of the tackle tore his knee apart. That's how most serious knee injuries occur.

O.J. Simpson is the closest thing now to what Gale Sayers was. O.J. has the same long strides and he cuts the same way. But O.J. comes off the ball almost at half speed, waiting to see what's developing. Sayers just took off. If there was a hole, he'd go. Otherwise, he'd make one move and go.

Larry Brown is definitely a great back, but I think the Redskins use him too much. He's playing a rougher game than he's capable of. From what I've seen, he's really tearing himself down with all those carries. He doesn't have the weight and the size to handle the number of carries he had last year—285 in the first twelve games. They had to rest him for the play-offs. He gets hit awfully hard on his second effort. And he's

not that big a guy to hold up under that pounding.

As much as I'd like to copy Sayers or O.J. or Larry Brown, there's no way. You run like you run.

I'm described as a bulldozer, a battering ram, but I resent that. You can't just be big and do it. I don't make what you'd call a cut, but I do make a move. Not a move on somebody, but an adjustment to the hole, to that open space. Just a juke to hit the hole, then I go straight for the hole. As for putting a move on somebody downfield, I don't, but that's not because I don't know he's there. For me, there's just no place else to go but at him.

I slide. I don't make any sharp cuts. I come up to the line and slide along. I take whatever hole is there. When I get hit my knees churn, but before that they're just low and sliding. Like when you see the Packers' John Brockington, his knees are going all the time. He gets a lot of power that way. But that's not my style.

I look for Brockington to get a bad neck injury or a bad head injury. He puts his head down too much. I think Brockington is more of a battering ram than I am. When you drop your head, you not only can't see, but your neck can't absorb much of a shock. You've got to keep your head up. I'll drop my head maybe two or three times a game. Brockington drops his head every time he's slowed down. When he knows he's going to be tackled, he ducks his head. Someone's going to hit him head on and he's going to lose the collision. Like that defensive back with the Cincinnati Bengals that he hit, Ken Dyer, who was temporarily paralyzed by a neck injury. Dyer lost because Dyer was a lot lighter. Brockington is going to hit somebody who's bigger than he is, and it's going to work the other way. He also runs with his knees high. He's always got one foot planted.

Jimmy Brown's style was the exact opposite of Brockington's. People couldn't understand why Jimmy Brown was so good because he never lifted his knees. But he was a slider. His legs were so powerful, when he'd get hit, the tacklers would bounce off.

Jimmy Brown was the perfect combination of power, brute force, a little bit of speed, and a little bit of finesse. He almost dragged his feet. Every time he ran, he'd hit somebody but he never hit anybody head on, always at an angle. At the last second, he'd hit a tackler at an angle and slide past him. He had the weight and the speed to do it. And he had tremendous balance.

His mental drive was fantastic. It seemed like he simply would not allow himself to be denied.

Mental drive is the biggest asset a running back can have. It's more than getting the first down or the touchdown. It's saying to himself at the beginning of the season, I'm going to play the whole season, no matter what. It's being relentless, just being more shitty than anybody else on the field. It's knowing that you're going to be the winner at the end of the season. It's not dedication. That's a coach's word. It's more than that. It's being able to look good personally. Screw everything else.

Jimmy Brown had it.

That's what made Jimmy Brown super. People talk about this back or that back being a real professional back because of his skills and his determination. But when I think of a real professional back, I think of a back who's real durable, a back who's always there. Franco Harris looks to be that type.

Emerson Boozer of the Jets is a great back. He's been hurt a lot but he sticks his nose in there. He's not great moves, he's a good blocker and he can catch

the ball. Another great back is Carl Garrett of the Chicago Bears.

Garrett never runs the same way twice.

He's powerful for a small guy but he doesn't run with short, choppy steps. Lots of times he reverses his field. Looking at him, he doesn't look that good, but he breaks a lot of tackles. He's got a lot of speed but he doesn't look like a speed back. His legs are moving all over. He's a strange back to watch. He's not a fluid runner. He looks like he's not going to get anywhere. But he's powerful and quick. He always manages to get away.

Leroy Kelly is a dancer. But he's one of the few durable dancers. He's hardly ever missed a game.

Kelly is something like Sayers was. Kelly has long strides too, but not until he breaks loose. Sayers ran with long strides even before he broke loose. When he gets the ball, Kelly likes to juke a lot, then take off.

One of the most intelligent runners I've ever watched is Kansas City's Ed Podolak.

Podolak probably isn't as good a natural runner as O.J., but he's got that instinct. He knows where to go, when to go.

If he runs a certain play, he knows two or three alternatives will develop. When he starts into the play, he's gliding and looking, waiting for an alternative to develop. As soon as he spots it, he makes a very definite directional change. It's not really a cut. He just knows which way to turn his momentum. And he's got tremendous heart. He's really into football. He knows he's the type of runner who's going to burn eighty yards but every time he gets his hands on the ball, he's really determined to rip something off.

Podolak looks sometimes like he's not getting anything done. He's not real fast. He's not that big. But he gets it done.

Denver's Floyd Little gets it done too. He's a choppy runner. When you think he's right there to be hit, he's not. He runs in choppy steps in tight. But when he gets into the open, he'll lengthen his stride. He runs on his toes, he doesn't run flat-footed. He's got quickness more than speed. He uses his quickness inside. He'll give a tackler a jab with a shoulder to make it look like he's going one way. But as soon as the tackler goes that way, he slides off and misses him.

Mike Garrett of the San Diego Chargers is quick. He's a darter. He never gives a tackler a good shot at him. His feet are always moving so quick. And he's really strong too. He's a muscular little guy. Heavy legs.

John Riggins of the Jets has legs that are really heavy up in the thighs but he's got spindly bones in his knees and ankles. I can tell by the way he looks in his gear that he's just not heavy boned. He's probably the fastest of the big backs. Oakland's Marv Hubbard is a heavy-legged runner like me. I like to watch Hubbard because he makes the same quick adjustment to the hole that I do. Riggins does that too. I really appreciate that in a big back.

Another good back is the Giants' Ron Johnson, strong and fast. Duane Thomas was a good back when he was playing, but I don't think he played that many years to be a great back. He was good, but nothing tremendous. Not to me. I think all the publicity he got for not talking made people think he was a better back than he really was. Calvin Hill is a good back, but of the backs that were on the Dallas Cowboys when they beat us in the Super Bowl game, I loved to watch Walt Garrison. He's clashing and scratching all the time for extra yards.

Garrison is a tough run. (Continued on page 178)

"WHY SO HASTY, MR. CSONKA?" "LOOK BEHIND YOU, MR. KIICK!"

(Continued from page 124) ner. If you're willing to come in and hit him, he's willing to hit you back.

But when Garrison is battling for extra yards, it seems like he's giving out the punishment. When some backs do that, they're vulnerable to get hit. But when he's doing it, he's still giving out punishment.

Duane Thomas struck me as not having any heart for football. He's had so many bad personal experiences that he didn't care about being a great football player.

In the Super Bowl game against us, Thomas had ninety-five yards. Some people were saying he should've gotten the Sport magazine car as the most valuable player. But to me, if it wasn't Roger Staubach, it was Garrison who deserved the car.

Garrison isn't going to make the Fancy Dan run. But he's going to hurt you more during the game than the back who makes one long run.

The Fancy Dan run doesn't interest me. I believe that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. If you run a sweep, and you get around the corner, fine. But until you do you've run ten or fifteen yards without gaining anything. Going up the middle, you're gaining yards and you're going straight toward the goal line.

Every running back is aware that he's running on ice. He never knows where the thin ice is, where the big injury is waiting for him. But a running back really believes that he can't be injured. Oh, maybe it crosses his mind that he's going to have injuries, but never one that'll cripple him, never one that'll finish him.

You have to run like you did as a kid. Just run. Not think about getting hurt.

As a kid, I ran through herds of cows, I ran through creeks. If I fell down, I came up running. I never lay there moaning that I was hurt. I came up running. Other kids wouldn't run into that briar patch because they didn't want to get all scratched up. I never thought of being scratched up as being hurt. Being hurt was a broken leg.

Don Shula is an ass-busting coach. He's like my father. On our farm in Stow, Ohio, if my father told us to build a barn in thirty days, we better have it built in twenty-eight.

But we bust Shula's ass a little bit too.

That's because of Kiick's bad attitude.

When we played the Jets in Shea Stadium last year, my friends from New Jersey had a big sign they kept waving: "Run Kiick or Trade Shula."

Shula talked about that sign for three days.

Damn right. In that game I ran the ball a lot and I told him, "You were a little scared of my boys, eh?" I'm not exactly on ideal terms with Shula, but he's a good coach. The thing I like about him is that he understands you don't have to be a rah-rah player to be a good player. I'm not the rah-rah type.

It's just not me. If I had to put on a rah-rah act, it'd be false. Shula understands that. I'm so relaxed before a game, I could fall asleep in the locker room.

As a matter of fact, I once did. I was lying on the floor—like a lot of guys do—and I just conked out. The other guys told me later that Shula kept walking back and forth, glaring at me. He didn't know whether to yell at me or not, because he didn't know if I was just relaxed, or if I was tired from staying out. I woke up after about a half hour. I really felt good. That little nap was just what I needed to be ready for the game.

I don't agree with Shula on everything, but I agree with his attitude toward the rah-rah stuff. He's a peppy talk guy, but his pep talks are rational. He's smart enough to know that he can't bullshit bullshitters. The Dolphins are a happy-go-lucky team. Only a few guys go for the rah-rah stuff. False rah-rah cracks under pressure. Being a football player is like anything else. You've got to be yourself. Some days I don't say much, but most days I clown around because I'm happy. And even though I hate practice, I'm basically happy there. I like what I'm doing. I like being on a winner. I like the guys on the team. I just like being myself. That's what Shula keeps saying. "Be yourself."

Shula is always himself. Always an ass-buster.

When he took over the Dolphins in 1970, the training camps opened a few weeks late because of the labor dispute between the N.F.L. Players Association and the club owners. When we finally got to camp, Shula told us:

"We've got to make up for lost time. We're going to have four workouts a day."

Four ass-busting workouts. Two in the morning at eight and eleven, another in the afternoon at two, another at seven before the sun went down. Sometimes we kept practicing in the dark until he was happy. No other team in pro football has ever had four workouts a day. In one of them, I was lined up as a dummy blocker for Bob Griese in a passing drill when Shula shouted at me from about forty yards away.

"Csonka," he yelled, "what the hell are you doing?"

I figured maybe my shorts had fallen off. I didn't know what else he could be shouting about from forty yards away.

"You lined up a step too wide," he yelled. "If a linebacker had been coming, you'd have been too far out to block him."

Right then I knew I'd better concentrate every second. When you least expect it, Shula will really bust your ass.

Those four practices a day were brutal. I thought I had reported to camp in pretty good shape. I would've been in good shape if George Wilson was still our coach, but I wasn't ready for Shula. We had an idea he was going

to be tough, but he was ridiculous.

Everybody showed up but me. I had the flu. I hadn't met Shula yet. All the veterans were due one Monday, then the following Monday all the rookies were due along with all the veterans who missed the week before. I was still weak from the flu so I decided to wait a week and go in with the rookies. It was a good decision.

Except that first Monday, when Shula called Zonk's name, one of the guys told him Zonk was sick. When the rest of us chuckled, right away we could see Shula thinking, Oh, oh, this guy's a goof-off.

The next Monday, when I did come in, I weighed 248 and Shula really bitched. He gave me all kinds of heat but I went out and ran a 4.7 for 40 yards.

He was all smiles then. He told me, "If you lose fifteen pounds, you'll run a 4.5." I told him, "No way." I lost fifteen pounds and ran a 4.8. He's got this thing about weight...

Shula's got a thing about hair too. But compared to most coaches, he's pretty liberal.

Jim even got away with growing a beard last season. Or what was almost a beard.

I'd cut my hair short because short hair was in. I also knew that Shula would like my hair short. But I had to do something that he wouldn't like, so I grew a beard. He doesn't allow a full beard so I shaved a hole around the bottom of my chin. That way he couldn't claim that I had a full beard.

I wish you had grown a full beard. It wasn't worth the hassle. The year Shula took over, he had an orientation meeting. He looked around and saw a couple guys with moustaches and long hair.

"About hair," he said, "I don't want extremes."

"What do you mean by extremes, Coach," I said.

"No beards," he said, "and no hair down to here."

That was reasonable and right then I liked the guy. Right then I figured he had a good mind if he wasn't letting things like that interfere with his judgment on ballplayers. He's always harassing me about my hair but I think he's kidding around.

Shula knows that Jim just likes the mold look. He knows that Jim's not trying to defy him with it.

Most coaches would like their players to have crew cuts. The coach of the New Orleans Saints, J.D. Roberts, sure as hell would. Roberts won't even let players wear sandals to dinner at training camp. Now that's ridiculous. Things like that have nothing to do with how you play football. Shula's pretty reasonable about all that.

Shula has rules just for discipline. He thinks it contributes to winning.

But it doesn't for me. Football is supposed to be a game of discipline and I'm sure that Shula feels that the more ways he can discipline his players, the more advantageous it is to the team.

On our charter flights we have to wear a jacket with a shirt and a tie. It's a club rule. I don't see how it helps. It bugs me to wear a tie. I like an open collar. I don't mind wearing a jacket but I don't like to wear a tie. I don't like anything tight around my neck. To say that you have to wear a tie because we're all going to wear a tie burns me more than anything.

I'm the same way. I don't like to do things I have to do. That's why I like to do things that are different. Just go a little farther to see how Shula reacts. It's really funny to me to see how he can get upset over little things.

I scared the hell out of Shula one day last season, the Friday before the Giant game. New goalposts had been put up on our practice field. There were green strips of rubber lying around. They looked just like snakeskin. I couldn't resist. I picked up a strip, figuring to have some fun. That's all I think about in practice. Shula knew I was there but he was yelling at the punting team about how not to piss on their shoes or something. Then he walked over to where he saw me holding something.

"What've you got there?" he asked.

"I found a snake," I said. "Here." I tossed it at him and he went, "Yow!" That's just what he yelled. "Yow!" I thought he had a heart attack. It scared him so bad he didn't get pissed off. He didn't know what to do. He chuckled. Then he walked around looking like he was going to get pissed off. Then he chuckled again. He didn't really get mad. I don't know why.

You're his son, that's why. The old Hungarian father-and-son team.

Maybe that does promote a little feeling; the fact that we're both Hungarian and we're both from the Cleveland area. I say shitty things to him all the time and I get away with most of it. Before our game with the Jets in Miami last season, we had a big meeting about tickets. We all needed more tickets. There was no real solution.

"Coach," I said. "I've got a solution." Shula turned around and all the other players got quiet.

"Trade me and Jim to the Jets," I said. "We'll get you all the goddamn tickets you want."

"You think everything's a joke," Shula said.

He really was pissed off. Now if I'd said that to him in private, he would've chuckled a little. But with all the other guys around, he really pissed him off because he's always afraid of how he looks in front of the players. It screwed him up a little too because me and Jim talk all the time about being traded. He doesn't know if we're serious or not. He's hoping we're not serious but anytime he's talking to us, I can see him trying to figure out if we're kidding or serious.

Another time we were walking out to practice and Shula said to me, "You looked faster yesterday than I've ever seen you look!"

It had rained the day before, and for Miami it had almost been cold. I guess it was down around sixty but when

you're used to ninety-five it's a big drop to sixty.

"That's what cold weather does for me," I said.

"You like cold weather, eh?" Shula said. "You really like to play football in cold weather?"

"I love cold weather. I really love it."

"I know what you're hinting at," he said. "I know all about you calling Namath and asking him to tell Weeb Ewbank that you wanted to be traded to the Jets when you were holding out. As soon as Joe talked to him, Weeb called me up. I know all about it."

I just grinned at him.

One day before the Super Bowl game with the Dallas Cowboys, Shula was surrounded by photographers. I told one of them, "I hope you've got a wide-angle lens." We're always busting his balls about him getting fat. He took it good. He laughed and then he went to kick me, playful like. That's just when the photographer took the picture, with him pretending to kick me in the ass.

He doesn't trust either of us. He knows a hell-raiser when he sees one. He was one himself. When he was a defensive back with the Browns, the Colts and the Redskins, his teammates used to go get him the night before a game and put him in a car to get back for curfew. Now he's the other side of the coin. He's up every morning for mass and communion. He'd like everybody to believe he's always been this way but he knows that me and Jim know better. We've heard the stories from guys he played with.

Shula never takes the room check. I don't think any NFL coach checks on crew violations. The assistant coaches always do it.

Tom Keane usually checks us. He's the defensive backfield coach, our only assistant coach who has been with the Dolphins since 1966, the team's first season.

Half the time, when Tom checks, we always have some people in our room.

Tom tells us, "I don't care what you guys do before the room check and I don't care what you do after it, but when I get there, I want you guys in the room and I don't want anybody else in there."

We tell him, "The party is going great, Tom, come in and fix yourself a drink." And he'll shake his head. When he does come by and sees some people in there, he won't say, "Everybody out." He'll call one of us outside the door and say, "Look, it's five to eleven, make sure these people are gone." Sometimes he comes back and sometimes he doesn't. He's got class. He'll tell us, "Now if Shula asks me, I've got to tell him the truth, that you've got some people in your room." We appreciate that.

Monte Clark panics when he sees people in our room.

Monte's our offensive line coach. When he's checking and he sees people in our room, he doesn't know what to do. So he just hides outside in the hall, waiting until the people leave. One time Jim's wife was in the room. We were in New York to play the Jets and Alice had come up for the game. She was sit-

ting in our room when Monte checked. He stood there, waiting for her to leave. Jim's wife! I mean, no coach should stand there waiting for a guy's wife to leave.

Shula always has to have the last word....

But one time he didn't. One morning last season I was in the locker room early. I was getting myself a cup of coffee when Shula walked in. Just the two of us were there.

"What's this I read," he said, "about you not liking practice?"

He was half serious and half joking. Which meant that if I wanted to back off, he'd keep on pursuing it. But if I gave him some grief, he'd back off. I had talked to some sportswriters about not liking practice, so I figured that's what he was talking about.

"That's the truth. I don't like practice. You've known me for three years. You know that I don't like practice."

"It sounded like you were speaking for the whole team," he said. "You can't do that. You can't speak for everybody."

"I wasn't speaking for everybody," I said, "but what's the difference? If you can find two guys on this team who like practice, it'd be a miracle."

"That's not true," he said. "There are a lot of guys on this team who like practice."

"Bullshit," I said. "That's just not true. And you know it's not because you were a player once yourself. You can't tell me that you liked practice."

"I loved practice," he insisted.

"You're full of shit," I said.

"Did like practice."

"You weren't practicing for a coach like you," I said. "Who was your coach?"

"Weeb Ewbank."

"You've proved my point," I said. "The Jets run around in sweat suits, no equipment. I wouldn't mind that, either. But there's no way that's going to happen down here with you. There's no comparison. I'd love to run around like the Jets do and have a good time at practice."

"You wouldn't win," he said.

"All right," I answered. "You made my point. But that doesn't mean I have to like it."

For once I had the last word.

The reason I don't like practice is that I hate getting yelled at. I feel that I have enough pride in myself to push myself. I'll take instructions or help, fine, but I can't stand somebody yelling at me. I'm not saying it's wrong because I'm sure some guys need to be yelled at, they need to be pushed. That's the main job of a coach, to know the personalities of the players. Which ones to yell at, which ones not to yell at. I think Shula yells at me less often than he does at the other guys because he knows I don't like it.

I agree with the way he pushes some guys, and I agree with some of his discipline. But I don't agree with his outdated policies like our having to stay in training camp. I'm twenty-six years old and kept in training camp for about six weeks. It's as though I was a child or

a convict—up at seven for breakfast, practice and meetings until ten o'clock at night, in my room at eleven for the check. I've got a wife and two sons that I'm responsible for but I'm told that I've got to be in my room at eleven. That just doesn't sit right with me.

It's a system designed for children, not adults. If they let me go home at night, I doubt that I'd do anything but go home, have a couple beers and go to sleep. But the way it is, it makes you want to bust out, to go over the wall, to drink beer and raise hell because you're so fed up. I guarantee you, if I was given the choice of staying at camp

or going home, half the time I'd stay in camp without any bitching. Just for the convenience. And on the nights I did go home, I wouldn't bitch if the club wanted to phone me at eleven to make sure I was there.

Wait and see. In a few years, pro-football teams will let guys go home at night during training camp like they do in baseball. And there'll be fewer problems. The way it is now, some guys get a kick out of sneaking out after curfew in training camp.

Don't let anybody bullshit you that training camps are like seminars. They're more like prisons. #

CONFESSIONS OF A LANDOWNER

(Continued from page 132) red-and-gold testimonials to the region's stout brand loyalty. Most sail on by us, but there are nearly always some in sight along the creek, and they take forever to rust and become picturesque.

For all its charms, the creek is something of a liability in terms of the place's usefulness. The stock water and gravel and sand it provides are not rare commodities. Its fluctuations keep it from building up good populations of fish and make it more or less useless for irrigation in dry times. Periodically it tears out fence water gaps and shuts us off from the world of men, for the entrance road fords it on my northern neighbor's place and nobody but an idiot—as I found out through acting like one once—will brave it when it roars. Therefore, functionally, the creek is not good for much, and for such reasons as these many farmers and small ranchers in Texas once preferred places without “live water” crossing them. Some still do. I don't. . . .

5.

Even now, after much bulldozing, the main timber on the place is still cedar, juniper, really, which locals divide into two sorts, “white” and “red.” The former is much despised, multi-trunked and spindling and good for very little except to take up space and soil moisture and to smother grass, and very hard to kill. A few years back, before bulldozers, people used to fight it with favorite recipes such as old crankcase oil applied to its chopped-off nubs in the hope, usually vain, of keeping them from sprouting out again. But the red variety generally has a central trunk that makes a good post and, though still undesirable on grassland, is a somewhat more likable plant. Occasional more or less virgin groves of it in niches that have been hard for post cutters to reach are pleasant, quiet, aromatic places where hoops and mason jars and firestones often turn up underfoot, for the big cedar with its privacy was favored by the old moonshiners, as it is by wild things. Undoubtedly more than a century of post cutting has reduced the proportion of red cedar in the brakes, though it is not possible to know just what the proportion was or what part of the hills had cedar then and what part only grass.

In the heyday of post cutting back in the Twenties and Thirties a man could still find a good bit of virgin cedar, and a great deal more that had been undisturbed since beginning to take over from the grass long before.

A hundred good posts a day was the legendary number an expert axman could chop, and a friend of mine from that background claims that in his prime he could do it in five hours, telling him and kids drag them to the wagon. That means a post every three minutes, with time sandwiched in somehow to breathe, to drink water and dip snuff and sweat horses and maybe kill a rattlesnake. It is no longer possible, not even with chain saws. Most brakes that have missed being bulldozed have been picked over time and again by choppers, and a man has to spend more time looking for posts than cutting them, and even then finding most often skanky “stays” and crooked thicker stuff. Nor have good posts gone up enough in value to match the price of beans, bacon and TV dinners, and the market is squeezed also by the competition of migrant cutters and by steel posts and creosoted pine, mass-produced elsewhere.

All of this militates against the old way, as do the great yellow Cats that growl across the hills, charging the cedars with a raised bright blade to knock them down, then backing off and dropping the blade to catch beneath their roots and shove them to a pile or windrow. There you let them cure until the needles are brown and crisp and the wood has lost its sap. And then someday when a light wind is right to keep sparks from drifting into places where you don't want fire, and maybe there is a mist of beginning rain for added safety, you set off a fire storm with a single match, and up with the high oily flames and the searing big sparks and the unbelievable heat and roar and pistol-shot snapping goes eighty years or more of something, of the old way, the cedar way. . . .

Therefore hail and farewell, old way? More or less, I suppose, though there is no forgetting the old way and its people when you are dealing with the Somervell hills. Even bulldozing does not remove the feel of them. For the country shaped them and they in turn shaped it too, and though in both shap-

ings there may have been more of destruction than of loving response, the relationship between these people and this land had a kind of rightness to it that we who possess it later stand little chance of attaining, even if we handle it better than they did. We lack their bred-in, maybe bitter, often ignorant intimacy with these speeding rocks and soils and woods which held their forebears' ghosts, and lack too their desperate dependence on its grudging yield of crops and meat and timber, and it was out of intimacy and dependence that the old rightness derived. Rightness may not be the word, but whatever you call it, the cedar hills and the cedar people were fitted to each other.

After you have fought cedar in this country for a while, you are not likely to be very sentimental about it, but you come to know that it has a rightness of its own, partly through association with old human ways, partly immemorial. It exists in the groves of big cedar when wandering, you happen on them, and in pruned silvered stumps of trees cut down for posts in another age, and in the darkness of distant hillsides nosing out into creek valleys, and in the way that birds and deer and other creatures flee to cedar when you flush them. There is a cleanliness about it, an aromatic naturally antiseptic quality allied to the durability of good cedar fence posts in the ground. The needles when they break off in your hands, too deep sometimes for tweezers, never fester. . . . When you run short of sawed oak cordwood, one of the old grey stumps will burn for hours in your fireplace, flavoring the woods and fields downwind with its smoke. In that small is all of cedar's cleanliness and all its rightness too.

6.

Despite cedar's long dominion, there is and always has been a big variety of other vegetation on the place. On the uplands stand good live oaks and elms sometimes alone and sometimes in mottes and groves, rusty Spanish oaks that turn a fine crimson in fall, red-buds, ashes, hackberries, and the like. Close beside the creek and the branches, sometimes sprouting from the gravel bars, are sycamores and cottonwoods and willows, and in deeper soil along these watercourses the moseying botanizer finds walnuts and pecans and bur oaks and other deciduous bottomland trees common in the region. And all about the place, but especially on bulldozed land and fields left fallow for a time, are seedling and shrubby forms of all these trees, besides a large array of lesser woody plants that rarely exceed bush size—shin oak, greenbrier, sumac, poison ivy, elbow brush, chittamwood, wild china, and a host of others. Lore attaches to most of them, though the oldest and perhaps best lore—the pragmatic botany of the old Tonks who once lived in these hills—has mainly long since perished.

The hardwood brush, stimulated by cedar clearing, constitutes a problem in terms of the place's intended function as a stock farm, for like cedar, if a bit less seriously, it competes with grass

ture and to smother grass, and hard to kill. A few years back, he bulldozers, people used to fight it

a convict—up at seven for bree practice and meetings until ten at night, in my room at eleven f check. I've got a wife and two sor I'm responsible for but I'm told I've got to be in my room at 6 That just doesn't sit right with me. It's a system designed for chi not adults. If they let me go ho night, I doubt that I'd do anythin go home, have a couple beers and sleep. But the way it is, it make want to bust out, to go over the to drink beer and raise hell be you're so fed up. I guarantee you was given the choice of staying at

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(Continued from page 132) red-anc testimonials to the region's stout loyalty. Most sail on by us, but are nearly always carried in ship

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