



Bobby Humphrey,

BEEN THERE- DONE THAT

Bobby Humphrey's first exposure to football wasn't from the bleachers or the field. Bobby parked cars and sold Cokes at Birmingham's Legion Field. He grew up in public housing within walking distance of the stadium. "People would always say, 'You're going to be something in life,' because I would bust my tail selling Cokes so that by the fourth quarter I was able to sit down and watch the rest of the game." Looking back, Humphrey says it was this God given work ethic that eventually gave him football success. "I was somewhat of a go getter at a young age. I was never going to be defeated. I was never going to accept no for an answer. You can tell in kids those that like to press, press, press- push, push, push, and that was kind of like me. I was not very outspoken but my actions were very pure and genuine."



Bobby and Barbara Humphrey met in the 10th grade.

Humphrey was the second of four children. His parents divorced when he was seven. "I think it was difficult for my mom but I did not realize it was difficult. It was not made known to me that we did not have this or that. We had food every day, and we were clothed. I just thought I was living like everybody else." Humphrey credits his mother Marlene's faith in God for keeping him and his siblings out of trouble. "My mom kept us in church, and I believe that is the only

thing that saved us from straying at a young age... We weren't put in a lot of situations where we had to make a choice between right or wrong, because we were in church."

While attending Glenn High School, Bobby became consumed with football, track and basketball, and through athletics he met his future wife, Barbara, a track star at Jackson Olin High School. "We were both in tenth grade, and she had just finished running a race. I went over to her and asked her if she needed any help. She just said, 'I think I'll be alright.'" An eight-year dating relationship ensued. Bobby went to the University of Alabama on a football scholarship and Barbara went to UAB on a track scholarship.

Despite a broken foot his senior year at Alabama, Humphrey catapulted into a successful pro career. He was named Rookie of the Year, played in a Super Bowl and made a Pro Bowl appearance by the age of 22. Soon after, Bobby and Barbara married.



Bobby and Barbara after awards ceremony in which Humphrey received high honors for his high school football performances at Glenn High School.



Barbara and Bobby Humphrey show off their high school caps and gowns. Bobby was the first person in his family to ever graduate from high school and attend college. His mom would later receive her doctorate in psychology and two of his siblings would obtain college degrees.

The happiness was short lived. "I never had a problem with my performance on the field, but I could not manage my life outside of my job and that was due to me not living a Christ like life. I found myself getting in trouble all the time." Humphrey admits to an untouchable attitude. "Becoming a celebrity figure, sometimes you feel you can do whatever you want. You're a superstar. Thanks to God, reality hit." After his 1992 season with the Miami Dolphins, Humphrey was arrested for possession of cocaine. Two weeks later he was shot in the leg. "God was trying to get my attention all along, but I

think the straw that broke the camel's back was when I got shot... That's when I started seeking the Lord and rededicated my life to Christ." Wife Barbara remained at his side. "She never cried, just showed support. She is very strong. God has given me a jewel." Barbara remembers, "I was always the type that you married for life. I kept saying, 'God, I know at some point you will turn this around.' I could not leave. I lived on the fact that this was not the Bobby I once knew." Barbara watched a new man emerge. "I know that it was truly God. Bobby never went through any drug program. Once he decided to do it, he did it. People aren't able to do that on their own. I saw in action that God can do all things."

Humphrey returned to Miami for another season with the Dolphins, but recurring knee injuries kept him off the field. Humphrey then played for Buffalo until he was released in 1995. "I had no intention of ever playing football again or coaching football, I was burned out on football." Humphrey turned his attention to finishing college. He commuted from his home in Hoover to Tuscaloosa for 18 months until he received his social work degree in 1998. Upon graduation, Humphrey filled a one-semester position with the Tuscaloosa County School System. His job was to help at risk students. Humphrey created student groups called "Choices and Consequences" at each of the county's middle and high schools. "I emphasized to them that for every choice there is a consequence." Wife Barbara recalls, "He reached out to those students. He was honest with them. He

As a coach, Bobby Humphrey draws upon what he learned from Coaches Perkins and Curry at Alabama and later from Dan Reeves and Don Shula in the NFL.



had the best testimony- 'I've been through it.' Humphrey says it was those students that restored in him a love for football. "Some football players at Brookwood High School asked me to help coach the team. Coach Jones allowed me to work with the running backs that Spring, and I began to think that I wanted to get involved in coaching." Humphrey says God's timing struck again when he attended a charity golf tournament. Among his foursome were two men on the search committee for someone to coach the newly formed arena football team, the Birmingham Steeldogs. "They invited me to lunch, and asked if I would be interested in working with the team. When they said they wanted to consider me for head coach, I was thrown off my feet. As soon as I got in my car, I called Barbara, I said, 'You will not believe this.



His first year in the NFL Bobby Humphrey played in the Super Bowl, made a Pro Bowl appearance, and was named "Rookie of the Year".



We have got to find some film (of arena football). I did not know anything about arena football." Wife Barbara furiously recorded arena football games for her husband to view and he soon had the job.

Bobby Humphrey says the highlight of his pro career was winning the AFC Championship and playing with the Broncos in the 1990 Super Bowl. His team did not win, but he walked away with a Super Bowl ring to remember the moment. "To play against (Joe Montana, Jerry Rice) and with (John Elway) some of the best was incredible."



Bobby and Barbara Humphrey with their children Brittley (5), Breona (9), Marlon (7), Maudrecus (11) and Marion (3). Barbara says she has watched her husband take what some would call a difficult childhood and use it as a way to be a better parent. "I think he said to himself, 'I'm not going to be bitter but I'm going to be in my children's lives.' That was the one thing he did not have- a relationship with his Dad."

Filling the role of head coach brought new challenges for Humphrey. "Relating to the players, was not hard for me. The knowledge of the game was more difficult." He met the challenge with his renewed faith. "I decided from the very beginning that we would have a devotional service before every home game." Humphrey's own pastor, Bishop Johnson from Faith Apostolic Church, first led the services. Today Dusty Davis, formerly with Athletes in Action, and Greg Davis of First Priority serve as chaplains. "Before every road game they also meet us at the bus and pray for us," adds Humphrey.

Humphrey will lead the Steeldogs into their fifth season this spring. Even though Humphrey's pro career took him to the coveted Super Bowl game, the competitive, go-getter is still after a National Championship. He says he believes his Steeldogs can give it to him in 2004. He hopes to give them a deeper insight into the best way to live life. "The only thing I regret in my life is that I did not team up with God a lot sooner. I don't regret any of the misfortune I had. I think it's a privilege to be able to at least go through the fire and be able to come out on the other side and talk about how you went through it. You have a true testimony."

-Laurie Stroud