



RICKY WILLIAMS: IT'S ABOUT "BALANCING THE NUMBERS"

By Kerry Schmidt 08-15-2005

With Weirdo Williams back swimming with his old fishes, I decided to try to make some sense of his past year's existence.

So I started on the internet. Go punch in "Ricky Williams" and you get a very big number. There are "about 8,700,000" articles on him according to Yahoo. True! Check it out.

Starting with the tangible numbers.

Drafted in 1999 by the Saints, for whom Mike Ditka traded away their entire draft (eight players) to get RW, to then having MD and RW on the cover of "ESPN The Magazine," with the latter in a wedding dress.

RW, at age 21, was given his first NFL check, for \$3.6 million, pre tax.

The NFL has had countless weird/crazy, et al players over the years, but RW was in a class by himself.

I remember interviewing him the first week of camp, and he would sit on the floor with his helmet on and the darkened visor pulled down over his eyes. And it stayed that way for most of the first two years.

Prior to the 2002 season, the Saints sent him to the Dolphins for first and third draft choices. He had two spectacular seasons with them, but we all know of his abrupt "retirement" just days before the start of training camp for the 2004 season.

Sans Ricky, Miami went 4-12 and Dave Wannestadt lost his job.

Thus began perhaps the oddest odyssey of any NFL player, or perhaps any individual. Ricky seemed to turn the clock back 40 years, to the 60's, that era of new beginnings and experimentations of all kinds.

He traveled to Australia, Asia, Japan, Fiji, Samoa, Europe, the Bahamas, and Nine Miles, Jamaica, home of his idol, the late Bob Marley. He traveled with current singer Lenny Kravitz, and the last time "60 Minutes" Mike Wallace caught up with him, he was living in a tent in Australia for 7 bucks a day.

And like his two above mentioned musician friends, Ricky said, "I smoked a lot of hash and marijuana." Not surprising if you listen to some of his comments from the interview with Wallace and others taken from the net.

Remember the 80's song, "Don't Worry, Be Happy?" That was Ricky.

He said "I just wanted freedom. I thought money would give me that, but I was wrong. I had to buy nice cars and houses (who forced him to do that?) and it just seemed to create more problems. Football was a torture, something I was forced to do and it took away my freedom and my balance." Ah, OK?

Throughout his travels, he read books on nutrition and Buddhism to Jesus, with the purpose of "finding the "balance" of life." When asked what was balance, well, this column is not long enough, plus I'm pretty sure his answer was delivered while enjoying his favorite meal: Hash, sans the corned beef and egg.

He then learned about an ancient Indian healing science called Ayurveda, which, he says, leads you to the proper "balance."



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

That led him to Grass Valley (aptly named), California and the College of Ayurveda up in the foothills of the Sierra Mountains.

It gets better, folks. The small college is run by a Dr. Mark Halpern, who says RW is learning holistic healing, and that "... he will help individuals live in greater harmony with their environment through all five senses, and when we do that, our bodies naturally express themselves in the form of health." He added, "receiving an ayurvedic massage give the various energies of the body the perfect balance. AH HA! We have reached Nirvana.

I know nothing of this Dr. Halpern guy, but for those of us who lived during the 60's, he has to be the reincarnation of Timothy Leary! And the final number in this stage of the odyssey is measured in kilos!

But now the tangible numbers come into play. For all his holistic and Ayurveda balancing stuff, a real life court of law brought him quickly back to earth. This magic number is \$8.6 million, the amount that Ricky has to repay the Dolphins for walking out on him.

Well gooooooollllllleeeeeee, as old Gomer Pyle would say. The real world light just went off in hash-man's head.

And besides the 8.6, he has three daughters by three different women, and a court ruled he must pay \$4,200 a month for one. No financial details were available for the other two.

Hey, of those balancing of the five senses, we know he was right there with at least one. So, RW has given up his one bedroom rented house with no TV and no phone in Grass Valley to come to back to his fish friends and teammates.

Speaking of which, several of his teammates had been very critical of him. His center said "he flat out quit on us. He showed he is selfish and a coward for not taking responsibilities for his actions."

Others said they are willing to take him back, but, one player said emphatically, "he needs to prove himself again."

New Dolphin Coach Nick Saban, at least in the media, has said he will be welcomed back and that he will have RW meet with the team.

Ricky will be suspended for the first four games of the regular season for violating the substance abuse rule. Hey, he didn't just abuse it, he annihilated it.

As for RW himself, he still says he does not know if he really wants to play football anymore. He says while he "is re energized and anxious to get back," he admits that he does not know how returning to this "old" lifestyle will effect him.

Well like it or not, he has at least 8.6 million reasons to come back. And he likely must play only for the Dolphins, because I feel quite sure than he has no trade value.

As one GM said, "He has shown himself to be selfish and unreliable."

So, Ricky baby, let's hope you have balanced those real numbers so that your inner self and all five senses can be holistically compatible with getting the bleep beat out of you on the field.

One piece of advice. Watch out for those "hash marks."

And once again the cliché is proven. "It's all about the money." Numbers!