



THE “KID THAT DID” HANGS THEM UP

By Kerry Schmidt

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Yes, Brett Favre, the 38-year old kid, still acting like the fun-loving innocent 15-year old prankster, finally retired from football.

The first question that came up, was he “the best QB ever?” Many said yes.

Was he?

No. He was not the best ever. Joe Montana was.

But Brett was, and always will be, “in the arguments over beers.” Always.

Archie Manning, another famous NFL QB and fellow Mississippi native, who has known and followed Favre his entire career, said, “When you start talking of the best of all time, he is in the argument.”

If I had to define Brett in one word, I would use “unique.”

Why? Many reasons.

Football, up through high school and sometimes into college is FUN.

In the NFL, it’s, first and foremost, business.

But not to Brett. For him, the game was always fun. He remained a 15-year old kid his entire career.

Yes, he could be a killer on the field, and as competitive as anyone, but no one has ever loved playing the game like he did.

In many ways, he remained the 15-year old excited and emotional kid.

Mike McKenzie, a CB with the Saints, who played with Brett for 5 ½ years, said the same thing. “He played the game like a true kid and a true competitor.”

I will always remember the many times he threw a TD pass, how he would run down field, arms up in the air and literally lift the receiver over his shoulder, with a boy-like grin as big as the football field he worked on.

Off the field, he was a down-home Southern country boy, laid back and always fun. But on the field, he was called a dangerous gunslinger, for his free will to make a throw from any and all places and angles.

Obviously, Brett had the team playbook, but he also had his own playbook, and like the “box of chocolates” in Forrest Gump, you never knew what you would get.

Yes, people will always start with his stats. Most TD’s, most yards, most passes, most completions, and, for the gunslinger part, the most INT’s.

In the postseason, he was second to only Montana in TD passes and total yards.

However, in his retirement conference Thursday, Brett said, “If I have to be remembered by statistics, then I did something wrong.” He added, “All those records are not mine. They are ours. (the team.)

Packers GM Ted Thompson said, “His accomplishments are legendary, but his passion for the game is what made everyone a Bret Favre fan. His personality, charisma, humbleness, his giving nature and love of the game will forever be his enduring legend.”

But for all the records, that is not what I, and I believe many others, will remember him the most for.

The above mentioned love of the game, yes, but far and away, is the 275 consecutive games he played!

Think about that. After being traded to the Packers in 1992 from the Falcons, he was backup to Don Majkowski until Don was injured in the third game in ’92. That same year, Eli Manning was in elementary school! Ironic then that Brett’s final game was a loss to Eli Manning.



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

Favre came in, orchestrated a 4th quarter comeback and won the game.

He started every game until the end of January, 2008.

He is the Lou Gehrig of football (yes, I know Cal Ripkin Jr. broke Gehrig's record, but Gehrig got his start because of another player's injury, just like Brett).

Having been around football as long as I have, and observing it first hand from the field for seven years, I've seen the vicious collisions that take place.

And, the QB, while he has a number on his jersey like everyone else, all the 300 pound, weight room addicted defenders see on the QB's jersey is a big bulls eye.

And, they hit that bulls eye hundreds of times.

Knocked down, but not out.

Ed Hochuli, an NFL referee since 1990, told this story. Paraphrasing, "I saw Brett scramble out of the pocket to his right. I also saw a 300 pound lineman racing full speed at him, and knew Brett did not see him. It was a tremendous collision. But Brett quickly jumped up smiling and got in that lineman's face and said, 'Is that as hard as you can hit.'"

Then on the next play, as Hochuli finished, "He threw a 42-yard TD pass."

On numerous other times, I watched Brett smashed, and more often that not he would jump up, smiling, and pat the tackler on the helmet or butt and say something like, "Whoa, you got me that time, or how's the family." Fun.

During the press conference, he said the reason for retiring was that, basically, "it's time." He added, "I know I can still play, but I don't think I want to. I've got nothing left to give, and that's it," he said, tears openly coming down his face. "I've had a great career, but it's time. I'm going out on top. I could care less what others think. It's what I think and I'm going out on top."

Yes he is.

True, the records will show that his last pass was an interception (that led to the Giants' winning FG in the NFC championship game), and thus his last game a loss. Brett could care less.

He led his team to a 13-3 record, the best ever. That prompted many to believe he would return, especially with such a young team around him.

But no, he was done. On top.

"It's just gotten too hard. Getting up on Mondays, it was hard. And it's only gotten harder. It was taking a toll on me, and I just decided it was up.

The Packers have been great to me, the fans and all. It's been everything I thought it would be and then some."

Proving his down-to-earth nature and humble honesty, he walked away from a guaranteed \$10 million pay day if he had played next year. Believe, me, very few would have done that!

I'm glad he did. Look at all the other sports greats that stayed too long. Willie Mays, Joe Lewis, Joe Namath, Johnny Unitas and many others. Brett kept his pride, and he did the correct thing.

So with graying hair and a deliberate gait – hitch in his get-along, he knew the toll the years had taken. But he will forever be celebrated for playing a serious, precise and tough game, but with the carefree joy of a little boy.

And, he went out on his own, not because an injury would have forced him to!

Ironically, in the current (March 10) Sports Illustrated, SI poked fun at the Packers web site for "mistakenly posting that Favre would retire."

They quickly retracted the statement, just in time for the edition to go to press, and just after it did, his true announcement.

In his early years, he was a wild man. Partying, drinking, you name it.

Jerry Glanville who was the Atlanta coach when they traded him to Green Bay, said, "I think that guy (Favre) has beer for breakfast." (NOTE: HEY, what's wrong with that?!) He added, "He



probably was kicked out of kindergarten.” NOTE: He wasn’t. In fact, he never missed a day, according to his 89-year old teacher.

He had other tough times.

In 1996, he went into rehab for addiction to the pain medication Vicodin, but the good aspect of that is it ended his wild days.

In 2006, his wife successfully overcame breast cancer. His brother-in-law was killed in an ATV accident the same year. Then Hurricane Katrina took his family home.

But perhaps his defining moment was December 21, 2003.

His father, who had coached him in high school, died of a heart attack in his native Kiln, MS.

Favre chose to play the following Monday night in Oakland. He threw for 399 yards and 4 TD’s in a 41-7 win.

The remaining top 5 moments, as chosen by USA TODAY.

#2. January 26, 1997 in the Super Bowl in New Orleans, a game I covered for my syndicate. He had to improvise, as his WR’s lined up on the wrong side of the field. No problem. He heaved a 54-yard TD pass to Andre Rison en route to a 35-21 win over the Patriots. (I guess they were not spying yet, though as creative as Favre was, it would not have made a difference).

#3. The 4th quarter comeback in his first game mentioned above, Sept. 20, 1992.

#4. October 29, 2007. In his signature final year, he bombed an 82-yard TD pass to Greg Jennings on the first play in overtime to defeat Denver.

#5. Oct 10, 1999. On his 30th birthday, he notched his third come-from-behind win in four games with a 73-yard drive, culminated by a 23 yard TD pass with 1:05 left.

Unknown to many was his giant heart for charity work and with kids.

On one occasion, of many, he agreed to meet with a girl with cancer via the “Make a wish” program.

He did not just meet her. He spent the entire day with her, took her into the GB locker room, let her come out on the field the next game day, and, he continued to call her and check up on her all season.

That was Brett.

The day after his announcement, the tiny town of Kiln, MS – the locals just call it “the Kill,” the town hang out, the Broke Spoke bar, THE infamous hang out, was packed.(NOTE:) The Kiln was named after kilns, which were vats that produced moonshine, of which many abounded there in years past).

The bartender “Gene” extolled of tales of 8-year old Brett running around the pool tables and throwing the balls, while his dad, “Big Irv, as he was called, sipped a beer with the good ole boys. Gene said, “we’ll probably see someone from Wisconsin today,” and sure enough shortly thereafter, Patty and Chuck Reynolds of Jamesville, Wisconsin showed up and had their pictures taken. As thousands of other Cheese Heads before have done, they were making the pilgrimage to pay homage at the Holy Shrine of Brett.

And, the entire extended Favre family – a lot – gathered at his mother Bonita’s house, of course located on Irvin Favre Road. The main street, if there is one, is called simply, Brett Blvd.

So, while Favre may not be the “the best ever,” he certainly is in the group.

There never has been any QB quite like Brett, the whole package, fun included, and there quite likely never will be.

I remember the incredible, no, “impossible” throws he would make against the Saints when I was up in the press box. On one, he scrambled to his right, and just before he got hammered out of bounds, he rifled a 38-yard completion to a covered receiver, with the ball never being more than five feet off the turf.



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

I am just one of millions who have been privileged to watch a 15-year old kid, who became the only 3-time MVP, play a man's game, a game to him that was "really fun," as he once said. No one knows what he will do, but right now he's planning on just fishing, hunting, driving his tractor around his 465 acre spread, and "yea, I'll probably watch some games on Sunday." Many have speculated with his great demeanor and personality, he would be a natural for TV, but, at the moment, he says he just wants to "be a recluse."
You've earned whatever you want, you 15-year old kid, you.