



## RANTS, RAVES AND LOTS OF LOCKER ROOM RUBBISH

By Kerry Schmidt      05-11-2008

Reader Randy emailed me re the current “outrage” over Chicago White Sox’s manager, Ozzie Guillen.

Seems that Ozzie, his team in a slump and a reporter who asked him re same, he burst forth with a profanity laced diatribe on just about anything.

He said, “bleep you and bleep everybody. We’re horst s..t, and we’ll be horses..t the rest of our lives.

Apparently referring to the cross town Cubs, he said, “We’re the Chicago bitch.” And so forth Then, his players brought several blow up female dolls into the locker room and positioned them in some pretty suggestive positions, using bats placed in strategic spots, including one that “held up” a doll by placing a bat between the cheeks, and I don’t mean facial ones.

Chicago sun Times columnist, Carol Slezak, wrote a column basically stating this was the worst thing since whatever (I say since letting broads into male locker rooms.)

The majority of this column will dwell on my experiences in NFL locker rooms, and how much worse they are than what she saw, but I guess Ms. “Sleazy-ack seemed horrified. What a panty waist bitch.

As Guillen said, “it’s managers who stir things up that are remembered. Sparky Anderson was one of the most successful managers in baseball, But it’s Billy Martin, the ruler of rants that everyone remembers.” He’s right.

There have been many, many such exposes’.

You have Jim Mora’s profanity laced – 46 bleeps re how badly they played and sucked, and his teary eyed, I quit (in mid season), along with his famous “Playoffs” blowup, now a beer commercial.

A one-liner was a favorite of mine. Ever so funny Charles Barkley, while with the Philadelphia 76’ers, was asked why his team was doing so poorly.

He replied, “we’re a bad team, man a bad f.....g team!” You gotta love Charles.

Not to be outdone by the cross town Guillen, back in ’83, Cubs manager Lee Elia was asked re another early season loss. 47 words. 22 bleeps, including the F word 11 times.

A favorite was Tommy Lasorda’s 52 bleeped comments on what he thought re Dave Kingman hitting 3 HR’s against his Dodgers.

There have been many more, from Mike Tyson’s “seared ear snack’ to Dennis Green’s “The are who we thought they were” rant re the Chicago Bears making a big 4<sup>th</sup> quarter comeback.

I’m sure you all have your own favorites, but I need the space to discuss some of the wild things I heard/saw during my years (1997 through 2004) as an NFL beat writer covering the Saints.

Jim Haslett took over the Saints’ coaching job in 2000, replacing Mike Ditka (I’ll get to him later).

After going 10-6 his first year, earning the team’s first ever playoff win and being named coach of the year, 2001 brought a dismal season.

Near mid-season, after blowing a big lead and losing to a team they were heavily favored to beat, I simply asked him if this was a step backwards.

Not good!

His eyes flamed, face contorted, and he spit out, Who the F are you? What the F are you doing here? That is the dumbest F...ing question I ever heard. He sputtered some more, then said to his support people (every coach has 2-3 PR guys on the podium just for this kind of situation).”get this f...ing bleep bleep outta here, then stormed off.



# OFF THE WALL SPORTS

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As I was in the locker room afterwards, getting interviews, one of the radio people from the Saints broadcasting crew asked me if Haslett had talked to me. I said no and the guy said he wanted to apologize.

Anyway, I had a real early flight to CA. the next morning, and when I got to my hotel, there were 7 phone messages and 13 emails. Apparently ESPN had filmed the whole thing, and Haslett had gone on ESPN and apologized to “the reporter I offended.” ESPN had gotten my name, so I had my few minutes of fame.

From then my press cohorts would walk by me and say, “is this a step backwards? Good stuff. After a couple more bad years, Haslett began surrounding himself with what I named “Haslett’s Nazis,” because to get any interview with anyone, you had to go through many people. Haslett let the team get way out of hand. He was sued by one of the Saintsations (cheerleaders) in a paternity suit – public record ( it was quietly settled, neither side could comment), and, reportedly, the team spent “thousands of dollars” to make some women employees go away and not file sexual harassment suits.

Ditka. He was a class into himself.

It was not so much as what he said, but it was how he said it. And that “Look.” A more scary scowl you have never seen. With that big head and mustache, he would just stare at you and say nothing.

Once I asked if there would be changes (they had lost a few in a row) and he just glared at me for what seemed like forever. He then said, “You think you can do a better f...ing job? Then get your F...ing ass up here, and he stepped off the podium. No one moved. He then mumbled something about freaking asshole press and walked out.

Interesting note. At the next few press conferences, his wife was in the interview room close to the podium, and every time he would start to near the boiling point, he would glance at her. I would quickly look at her and see her ever so slightly shaking her head.

He was just plain scary.

Then of course, his ever so infamous 1999 draft.

He had announced well before the draft that he was willing to trade their entire draft – eight players - to get Ricky Williams.

Now, Ditka loves to gamble, so it was all the more crazy that he tipped his hand so early. He also gave up 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> round choices the following year!

Right after he did so, he left the draft room and said, “Well, I’m done, time for some golf.”

We all know he actually got two “players” for one. Williams and Mary Jane.

There were many other coach’s rants over the years, but I only mentioned the ones pointed at me. Space does not allow three others that were juicy.

The players themselves could also get pretty rough.

Especially Kyle Turley. He was a huge, rough looking SOB, mean as a junk yard dog and as surly as can be.

Any reporter trying to interview him did so at their own risk..

I once wrote a column in which I named him “Surly Turley.” Well, the next time I saw him in the locker room, he glared at me and said, “You c..k suc...g dick head, I’m gonna tear your head off, and he came after me!

I dodged three players, and ran behind the towel bin. Lucky for me, a coach and a couple of players got to him and stopped him.

He finished by saying, “If I ever see your bleeping ass again, I’ll bleep bleep the bleep out of you. Nice guy.

Honest follow up. As I was leaving the locker room, Turley, nearly naked, glared at me and I said, “Have a nice day, Surly,” then I ran all the way to the press box.



# OFF THE WALL SPORTS

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NOTE: After a couple of incidents – like ripping the helmet off an opposing player and tossing it, which cost the Saints the game, the NFL ordered him into anger management.

Strange, but he majored in Art at San Diego State and painted, sculpted and played guitar. Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

The exact opposite.

Joe Horn, the Saints' all time best receiver. He never saw a reporter or camera he didn't like. He was a sportswriter's dream, since if you needed a quote, always go to Joe.

One time I walked into the locker room, and there was Joe, talking away. I checked my watch, did my three interviews and as I was walking out, Joe was still blowing his horn, 21 minutes later!

NFL players have their own vocabulary (so do MLB and NBA players), and sometimes it's hard to catch their drift.

On two occasions, fairly late into another losing season, as I walked into the locker room, two players were sitting in front of their lockers, undressed, arms on knees, heads down and quietly talking.

I heard one say to the other, "Hey many, you be stealin?" "Hell yea, I be stealin," said the other. They both laughed, saw me and stopped.

Later I learned what they meant. "Stealin" meant just going through the motions to finish out the season and not get hurt, but getting paid (thus stealin).

I later heard the same comments in several stadium locker rooms. Makes you really respect those guys. NOTE: I'm sure they are in the minority, but some just do "be stealin'."

My man Ricky Williams.

He was as about as strange a dude as I ever met in the NFL. And believe me, there are many strange creatures in that bunch that pass for human beings.

Starting with his rookie season, he would "suffer through" his interviews thusly.

He would crouch down on the locker room floor, knees up in this chest, helmet on with the darkened face plate down, so you could not see his face, and he would speak so quietly and briefly, you could barely get his drift – his meaning, not the drifting smoke.

I don't remember more than a 5-6 word answer out of him in three years.

One time when he was asked if he knew he had just broken the Saints single game rushing record, he mumbled, "Oh."

He rarely mingled with the other players, and often would be dressed and out of the locker room before reporters were allowed in.

When he was there, he pretty much ignored you. The unwritten rule is when a player, freshly out of the shower, had his back turned to you, you did not talk to him. You waited until he turned around. Williams would often keep his back to you as he dressed fully, then quickly grab his stuff and walk out.

He wasn't "surly," like Turley, or challenging, he was just shy.

It turns out he had some type of social disorder. Once he started taking medication (and his pot) for the problem, he lightened up, but by then the Saints had had enough, and after his Mary Jane problems, they shipped him off to Miami.

He continued to tour the world, living in poverty type style, smoking weed and, well, dropping out. He was born 30-35 years too late. He would have made a great hippie.

There were some really nice guys.

One time, when I was on the sidelines, the 49'ers' Steve Young got nailed going out of bounds and knocked me ass over tea kettle, and I landed on top of him, He just jumped up, asked me my name and if I was O and went back in.



## OFF THE WALL SPORTS

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When I saw him again in S.F. a few weeks later, he was at his locker, he remembered my name and we talked for five minutes.

There are so many more, but I will “go long” and finish with a tale from the last Super Bowl I covered.

It was SB XXXVII, January 26, 2003, Tampa vs. Raiders.

Raiders were favored by several points, but since Jon Gruden had coached Oakland the previous year, I figured he knew the entire Raiders offense.

Before the game, I was on the field as the players were warming up. Now you’re not allowed to talk to them, but Tampa’s strong safety, John Lynch was standing about 10 feet from me and I just said, “Hey John, you think they (Raiders) will run the same offense as last year?” He grinned widely and said, “Yep, I know they will,” then trotted off.

He was correct. It looked like (and mostly was) that TB knew what plays they would run and were in the right defense.

Rich Gannon was the Raiders QB, and he was the MVP in 2002, thanks mostly to the way Jon Gruden had trained him.

As he would call the plays, Lynch would wait until he started, then he’d yell out the rest of the play.

At one time, you could see Gannon so PO’ed, that you could see him say, “F...” and have to call a time out.

After the game, I talked to Lynch again in the locker room, I said that on pass plays, it looked like his defensive backs were breaking on the pass routes before the receivers were. “Yea, we were, he grinned. We knew exactly what the plays were, so we could actually beat them to the ball. We stopped them cold. It was like we had their playbook, which, basically, we did,” he said.

NOTE: Since he had told me that before the game, I made a bet with a very well known, top Sports Illustrated writer. He wanted to give me TB and 5 points for \$100. I said no, but told him I’d take TB and GIVE him 17 points, but I wanted 20 to one odds on my \$100. He told me I was crazy and in front of several of his SI cohorts, took the bet.

Well, he tried to weasel out of it as the game wound down, but his same cohorts gave him a real hard time and he, pissed off, wrote me a check for 2 grand!

I hate the Raiders, since the 49’ers are my team, so it was double sweet, seeing them get killed, 48-21, and I made 2 grand.

I have gone on way too long.

But I will do another column down the line on more of the stuff I got by being “inside the locker rooms.”

Single malt, where are you?