

Sports Illustrated

SI.COM/PLAYERS

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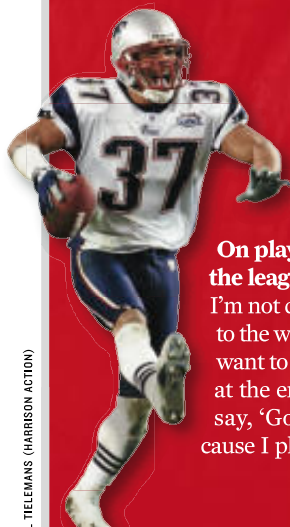
SI

P1
Players

First Person

RODNEY
HARRISON

PATRIOTS STRONG SAFETY



AL TELEMAN (HARRISON ACTION)

On players voting him the dirtiest player in the league (poll, page 36)

I'm not dirty. I'm a hard-nosed football player. I play to the whistle. I'm not going to be your friend. I don't want to go to parties with you. I don't need you. But at the end of the game I'll pat you on the butt and say, 'Good game.' Guys think that I'm dirty because I play football the old-school way.

On his reputation affecting his Pro Bowl status

How could I only make it twice? Opposing fans may not like me. Opposing players definitely would never vote for me. But the QB and the offensive coordinator are always looking for number 37.

On his idol as a kid living near Chicago

Walter Payton. He wasn't blessed with a lot of speed, but no one worked harder. He had desire.

>>>

>>> RODNEY HARRISON

On going to Western Illinois

I wanted to get away from home and not end up like my buddies who were making minimum wage and hanging out on the streets. I said I'm going to get a scholarship and an education to make my mom proud. Western promised me that, and I played a little football and a little basketball for them in return.

On playing basketball

I was a point guard. I was better at basketball than football, but football suited me. If you knock somebody's head off on the court, it's a foul and you're probably going to get ejected. In football I can assert my personality.

On his wife, Erika

I met her at Western and had a mad crush on her. I'd follow her around, but she was seeing someone. One day we were walking to biology, and I said, 'You know class is canceled today.' I just said it for fun. So she went back to her room and missed it. Turns out we had a pop quiz that day, so she couldn't stand me for the longest time. But I was persistent, and eventually she opened her heart and the rest is history. Now 15 some odd years later we have one son, Christian, a baby on the way and a stepdaughter, Michale. I'm a family man.

On his Super Bowl XXXVIII win and the photo of him under a hail of confetti with his arm in a sling

I had it blown up, and it's hanging in my basement. Tears are flowing down my face, and my arm is broken: It signifies my career and life. There was so much pain and hard work. I remember days [growing up] it was 100 degrees. I would be running up and down the street in the neighborhood, and people would laugh at me, saying, 'Are you crazy? You're not going anywhere.' That motivated me. You're not going to outwork me. You may be faster, you may be bigger, you may be stronger, but you won't outwork me. And I'm not afraid. I don't care if you're 6' 6" and 300 pounds, I'm going to try to make you pay. —As told to Lisa Altobelli

THE 6' 1", 220-POUND HARRISON, 33, HAS 33 TACKLES. THE PATS (4-1) PLAY AT BUFFALO (2-4) ON SUNDAY.

WHO'S Hot

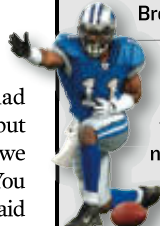
Broncos Defense

Five games, one TD allowed—the stingiest start in 72 years. And they've got swagger. After Raiders' 5' 10", 230-pound LaMont Jordan (*right*, being tackled) ran out-of-bounds to avoid 5' 8", 188-pound cornerback Darrent Williams, Williams said, "You're so much bigger than me, and you're scared?" Next? The poor Browns.



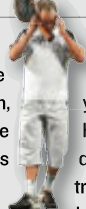
Roy Williams

Lions' receiver can't be slowed. The 2004 first-round pick, battling a wrenched neck that he treated with a heating pad in pregame, had 10 catches for 161 yards versus Bills—and gave a TD ball to a kid in a number 11 jersey. Marveled QB Jon Kitna, "He can barely turn his neck and just plays a superstar game."



Kelly Slater

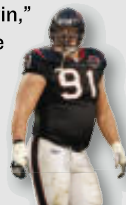
Dude—you have got to be stoked! The 34-year-old surfing great, competing in Spain, wrapped up his record eighth world title. Some of his fans donned SLATER T-shirts, others tossed him gleefully into Mundaka Harbor, and Slater said it was "satisfying."



WHO'S Not

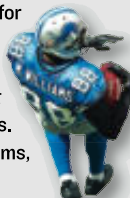
Texans Defense

Houston is giving up an AFC-worst 29.4 points a game and during Sunday's 34-6 loss to Dallas ("At the half [up 6-3] I felt sure we were going to win," said end Anthony Weaver to the *Houston Chronicle*) their season got truly painful: tackle Seth Payne (*right*) tore his right ACL and is out for the year. Next? The potent Jaguars.



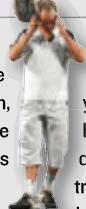
Mike Williams

Lions' receiver can't get off the ground. The 2005 first-round pick was benched for the fourth time in six games. He's no longer overweight and no longer tardy—traits that got him fined last year—he's just not making catches. Said Kitna when asked about Williams, "I don't want to talk about that."



John McEnroe

Dude—you cannot be serious! The 47-year-old tennis great, competing in Stockholm, got swept from the second round of the doubles bracket. Later Mac (*left*) went on a trademark attack, blasting the umpire for a call he said was "disgraceful, absolutely disgraceful."



Alliterative Panthers

Receiver Steve Smith helped Carolina win its fourth straight (after a 189-yard showing he explained, "I just work hard."); while on the ice in Florida, new goalie Alex Auld is 3-0-1.

Brawling Hurricanes

Beyond Miami: Carolina Hurricanes teammates Kevyn Adams and Bret Hedican fought in practice; five days later, winger Trevor Letowski was laid out (and concussed) by a hit in Pittsburgh.

SI PLAYERS NFL POLL



Who is the dirtiest player in the NFL?

- << Rodney Harrison, Patriots S 23%
- Joey Porter, Steelers LB 6%
- Jon Runyan, Eagles T 6%
- Warren Sapp, Raiders DT 5%



FAST FACTS Chiefs T Kyle Turley was fifth (4.1%), even though he missed all of 2004 and '05 (back injury). . . . More than 48% of WRs chose Harrison. . . . Porter got 26.8% of votes within the AFC North. . . . Steelers WR Hines Ward was the top vote-getter among skill position players (3.7%). . . . The only QB to draw a vote was Patriot Tom Brady. . . . Titans DT Albert Haynesworth, serving a five-game ban for stomping on the face of Dallas C Andre Gurode, didn't get a vote; the poll was conducted in the preseason.

[Based on a survey of 361 NFL players] • For an expanded version of the poll, go to SI.com/players.

RODNEY HARRISON: WIREIMAGE.COM (JORDAN); SCOTT HALLER/GETTY IMAGES (GRINE); TOM BRUCE (MIKE WILLIAMS); (TOP) JOHN MITCHELL/REUTERS (WILSON); (MIDDLE) JEFF HAMILTON/REUTERS (WILSON); (BOTTOM) WIREIMAGE.COM (THREE STORIES); STEVE JACOBSON (HARRISON); LEON HALL/WIREIMAGE.COM (ROY WILLIAMS)