



Chad Hosts Star-Studded Event

HUNTINGTON -- New NFL commissioner Roger Goodell has been cracking down on off-the-field misbehavior by players. Just recently, he suspended Tennessee Titans cornerback Adam "Pacman" Jones for the 2007 season and Cincinnati Bengals wide receiver Chris Henry for the first eight games. Both players have had multiple run-ins with police.

Contrast that to Saturday night when Chad Pennington, a former Marshall University quarterback and starter for the New York Jets, held his third 1st And 10 Foundation Celebrity Bowl at Colonial Lanes.

"For all the Pacmans, each team has players like Chad," Boomer Esiason, former NFL quarterback and NFL analyst on CBS, said. "They try to do the right thing. Something like this never gets written about. This shows the true commitment of NFL players. This is what it's all about."

Esiason was one of 11 celebrities who participated in the event. Other ex-NFL quarterbacks on the lanes included Doug Williams, Frank Reich, Ken O'Brien, Neil O'Donnell and Jim Everett. Randy Moss, another past Marshall standout and all-pro receiver with Oakland, appeared at the auction Friday night at the Pullman Plaza Hotel. Moss didn't make it to the bowling event.

The 1st and 10 Foundation founded by Pennington and his wife, Robin, is a major fund-raiser for southern West Virginia community organizations and institutions. More than \$200,000 was distributed after the 2006 event.

"We're here to have some fun and help a friend," Esiason said. "Chad's shown unbelievable perseverance. He's had all the injuries and come back. He's really humble, too."

O'Donnell, who once played for the Pittsburgh Steelers, finished up with the Titans. He now works for a television station in Nashville and reports on the Titans.

"I have a lot of respect for Chad," O'Donnell said. "I like his toughness. We're here to raise money for charity, help people who need it the most."

Celebrity bowlers had lane assignments. Their scores, along with the scores of their team members, were added together to determine the winner. The top three teams received prizes. In addition, competitors took part in a silent auction to bid on some prestigious items.

For O'Donnell, the Celebrity Bowl was a chance to see friends he competed against in the NFL.

"You get the chance to be around the guys," he said. "I'd love to be a coach, but I want to stay away from the hours. I played 14 years. Football is out of my blood, but not the lockerroom. This is a way to get back in."

Williams played college football for legendary coach Eddie Robinson at Grambling, then went on to make it big in the NFL with the Washington Redskins.

"He had a great impact on me," said Williams, who coached at Grambling for six years and is now personnel executive with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

Williams said this was his first time inside a bowling center for a charity event. Usually when he gets a call, it's time to head to a golf course.

"It's unique. It gets so many people involved," he said of the setting in the 34-lane center. "Am I a good bowler? No. I just want to keep the ball on the lane. I'm here to help the people. That's what Chad's all about."

Celebrities do have to make sacrifices to attend functions such as this.

"We all give up time," Williams said. "When I was leaving home, it was tough. I have a wife and kids and I have only so many days off. You give back. Fortunately I had players in the NFL help me so I had time for this."

Employees from companies in Huntington, Charleston and around West Virginia made up the teams. They are glad to give up their time.

"The charities benefit from this," said Andrew Hudson of Beckley. "That's who you want to help."

"This means a lot to the charities," said Tom Alderson of Charleston, who represented Mountain State Blue Cross & Blue Shield. "The dollars that go in stay here."

"I like the opportunity to bowl with the celebrities," said Loretta Hanshaw, another Blue Cross and Blue Shield rep. "This is a wonderful thing they do."

"You do things for children and that's good," Jerry Duff said.

Before bowling, Pennington made a stop at Marshall's Green-White Game at Joan C. Edwards Stadium.

"It's always different and every year's a challenge," he said between shots, posing for pictures and signing autographs. "I'm so excited to have the support. We've done a lot and it's because of people like we have here."

Pennington said he's looking forward to the 2007 season. On Oct. 21, the Jets will play the Cincinnati Bengals in Cincinnati. However, on that same Sunday, the Herd will take on Southern Miss at night at home.

"I'll try to stay healthy and be available to the team," he said. "I have to stay sharp physically and mentally. If I can do that, things will be good."

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