

## **JIM CARTER CELEBRATION OF LIFE – 6/10/24**

### **STEVE SCHUMER SPEECH**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

- I really don't understand why I was listed as "Packer Backer" on the program. What, Jim, would ever give you that idea?
- Hi all. I'm Steve Schumer, a long-time, die-hard Packers fan.
- I'm both honored and humbled to be here, and deeply appreciative of Jumpin' Jimmy giving me the opportunity to share my thoughts about Jim Carter as part of this wonderful celebration of his life
- And I'm thrilled to follow Jeff Wright and Scott Hunter, two great players from the teams and era I'll be talking about
- I honestly did not have to think long about what I wanted to say today. Because, as I'll explain, Jim Carter was one of my all-time favorite players on my all-time favorite Packers team – a team on which he enjoyed the winningest season of his pro career
- I hope in sharing my personal perspectives I can represent the thoughts and feelings of the many millions of Packer fans who still remember and greatly appreciated Jim

#### **MY BACKGROUND/CONTEXT**

- Just a bit about me for context
- I've lived my entire life in New Jersey. Yet I've always been a Packers fan. Yeah, I know, that often confuses people.
- The quick backstory is that I adopted the Packers when I was a kid simply because I didn't want to be like all my friends who were NY Giants or Jets fans. So I chose a team that at the time I knew very little about, other than that they played far away, somewhere up north, on some frozen field in some very small city. All of that appealed to me then. And it does to this day.

#### **JIM CARTER INTRO**

- Jim Carter ironically joined the Packers the same year I started following them, in 1970
- As many of you likely know, though he played FB at the University of Minnesota, the Packers drafted him to play LB, and he was given the unenviable task of replacing a Hall of Famer and legend in Green Bay, Ray Nitschke

- You also likely know that as a result, Jim was not welcomed by some Packers fans. In fact, some even booed him. I was always disgusted by that. I hope he knew there were millions of Packers fans that never did that and did nothing but appreciate him.
- And as you may know, Jim spent his entire 9 year NFL career with the Packers (1970-1978), was a defensive captain for 4 of those years and made the Pro Bowl once.
- Jim Carter, by any measure, had a great NFL career
- Unfortunately, he enjoyed only two winning seasons out of his 9. And only one of those seasons resulted in a division championship and playoff berth: 1972.
- Not surprisingly, Jim shared with teammates that he always looked back on that '72 season as his very best pro football experience. It was also mine.
- So I'd like to try and share with you why Jim and I both felt this way about that year

### **1972 TEAM/SEASON**

- By the end of the 60's, most all of the players from the great Lombardi teams were gone
- Thus it was no surprise that in 1970, Jim's rookie year, the Packers won only 6 games
- The next year, in '71, they were even worse, winning only 4 times and finishing last in the old NFC Central, or – as it was known – the Black & Blue Division
- As they approached the '72 season – and Jim entered his 3<sup>rd</sup> year on the team – the Packers were predicted by everyone to finish last again
- They opened on the road against Cleveland, a playoff team in '71 who would be again in '72. Consequently, the Browns were expected to beat Green Bay handily. But the Packers not only pulled a major upset, they beat Cleveland by more than two touchdowns. That caught a lot of people's attention.
- However, as the Packers looked to build off that impressive start, in the second game they lost two key starters on offense for the year. One was considered by many the #1 guard in the game at that time and arguably the best player on the team: Gale Gillingham from? The University of Minnesota (1<sup>st</sup> round 1966). The other player lost was their starting TE, Rich McGeorge (1<sup>st</sup> round 1970).
- Losing both Gillingham and McGeorge for the season made the challenge to generate offense all the greater for a young QB who was a 6<sup>th</sup> round rookie just the year before – Scott Hunter. But here's what one of Scott's teammates said about him: "Hunter wasn't a bullshitter and he wasn't somebody trying to run the show. He was one of the guys. And it helped to be a QB like that. He was a scrapper. He wasn't afraid. That toughness element back when we played was a big deal, even with a QB." The teammate that made those comments? Jim Carter. Pretty significant when the leader of the defense thinks that of the leader of the offense.
- But the Packers, on the heels of losing those two key starters on offense, were in their third game now hosting the defending Super Bowl Champion Dallas Cowboys – and a

team that in 1972 would go on to the NFC Championship Game. The Packers were therefore expected to lose -- and by a lot. Instead they shocked the entire NFL by upsetting the Cowboys and serving notice to the rest of the league that this Packers team might indeed be for real.

- A couple of weeks later, in mid-October on Monday Night Football, the Packers faced the Lions in Detroit. This was a team the Packers had beaten only once in their previous 8 tries. With the Lions heavily favored, it was not a surprise when the Packers fell behind 17-0. But Green Bay came roaring all the way back, and on the strength of an exhilarating last-minute TD pass from Scott Hunter, pulled another stunning upset to beat Detroit by a point.
- The Packers amazing run would continue. In November they played yet another team that would make the playoffs in '72, the San Francisco 49ers. San Francisco was fully expected to leave Green Bay with a win that day. But the Packers -- you guessed it -- were the victors in an extraordinary upset, beating the 49ers by 10.
- All these upsets, added to wins over the Bears and Oilers, led the Packers to a 7-4 record. In early December they squared off in Green Bay with the Lions, who were also 7-4. The winner of this game would take the division lead. Like in the Monday Night game a couple of months earlier, the Lions were again favored. Yet, as they had done all season, Green Bay beat the odds -- and this time, by a ton. Jim Carter and the Packer defense totally dismantled the Detroit offense. Green Bay was winning the game 33-0 -- 33-0! -- before the Lions scored a meaningless TD at the very end.
- This monumental victory over Detroit positioned the Packers the following week to clinch the division. But to accomplish that, they would need to defeat the mighty Minnesota Vikings.
  - I said the mighty Minnesota Vikings, and rightfully so
  - I have to tell you, I had tremendous respect and admiration for the Vikings of that era. They were a great, great team.
  - They totally dominated the NFC Central Division, winning it 10 out of 11 years, from 1968 to 1978
  - They were also the class of the NFC, going to 4 Super Bowls during that span
  - Hence, to no one's surprise, the Vikings had beaten the Packers 6 weeks earlier in that '72 season in Green Bay, getting 4 interceptions that day. Jeff Wright had one. 2 others were returned for TDs.
  - Now in this rematch at the old Met, the Packers were facing no less than 7 future Hall of Famers on that '72 Vikings team: On offense, QB Fran Tarkenton, OT Ron Yary and C Mick Tinglehoff. On defense, DE Carl Eller from? The University of Minnesota (1<sup>st</sup> rd pick 1964), DT Alan Page and S Paul Krause. Their 7<sup>th</sup> HOFer? Head Coach Bud Grant from? The University of Minnesota (1<sup>st</sup> rd pick 1950 by the Eagles). In comparison, the Packers in '72 had only one starter who was a future Hall of Famer, LB Dave Robinson.

- Based on all of this, the Packers were understandably big underdogs on that day in Bloomington. It would take a minor miracle to overcome that Vikings team.
- There was no lack of motivation though. Jim Carter expressed his feelings this way: “Being from Minnesota, I always wanted to beat the Vikings.”
- In what was the 5<sup>th</sup> coldest NFL game ever played – at minus 2 degrees with a windchill of minus 19 – the two teams faced off on national TV on December 10<sup>th</sup>, 1972
- The Packers hung tough the first two quarters, but trailed 7-0 at halftime. It felt at that point like they weren’t going to be able to pull off another upset. But then the Packers totally turned the tables and had a second half for the ages. It was nothing short of incredible. They scored 23 unanswered points and held the Vikings to none. Jim Carter and the Packers defense ruled the day. The Vikings gained only 144 yards of total offense. Tarkenton was intercepted 3 times and sacked 4 times. John Brockington and MacArthur Lane, the Packers running backs, got the upper hand in that game against the Purple People Eaters, combining for over 200 yards rushing and controlling the ball for 13 of the game’s final 15 minutes. It was a hugely shocking but convincing 23-7 win for the Packers that earned them the NFC Central Division Championship.
- Jim Carter, Scott Hunter and their teammates played the greatest game of the greatest season of their careers that day
- In fact, that ended up being the most impressive and important regular season win for the Packers for the next 20 years
- I watched that Packers/Vikings game as a 15 year old on my 9” color TV and will never forget it. I had no idea at the time that game would end up becoming the most favorite regular season Packers win I’d ever watch.
- The Packers final record in 1972 was 10-4. They had shocked the NFL, going from 4 wins the previous season to 10, a turnaround no one could have predicted.
- That turnaround – and all the upsets it included -- was fueled, more than anything, by two major factors:
- The first was that Brockington and Lane ended up being as good as any pair of running backs in the league that year. That was not a big surprise.
- What was a big surprise was that the Packers ended up having a great defense. Not a very good one – a great one. The old adage is that defense wins championships. And in 1972 the Packers had a defense good enough to win the Super Bowl with. The Miami Dolphins had the only perfect season in NFL history that year and won it all. And, as expected, they did it leading the NFL in defense. But guess what team had the #2 defense that year? It was the Packers. And the Packers were actually the #1 defense in the entire NFL against the run, giving up the lowest average yards per attempt in the league. All 11 players on that Packers defense deserved credit for these outstanding rankings, but none more so than the man in the middle of it all, Jim Carter.

- Jim was so good in 1972 that he was formally recognized as the 2<sup>nd</sup> best MLB in the entire NFC that year (by UPI) – behind only a MLB most consider the best in the history of the game, Dick Butkus.
- Scott Hunter said this about Jim: “He was the perfect MLB for our ’72 team and defense. Tough, smart, a leader on the field and in the locker room. A great guy and teammate.”
- Considering all that team and he individually accomplished in 1972, it’s no wonder why Jim always looked back on that season as his very best pro football experience
- Since the early 90’s, the Packers have enjoyed mostly winning seasons, many division championships, and won a couple of Super Bowls. Yet, like Jim, I’ve always looked back on that ’72 team and season as my all-time favorite.

### **1972 ARTICLE & MY INTERACTION WITH JIM**

- 2 years ago marked the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that 1972 Packers team
- I thought they should be remembered and celebrated
- At first I raised the idea with Scott Hunter, seeing if the players might arrange themselves a 50 year reunion and celebrate their best season together. But there were various challenges and complications that prevented it from becoming a reality.
- I then appealed to Cliff Christl, the official historian of the Packers, and Aaron Pokey, the Packers’ Director of Public Affairs. I’ve known both for a number of years. And while empathetic, they explained to me that the Packers only celebrate their NFL Championship and Super Bowl teams.
- I was undeterred. I reached out to the Green Bay Press-Gazette and engaged Rich Ryman, one of their lead Packer writers. He admitted he knew little about that ’72 team and season, but was willing to listen. After I made my long and detailed case, he was sold. He not only agreed to write an article, but research further what I raised to him, interview players from that team and record videos. Rich did a masterful job.
- So on October 19th 2022 that article was published. It was the lead story on the front page.
- If any of you haven’t seen it, I’d be happy to send it
- Jim was quoted several times and was in one of the accompanying videos as well
- I passed the article on to him and a number of his teammates to ensure they all saw it
- Jim made my day when he responded to let me know how much he appreciated my efforts in getting it published. In his email he said, “Steve, excellent job! Thanks for being vigilant and getting it to print.” That meant a lot to me.
- A couple of months later, in December of 2022, I sent Jim an article I had come across about him from the mid-70’s. His response via email was “Thanks, Steve. Nice of you to send. I don’t remember the article, but it was fun to read. Also, pretty ‘cringe worthy’ for some of my youthful comments.” I got a kick out of that.

- That though was my last communication with Jim. I had no idea he'd be gone less than a year later.

## CONCLUSION

- I'm sorry I never met Jim Carter in person, and came to know him like so many of you
- But that didn't stop him from being, as I said at the outset, one of my all-time favorite players on my all-time favorite Packers team
- I'm deeply appreciative that I got a chance to interact with Jim, even if just by email. And I'm appreciative that it ultimately led me to being here today.
- I'd like to end by sharing with you my favorite quote. I don't remember where I found it, but it has been on my bulletin board for many years now and I look at it almost daily. It reads as follows:
- "At the end of our lives, we will not remember how much money we made, how many ball games we watched, or how many things we possessed. What will come back to us in a brilliant and blinding light is the quality of the relationships we formed with those we loved: our friends, our spouses, our children." And I'd add, for some, their teammates.
- It's obvious from everyone being here today that the quality of the relationships Jim Carter formed during his lifetime was unquestionably high, and I have no doubt that's what he celebrated at the end of his life, and what we should celebrate together about him today. Thank you all.