

# American Century Championship

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Lake Tahoe, Nevada, USA  
Edgewood Tahoe

## DeMarcus Ware Emmitt Smith Press Conference

**Q. A lot of emotions gotta be going through your mind with August 5th coming up when you go to Canton, what's going through your mind?**

DEMARCUS WARE: Those emotions, those 12 years that I played, they're going to be bottled up in a 10- to 12-minute speech that I have to deliver to the world, which is a challenge. I've changed it 15 times now, and I've worked on it every single night while I've been here.

Having an opportunity to share your story that's going to last forever, you pick your words wisely because it's going to be played over and over again.

So that moment when all your family's there, there's no words that you can say to the world what it really means to you. But I know when I look back and I see all those guys, all those other Hall of Famers, you can actually say you made it and you're in that same locker room.

**Q. When you first burst upon the scene, did Hall of Fame even cross your mind back then?**

DEMARCUS WARE: You can't even fathom saying, okay, coming from Troy University, getting drafted in the first round and saying I'm going to make the Hall of Fame. First of all, you need to be a defensive captain, right, Defensive Player of the Year. There's a lot of things that come before that, but you can't let "Hall of Fame" come out of your mouth. You've got to let other people say it.

That's one thing that I've never said to anybody, when they say, DeMarcus, do you think you're going to make the Hall of Fame? No, I just want to be Defensive Player of the Year, be the best that year, because if I can add a cumulative amount of years together, now I can say I was the best while I played, and that's Hall of Fame quality.

**Q. Speaking of Hall of Famers -- look at this guy right**



**here. Emmitt Smith, come on up. Good to have you.**

EMMITT SMITH: Fashionably on time.

**Q. Emmitt, we were just talking to DeMarcus about his emotions coming up on August 5th when he's inducted in Canton. What kind of memories do you have when you went in that you could share with him?**

EMMITT SMITH: They were all great memories. It's always exciting to know that somebody outside of yourself thinks that you're the best at what you do.

As athletes, we grow up thinking we are the best when we're out the football field; but when others recognize your talent from afar, it just solidifies who you are, what you've been able to accomplish and the work that you put in to get to that level. So for DeMarcus, I think it's a great thing for him, not only him and his family, but also the Dallas Cowboys and everybody that we both support.

But at the end of the day, it's all about him. I mean, as a Hall of Famer myself, and now a future, soon-to-be soon Hall of Famer, I'm just excited for him because I know the journey.

See, what most people forget is the journey. The work that guys like him and myself put in as a young child to even try to get there, the faith that we actually have to even get there and the belief that we actually have to instill in ourselves that we can actually get there, even if you guy to Troy State, because oftentimes many people think that just because you go to a Power Five school that this is your pathway.

The one thing I learned about the National Football League, they find you, no matter who you are, no matter where you are; you're a great player, you stand out, regardless.

The ones who find you, they're finding the jewel, and when they find a jewel, they have a DeMarcus Ware come in and does what he has been able to do. So kudos to my friend here.



DEMARCUS WARE: Thank you so much.

EMMITT SMITH: No, shit. Thank you? It's well deserved.

DEMARCUS WARE: Me growing up, I got to watch Emmitt. Now being inducted into a class and now saying I'm in the same locker room with him, I didn't get to play with him or play against him.

EMMITT SMITH: I'm much older.

DEMARCUS WARE: But what I'm saying is what you were capable of and your embodiment made me who I am because I looked up to guys like him. Now to be on the same stage, saying, you know what, we're both Hall of Famers.

EMMITT SMITH: Same class. Same locker room. Beating everybody on not on the side -- all 300 some of us, all 371 is on one team, and that's a beautiful thing. How many people in the world can say that they are a part of an elite group outside of our military people who are a part of very elite groups that stands out above the rest, have gone beyond the call of duty.

So even though we're not military people, trust me, they're laying their lives on the line every day for each and every one of us that are behind the mics, from the cameras, they're doing it every day so we can do what we do. So much respect and kudos to those individuals.

But from an athlete's standpoint, we think about it from that perspective, in terms of being able to sacrifice for the man on my right and man to my left and for the team and the organization, that's how we look at it. So kudos to my man. He earned a right to be here, deserved a right to be here and all the recognition and respect that he deserves.

**Q. DeMarcus was just saying that he was reworking his speech, 12 minutes to talk, wants to make sure --**

EMMITT SMITH: 12 minutes? I had 20-some minutes. I ended up going 22 minutes long.

DEMARCUS WARE: I wish I had 22 minutes.

EMMITT SMITH: Ironically, 22. Ironically. But you know, it's hard. Here's the thing: Everything is made for television, right? So we have to do what television is asking and demanding of us, but it's not getting the best of who we are because we have to acquiesce to what television requires.

If television requires a 12-minute conversation or a speech in 12 minutes, that's what's required because you're trying

to maintain ratings and everything else, but you dilute the message from the athlete, and the message shrinks and shrinks and it gets all condensed, because what you don't realize and what you don't recognize -- and I want people to understand this -- what you don't realize is that what has embodied this man, what has made this individual the person that he is, and on that stage it's the opportunity for him to share and encourage a country right now that's divided -- let's be honest -- and encourage people that are feeling left behind, also encourage people that are having various challenges and everything else.

This is not an overnight success. Even though we want to paint it as an overnight success, but the reality this has been a journey for this man. He started when he was probably six, seven years old, going through the entire process of people saying he wouldn't, versus folks saying you can, and being encouraged at multitudes of levels. And to fight through whatever he had to fight through, that message has never been talked about.

See, oftentimes we are projected as heroes, but people don't see the process that heroes have to go through in order to get there. They think that it's all automatic or that it happened overnight. This is not an overnight success. Neither was I. Neither was the others of the 371. At the end of the day, anybody that makes it to the National Football League are not overnight successes. That's all I've got to say about it.

DEMARCUS WARE: You can never have too much material for your speech. I changed it 15 times. Because I thought to myself, when I get up there I want to deliver a message that you can't find on the Internet. The true me. I just want, at the end of the day, when you look at this message over and over again, that it's impactful, it's motivating and it's going to change lives. It changed only one life, that's mine. I want to change another that's all I'm asking.

**Q. Before Joe Montana went in, he was talking about the night before he completely changed his speech. After he got there, he was talking to a lot of guys, he said, I have to go after something else. We all remember Peyton Manning's speech too.**

DEMARCUS WARE: He did the same thing.

**Q. You don't seem intimidated by that?**

DEMARCUS WARE: We don't get intimidated. I think the pressure actually makes us who we are. When we get pressure, just like situations like this, we figure out how to do something greater with our minds, our bodies -- so that's who we are. That's the cool thing. Like I said, I

might change it. I don't know. When we get up here, be on stage, I don't know -- when I get up there, especially with mom and grandma.

EMMITT SMITH: To be honest with you, when I got on the stage -- prior to getting on the stage of the Hall of Fame, I had my speech down pat. Memorized everything, knew exactly what I was going to say.

The day of the Hall of Fame, going on to stage, I couldn't get to the very first sentence. I didn't have any paper.

When they called my name and Jerry Jones did what he did, they brought me up to the stage, it came out. It just came out because I had spent almost six months preparing. But the one thing that I forgot -- one segment in my speech -- and that was to thank the University of Florida. I regret that every day of my life because I don't want that University of Florida to think that I truly ignored those years because those years were very paramount to the success of what I was able to go from that point on.

So to DeMarcus' point, maybe people don't realize this, yes, it's a pressure to deliver the message and deliver it in a way that's packaged, that's concise, that's to the point and that's impactful. Because you know what, we are used to thousands of critics criticizing us about everything that we do because we don't do it the way they want it done.

And unfortunately, if people don't accept us for who we are, they always try to conform us to who they want us to be. And people have to understand, if you want to grow and expand who you are, you have to accept people for what they're bringing to the table, and that message itself rings beyond anything that we are able to do on the football field or beyond because that's a life message.

That's the only way we can break down these limitations and barriers that's been holding us all back from being the best version of ourselves, period.

**Q. Advice to the generation coming up after you. Emmitt was going into that about staying true to yourself. I can't imagine what it's like with social media full time now. What would be your advice to those coming up after you who have the same dreams you had in your heart that have now manifested?**

DEMARCUS WARE: My mom always told me, don't conform to the world. I know exactly where she got that from and that's Jesus Christ.

When you don't, you create individual identities that do great things because they're different.

Everybody that you want to be like is really different. They don't say, I want to be like -- they say, I like these traits, these traits, these traits of who I am and they be the best them, because one thing you can do is fool yourself; but if you are honest with yourself, you will be your best self.

**Q. How did you manage to get Jerry Jones to be your presenter?**

DEMARCUS WARE: With Jerry, he brought me in knowing that he had to go against Bill Parcells and me getting drafted because Bill Parcells wanted another guy at the time. So Bill Parcells and Jerry Jones, they had a bet. Jerry Jones won that bet.

So when I got announced by Jerry Jones, actually he said, "DeMarcus, you made the 2023 Hall of Fame Class," and I asked him at that time. I said, "You brought me into the Dallas Cowboys," and I asked him to be my presenter at that time. I think it was a good deal that, first of all, he welcomed me into the Hall of Fame, being a Hall of Famer himself, and then me saying, "Will you present me?" Because I think that's that last period to say, hey, you've made it.

**Q. In 2015, you helped lead the Broncos to win a Super Bowl 50. The culmination of a successful season, the emotions that run high at the end, presentation, all the ceremony, how do you think that's going to compare to your Hall of Fame induction?**

DEMARCUS WARE: I think that's the biggest moment in football as a player to become a champion because it's not an individual thing, it's a team thing. And if you are a team player, that's what you're searching for every year. You get 90 new guys in the locker room.

But now the Hall of Fame -- here's the first time I've been singled out. I've never put the attention on myself, and now you have no choice but to accept it. And I think this is going to be the biggest individual award and opportunity for myself to say, hey, now it's time for you to blossom a little bit and stop thinking about everybody else and think about yourself for a change and be selfish and now sort of give a speech to your family, your fans and everybody out there to let you know how important it was, how hard you worked, and you can do it, too, if you set your mind to do it.

**Q. Turning to the American Century competition, I know you were upset coming in 79th last year --**

DEMARCUS WARE: Oh, yes.

**Q. Not to belabor the point and remind you --**

DEMARCUS WARE: I don't think there's 94 people, but I'm glad it's not 94th. I was upset about coming in 79th. I came in today, I'm going to tell you guys, I shot 81 yesterday, feeling really good. I'm like, I'm really going to shock the world, right?

I got here. I practised. Hitting the ball straight. I didn't have one missed ball on the range. First hole, parred it. I said yes, you know what, I'm going to make the top 70. Four doubles right after that. You know, me being a competitor, I wanted to like smash my clubs. I said, "This is golf. You've got to now settle down, relax, because you've got three days of this."

And I didn't shoot like I wanted to today, but I also got to think about this is one of those games that it's the most challenging game ever. That's why you see so many athletes and celebrities play it because it's so cerebral. It's not about how strong you are; it's about your technique, your thoughts, just focusing every single stroke like a field goal or touchdown, every single stroke.

That's why so many guys are out here. I'm enjoying it, having fun it, especially having the weather out in Tahoe. Amazing people with American Century Championship, it's such an amazing atmosphere. So I'm okay.

**Q. You mentioned on the Zoom call you had a couple of rituals, going on the boat, same Italian restaurant?**

DEMARCUS WARE: Same thing.

**Q. Are you superstitious?**

DEMARCUS WARE: I'm not superstitious. I like routine. Friday night I'll go to my favorite pasta place, I think it's called -- I can't remember -- Piatti's -- right here.

I always go on the boat, me and Charles. We talk a lot of trash. I usually get a round with Charles at the end. Hopefully I get the same thing this year. I usually get the defensive guy. I already got one behind me, playing with Emmitt, which is an offensive guy, then playing with Dwight Freeney.

Tomorrow I don't know who I'm going to play with. But those are the rituals, and I've already put one in the bag. I'm not going to change the rituals because, as a player, if you start changing things, then your swing changes and everything else. I'll hit the range right after this for probably an hour and hopefully I'll get those things ironed out.

**Q. You alluded to a little bit when Jerry broke the news to you. I'd love to get an inside peek as to what was going through your mind in that moment when he**

**first told you that you were going to be going into The Hall.**

DEMARCUS WARE: I was fooled. My assistant, she said I'm going to a photo shoot for NFL, which it was planned. And me and my wife, we're getting out of the car. We go to Jerry Jones' office.

Every time I go to the facility, I always just go say hi to Jerry. I knocked on the door. I opened up the door, and I saw Jerry with a gold jacket on. I'm like, what are you doing? And then I saw Jim Porter, and I saw like the Hall of Fame little crest he had there.

He said, "DeMarcus Ware welcome to the 2023 Hall of Fame Class." It still didn't hit me yet. And he touched me and he said, "Congratulations." One word he said was "congratulations," and I like lost it. It was like my whole soul just left out of my body. And Jerry, he kept talking to me. I'm like, "Wait a minute." Like, really, I couldn't talk because this is a moment that I've been waiting for my whole career not thinking about it but your embodiment of your work and how you played put you there. So that's that moment. I was actually fooled in thinking I was doing a photo shoot.

**Q. I'm curious, outside of winning Super Bowl 50, which was perfect culmination of an amazing career, outside of that, is there any particular moment throughout your professional career that really stands out as maybe a favorite of yours, aside from the Super Bowl?**

DEMARCUS WARE: I think it was in 2009 when I was rushing a passer -- I came around the corner, Philip Rivers stepped up, I saw Anthony Spencer. I tried to move out of the way and he hit the top of my head. I laid there on the ground -- I remember Marcus Spears sitting over me. He said, "DeMarcus, will you please move?" And I was paralyzed for about three minutes, on the ground, just sitting there.

And I got on the ambulance, and I remember giving the thumbs up and I was getting my feeling back. So I remember going into the locker room, and all the guys looked at me like they saw a ghost. I really didn't know what happened until I went back and watched the tape. I wasn't moving for like three minutes and the whole crowd is silent.

So the moment for me, I think, that embodies me who I am, the whole week I didn't practice or didn't play, wasn't thinking about football, but I went into the Saints stadium, they were 13-0, and if we won that game we would have a sort of berth in making the playoffs.

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I saw all the guys with their head down. And Romo said something in the locker room and he said, "We don't have Superman." He used to call me Superman all the time. Chokes me up a little bit.

But I saw my pads with no jersey on, and I went and asked the Coach, can I just go play on third down. He said, "Are you kidding me? No." I ended up playing a couple of third downs. And I remember Sean Payton ran the ball at me, it was third and 18, and I got pissed. And so I said, no, let me stay in the game the rest of the game.

I ended up getting two sacks and two forced fumbles that game and winning that game for the team.

**Q. It was a prime-time game?**

DEMARCUS WARE: It was a prime-time game. I ended up winning the game for the team. But lets me know that again I put the team before me, my family and everything else, but that's who I am. I always put people and everyone before me. But like I said earlier, this is that first time to where I've got to think about myself and now put that out there to the world.

**Q. You and Jerry Rice came from small schools. Now you're here. What's the advantage of going to a small university?**

DEMARCUS WARE: When you go to a smaller university, you get told so many times of what you should be like: You're too small; you're not fast enough. But one thing that that does is -- I'm going to use the symbolism, if you get a Coke bottle and you shake it up, and you keep shaking it up, eventually that plastic can't hold in that soda. And eventually you get to open up that soda every week on somebody spray it everywhere on somebody. You get to put that out there.

And I was talking to Jerry a little bit earlier, it gives you that underdog mentality, that's an edge that's over a little over the big-time school guys because you came from enough -- I would never say nothing -- you came from enough and with enough you figured out what to do with it to become great.

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