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Eric Dickerson

Q. Eric Dickerson, just looking at your new book, Eric Dickerson, "Watch My Smoke," and on the back it says, "Eric Dickerson is the greatest player in Los Angeles Rams history," and I can't deny that.

Your running style, unbelievable, and really in the conversation for greatest running back in NFL history, and you have the single season record both as a rookie and all-time that you've held forever.

ERIC DICKERSON: Yeah, thanks, Sam. I mean, I'm very proud of those records. People ask me about those. I say, I have a lot more, too, a lot more records, but I think those two are kind of iconic because I did the 1808 my first year, my rookie season, and I always say that one is going to last longer because a team doesn't build an offense around a rookie, and I was fortunate that John Robinson did.

And then I came back the second year and had the 2,000 yard season, so I'm very proud of both of those seasons.

Q. What was it about your running style? It was described as upright. It really seemed so comfortable, casual, and had that fifth gear that most guys didn't have.

ERIC DICKERSON: Well, it was a good thing. It was a blessing and a curse at the same time because people would say, man, you're not trying hard. You're not running hard. They would say it to me all the time.

As a matter of fact, one of my first practices when I got to Anaheim with the Rams, we ran a play, like a toss play, and I'm about to follow the guard and the tackle, and John Robinson said, Stop, stop. Son, you've got to run faster than that.

I said, Coach, I'm running fast. He said, You look like you're jogging out here. I said, I'm not jogging. Get out here and try to catch me. I've heard that my whole life, that I look like I'm not trying or not running hard, but I was a track runner. I ran track.

That's just how I ran. I ran upright, but when I hit the line of

scrimmage, I didn't have my shoulders upright. I was leaning over, but I'm so tall that people thought I was running straight up. And I wore the big shoulder pads. These guys now, they wear the little baby shoulder pads.

Q. Let's talk about your pads. Take me down all the pads you wore because --

ERIC DICKERSON: I wore everything. I had the goggles which I hated because I couldn't see, and then I had the neck roll, and the neck roll really didn't suffice a purpose, it just looked good.

I had it pulled out. I drilled holes in it and stretched it all the way out. I had my shoulder pads reinforced underneath. I wore a flak jacket under that, and I wore a rib protector. I wore it all.

I had the hip pads. I wore two hip pads. I had knee pads. I put them in the side. I wore it was called a butt pad, wore that in the back. Knee pads, shin guards, elbow pads, the big round mouthpiece. He was like, Man, that don't slow you down? I said, No, I just -- I thought it would protect me, but trust me, you're getting hit, it doesn't protect everything.

Q. Take me back to Sealy, Texas, known for the Sealy Posturepedic Mattress and Eric Dickerson.

ERIC DICKERSON: Well, my hometown of Sealy, there wasn't a lot to do. There really isn't. When I grew up there it was 2,000 people and one red light. The big thing was to go to 7-Eleven, hang out at the 7-Eleven with all the kids. Hang out at the 7-Eleven or go to the country and go -- we called it go cow tipping.

But it wasn't a lot there. The Sealy Posturepedic Mattress shut down -- I remember because I was a kid. As a matter of fact, the first time I actually saw it, the factory, was about 10 years ago. Someone took me to it. I'm like, Wow, this is where they used to make the mattresses. Sealy is just a small, sleepy town.

Now it's starting to grow because it's so close to Houston. Houston is starting to come that way. You have Katy is blowing up and then Brookshire and then Sealy, so Sealy is getting to be a little bit bigger now.

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Q. Talk about what cow tipping is for the uninformed.

ERIC DICKERSON: Well, for us, they'd try to catch the cow asleep standing up, and you'd just got to sneak up on him and push the cow over.

Now, I won't forget one time we tried that and a bull was out there. A bull chased us out of the pen. I could say when you're in a small town, it's nothing to do in small towns but sometimes just get in trouble.

Q. Pretty advantageous to have that Eric Dickerson speed when a bull is chasing you. What about the recruiting of Eric Dickerson as a high school player? There's so many great stories and eye-opening stories about that.

ERIC DICKERSON: Well, I'll tell you about the recruiting. It was not easy. People think it's fun, but it wasn't. I was excited about it at first. I was the No. 1 recruit in the nation my senior year from a small town in Texas.

All the colleges, SC, I met John Robinson, Oklahoma, A&M, SMU, Alabama, I mean, everybody recruited me. The coaches, they come to the school, they start coming in your house, and it just became overwhelming.

I think the overwhelming part was when a coach would say, If I don't get you, I'm going to lose my job. I remember one night my mother came and woke me up. It was probably 1:00 in the morning. I grew up in a small house and she came to my room and she said, Eric, it's a coach in here outside. I'm like, Huh? And I had finals the next day.

She's said, He wants to talk to you. So I'm like, Okay, I get up. I'm sitting out on the porch, he and I on the steps. I mean, stars out, it was a bright night. He said, We need to have you. If I don't get you, I'm going to lose my job.

I'm like -- he said, Tell me, what are you thinking about? I said, I'm thinking about sleeping right now.

Q. You're a high school kid.

ERIC DICKERSON: I was a high school kid. I mean, it was so much to recruiting. One of the things that I remember the most, or two things, is that University of Texas, I liked UT, but I wasn't really crazy about UT, and one of the coaches, Fred Akers and three other guys came to my house and talked to me.

They knew I liked OU, I liked Oklahoma because I liked Coach Switzer. One of the coaches said, Hey let me talk to you in the back for a second son. So I say, Okay, so we

go to the back.

My mother is out there with the other coaches. He said, Son, looks like you're not interested in your state school. I said, I'm interested in it. He said, Look, we know you like Oklahoma. He said some derogatory things about Coach Switzer. He said, We know you like SC, but that's long ways away.

He said. Look, let me tell you, SMU will never beat us as long as you never beat us. As long as you play they will never beat us. He said, If you don't consider your state school when you get out of college, we'll make sure you don't get a job in the state of Texas.

I'm like, Really? He said, Yeah, and I will never forget it, I told him, F you, man. I went back to my mother, I said, Mom, make them leave.

So went back in, It was nice meeting you, gentlemen. When they walked out said what that man say to you, I told her? She say, Oh, hell no. You will never go to that school, so that was even better for me.

Q. Now, this was several decades before name, image, likeness, but it sounds like some people already cut some unofficial name, image and likeness deals.

ERIC DICKERSON: What are you talking about? (Chuckles.) What are you trying to get at?

Q. Well, chapter 3 --

ERIC DICKERSON: Do you want to talk about the Trans Am? Look, I'll tell you about the Trans Am. And people have said for years where the Trans Am came from, and I've always said, My grandmother bought that Trans Am. So how the Trans Am went down, as far as I know -- first of all, I was a kid and I'd pass by -- it was at a Pontiac dealership called Leo Jonigan Pontiac right off the 10 freeway. I'd go drive by, look at the Trans Am. I'm like, Man, I like that car.

I told my mother about the car and told my grandmother about the car and so she said, You like the car? I said, Yes, I like the car. I remember one day, I don't know it was just like one day said, Hey, we're going to go to Houston, we're going to go to Leo Jonigan to look at the cars.

I'm like, Okay, cool. So we drive down and my grandmother from Houston and my grandfather met us over, and my mother, who people think is my grandma is my great, great aunt because I was legally adopted, so my mother was older.

So we go into Leo Jonigan, make a long story short, we talking and talking and all of a sudden I drive the car, love the car. There was some other guys that I didn't know, boosters, I didn't know who they were.

Come out, Here, take the keys, your car. I'm like, What? It's yours. So have the car. NCAA comes in investigating and all that kind of stuff and found nothing. I'll never forget when I had the keys my mother said, Eric, you ain't got to worry about nothing with this car. I'm like, Okay.

So sure enough, when the recruiting process started -- when they came and talked to me at my school about it, I didn't find out until later -- I asked my mother, I think I might have been still playing pro football or retired from football.

I said, Momma, tell me about the Trans Am. How did the Trans Am transaction go down? She said, Eric, look, she said, Your grandmother paid for that car. She said, They paid for it, wrote a check for that car. Because my grandmother and grandfather could afford it. They lived in Houston and my grandfather was a crane operator. They got a new car like every three or four years. For them, one thing about -- they got a Cadillac, and the Cadillac black man's Mercedes back in the days.

She said, Your grandmother paid for the car and A&M gave her cash back for the car and that's how the car was. It's like I said, My grandmother bought the car.

Q. Yes, she did. Now, you eventually upgraded I think to a Corvette.

ERIC DICKERSON: I got a Corvette, yeah. I got a Corvette Stingray. I loved that car.

Q. The Trans Am went to?

ERIC DICKERSON: The Trans Am went to my best friend at SMU. Let me tell you something, SMU a lot of guys had cars. I can say that -- man, look, back in those days, everybody had a car. That was the thing to have, a kid having a car.

Everybody was doing all kind of things back in those -- you know, A&M, Texas. I mean, I went to play against guys from Texas that were getting money, had cars; A&M the same thing. That was how they did it.

It depends on if you got caught or you didn't get caught. And you know, we didn't -- I mean, when I was there, we didn't get caught doing anything.

Q. I'll tell you who had a nice car, Walter Payton had a nice car from KangaROOS he got, and you got --

ERIC DICKERSON: Well, the year that I broke OJ's rushing record, the 2,000 yard record, Walter Payton also broke Jim Brown's all-time rushing record.

Walter is my friend, and he got a Lamborghini. I mean, saw it in the paper, nice Lamborghini. We was getting close to the record and the guys said, Man, you probably get a nice car, too. I'm like, Well, we'll see.

So I'll never forget, I broke the record and my sponsor was Adidas. Y'all still owe me. They come over to the complex, and it's a cake and a carrot cake, and I'm like -- and the guys are like, Man, what's -- a cake? I couldn't even eat it because I'm allergic to nuts.

Eric Harris, said, I mean, is it a key in this cake or something?

So basically what I got rushing for 2,000 yards -- he was with KangaROOS. He got a Lamborghini, I got a carrot cake.

Q. Wow.

ERIC DICKERSON: That what you get for running for 2,000 yards in 1984.

Q. Yeah. It wasn't even a nice -- it was out of Vons.

ERIC DICKERSON: It was a Vons cake.

Q. The 2105 is a number that's basically been etched in stone for the last almost 40 years, those yards. You set the record, broke the record; 47 gap was a huge play for you, right, 47, 46 gap?

ERIC DICKERSON: Our signature play was 46 and 47 gap. That's what we done for 46, 47 gap toss right toss left. Those were my favorite plays with the Rams, stuff to get me outside, use my speed and cutting ability.

We played the Oilers that day. We had to play the Oilers and we had one game left to play the 49ers was our last game of the season. I needed 215 yards to break that record that day, so we thought, Well, we probably get 160, 170 because they wasn't really good against the run.

And so as the game went on, it got kind of -- they start talking, I start talking, and I don't talk. I won't forget the guy, Steve Bostic was talking to me, You ain't gonna break no record. I said I'm going to break this record on y'all's ass today. I said more than that, but I can't say it here.

Sure enough, we got close. I think I was only eight yards



away. Now think about it, it was like 2nd and 8, 2nd and 7, and Jeff looked because we were just running the ball, just running it.

He looked up, knelt down, looked up at me and said, Eric, what play you want? I said, 47 gap. He said, 47 gap it is on two, ready, break. We picked up nine yards and we set the record that day.

Q. Yeah, amazing. Like you said, the rookie record will probably be untouchable, although Zeke Elliott had a good year but fell short, obviously. A lot of guys we've seen fall short of that record.

ERIC DICKERSON: Yeah, as a matter of fact, Zeke owes me a jersey because I told him he wasn't going to break that record. I've told Marshall Faulk, I've told Zeke Elliott, I've told Ingraham, I've told them all, you're not going to get that record.

Q. What was it like going from the Rams to the Colts, Halloween, you find out the news, and didn't a police officer pull you over?

ERIC DICKERSON: Well, I can tell you, look, I'll say this: I wanted to play my whole career for the Los Angeles Rams. I really did. I loved playing for the Rams, loved my teammates. The organization was not the best organization.

I can honestly say that I've never played for a good organization. I just never have. I wasn't that fortunate.

Leaving LA was hard, but it was something that I had -- I knew this much here: I wasn't being paid fairly. There was no doubt about that. Back in those days we had no out. We had no free agency, nothing.

So for me, it was just -- it got uglier and uglier. I'll tell you what really kind of put it over the top was I go to John Shaw, I go to John Shaw's office, meet with John.

It took me a month to get a meeting with John Shaw. Imagine, he was the general manager. So imagine right now a player, it takes you a month, say, for Zeke Elliott to get a meeting with the general manager. A month. That's what it took.

I go in, I meet with him. I said, Hey, John -- he said with that raspy -- why are you here, Eric? I said, John, my contract. He said, Well, you have a contract, Eric.

I said, John, man, it ain't right, blah, blah, blah, and I said, John -- he said, Well, you've got to prove yourself. I said, John, I led the league in rushing last year. No, you didn't,

Walter did.

I said, No, I led the league in rushing. No, Eric. We're arguing. Let me get the book. He gets the book, open it up, Oh, you did. You knew I led the league in rushing last year, John.

I said, Look, John, I'll tell you what. Think about this. I said, if I rush for 1,500 yards, I said, you pay me like Marino and Elway. They were making a million dollars. I said pay me like that. I'm making like 300. He thought about it, No, we're not going to do that. I said, Okay.

So at that point, stuff just started falling apart. When I got traded to Indy, I got to say, Man, I was really disappointed, I was hurt because I played hard for the Rams. I mean, 30 carries this week, no problem. 30 carries the next week, no problem. 30 carries the week after that, no problem.

That's just how I was. I won't forget when I got traded I was at my house. I was going to a Halloween party. Jim Gray was there, and we were leaving the house and the phone rang. That's when phones weren't in the car. Phones were in the car, built in the car. Didn't have the portable phones.

I said, Man, let me answer the phone. No, come on. I said, Hold on, so I picked up the phone. Big E. I'm like, Coach? Coach Meyer.

I just made a trade for you. I'm like, What? I didn't even know where he was. He's said, I'm in Indianapolis. I'm like, Indianapolis? He said, Yeah.

So I said, Okay, Coach. So I hung up the phone and said, Man, I just got traded, and he said, Really? I said, Yep.

So I had to go pack. Jim was taking me to the airport and we got stopped by the police, and I won't forget Jim said, Eric Dickerson just got traded. The police was like, Got traded? What? So he said, Yeah.

So he went to go by the studio to do a quick interview. Did that, got to the airport. I'll never forget, still can remember taking that late flight to Indiana. The flight took off, looking down seeing all the lights, all the beautiful lights of Los Angeles and flying off and just watching them just fade away in the back and I shut the window shade.

When I woke up they said, Hey -- the captain comes on, We about to land in Indianapolis, Indiana. Buckle up your seat belt. We buckle up, blah, blah, blah. Open the blinders up and there it was about 5:00 in the morning. I looked down and I just see cornfields. I'm like, Wow, this is different.

So, I mean, being in Indy was cool for a while, but I'm not an Indianapolis guy, to be honest. That wasn't my place.

Q. They didn't ask much of you. They gave you like three days to practice before your first game.

ERIC DICKERSON: They gave me two days to practice. Maybe not even two. I take that back. One day of practice because I got there I think it was a Friday -- yeah, Friday evening.

I went over plays with run and the offensive coach that night, and we played the New York Jets the next day in New York. I didn't have much time to practice. I played okay. I think I had like 50 yards, something like that, in that game.

Q. You were literally going through plays with the coach in his hotel room, right, hand-offs and everything?

ERIC DICKERSON: Right. They came to my room, because you understand, certain teams -- football teams, like two, four, six, eight for a running back is on the right most of the time, and one, three, five, nine is to the left.

Well, with the coach it was flipped around, so two, four, six, eight was to my left, and one, three, five to the right. So I'm like, Dang.

So you've got to try to flip your mind around and think of it and say, Okay, we say 47 gap, I'm going to my right and now it's going to my left, so it was difficult at first, but you get used to it after a while.

Q. Didn't you have your Rams goggles when you were playing for the Colts?

ERIC DICKERSON: I still had the yellow colors. I still had the yellow stuff on because I matched -- look, I like my uniform to look good, I like everything to look tight. So, yeah, it matched the Rams' colors.

Q. I remember there were the yellow ones that -- it was so soon they threw you in there. Then you went to the Raiders, right? Was the Raiders the next stop? What was that like playing for Al?

ERIC DICKERSON: Different. That was different. Al ran that football team. I mean, the thing I think that really was disturbing is that whatever was going on with him and Marcus -- I didn't really know Marcus that well. I knew him but wasn't really that close. They told me they were going to trademark us. And, look, to me, Marcus Allen is the

ultimate Raider. He really is. We're best of friends now.

I just felt that they brought me there in a sense when I figured it out like kind of to mess with him. And then I wasn't playing, because it was times in games where I would have 100 yards at the half and I wouldn't play anymore. I'm like, I'd just sit on the bench.

So it was just an odd situation, very odd situation playing with the Raiders.

Like I said, once a Raider, always a Raider, so I respect the organization.

Q. I think of you as a Ram, but I wonder if when you walk around LA those Raider fans remember you as a Raider?

ERIC DICKERSON: A lot of them do. It's funny, when I say once a Raider, always a Raider, that's what they say to me. It's cool.

Q. What do you think about this year's team and the success they've had and Matthew Stafford, Cam Akers coming back, Sony Michel and the team in general?

ERIC DICKERSON: I think Les Snead has done a really good job of putting this team together. I'm not big on No. 1 draft picks. People get stuck up on these draft picks because draft picks a lot of times don't pan out. They don't.

You understand you draft a kid and maybe he may play well. They drafted me. It still was a gamble. You draft guys. I've seen so many No. 1 draft picks -- even when I was in Indy -- that didn't pan out. With the Rams, didn't pan out.

If you've got a guy that you can take that's a real solid player, like Von Miller, like getting Matthew Stafford, OBJ, these guys -- the defensive back, Jalen Ramsey -- I mean, you're getting guys that are proven, a proven product.

I've got to give, like I said, Les Snead a lot of credit for doing that and putting that out of his mind. That's how he built this football team. I think the team is a really good team; lots of talent everywhere. The only way that we get beat out, beat ourselves. A good football team, that's what happens.

For me, if we don't turn the ball over, they don't turn the ball over. If they don't turn the ball over, they pretty much could win pretty much every game. But you're going to be up and down.

I've said this with the playoff run. We started with Arizona. I said, Look, if we don't turn the ball over we beat them handily; we didn't turn the ball over.

The next game everybody is like, Y'all got to play Tom Brady. I said, Look at our history with the Bucs. We pretty much always beat the Bucs, Tom Brady included. I mean, early in the year we beat him. I said, If we don't turn the ball over, you hear me say this, we will control that game from beginning to end.

But what did we do? Turned the ball over four times and made it out of a football game. San Francisco was a little bit different. That team has been beating up on us. They run the football. Once again, if you hang on to that ball, we end up beating them, also.

Like I say, the football team itself, and I think really the missing piece on this team the last couple years was Matthew Stafford. To me that was always our weak link, and I've just got to say it. I've said it before. Jared Goff did great, did what he could, but I always thought we needed better at that position.

Q. Do you ever think that you played a role in bringing Sean McVay to the Rams in a weird way?

ERIC DICKERSON: I mean, with Fisher leaving? Yes and no. Look, my thing is this: Like I say, one thing about me is I'm real honest. If you don't want the truth, don't ask me. Ask somebody else.

The deal with Fisher is -- and, look, I don't really know Fisher, Coach Fisher. I mean, I played against him with the Bears. I don't remember him playing.

I want our team to win. That's what I was saying. This is LA. This is not St. Louis. You can't go 7-9 here. You can't go 8-8, you know, saying, Man, if we wouldn't have turned that ball over we would have won. If we just had one more quarter, we would have won.

I said, That's what losers say. Losers say that kind of stuff. If, if, if. I was just kind of critical, but not overly critical of the football -- not even the football team, mainly our offense, because our defense was playing great. But we need to win football games.

And then all of a sudden -- I won't forget, I asked for some passes on the sideline, and I'm going to tell you, I didn't even need the passes. I did it just to see what they were going to say. They said, Man, Eric, I don't know, man. You've got to ask Coach Fisher. Coach Fisher is going to want to talk to you about it.

I'm like, Okay, cool. So sure enough he said, He's going to call you. He called me. I don't know what day it was. It was after the ceremony we had, the groundbreaking ceremony for the new stadium at SoFi.

He calls me and I'll never forget what he said. He said, Hey, Eric. I said, Hey, Coach, how's it going? I said, Good. He said, Good. Look, man, I'm going to get right at this here. I said, Okay.

He said, You're not talking about my team. You're not going to be talking about my players and expect stuff from the team. He said, as long as I'm head coach here, it ain't happening. He said, I'm just telling you, we're not doing nothing for you.

I listened to everything he had to say. He talked for maybe two, three minutes, and I said, Okay. I said, Hey Coach, man, thanks for the call. I appreciate it. He said, Okay, thank you, I'll talk to you later. I said, No, no, no, it's my turn now.

I said, Coach let me tell you something, man. First of all, the Rams F'd over me when I played for the Rams. I said, Man, I don't work for the F'ing Rams. I said, Let me tell you something, I played for that football team. I wore that uniform. I said, You can go coach anywhere, but I will always be Eric Dickerson of the Los Angeles Rams.

Boy, when I said that, all of a sudden, wait a minute, hold it, Eric; that's not what I want. I want you -- it just went a whole different way.

At the end I said, look, Coach, no offense, but as long as you're head coach there, I'll never come back to another game, and that was the end of that conversation. A couple days later we lost, he was fired, and then we got Sean McVay, which I think is the best thing that ever happened for this organization and this football team and the city, too, because look, LA deserves winners.

If you live in LA, you're not going to watch the Dodgers lose. You're not going to watch the Lakers lose, even though the Lakers are suffering right now. You're not going to watch the Rams lose. You want to see winners.

And it's not just winning, it's how you win. This is LA. That's what you want.

Blame me if you want, but I'm happy to see us win. I'm happy to be at this game Super Bowl game.

Q. How do you like SoFi Stadium?

ERIC DICKERSON: It's fabulous. I don't think there's

anything like it. I think when you walk into that stadium - when I first walked in I went, wow. This place is amazing. I mean, you have to, because whatever you call that octagon, whatever, it's humongous. It really is. It's such a fabulous stadium, I've got to say, the builders and Jerry, our owner Stan Kroenke, you have to give him credit for dishing out all the money for it, so it's a fabulous stadium.

Q. Was there a time you thought football might not come to LA?

ERIC DICKERSON: No, I had a feeling the Rams would come back at one point. I mean, look, nothing against St. Louis. They didn't belong in St. Louis. St. Louis is a baseball town. It really is. The Los Angeles Rams was here I think in 1937. They started here. When I talk to guys that used to play for the Rams, the Deacon Jones, the Jackie Slaters, the Jack Youngbloods, when I first got to the Rams, they said when we were in LA, the Rams, we ran this town. It was a Rams town.

When we left and went to Orange County, it changed because a lot of fans, they called it the Orange Curtain. They didn't want to go out to Orange County; it was too far. So they lost a lot of fans when they moved to St. Louis most definitely. Some fans still watched the Rams; in their heart they still loved them. But you lose fans.

Look, we'd been gone 22 years at one point until we came back in 2016. People expected the Rams to be like -- it's like this. If you've got a wife or you're a man and your wife leaves, look, I'm going to go to the store and I'll be back, and I come back 22 years later, they'll be like, hey, you're back? Come in here. Everybody is like, who the hell are you. You're gone.

So that's what happened. You lose fans. You picked up the 49ers. I hate the 49ers. You got Cowboys fans. I hate the Cowboys. The Raiders, you've got Raider fans. This is a Raider town right now. You just have to say it. But trust me, this will become a Rams city once again.

Q. You played in Orange County, you didn't play in LA but you lived in Malibu, two-hour drive to practice. I still don't know how you did that.

ERIC DICKERSON: I know.

Q. What was that like, and what was it like being an LA guy in the '80s and the toast of the town with Magic and --

ERIC DICKERSON: Well, I'd say being in LA back in the '80s was great. It really was. I lived in Irvine. I moved out to Malibu, Calabasas now my area is called.

I won't forget, I would go -- I went to the Lakers game. Dr. Curland was the Lakers' doctor and our doctor. He'd say, Eric, do you want to go to a basketball game? Sure Doc. I didn't know; they'd say, man, you're going with Dr. Curland, you're going to sit on the floor. I'm, what you mean on the floor? Like the seats on the floor. Oh, cool.

So I go to the game with him, and I'll never forget sitting there watching them warm up, and Magic comes over and Kareem and Worthy and everybody comes over and shakes my hand like, wow, they announced me on the loudspeaker and I get a standing ovation. I'm so embarrassed. I don't like that kind of stuff. That's how LA was. That's how LA is still right now.

I won't forget I went to a restaurant called Nicky Blair's, and I'm sitting there, and I knew the owner Nicky. I look over and I see Clint Eastwood. I'm like, that's Clint Eastwood. I said, hey, Nicky, is that Clint Eastwood? He said yeah, Eric, come over and meet him. I'm like, no, no. He'd said, come over, he'd like to meet you.

Okay, so I get up and I got close to him, and he said, hey, Eric. Man, think about that. Clint Eastwood knowing a boy from Sealy, Texas. I'm like, how you doing, Mr. Eastwood. He said, I'm a big fan, and I said, so am I.

That was LA in the '80s. There was a lot to do out here, clubs, girls. Just it was a fabulous city.

Q. Did you have a love-hate relationship with football toward the end?

ERIC DICKERSON: Yes. Yeah, man. Football was a sport that I loved it so much. I loved everything about it. At one point when I was a kid and even being an adult, I would go outside, and when it came close to football season, I would go, yeah, it's football time. You could just smell it in the air. You knew it was football time, and I loved it.

After years of playing, the dispute with the Rams and the Colts and just -- just all of the -- the politics, and people don't believe it, but it's politics in the NFL. It's politics with teams. It's politics with playing time. I'm like, man, they just made me hate it. It's sad to me because it was a sport I loved so much, but at the end I hated it and I was glad to get away from it. But I still love it.

Q. You look like you could play now.

ERIC DICKERSON: Yeah, thanks, but no, I'm good.

Q. When you look at the game now, how has it



changed?

ERIC DICKERSON: You know, I think they do a -- I've got to say, they do a better job of protecting players. They do the best they can do.

The free agency helps so much. I mean, because when I was playing and my contract disputes, I was vilified. I was a bad guy. I was a malcontent. I was this -- I was things I had never heard of. What is a malcontent? I didn't know what that was.

The game has changed a lot for the players. They have ways to talk about themselves, not the writers who back then wrote for the teams and the city and they would talk about the players. The players had no outlet. So I'm glad this they have Instagram, Facebook and all those -- Twitter. They can tell their story without some guy saying that oh, this is what it was. I had a writer who wrote an article about me. He wrote some of the stuff I said, and I'll never forget he put in quotations. But this is what he really means. I'm like, I didn't say that!

I think it's great for the league and for the players to have an outlet in a way, and like I say, protect the players. I think they've done some good things, but they have a long way to go. Like our pension is laughable. The guys who run the NFLPA are laughable. It is. It's really sad.

I look at baseball, I look at basketball, all the good stuff that they do for their ex-players, and for us, it's sad. But for the current players, I'm happy for the current players because I have a cousin that plays, Ricky Seals, he plays for the Commanders, and the stuff is a lot better for the players now.

Q. I say it looks like you could play, but you have some physical effects, don't you, from all those years of pounding?

ERIC DICKERSON: Of course you do. I mean, of course I do. I had to retire because of a neck injury. After I retired the first two years I had to sleep sitting up in a chair back almost like a recliner because I couldn't lay down because I was in so much pain.

I don't sleep well at night still. I have a shoulder -- I can't sleep on my left side. I have a bad toe. I have headaches sometimes. That was the price you paid for playing.

The thing is, people will say, well, you knew what you were getting yourself into. Think about this. I started playing football at, what, 14, 13 years old. You don't know what you're getting yourself into. Okay, you go off to college, you don't know what you're getting yourself into. You're

playing something you love. They don't say, hey, you could have brain damage. They don't say that. You get to the pros, they don't tell you that, that you could have brain damage, you could have this. You have no idea.

I think the big thing is that people ask me would I do it all over again. Now they tell the players, they have a contract, you can't sue the NFL because you know. They do know now, but they protect them better.

Would I do it all over again? And people ask that. Well, I'll tell you this much: I would do it all over again for one reason, and that's to take care of my mother Viola Dickerson. That's the only reason I would say because she hated it, but I loved it. I gave me a way to support -- give her a life that my mother would have never had. I would sacrifice my life and my body for her with no questions asked because she did the same for me.

Q. The joint pain is one thing, but the headaches, that's scary, isn't it?

ERIC DICKERSON: I mean, it's scary. I know I'm not the guy I used to be. I mean, my memory is not what it used to be. That's one reason I wrote the book now. I think it's a perfect time for it now, because a lot of this stuff I may not remember later. I'm sure -- I hope I am, but I don't know who I'll be five or ten years from now; will I still be this guy or look like a guy that could possibly play.

I've seen a lot of players go down bad. I saw the great Gayle Sayers when he was having really issues, and I won't forget, I'm talking to him, and he kept saying the same thing over and over, and his wife said, Eric, he's getting dementia, and I'm like, wow. It breaks your heart. It really does break your heart to see the great players are not the guys that they used to be, and that happens to all of us.

Q. How do your football experiences affect how you handle your young son playing football who's a phenom at age 9?

ERIC DICKERSON: Man, he is so fast, and I'm not just saying that. I'm not that guy. I don't try to coach my son. I just sit there and watch. I just tell him little stuff to do, but he is so fast. He's such a good athlete. I said this to my best friend, Charles Graden, when my son was four and a half years old, I said, he's going to be a better athlete than me. He said, Dick, don't say that, don't put that pressure on him. I said, I see it; I just see the stuff he can do.

Now when they see him, they say, man, I think you might be right, because he can run, he can cut. He plays baseball; he's got a good eye for that. He's taken to piano.

He wants to know how to play the piano. He's fast.

I mean, and the thing is that now in sports, they have things that we didn't have, like trainers and all that kind of stuff to get you ready for it. If he does play football, and I told him, I said, look, I explained it to him, I said, look, I'll let you play flag now, now your dad played tackle and I showed him and he's seen it. I said, now, this is a violent sport. If you want to play, I'll let you play, but I just want you to know you could possibly get hurt.

He's nine, and I won't let him play until he's probably in seventh grade, and I said, if you want to play -- he said, I'd like to play one day, dad. I said, okay, when it gets closer let's see if you still feel that same way. But I wouldn't stop him because it would be unfair, but I want him to understand going in what are the ramifications of playing a violent sport like football.

Q. When you look at this Super Bowl, you mentioned the turnovers, if the Rams don't turn the ball over. How do you see it coming down with that defensive front against that Bengals offensive line, and what do you think the factors are in this game?

ERIC DICKERSON: Well, the big factor is not turning the football over. I've said this all year with the Rams. I said it going to their playoff run. When they played Arizona, I said, if we don't turn the football over, we beat them handily, and we did.

We played the Bucs the next week, and people were like, oh, Tom Brady. I said, Tom is a great quarterback, but we have a history with the Bucs; we pretty much always beat them. We beat them early this year. I said, if we don't turn the ball over, we control this game, I said, we could probably even crush them. People said, oh, no. I said, okay.

Well, it was going to be a crushing but we turned the ball over four times and we got out of that by the skin of our teeth.

Thank God for our quarterback Matt Stafford that people just hate on. I'm just so sick of them hating on him.

San Francisco, same thing. I said, it's going to be a different kind of game. They'll physically run the football, and we won that game.

But this game here, I see pretty much just like I said all other games. If we don't turn the ball over - that's our own worst enemy - we will control this football game from beginning to end. I'll say it again. If we don't turn it over -- we turn it over once, okay. But three, four times, you can

get beat like that.

I mean, I think that our offensive line will do a good job against their defensive front. They have a pretty good defensive front. Their offensive line is not that good. Our defensive line should be able to handle them, and I think that it's going to give our secondary Jalen Ramsey some chances to possibly take some picks or take some chances.

Q. Are there players on this Rams team who you really connect with who know Eric Dickerson and have asked your advice, or have you stayed in the background?

ERIC DICKERSON: I stay in the background. I text one guy pretty much like -- and that's Aaron Donald, just to say, man, it's fun to watch you play, man. His reply is like, thanks, Big Dog.

I'm not a defensive player. I never really watch defensive players play that much because you watched Lawrence Taylor back in the day, stand up and watch him play. But to watch an interior lineman play, a guy that's in the middle, it's almost like watching Reggie White all over again. He's such a great player.

I mean, you see like, damn, see how quick he beat that guys? Almost like, get out the way, like slap him out the way. It's fun to watch a defensive player play, and I love watching Aaron Donald play.

Q. What current backs in the league do you like?

ERIC DICKERSON: Well, you've got to like Derrick Henry because he's big. I like big backs. It's funny, they'll tell you, oh, he's a big back, this guy is a big back. How big is he? Oh he's 5'10". I'm like, 5'10"? That's a little bitty guy. Well, he weighs 220. Well, that's a fat back.

So for me, you've got Derrick Henry, I still love watching Zeke play. Alvin Kamara is fun to watch coming out of the backfield. The kid, I can't think of his name, in New York, the --

Q. Saquon?

ERIC DICKERSON: Saquon. Man, I was really excited to watch him play, but I said it when I got drafted, bad football team. I said, he's not going to last on that bad football team. It's sad to see a guy with such great talent not get a chance to really use it, because he's almost like a Barry Sanders type. But those are some of the backs I like to watch play.

Q. Is Deebo Samuel going to give the Rams problems

for years to come?

ERIC DICKERSON: Yeah, he's a special guy, he really is. A guy that can come out of the backfield, thick legs, runs hard. He runs like, get the hell out of the way. He frustrates me and he wears my old college number, so I can't be mad at him.

Q. Getting back to the book real quick, what are you proudest of?

ERIC DICKERSON: You know, I'm proud of everything in that book. I think that I get a chance to tell my story, my own words. You get the audio book, you'll hear me talking; I talk in the audio book.

Like I did one -- I told my Howard Cosell story. I'll tell it to you, as a matter of fact. We were playing the Atlanta Falcons in Atlanta. Getting on the elevator, and the elevator door opened, and there's Howard Cosell. I'm like, man, Howard Cosell. He said, Eric Dickerson, how's it going, Eric? I said, great. Let me ask you a question, Eric; how in the hell did you and Craig James split time at SMU? I said, well, I explained the story to him. He said, he should thank his lucky stars. I said, well, man, it wasn't like that.

But it was just things in that book and Howard doing that, I'm like, man, I'm so glad he did my game.

You know what I'm really happy and got a chance to tell my side in a sense of how I was betrayed in the media as being a bad guy, a guy that was selfish. I think the thing that in that time that hurt me the most was not the things they said about me. I didn't really care because I didn't really read articles. My coach Ron Meyer said, look, don't read them articles in college because they love you one minute and they hate you the next, so if it was a good article I said didn't read it.

I've only read a few articles in the last couple of weeks about some -- I read one in the LA Times, I think the -- I don't know, New York Post. It was one I read not long ago. It was okay. It was good.

But I think that to really get out the guy that I was, that I am, my mother would read that stuff, and it would hurt her so bad. She'd say, Eric, this is not you. These are lies. I know how we raised you.

That's what makes me most proud. If you read it, fine. If you don't -- but I know the person that I am. People know one thing about me: I'm loyal. I'm loyal. My mother said, you've got one problem, son, your loyalty. You're too loyal, and people are not as loyal as you, and I like that about

myself. I won't change that.

But there's so many stories in that book that I told about the playing days, the Trans Am story. I just told you about the Trans Am story. But me personally, I've talk to guys who have called me about the book, players. Man, Eric I hadn't read a book in 22 years; it's such a good book, and it's so you, so it makes me proud of it.

Q. Comes out on audio book February 22nd.

ERIC DICKERSON: February 22nd.

Q. In your voice.

ERIC DICKERSON: In my voice, and let me tell you, man, that was hard. God, that was hard, because I'm dyslexic, too, and reading that book, and all of a sudden the words would start running, I'd say, hold it, man, give me a minute, I've got to sit here and look at these words. These words are starting to run all together. But I'm so glad I did it, and I'm very proud of it.

Q. Hall of Fame running back Eric Dickerson, one of the greatest players in NFL history, thank you so much for coming to haul of farmer.

ERIC DICKERSON: Sam, thank you very much for having me.

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