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Andre Reed

THE MODERATOR: We're here with Hall of Fame receiver Andre Reed. Great to have you, Andre.

ANDRE REED: Good to see you. Good to see you.

Q. Nice to see you.

ANDRE REED: Good to be seen.

Q. I want to talk a little bit about Buffalo now and the excitement in Buffalo. Obviously, the team didn't make it to the Super Bowl, but with Josh Allen, Stefon Diggs, the excitement surrounding that team, what are your thoughts about it?

ANDRE REED: My thoughts are great. I think this team is definitely on the right track. It all started five years ago with Sean McDermott getting hired and hiring a really good GM that's been around. Those two guys have been around each other for a long time. They were in Carolina.

Then they got the quarterback that they thought would be where he is right now. You know, Josh is not only a great person -- I had a chance to meet him draft day there in Dallas when he got drafted, but he's just an outstanding person.

In this league at the quarterback position, it's all predicated on how your quarterback plays to a certain point. You've got to have defense, but the quarterback is the guy everybody looks to. If something's wrong, they look to him. I think the Bills hit a home run with him. He's had a great year this year, had a great year last year. He really took a big step in his development. That's not only a credit to him, but it's a credit to what the offense is doing there to help him.

Then bringing in Stefon Diggs. Devin Singletary has had a pretty good year. I know the running game has been kind of lackluster the past couple years, but defensively they're the No. 1 in the league in every category this year -- interceptions, yards per game, everything this year. Jordan Poyer and Micah Hyde made the Pro Bowl. They actually didn't make the Pro Bowl, but they were All-Pros. I

don't know how you do that.

They showed that that's what their focus was in the off-season with the No. 1 defense, and now they're starting to gel together. I think this team is going to be there for a long time. So looking forward to next year.

Q. Was it a surprise with Josh Allen? There were questions coming in. Played at Wyoming, was a 56 percent passer in college, and that doesn't get it done in the NFL. Are you at all surprised at the success he's had?

ANDRE REED: Not at all. Look at Aaron Rodgers and Peyton Manning when those guys came in. They're Hall of Fame quarterbacks. Peyton Manning won one game his first year. Troy Aikman won one game. So you've got to go through your growing pains just like anything.

Even in what you do, it's going to take you a minute to get comfortable and know your surroundings, and then you kind of flow. I wasn't surprised, but, again, it's what he's done to make himself better with the guys around him and gelling together that way.

You could be the greatest quarterback in the world. If you don't have the guys to throw it to...or you can have the greatest receivers in the world, but if the quarterback can't get it to you, then we have problems.

Q. You mentioned the Hall of Fame. You're going to the Hall of Fame Luncheon, the Annual Hall of Fame Luncheon today. What was that moment like -- we're coming the night after we've seen a lot of guys get into the Hall of Fame. What was the moment like for you?

ANDRE REED: Well, your football life just flashes before your face in like five seconds. All the way from a little Pop Warner tiny kid to the last time you played a down in the NFL. All that in between, there's so many different people, so many pats on the back, so many kicks in the butt, so many you're this, you're that, you can't do this, I thought you were this.

Then you get the lessons you learned from your parents, and my dad, unfortunately, passed away in '96 before I was inducted, but I felt he was looking down on me during my speech. I mean, they take bets on who's going to cry,

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and mostly you tear up because it's everybody that touched you in your life, that said something to you that resonated with your career.

Q. When did you feel that catch in your throat?

ANDRE REED: Towards the end when I started talking about him a little bit because my mom was sitting over to the left and it was an empty chair there. And I was trying not to --

Q. Yeah.

ANDRE REED: -- you could see it.

Q. How do you steel yourself to that?

ANDRE REED: Yeah, yeah, very emotional. And the one thing I think I tell people -- and this was ironic. At the end of my speech, I thanked everybody at the Hall, the fans, the media, all that stuff. And then I looked up in the sky, and I said, Dad, I can still feel your hand on my shoulder.

Then in the background, you hear a faint noise of a train going by. Seriously, it was really freaky. Because my brother caught it and I didn't. Then when I watch it over, I just want to hear that. I said, Dad, thank you for what you've done for me, for bringing me into this world, and I said a bunch of things, and all you heard was a choo choo, a train go by. And there was actually a train that went by at the right time. So I knew he was there when I heard that.

Q. Tell me about your dad. What was his influence when you were growing up?

ANDRE REED: My dad was just a tough minded guy. Little short, stocky dude. When my dad walked into a place, you're like, ooh, there's Calvin. That was his name, Calvin. They knew he was coming.

I think he just -- values. He was all about values, of teaching me what's right, what's wrong, knowing that every time you do something, it's not going to be the way you want it to be, but you've got to be persistent in life. Know that some doors are going to close, but you've always got to be there and knock on the door. If you don't knock on the door, nobody's going to know you there. You can peek here and there, but if you keep knocking, somebody sooner or later is going to hear that knock.

He taught me a lot about that and never giving up and realizing your surroundings and always being held accountable to yourself and what you do.

Q. A lot of doors closed when you came out of high

school. I mean, you look at some of the greatest players in NFL history -- the Jackie Slaters, Jerry Rice, Andre Reed come out of really small --

ANDRE REED: Obscure.

Q. -- almost unknown, obscure colleges.

ANDRE REED: Well, I was a homebody kid. At 17 years old, I just wanted to be home. I wanted to be close to home. I wasn't a momma's boy. My mom probably thinks that, but I just loved being at home and loved that pull of what home meant to me.

And I wasn't recruited to a big school. I was a quarterback in high school. I wasn't recruited to go to a Penn State or Notre Dame or nothing like that, so I just picked a nice school that they're all about education. I wanted an education. Picked Kutztown because it was 35 minutes from my house, 40 minutes. I could go home on the weekend.

It was the best choice for me, obviously. I could have went anywhere and maybe have been lost in the shuffle as far as sports went. But it was all about education to them, and that was the most important thing. I want to see a piece of paper. Everything else is just a formality. But a piece of paper really is kind of the meat and potatoes of you and what you've done.

Q. Being a quarterback, even though it was at the high school level, did that help you as a receiver? Just understanding the concepts a little bit more and understanding everything that was going on on the field?

ANDRE REED: Yeah, I was that little kid with the big afro. I put the helmet on, and I couldn't hear anything because the hair would come out the sides of the holes. That was me.

I think I was just that fast kid that did everything, and any position I could play to a certain point. It really helped --

Q. So it's like you're the best player, and they said you're the quarterback?

ANDRE REED: Yeah, yeah. That's where I learned a lot of my running ability after the catch is playing quarterback. We were a veer offense, so I handled the ball a lot. I wasn't the greatest passer, but I can make you miss, and we can get it done on the ground for sure.

Q. Question you've been asked about forever, but tell me about the greatest comeback in NFL history and



the win over Houston.

ANDRE REED: Houston --

Q. If you look, who was out of that game -- Bruce Smith, Jim Kelly.

ANDRE REED: Cornelius.

Q. Thurman Thomas. Cornelius wasn't playing in that?

ANDRE REED: He didn't play in that either.

Q. So some of the best players' ability -- not taking anything away from the guys who were on the field, but really the two players, it almost like Andre Reed and Frank Reich.

ANDRE REED: Every playoff year, they play that game, for what reason? There's a lot of reasons because it's a lesson being learned that regardless of what's going on and you're down and you don't think you can win, there's always a hope, and there's always, if you're all together and you all know if we put the effort in, anything can happen.

As a kid, that's what my dad told me. He said, again, it's not going to all go your way. It's your persistence and perseverance that's going to get you over the top. The ones that quit early, those are the ones that are not going to be on the other side. It's the ones that keep going, regardless of the outcome, those are the ones that are going to get things done.

Yeah, that was a game of ages. The Houston Oilers -- there's no such thing as the Houston Oilers no more. It's the Texans and the Titans now. Every time I see Warren Moon, we talk about that game. I have to.

Q. He doesn't bring it up.

ANDRE REED: I just say, hey, Warren, what's up? Remember that comeback? Yeah, he don't want to hear that. But they dig me too, you know, the four Super Bowl losses. Hey, Andre, you went to all these games, the Super Bowls, and you lost. I'm like you were sitting there watching me, so don't worry about that.

Q. We'll get to that. We'll get to that. I wanted to ask about you mentioned that being a metaphor for life.

ANDRE REED: For life, yeah.

Q. What kind of letters did you get? What kind of fans

reached out to you who might not have been football players, but they say, hey, I needed that in my life?

ANDRE REED: Yeah, a lot of thank you letters. Again, a lot of coaches have talked to me over the years. It's been 30-some years now since that game. And said, you know what, that game really taught my football team how to -- not only how to play, but realize, if you're down, it's never over.

High school and college and Pop Warner -- that's a game that resonates in football folklore, but it is a teaching method because we all sometimes feel like we can't do what we -- you know, we're going to give up to a certain point. That just tells you that you can never give up at the highest level.

Q. Was there a time in that game you thought we're done?

ANDRE REED: No. Being done is just like I'm not even going to try. That's -- when you see a team that's done, you can tell because they're not giving the effort. We were giving the effort. So there was nothing that -- I don't think there was anything that any guy on that sideline thought that we were going to lose this game.

Obviously, we were like, yeah, it's going to be a surmountable comeback, but we're at home in front of our fans, everybody else is watching it on TV, my mom and dad are watching. I'm like, eh, I can't let them look at me and look like I'm giving up. So that all resonated with the whole football team. And 80,000 fans going crazy. It was over for Houston after a while.

Q. You played in the last Super Bowl played in Los Angeles.

ANDRE REED: Yeah.

Q. That Rose Bowl game. Michael Irvin and Charles Haley snuck out of the locker room at halftime to watch the Michael Jackson halftime show.

ANDRE REED: And I was standing there with them.

Q. Were you really? You were out there?

ANDRE REED: Yeah.

Q. Tell me about that.

ANDRE REED: We were losing. It was a tight game really going into the half.

Q. You took an early lead.

ANDRE REED: Yeah, we were. And I remember walking into the tunnel -- as a matter of fact, I played golf over at Brookside yesterday at the scene of the crime. And I walked through there, and I just happened to glance out the corner of my eye, even though I was focused about the game, and Michael Jackson was standing there, like he looked like a mannequin. He just was standing there.

What I thought about it, I go, look, that dude is ready to perform. Like that's his stage. He's not going to fail. He's not going to slip. He's not going to do anything. And that's what the attitude we had to have coming back out.

Like Michael Jackson, I was like, man -- not only was I freaked out that was Michael Jackson, but like you said, Charles Haley and Michael Irvin are like, that's Michael Jackson. I was like, yeah, that is Michael Jackson, no doubt about it.

I thought about that, and I was like that really had -- that really did something to me when I saw him standing there. Not only was it Michael Jackson, but the way he was standing, he was like ready to go. You could tell, yeah.

Q. Did you know that Steve Smith, the receiver, was one of the kids on the field running around?

ANDRE REED: During that time? No, I never asked Steve that. I've been on his podcast.

Q. You've got to ask him about that.

ANDRE REED: I'm going to say, yo, I probably tripped you. Stuck my foot out there, and you probably tripped on my foot.

Q. So that was an iconic halftime show. Obviously, it was the start of the Cowboys dynasty but a difficult one for you guys to swallow. Every one was, I bet.

ANDRE REED: As the years going by, one thing is people talk about it, but there's more positivity to it now. They don't just say you lost four. I was watching the game, and I bet on it. Okay, you can do that with a horse race too.

But the more as the years have went in probably the last 15 years, 20 years, the more positive. There's seven Hall of Famers, Hall of Fame coach, owner, and GM -- we did something right. We win one, do we go to three? Who knows? We win one, do we win three more? I think, if we win one, we'd be a dynasty to a certain point, just like the Cowboys were at that time and the 49ers and the Steelers of the '70s, but it just wasn't meant to be.

You know, I'm not going to go out on the 405 and just wait for cars to come by and just run across. That's how it was. There was a lesson to be learned, and I was very proud to be on that team. There's a lot of guys that play in this league ten years, never get to a playoff game. Never see a Super Bowl except on TV or go to it.

Q. Do you think it's going to be a long time before we see a team that wins four conference championships in a row?

ANDRE REED: Kansas City maybe had a chance again this year. The Patriots had a chance a couple years ago. Of course, I was rooting against them. I was like, eh, I don't want the Chiefs to be here. But that's a record that nobody talks about because it's hard to do, and nobody really talks about it a lot.

Q. So tell me about this game and how you see this game unfolding. If you look at it, some of the greatest -- in terms of receivers, this collection of receivers --

ANDRE REED: It's pretty solid.

Q. Might be one of the best Super Bowls -- might be the best Super Bowl when you think what Ja'Marr Chase is doing, Tee Higgins, Tyler Boyd, Cooper Kupp on the other side, OBJ.

ANDRE REED: Yeah, that's a pretty good assessment. Both of these teams offensively are very powerful. They can score a lot of points. I always tell people, when Super Bowls come around, it's how the player who has never been here before handles everything about the week. The football is going to take care of itself. It's everything from your family getting hotel rooms to the tickets, that really plays a factor in some people's mind and psyche.

It's all business, no doubt about it. That's what you're here for, but like you said, there's a lot of fire power on both sides. Both quarterbacks, a young guy in Burrow and tore his knee up and what he's done this year with Cincinnati has been tremendous. Then you've got Stafford, who nobody thought he'd be here either. Coming from Detroit, all he had was Calvin Johnson, that was it.

So he's got a cast of guys with Cooper Kupp, Offensive Player of the Year, OBJ comes over and really seems like he's happy where he is now. Unfortunately, Robert Woods went down. That's half of Cooper Kupp's 145 catches maybe. Maybe he catches 100 instead of 145. But you've got to give credit.

Then their defense with Aaron Donald and Von Miller is still

playing well. It's going to be an unsung guy that's going to make a play that's going to be a factor in the game.

Q. Okay. Any thoughts on who that guy might be?

ANDRE REED: I have no idea. I mean, you go to sports betting, they probably have that this guy's going to do this, bet on this guy. When I came in the league, came into the Super Bowls, there was no such thing as that. \$125 was the highest for a ticket at the Rose Bowl.

Again, this is going to be a feel 'em out thing first maybe for a quarter, and then once they settle down a little bit, it should be a pretty good thing. I think Joe Burrow is just going to be smooth. He's done it at LSU. I just don't see him tanking or going in the tank.

Q. In terms of what they've accomplished to this point, not projecting out into the future, who do you think your Canton teammates are going to be out of this game?

ANDRE REED: Von Miller, Aaron Donald of course, three defensive player of the year. Aaron Donald, all he wants right now is a Super Bowl ring to be on top of all the MVPs. Von Miller was won a Super Bowl. I think he was an MVP too, right? Von Miller. And then on the other side, they're just young kids. Their skill positions are 5 and under. All the receivers are 23 years old. Joe Burrow is 23. I think Mixon is 24 or something like so that's a young football team.

Q. Would Wentworth be a consideration?

ANDRE REED: You know what, yeah. He's been there the longest for sure.

Q. Playing at 40.

ANDRE REED: Yes. And I think he won --

Q. Walter Payton.

ANDRE REED: Walter Payton Man of the Year. So this would be an icing on the cake for him whether he retires or not, but it's seldom that you see a 40-year-old tackle out there playing in the NFL.

Q. Tell me what you're doing now. A lot of stuff with Boys & Girls Club?

ANDRE REED: Boys & Girls Club kid. I was a club kid growing up. I know how important they were in my life keeping me on solid ground. I was a kid. I did stuff I shouldn't have done.

Q. Tell me some of those things.

ANDRE REED: I can't tell you what I did, but just kids stuff. But they gave me the foundation I needed. Sports gives you a foundation, but the Boys & Girls Club, what they stand for is all the stuff that I said earlier. Never giving up and always being accountable for your actions and knowing that somebody's watching you do everything.

Every move you make, somebody's watching, and they just laid the bricks for me to stand on. I'm an ambassador just like Denzel and Jennifer Lopez -- they're club kids. They're all ambassadors for -- Shaquille O'Neal. They're all ambassadors for the Boys & Girls Club. So I speak on behalf of my experience over ten years as a club kid and what they've done for me in my life.

I go all across the country and speak at different clubs to help them raise money. I have a reading program because we all know reading is fundamental, it's important, it's all knowledge. And it's important. So that's been a very stable foundation in my life.

Q. Who were the players that you looked up to as a kid and maybe met later? Maybe they're in the Hall of Fame.

ANDRE REED: I was a Steelers fan growing up, yeah. I was a terrible towel guy. I don't think they had the terrible towels back then when I was little, but I wore 88 in college because Lynn swan wore 88.

It's funny because, when he got inducted in the Hall in 2001, I was in the audience because Marv was in the same class, Marv Levy. I was sitting there watching it, and Lynn Swann starts talking, and he mentions my name. Yeah, I had just retired, so he mentioned my name. And he said, this game is all about a guy named Andre Reed out there, who one day is going to be up here at this podium. I was like, is he talking to me?

So my idol said that, and then when I got inducted 13 years later, every time I see Lynn, I tell him that story.

Q. That's great.

ANDRE REED: So that was outstanding. That was awesome.

Q. You and I took the Israel trip.

ANDRE REED: That was fun.

Q. Hall of Fame Israel trip with Mean Joe Green, John



Stallworth, Franco -- was Franco on that trip?

ANDRE REED: Franco was there, yeah.

Q. Embarrassed myself here.

ANDRE REED: Take a lot of hits to the head too, bro?

Q. Listen, thanks so much, Andre, for coming. It's great talking to you.

ANDRE REED: It's awesome, man. That Israel trip was kind of the icing on the cake of a great career and all the blessings that I got in life. But you know what, in life when you're being blessed, you've got to give those blessings back. To much is given, much is expected.

Q. You're doing it. Thanks, bud.

ANDRE REED: Thank you.

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