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Unsung Bruschi epitomizes great linebacker play



Jan. 7, 2008
By Lesley Visser
CBS Sports

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Is there such a thing as an unsung superstar? I offer [New England Patriots](#) linebacker [Tedy Bruschi](#). He has been in the league 12 years, won three Super Bowls, been to the Pro Bowl, yet most people think of him as, "Oh yeah, the guy who had the stroke."

He might even be the best No. 54 in the NFL. There is Zach Thomas, who has had an outstanding career with the Miami Dolphins but has never been to a Super Bowl. There is Brian Urlacher, who lost the Super Bowl last year with the Bears. And there is Hall of Famer Randy White, the defensive end who was the co-MVP of Super Bowl XII when Dallas beat Denver.



Tedy Bruschi credits hard work and preparation for his success.
(Getty Images)

"I never think about something like that," said Bruschi. "My entire career has been thinking about tomorrow. What do I have to do to get better tomorrow?"

Like every fan, Bruschi watched the Pittsburgh-Jacksonville game on television. But unlike every fan, he was trying to figure out how to personally stop Fred Taylor and Maurice Jones-Drew.

"They're a terrific one-two punch," he said. "Jones-Drew is small and compact, hiding behind the line, then he pops out somewhere. And I voted for Fred Taylor to go to the Pro Bowl. He still has take-it-to-the-house speed."

Bruschi, who knows the Patriots have struggled stopping the run, said the Jaguars have another interesting aspect to their running game.

"They rotate the running backs, so they're always fresh," he said. "They try to wear down the defense, so it's double the challenge. They're a tremendous threat and they're always ready to go."

Bruschi said he's typical of a Bill Belichick linebacker.

"Bill wants smart, tough, low-to-the-ground linebackers," he said. "It's a philosophical tree -- from Bill Parcells to Bill Belichick to Romeo Crennel. My coach, Pepper Johnson, has us look at film of the Giants' linebackers -- Lawrence Taylor, Harry Carson, Carl Banks, and Pep. Coach Belichick wants it done the same way."

He even said -- are you sitting down? -- Belichick is funny.

"You should hear him in the meetings," said Bruschi. "He'll say something kind of quietly, and it may take a second to get it, but then you burst out laughing."

Former Patriots linebacker Steve Nelson said Bruschi has what all great linebackers have.

"A lot of people think being a linebacker is about technique," he said, "square your shoulders, keep your head up. But it's really about getting a guy to the ground. That's what Tedy Bruschi does."

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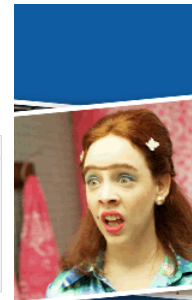
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