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Old man Testaverde summoning longevity of Blanda



Oct. 18, 2007
By [Lesley Visser](#)
CBS Sports

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Remember when we all thought George Blanda was the same as Bob Hope -- the oldest person doing what he once did best?

Well Vincent Frank Testaverde, the pride of Sewanhaka High, is not that far behind. Old George was 48, Vinny is about to be 44, and last week he got off his couch in Long Island and led the [Carolina Panthers](#) to victory.



Teammates hoist Vinny after the old timer carries the Panthers to victory. (AP)

It's stunning. He's supposed to be one of those old Italian guys, sitting on a park bench, playing bocce, even taking a nap, not throwing the deep ball to Steve Smith.

This is a modern day fairytale, and we all get to watch.

I told him I think George Clooney should play him in the movie.

"George Clooney?" he said. "Can't you get someone good looking?"

He's loving life now, as he should. When he came into the league, Ronald Reagan was standing in Berlin saying, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down that wall." Gas cost 83 cents a gallon. Some of his teammates weren't even born.

"I've been inspired by people like Kenny Lofton," he said of the Cleveland Indian who's in his 17th season. "I'm healthy, I can still contribute and I still love the game. Boomer (Esiason) told me today that only one other person, Chris Chandler, played for more teams."

To give it perspective -- Vinny is older than his offensive coordinator Jeff Davidson, older than three current NFL head coaches and the same age as four more.

In his 21st season, while not even knowing all of his teammates' names, he delivered an astonishing performance last Sunday. Four days after joining the team, he completed 20 of 33 passes for 206 yards and a touchdown vs. the Cardinals without committing any turnovers -- showing everyone there's still no substitute for experience.

"I just felt I could still do it," he said. "I was treating my life like the offseason, still working out, still playing pick up basketball, still taking my kids and my wife out on Friday night." Vinny was never a Maserati, never a prized Ferrari. He was extremely well-prepared, an excellent student of the game and always willing to stay in shape. Paul Hackett, his former coach with the Jets, says Vinny has "a remarkable love for the game."

"My attitude has always been that I'm here to help," Testaverde said. "We have a bye week this week, then we face the Colts. I told coach (John Fox) that if he wants to start me, great, if not, I'll do whatever he needs."

The movie will include all the ups and downs in this farcically unlikely story. Remember when Vinny won the Heisman and we all cried along with his father, who couldn't keep his emotions in? Remember when Vinny got skinned alive in those early years in Tampa Bay, when billboards made fun of his being colorblind? The movie will have it all.

The Buccaneers were terrible then, they never had a running back or a great receiver to help him. He could have gone there and disappeared down a pirate hole. But he didn't. He kept at it, because that's how he was raised.

The No. 1 pick of the 1987 draft was cut by Tampa, cut by the Jets, cut by the Patriots. In between, he started for the Browns under head coach Bill Belichick, stayed with the Browns when they moved to Baltimore, then played for the Ravens. Still with me? He got a call from Jets coach Bill Parcells and led his childhood team to the AFC title game in 1998. Cut by the Jets in 2003, he rejoined Parcells with the Cowboys, then was released after only one season. So he went back to the Jets for one game, then back to Belichick, this time as a backup to Tom Brady.

And it should have ended there. Joe Montana was 38 when he retired, so was Dan Marino, so was John Elway. But Vinny re-upped. Maybe Oscar Wilde was right when he said, "after 25, everyone is the same age anyway." But this renaissance is so unlikely.

"I know that history says it should have ended at 38, but that seems so long ago," he said. "Now I have to read up on George Blanda, since I might last that long."

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