



## NFL'ers to Inspire with Insight

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They may be the nation's gladiators capable of performing awe-inspiring feats and sustaining violent collisions but a group of thankful NFL players have teamed up with a Clifton priest to inspire people facing tall odds and sobering hardships.

The Insightful Player program employs current and former NFL athletes who have endured life's tragedies such as drug addiction, alcoholism, gang involvement, reckless personal behavior, divorce, suicidal thoughts, poverty, life-threatening illness, physical limitations and low self-esteem.

Through the program, past and present NFL players with a desire to give back are able to share their life stories of self-perseverance, faith, and determination.

The organization uses player appearances and special events to reach America's youth and will soon offer textbooks, workbooks, magazines and more to students.

Coach Chrissy Carew created the Insightful Player program and tabbed Legendary Dallas Cowboys quarterback Roger Staubach as the first NFL player to join.

Since then, many more professional football players, including local favorite Jerricho Cotchery of the New York Jets, have followed in his footsteps.

Cotchery grew up the second youngest of 13 brothers and sisters in a tough area of Birmingham, Ala., and joined a gang by age 12. However, after the death of his friend in 1998, Cotchery decided to turn his life around.

He set school records at North Carolina State University and was drafted by the Jets in 2004. He credits his mother for dragging him to church every Sunday as a major reason he saw the light.

Father Pawel Szurek, a parochial vicar at St. Philip the Apostle parish on Valley Road hosts the "Change Your Attitude, Change Your Life" radio show on New York's AM970 every Sunday at 9 a.m. The contemporary talk show infuses spirituality with the issues of today and calls upon guest experts in various fields to discuss.

Starting this month and continuing throughout the season the radio show will partner with the Insightful Player program to present remarkable stories of inspiration and hope.

The show's producer and creator, Joan Herrmann, said the players' stories are dramatic testimonials depicting how people can overcome great obstacles with hard work and self-belief.



“People often think of football players as big, tough guys who are all about winning,” Herrmann said. “Having had the opportunity to work with these men, I can say that they are all tough winners in every way that counts. They are [also] gentle spirits with hearts of gold.”

Szurek lauded Insightful Player volunteers for using their celebrity status to raise awareness and give hope to children and adults around the country.

“If the readers would emulate one aspect of each Insightful Player’s message we could slowly but steadily change the world,” New Orleans Saint Heath Evans said.

Former Cincinnati Bengal and Tampa Bay Buccaneer Damian Vaughn credited the program for its “much needed” vision and value to society.

“We need more leaders to stand up in the way that the [program] has laid out a map for them to do so,” he said. “I see tremendous potential because it provides a format for athletes to connect in a different way with young kids in such a positive way.”

The series kicks off this Sunday, Aug. 15, with Super Bowl champion New Orleans Saints player, Billy Miller, who overcame the temptations and pitfalls of fame to turn his life around.



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