



# The Gift of Insight

## PATRIOTS PLAYERS, PAST AND PRESENT, PROVIDE INSPIRATION IN EVERYDAY LIFE

BY ERIK SCALAVINO

**T**he New England Patriots have a worldwide following, thanks in large part to their Super Bowl success over the past decade.

While many of today's fans are recent comers to the party, there are those who've been following the team since its inception. Few, however, can claim to have been fans before the team even played a single game.

Chrissy Carew is one such person.

For a time, before their inaugural season of 1960, the then-Boston Patriots practiced on the same field where Carew's father coached high school football in Concord, Mass. As a little girl who adored her father and the sport he loved, she fell hard for the Patriots.

At her dad's high school games, Carew stood right behind the bench; at home, she was also given a front-row seat to the world of coaching. When her dad would break down opponents' game films, she was right there beside him, eager to inhale any pearls of wisdom he'd often stop and share.

She was particularly moved by the way he treated his players off the field.

"There were football players in and out of my house even before I was born," she recalled. "He used the game to teach them life skills and values. He was a wonderful, humble man who loved to inspire others to be the best they can be."

Decades later, Carew found a way to incorporate her love of football and her desire to help others. During the 1980s, she owned a successful public relations agency, and many of her clients began asking her to give motivational speeches about building a small business. Eventually, she drew more satisfaction from public speaking than from public relations, so she modified her business model.

She now finds herself in her father's line of work, although the coaching she provides is more for businesses and individuals.

"I help them create compelling goals they want to achieve," Carew explained. "I work with a lot of small business owners and have started working with athletes. I want to do more with them."

Naturally, she was drawn back to her first love — football. Her idea was to coach NFL players not about the game, but about life.

"Because I was frustrated with a lack of role models in the world," she continued. "I wanted to reach kids."

So, three years ago, Carew went to NFL headquarters in New York and shared her vision with some executives there. They were inspired by her passion and advised her to reach out directly to all 32 teams' player development departments.

The teams were willing to listen, but not do much more than that. Undeterred, Carew tried a different approach.

Out of the blue, she called Roger Staubach.

Carew had a feeling her idea would resonate with the legendary Dallas Cowboys quarterback and Pro Football Hall of Famer. She was right. Carew offered to write a feature story about Staubach and his life outside football. His would be the first profile of athletes who lived honorable lives and tried to help others do the same. Carew would then compile those stories in a book, with shorter versions available on a website.

With Staubach on board, Carew called every NFL team's PR department offering to write similar features about qualified players on their rosters. At that point, most clubs decided to join forces with Carew. When sports marketing firms who represent individual NFL players heard about her idea, many began contacting her directly and offering their clients as potential profiles.

She now has 30 NFL players on board, and the number continues to grow. The abridged versions of each player's profile are available for download free of charge on Carew's website, [www.theinsightfulplayer.com](http://www.theinsightfulplayer.com), while she actively seeks a publisher for her book that will feature the more in-depth features.



But what exactly does Carew hope to achieve from all this?

"It's a bold movement of hope," she declared. "We need to inundate kids with support and tools and role models. These are the people who are going to save this world some day. If we can give our kids these resources and inspire them to get into community service, the sky's the limit."

"The National Education Association has already made us a partner with their 'Read Across America' campaign. It's a great honor."

Her goal for her website is a million downloads. She's not close yet, she freely admits, but insists that's not going to discourage her.

"I'm a professional coach," Carew stated. "I help people reach their dreams."

Including her own. **PFW**

*Devin McCourty*

### CORNERBACK AND 2010 PRO BOWL SELECTION

*The following are edited excerpts from Carew's profiles of current and former New England Patriots players.*

The Patriots rookie and his twin brother, Jason, who plays corner for the Tennessee Titans, were raised by a single mother who was widowed when they were just three. Their brother Larry, older by 17 years, acted as both brother and father figure to them. Their mother made spirituality a high priority, taking her young boys to church every Sunday where community members made them feel protected.

Devin refers to the obstacles he has overcome throughout his life as "speed bumps." The very first one was losing his father at such a young age. "At first, I didn't

really understand it. It wasn't until college that I started to realize all I had lost," McCourty said.

"That speed bump motivated me because I always felt like he was looking down on me. He left the world early, but Jason and I are what he left on this earth and I always felt we represented his presence here, and that made me want to try to do good."

Devin's mother also inspired the growing boys with her astonishing sense of determination. Though an on-the-job injury made her unable to work for most of their childhood, she committed herself wholeheartedly to being physically and emotionally present for her boys.

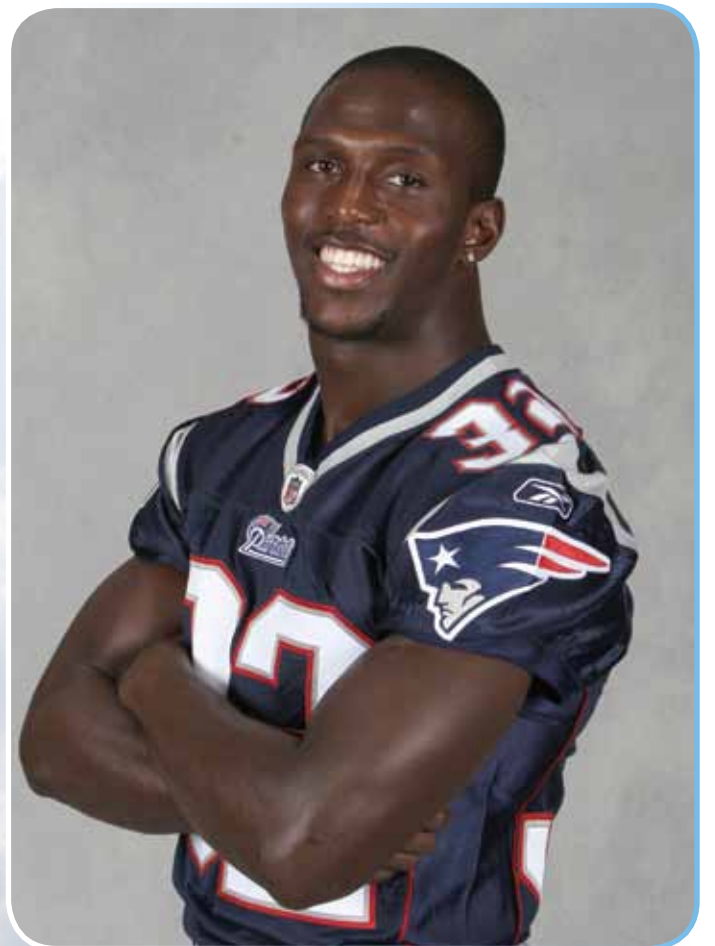
"To make it professionally as an athlete, you need someone showing constantly how much they

support you. I was lucky enough that my mom was able to be there for almost every high school game I played in four years."

He and his brothers never forgot their father's presence, either.

"I always felt like my love for sports was kind of connected to my father," McCourty continued. "His birthday is in September, right around the time we usually play our first game of the season. Jason and I both always feel like in some ways we are playing in his memory."

With his persistent refusal to let adversity defeat him, coupled with his determination to learn all he can from life experiences and those around him, Devin McCourty walks the walk and talks the talk of a remarkable Insightful Player™ team member.



## Steve Grogan **FORMER QUARTERBACK**

New England Patriots Hall of Famer Steve Grogan recognizes that it's been a while since he played professional football. When he talks with young people now, they often don't know exactly who he is.

"So I just tell them I used to be Tom Brady," he laughs. "Then they get it."

Grogan spent his childhood in Ottawa, Kan., with his parents and one younger brother. "My parents were very involved in community and church activities. They set a great example for my brother and me," he said. Being a role model has always been important to him.

"I'm just a regular person who was in the public spotlight and therefore tried to conduct his life in a good way and set a good example for kids and adults alike."

Remembering the fine example set by his own parents helps Steve to articulate the importance of recognizing right and wrong when he speaks now to student groups.

"In today's anti-drug programs," Grogan continued, "they teach the kids to say no. 'Just say no' sounds easy, but it's not. I explain to them how, when I played football, I had an offensive line that was protecting me, but sometimes the offensive line would break down and I would run for my life to get away from danger. And I try to tell them that their offensive line

is their parents, their teachers, the police, the business people in their community, all of whom are there to help protect them, but they're going to get into situations where that offensive line is not going to be around.

"So, I advise them that if they find themselves in an awkward situation that they're not comfortable with, to get the heck out of there."

Despite the success he eventually had in the NFL, Grogan explained, "There was always a sense that someone better than me could be playing my position. I just kept working hard and doing the best I could and outlasted all of them."

Recognizing he wasn't always the best on the Patriots was an important element of personal growth for him.

"One thing I realized is that humility is the number one asset for someone in a job like mine. It's hard when someone tells you you're not good enough anymore and then sits you on the bench. I found that rather than moan and groan and complain about things, it was a much better approach to just go out every day and practice and have fun. You're part of the team, you do what the coach asks you to do when you are asked to do it, and you stay ready to take over when the time comes."

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*Andre Tippett*

**PRO FOOTBALL HALL OF FAMER  
AND FORMER LINEBACKER**

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Street life posed tough challenges for a boy growing up in Newark, N.J., in the 1960s. So Andre Tippett, who moved to that city from Alabama with his mother and sister when he was 7 years old, turned to the martial arts to learn to defend himself. What he discovered in the dojo (karate studio) turned out to be much more than just self-defense on the street: he learned the critical importance of mind-body balance.

"Karate instructors always talk about mind, body and spirit, and how you can't have one without the other," he explained.

This sense of balance was just one of the ideas that formed young Andre's moral compass. As a freshman in high school, Andre tried out unsuccessfully for the football team. The brush with rejection only strengthened his resolve to make the team another year. He joined the wrestling team to build his strength, watched every football game and practice, and consequently made the JV football squad the following year. Before that season ended, he was sent up to the varsity team, which went on to win the state championship.

Along with developing the skills that would lead him to a career in the NFL, Andre met one of the great influences of his life at this time: his high school coach, Frank Verducci. "Coach Verducci became an inspiration and a disciplinarian for me, a father figure in my life who was constantly on all

of us to lead by example and do the right thing. To this day, whenever I need to talk to somebody, I can call him and tell him just about anything."

From then on, Andre strove to serve as a role model to others, just as his coach did for him.

Spiritual faith has always played a significant role in his attitude, and so has a belief in the necessity of humility. When fans tell him how much his example has meant to them, he reminds himself that, "There are people out there who are saving lives, curing cancer, so many things out there that are much bigger than who I am. I have to have the humility to understand that I didn't get here alone. I had people who were watching my back and helping me along the way.

"As a kid," Tippett concluded, "I could have taken the right turn versus the left turn just as easy as the next kid. But because of the people that were constantly giving me good advice, I made the right decisions."

And his importance as a role model has not ended. Along with working for the New England Patriots as Executive Director of Community Affairs, he is featured in the Good Men Project, an endeavor that recruits male role models to help build and sustain national discussion about being a good father, son, husband, partner and worker — the same fundamental tenets that led him from a poverty-stricken childhood in Newark to the height of an NFL career.

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Steve Nelson

FORMER LINEBACKER AND PATRIOTS HALL OF FAME

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In some ways, Minnesota-born Steve Nelson has made a career for himself out of recognizing the value of the team over the individual.

"The first thing you have to recognize about playing on a team is that the team comes first," he maintains. "Once you understand and accept that, you really start enjoying what team sports are all about. When you're part of an effectively functioning team, you appreciate everyone else more. And as you become a better teammate that translates into you becoming a better person."

Recognizing the value of teamwork was woven into the fabric of Nelson's childhood. His father was a high school coach, and Nelson grew up with an understanding of a coach's role in his players' lives.

"My father taught his players that it's important to work out in the offseason. It's important to be a good student. It's important to be a good person. All of these things add up to being a good teammate, and if you have a bunch of good teammates, you're going to have a good team."

Steve's father, now in his 90s, remains one of his most powerful role

models.

"In World War II, he was part of the fighting on Omaha Beach. He took care of my mother after she developed Alzheimer's for as long as he could, and when she finally had to go to a rest home, he visited her every day. He still lives in his own house, cuts wood, mows his lawn and plays golf. And this is someone who really grew up with nothing. He was one of four kids, they had no father in the house, and my grandmother earned a dollar a day."

He recognizes that many kids are not as blessed as he was with a father who taught valuable life lessons. But what matters, Steve believes, is that kids find someone else.

"Somehow, the community has got to rally around the young people and provide leadership and good role models. Being a good role model is not somebody taking them to the ice cream store every Saturday; it's someone who sits down and tells them to knock it off, or don't do that, or that's not the right choice."

"I think fundamentally, the key to being happy is to be appreciative," he added. "If you appreciate your health and you appreciate all the good things that life has given you, you're going to be happy." PFW

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