

## COMMENTARY: Neal Driscoll

Written by Neal Driscoll  
Saturday, 18 July 2009 09:30

---

### [#13, Forever the Face of the Miami Dolphins](#)

by Neal Driscoll

## COMMENTARY: Neal Driscoll

Written by Neal Driscoll  
Saturday, 18 July 2009 09:30

---



I was sitting in my basement looking at my Dan Marino autographed jersey which I have framed on my wall and I had a moment; a moment of reflection on how great Dan Marino really was. I am sure one thousand people have made similar threads but I think I owe it to Dan to give him some appreciation. It's not often that a man can overcome perfection but Marino plays devil advocate here. The 1972 Miami Dolphins had the only perfect season in the history of professional sports yet when you think of the Miami Dolphins you do not think of that undefeated Dolphins' team, you think of #13, Dan Marino. Bob Griese, Don Shula, Paul Warfield, Larry Csonka, Jim Langer, and Larry Little are a few of the National Football League Hall of Famers that were part of this perfect season yet a Quarterback who never won a ring is on a pedestal above them all.

Watching Dan Marino was an absolute pleasure; it was a thing of beauty. People watch Peyton Manning today without realizing that Dan Marino threw the rock around even better than the great Peyton Manning. It was an absolute blessing in disguise when Dan Marino fell to us in the first round of the 1983 draft. The likes of John Elway and even Ken O'Brien were selected before Dan Marino which proved to be a big mistake. I know that there are people in this world that truly believe Elway was in Marino's class but I am not one of them. Elway didn't win anything until Terrell Davis came into his own and at the time was one of the best players in the league. Elway was a great player but Dan Marino he was not. In his rookie season Dan started 11 games in which complete 173 passes out of 296 attempts for 2210 passing yards and 20 touchdowns. Most rookie Quarterback's struggle big time with turnovers but not Marino as he threw just 6 interceptions; his accuracy granted him a Quarterback ranking of 96.0. In his second season Marino had one of the best seasons a player has had in any professional sport accounting for 5,084 passing yards, 48 touchdown passes, and a unheard of Quarterback rating of 108.9. His 5,084 passing yards in a single season is a record that still stands today; Drew Brees came close but no cigar in the 2008 season. His illustrious career includes 9 trips the NFL Pro-Bowl, 14 NFL records, and nearly 50 Miami Dolphin team records. His stats speak for themselves as he had 420 career touchdown passes which was recently surpassed by Brett Favre, 61,361 passing yards which was also recently surpassed by Favre, and he is statistically one of the best pure passers this game has ever seen.

Marino lead the Miami Dolphins to 37 4<sup>th</sup> quarter comeback wins which shows what kind of man Marino was. When you were down, you wanted the ball in #13's hands. I'll never forget that feeling when Dan ruptured his ACL in 1993. I was a terrified 11-year old who ask his dad if Marino would ever come back. My mom let me miss school the next day and I was scared that my hero wouldn't be back. Marino came back strong in 1994 proving all the critics wrong who said that his injury was too severe to bounce back. He threw 30 touchdowns in 1994 and accounted for 4,453 passing yards; my hero was back. I'll never forget that playoff game in 1998 when he lead the Dolphins past the Seattle Seahawks. I'll never for get Marino to Duper,

Marino to Clayton, Marino to Fryar, Marino to Ingram, Marino to McDuffie. He made so many receivers look better than they were and he did it all with his only career 1,000 yard rusher being Karim Abdul Jabbar in 1996. I can't even imagine how many rings Marino might have if we actually had a Running Back. It's not fair to look back in that hindsight and it's not fair that people question Marino's greatness because of his lack of the championship.

I could go on for hours about how great of a man he was with his extraordinary effort in the community with charity involvement, the Dan Marino Children's Hospital, and being the ultimate family man and role model for his children. The memories and moments that Marino created for me are simply amazing but there are three moments that make Dan Marino more than my favorite football player but my hero, my role model.

September 17, 2000 was a rainy night in Miami where the Baltimore Ravens came to Miami to play the Dolphins. My dad had gotten me tickets for my high school graduation so we went to BWI-Airport and flew from Baltimore to Miami. Dan Marino's number was retired at half-time and this was just an absolutely special moment. Seeing my childhood and modern day hero getting paid his due was pure satisfaction. The Dolphins beat the Ravens that night 19-6. What a night.

The second moment that special day in 2005 when Dan Marino was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame. My dad called me the night before the ceremony and I was at the University of Maryland, College Park just getting into my final semester of college and says, "You have gas in your car?" I replied, "Yeah, Why?" He went on to say, "I'm in Cleveland on a business trip and just scored two tickets to the Hall of Fame Ceremony." Before he could get out his next sentence my 2002 Jeep Wrangler was heading 495 heading to Cleveland. Marino's son gave a speech that made

even the toughest guy in the world wipe a tear away from his eye and seeing Marino on that stage in his tan sports jacket was his Championship moment. There was a sea of aqua and orange in Canton that day; Miami Dolphin fans were out in the thousand sharing their appreciating for the greatest player the organization has ever put on that field. It was Marino-like that in his moment of glory he thanked his family, he thanks his coaches, he thanked his teammates, he thanked the owners, and he thanked us, the fans. I remember Marino hitting Mark Clayton down the aisle; the old man still had it. This was the single greatest day in my world of sports which includes Cal Ripken 2131, Juan Dixon leading the Maryland Terrapins to the National Title, and seeing Michael Jordan play Magic Johnson live. Nothing compared to this day. Well..

One thing does compare. I was a 13 year old boy at Disney World waiting in line for Splash Mountain with my brother and my best friend. I hear some say "Hey Kid that is a nice shirt". I was wearing a Wilson Dan Marino Replica Jersey in the aqua color. I turn around and look and there he is, Dan Marino. My day, my vacation, my life was all made in one sentence. I said "Thank You Mr. Marino" and he asked if he could sign it. Dan Marino borrowed a sharpie for one of the workers of the theme park and signed my jersey right on the one. I bought another signed Jersey from Upper Deck so I would have the certificate of authenticity but that was just for self satisfaction as the jersey he signed on June 14<sup>th</sup>, 1995 was something that was absolutely priceless to me.

Thank You Dan Marino. You made me love the game of football, you made me love the Miami Dolphins, and you guided me to the man I am today. There will never be another Dan Marino but the memories will never fade.

## COMMENTARY: Neal Driscoll

Written by Neal Driscoll  
Saturday, 18 July 2009 09:30

---

*Neal Driscoll is a columnist for FinHeaven.com and goes by the username RealDriscoll on the forums. He is an avid fan and brings a real fans perspective to you through his commentary. Send him a PM and let him know what you think of his article.*