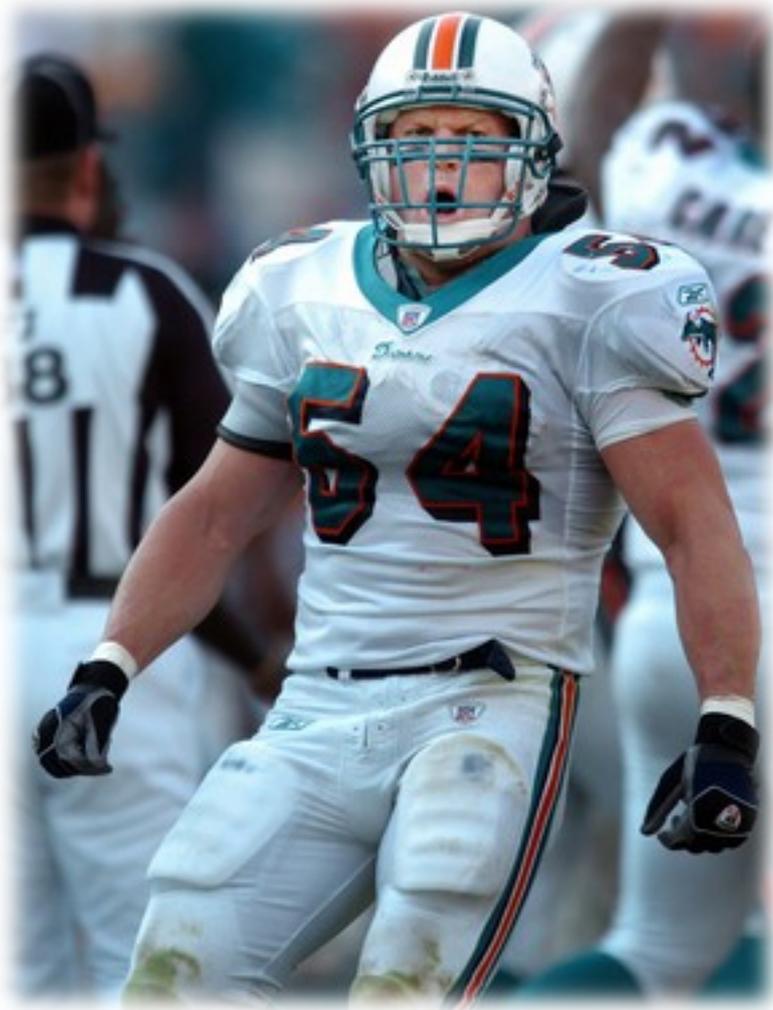


REMEMBERING AN ICON



When I woke up Thursday morning and read that Zach Thomas had signed a one day deal to retire as a Miami Dolphin, I knew I had to dedicate this week's Fin Fridays to the Icon, Zach Thomas. First, I want to congratulate the Miami Dolphins organization for this classy move. If there is one person who deserves the honor, it is Zach Thomas. Second, I want to thank Zach for every tackle, big hit, sack, fumble, interception and touchdown he made as a Miami Dolphin. Those memories will never be forgotten and I wish him and his family the best.

Zach Thomas is Miami Dolphins football. To me, Thomas was one of the best at his position and watching him play on Sundays was amazing. What Zach lacked in size he made up for in heart, smarts and his ability to make tackles and big plays all over the field. He was a tackling machine, and at times it looked like he was a one man wrecking crew. I truly don't know how Thomas found the energy, speed and strength to make so many tackles and big plays. He credits his success to studying film and being a student of the game, adding that it was what

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Written by Roberto Yanes
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always kept him ahead of the opposition. One thing is certain, on Sundays Zach Thomas was a menace to reckon with.

The legacy of Zach Thomas as a Dolphin began when he was chosen by the Miami Dolphins in the fifth round of the 1996 NFL Draft. At the time, word was that Thomas was too small and too slow to start in this league. Coaches and pundits believed Zach was nothing more than a special teams player, but they soon would learn they were all wrong.

Throughout his career, Zach Thomas would prove to everyone that their evaluation of him as a player coming into the NFL was incorrect. In his rookie year, Thomas impressed then Coach Jimmy Johnson so much, that Johnson decided to cut veteran linebacker and now Jacksonville Jaguars' Head Coach Jack Del Rio over a small and slow linebacker named Zach Thomas. The reason for cutting Del Rio was simple, Zach was just that good. Thomas would go on to have a great and legendary career with the Miami Dolphins.

In his career as a Miami Dolphin, Zach recorded 1,639 tackles, 19.5 sacks, 17 interceptions, 16 forced fumbles, eight fumble recoveries, and four touchdowns. He was also selected to seven Pro Bowls. Thomas has the body of work to one day earn himself a place in Canton and become a Hall of Famer, I hope to see him there. Miami has a rich history of great linebackers, but without taking anything away from those guys, Zach is one of the best, if not the best, linebacker to wear a Miami Dolphins uniform.

Zach was a true leader on the field. He led by example and owned up to everything. I remember after Dolphins games he was always the first guy to speak to the media, win or lose. He also has been great to the South Florida community and awesome to his fans.

To see an Icon like Zach Thomas retire is very sad to witness, but it is these moments which make it great to be a fan of the Miami Dolphins. Watching Thomas play was an honor and now Thomas will be part of the Miami Dolphins forever. He joins the proud history of this great franchise and will always be a Miami Dolphin. There is only one Zach Thomas and I am very proud to say that I witnessed this Icon's great career. We will miss you Zach.

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