



Super Bowl Party at Spirit Mountain Features NFL's Ed "Too Tall" Jones



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famous former Dallas Cowboy teammates playing golf and working with charities, promoting and managing his boxing team and running his business of establishing musical acts and all the while soaking up the laid back style of life in the south.

Then, a new opportunity for fame came calling and found a willing, if unsuspecting, participant in Jones. Life in the NFL had been good to Jones — at 6'10" he loomed above the competition like death at an accident scene and at 275 lbs. he carried enough weight to back up his desire of rendering quarterbacks of their helmets and their courage.

So, when the folks at Sony PlayStation came calling and wanted Jones for a new commercial promoting their latest John Madden NFL 2001 video game, fame was nothing new to Jones. He new what to expect — he had been through it before.

Sure, he had been out of the spotlight since his retirement, but those golf tournaments and autograph signings kept him in the public's eye quite a bit, he thought.

Then, the Playstation commercials started airing across the country. The ads featured Jones staring menacingly at a naive-looking video game researcher who asks Jones how he managed to intimidate people during his playing days. Jones stares him down hard, thus providing the researcher with his answer.

Jones had no idea what was ahead for him, but he was ready. And, he loves every minute of it. Unlike some superstar athletes, he loves interacting with fans, loves signing autographs and loves being around people in general. He said it is his way of giving back to the people who cheered him on and gave him the desire to keep playing the world's most violent game.

Fame has exploded again for Ed "Too Tall" Jones well after his playing days have ended. Jones said he is overwhelmed by his new found fame but enjoying every minute of this second opportunity to reach a whole new generation of youth with his message.

Jones took time out of his schedule to meet with *Smoke Signals* before his gig hosting this year's Super Bowl party at the Tribe's Spirit Mountain Casino on Sunday, January 28.

The warm, animated, enthusiastic and engaging big man talked to us about his storied playing days with the Dallas Cowboys, the state of the game today, his feelings about modern youth and the problems they face, his first love in the sporting world — professional boxing and his love of music, especially the blues and B.B. King.

The Interview...

By Brent Merrill

I grew up watching you play. After you retired, you were out of the spotlight for a while. Now, with this new PlayStation 2 commercial, you have a whole new following — a whole new generation of fans.

Yeah.

Are you enjoying it?

I enjoy it. I meant to disappear when I retired. First of all, I played for 15 years. That is a lot of wear and tear on you. I tried to do as many things as I could during the season and off the season for different charities that I represent and other business interests that I had during the time that I played football. I just really stretched myself thin. I said when I retired — my mom passed that year that I retired (that is one of the reasons that I went ahead and retired — I could have played another two years) — I just said 'I need a break.'

What year was that?

That was 1989-90. I said 'here it is — I played 15 years, 15 wonderful years, never missed a game. So I went ahead and hung 'em up. I just kind of took a back seat. I stayed on top of my business things, but at a very low key.

Then, I decided it was time to get back out there. And so I really started working very hard with my company to get it out there and then the Playstation thing came along and like you said — it is amazing what being in front of a screen can do to you. The phones started ringing off the hook.

I'm a people person. Always have been. I love getting out and getting involved in activities like today — hosting Super Bowl parties and activities were I can interact with the public because for so many years the public supported me. They were there for me and let me tell you — they don't hear it enough, but they don't know what that means to an athlete to get that fan support. It means the world. So, this is my way of saying thank you — getting out and... You know a lot of people never have the opportunity to meet a professional athlete up close — whether it be football, baseball, basketball — whatever. They just don't have the opportunity. I would have given anything to have had that opportunity when I was growing up as a kid in Tennessee. We didn't have any — you know, no local role models on the professional level to look up to — to encourage you, none of that. I didn't get to experience any of that until I was an adult. So I know what it would have meant to me. So that is why I make myself visible and available to the public.

The thing that I noticed the most when I was in Nashville was that everybody was so polite. That "South-

Ed "Too Tall" Jones was born in Jackson, Tennessee in February of 1951. Jones was drafted out of Tennessee State University in 1974 by the Dallas Cowboys with the team's number one draft pick. He played defensive lineman for 15 years — sandwiching his NFL career around a year of professional boxing. Jones had six fights in his professional career and won all six. Jones was his team's most valuable defensive player and played in three super bowls with the Cowboys. Jones made a jazz album and also starred in a movie after the 1977 season.

ern Hospitality" is really true.

Oh yeah. It is. There is a lot of truth to that. I went to college in Nashville. I'm from Jackson, Tennessee, which is right between Memphis and Nashville. I have an office in Memphis now. That is one thing that I don't think will ever change — that southern hospitality.

I loved it.

I was there years ago with some of my teammates who were from areas like New York, Philly and places on the East Coast and they freaked out on how people actually spoke to them and how polite they were. They couldn't understand it. And I didn't even try and explain to them what it is really like to grow up in an environment like that.

Things have changed — there isn't that sense of respect anymore. When I was a kid, I was raised in a family where we didn't back talk. Now...

Excuse me. If you're from a big city you have lost that. I grew up in a home where we went to church every Sunday. You respected your Elders. Everything was 'yes sir, yes ma'am.' The worst trouble I got in was snagging jeans playing with kids trying to jump fences I shouldn't have been trying to jump. Which is nothing today. But, one of the main reasons why we have lost them is first of all because of drugs that are in our communities. Young kids have gotten a hold of them.

Number two — single-family homes. Either you have the father raising the kids or you have the mom. That is tough. That is tough when you have to work. Most families can't afford to have someone come in and watch them. So those kids have too much idle time by his or herself.

It is a nightmare and that is why I go places and do things where you have a lot of sponsors there with community programs. Man, if I thank them once, I thank them a hundred times before I leave there because I know the importance of it.

You have to try and start on the community level — with people in their communities. Get things out of your communities and drugs off the streets. Go to church, study. Not just go to school, but go to school and learn something. It is going to have to start on a community level. The communities are going to have to try and turn their communities around before it is going to effect statewide. It is going to be tough. It is going to be tough.

It is only inevitable that it would transcend itself into sports. The money had to change things too.

Having gone through every level of sports possible, I sit back now and analyze how professional sports gets blamed for everything when individuals do things. What the public doesn't realize is, in the professionals — the player has a problem before we ever get them. Before he ever reached that level, he has already

got a problem — it started in high school, he was coddled. It started in high school, when he could do know wrong — and didn't get punished for doing any wrong. Then, on to college and it is the same thing. And by the time he gets to the pros, he is lost. But, the pros get blamed for it.

You have got to be involved and you have to start when they are young.

That's right. Mine did — mine (parents) started when I was very young. All the friends of mine I know (who) turned out to be okay — the same thing. But, unfortunately, like I said, because you have so many broken homes, others are going to have to take an interest in other people's kids. People say 'hey, it is not my responsibility.' No it is not, but I want a clean society for myself. I want a safe society.

You got to play your whole career in Dallas, right?

Yeah.

And again, that is a different thing now days too.

Oh you won't see it again.

People just don't play 15 years in one city anymore.

You will only see a handful of them (players in the NFL) doing it anymore. And that will probably be a quarterback or a receiver with a history of staying healthy and being productive.

Everybody else has to move on to the bigger contract.

That's right. I'm so glad I didn't go through that. I knew my teammates.

15 years.

I knew them. And, that made a difference man. When you are lining up next to a person that you have worked, bled and sweat together for years instead of looking around at someone that doesn't know you — and you don't know them it means something. This is a team sport — you know you got to have 11 acting as one.

On the same page.

On the same page.

Do you still keep in touch with some of your old teammates?

Very close. We have always been close.

Who were some of your favorite players to play with?

I won't use the word favorite. Like I said, we were all close and we do a lot of — to this day — we still do things together. We golf together, we do charities together and the key is because Dallas is a good place to play sports and live and to do things off the field. So, the majority of players make their home in Dallas. Un-

like some places were you have guys who play there, but they don't live there. As soon as the season is over — they are gone. So, you might not run into them until 10 years later.

Who were some of your favorite players to play against?

Not necessarily the players to play against, it was teams. And, most of them were rivalries like the (Washington) Redskins for years. Then we went through a phase where it was the (New York) Giants. Then, at one point it was the (Philadelphia) Eagles and that lasted so long. It was usually whoever was hot in your division. But the Redskins were the longest rivalry. Then we went through a point where the (San Francisco) 49ers and the Cowboys couldn't stand each other. Well, I went through all those. That is what longevity will do for you. It wasn't the individual that brought the best out in me, it was the team. 'Man, you couldn't wait for those games.'

I remember you did some boxing during your football career.

I fought one year early in my career. I played five years, retired, boxed one year, and then came back. It was something I had to do. Boxing was my favorite sport — still is. I'm involved in boxing now. I have a boxing team. I manage fighters. I love that sport and I had to do it. I wasn't one of those who was going to be 50 years old and look back and say 'man I wish I tried that.' I had to try. I gave a year notice and I took off chasing a dream. Fought one year — six fights. Won all six. Came back (to football) for ten more years. If I had not fought for that year, there is no way that I would have played football for 15 years. I mentally wasn't into it. Football man - if you had the talent to play on a professional level — it is 85 percent mental.

Preparation?

All of that stuff. Yeah. But again now, don't misunderstand — you have to have the talent to play at that level. So forget talent or you wouldn't be there. Now what separates you? That is what I'm saying. Now it becomes mental. So, if I'm out there on that football field, it is a lot of work, it is not easy during the week. See when the fans see us; they see us on Sunday — when you are polished and ready to play. They don't have any idea what you go through during the week in practice. It is a hard job. It is a hard job. You are in meetings for five hours. And you are practicing for two hours. Then you are lifting weights and running.

(Signs an autograph for a young man that works in the restaurant.)
(Signs another autograph)

What is the state of the game today? Will there be a look back for the older values of the game? Or is it a whole New World now?

I have never seen anything go back. If something is getting out of control — you make an adjustment then. Football is healthy right now. Other sports are forcing people's concerns for down the road. Basketball and baseball — they think it is getting out of control — mainly salaries. We have a salary cap in football. The game is healthy today. But some of the other sports have issues that they are going to have to address.

What was it like to play for Tom Landry?

Coach Landry — I would consider him a football genius. The reason why I say that is because he controlled every aspect of the game. He controlled both sides of the ball — offense and defense and kicking game. He programmed his coaches to program you. He was everything. If you didn't accept that, you couldn't coach for him. To me, that is a genius if you can do that and be successful. He was successful.

What did you think when Jerry Jones came in and bought the team?

(Talks to a middle-aged man who says he watched him play for years and didn't realize how big he was in person.)

I felt the way he handled the transition was wrong. But, he has since apologized and before coach Landry passed — he accepted his apology. Coach Landry put it as well as anybody I ever heard when he said that 'hey they were young and they were excited to get the team.' So, they didn't think before they decided how to let him go. You have got to watch how you let a legend go. He was a living legend. They just didn't think.

(Orders two scoops of ice cream and an éclair)

They could have bumped him upstairs to the general manager's job or something.

I'm not sure Tom would have accepted that. Tom was a coach. Think about it — you don't see that happening a lot with head coaches in football. You see that happening in baseball and basketball.

What was it like playing with a guy like Roger Staubach?

Great. Man I played with a lot of great

guys. When I say that, I'm not just talking about football players. I'm talking about guys who were just good people. Coaches, players, Staubach, Craig Morton, Calvin Hill, Tony Dorsett, LeRoy Jordan... The list goes on — just good people. Mike Ditka, Dan Reeves, Gene Stallings and the list goes on and on and on.

Mel Renfro (Professional football player who went to college at the University of Oregon?)

Yeah. Renfro.

He is an Oregon guy.

Yeah, I saw Renfro yesterday (in Tampa at the Super Bowl festivities) and I asked him about where I was going. He told me, man you might get some snow. Does it snow here a lot?

Not a lot in Grand Ronde, but it does snow and it is cold enough.

What kind of message do you have for youth that are rediscovering you because of this commercial for PlayStation?

The only thing I can say man is there is no such thing as waiting until you are a certain age to decide what you want to do. Start today. Be preparing yourself. If you are undecided, one safe bet is to study as hard as you can in school (and) put yourself in a position for whatever you decide to do in life you have a head start on everybody because you have educated yourself.

Accept it — nothing can take the place of education. 'So I say hey, the first thing you should be concerned with is bettering (yourself) in the classroom.' All that other stuff will come in time. You don't develop talent overnight, but you can develop learning skills. If you study hard and work hard and realize that nothing comes easy — there is a price you pay for everything. I don't care who you are, I don't care how talented you are — You know I didn't get where I am today because of my size — sure I'm 6'10." I weigh 275. That still didn't make me a 15-year veteran in the NFL. I worked at it. Worked very hard — heart out. And I played hard too. But, you can enjoy your friends and family and everybody else and still do your schoolwork and be a player and have fun. You can do all those things — combine all those things.

You have to have a system and be dedicated enough to do it. And stay clean. Stay clean. I saw a lot of guys with more talent than I had that didn't make it because of decisions they made that cost them their careers. Bad choices. Bad choices...

People they hung with... Things they did...

Ran with the wrong people. Tried the wrong things that weren't good for themselves or anybody else. So stay clean. I haven't seen one person that I can honestly say that drugs helped them in anything. Those are pretty good statistics there when you haven't seen one. Why chance it? Why risk it? Stay clean and develop a good work ethic because that will carry through everything you do in life. I don't care what it is, whether it is sports — whatever profession you choose in life.

My dad passed when I was growing up and there were eight of us. I had five sisters and two brothers. Being one of the boys — I said my dad wouldn't want my mom doing things that I could do. He would want her doing things for the girls. So to take some of the pressure off of her I'm going to get a job. My mom didn't have to do nothing for me. That was because of the foundation that was built under me by my parents. You know — what my dad meant to me, what my mom meant to me. My dad wouldn't want me to be dependent on my mom. I started delivering groceries, cutting yards, everything I could do.

What is it like living your life in the public eye all the time — having people come up to you while you are eating and ask you for you autograph?

I don't have a problem with it.

Some people do though don't they?

That doesn't surprise me. You have got to have all kinds of people. Some of the guys I played with over the years don't care what they are doing when you come up or what is going on — they are cool with it. And you have that group that can't stand it.

What is in your CD player right now?

You are talking to a person here that promotes concerts. I have over 500 hundred CDs. Usually it is one of my groups depending on what my favorite is right then.

B.B. King will be here.

I saw that. I have known B.B. forever. Tell him Ed Jones from Dallas said 'hi.' We have had some good laughs together — B.B. and I. Blues is my favorite — it has been forever.

