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## Urlacher's expectations are high

By **Graham Bensinger**  
Special to ESPN.com

*Editor's note: Each week during the season Graham Bensinger will be talking with high-profile NFL figures for ESPN.com's Weekly Conversation.*

**Graham Bensinger:** I hear you are the king at scaring people ...

**Brian Urlacher:** Who's telling you this stuff?

**Bensinger:** Tell me about the best time you ever got someone.

**Urlacher:** My brother Casey. We were at my house one night and we have these deer feeders in front. He was filling the deer feeders up and it was dark. I had my shirt off and ran outside. He thought he saw a buck. He thought I was a buck running. He said to my agent Bryce [Karger], "There's a buck!" (laughs)

So they came over to fill the deer feeder up and I was hiding behind a tree. They're filling it up and I ran out and screamed at them. Casey goes, "Oh my God!" (laughs) And he started running ... Bryce was trying to use the deer feeder as protection. That was definitely one of my best times. I've had a lot though, man. My house is scary as heck. I live on 10 acres in the woods so it's creepy. There are a lot of good hiding spots.

**Bensinger:** I heard Casey has come home late at night a couple times where you've decided to take residence under his bed?

**Urlacher:** Oh yeah, man ... (laughs) I have a hard time getting underneath there, but I get beside it. I got him so bad one time. What I do is I call him before he comes home. He should know by now that when I call him that something's going to happen to him. (laughs) He goes to the bathroom and he comes into his room and I just scare the hell out of him, man. He has no chance.

**Bensinger:** Tell me about these intense Wiffle Ball games going on ...

**Urlacher:** We have some pretty good Wiffle Ball games in my backyard. I am the best of course. They can't hit off me! My curveball is too good. I strikeout Lance [Briggs] all the time ... He came to the house one day and I struck him out. Set him down. I mowed him down. We play in the locker room also and Lance gets mowed down in there too. It's all the same.

**Bensinger:** Your reputation precedes you. I've been told you have a pretty mean fastball as well.

**Urlacher:** They can't hit it. That's how good it is.

**Bensinger:** What'd you think of the Bears' team last season?

**Urlacher:** We got better as the season went on. We started off at 1-3. We really didn't know how good we could be. Then, we finally put it together. We went on an eight-game winning streak. We weren't very consistent. We obviously finished on a bad note losing in the playoff game, but we got a taste of how good we could be. We felt this season we'd be better and we obviously are.

**Bensinger:** Where was the biggest area for improvement?

**Urlacher:** On defense?

**Bensinger:** On both sides of the ball.

**Urlacher:** I'm going to stick to defense because that's the only part I know about. We need to be more consistent. We made some mistakes last year that we shouldn't have made. When we give up plays, we need to be able to make a play of our own. We've done that this year. We've given up a couple big plays and we've come back and made plays. We also need to be consistent in our running and passing game.



Jonathan Daniel/Getty Images

**Brian Urlacher was the NFL's defensive player of the year in 2005.**

**Bensinger:** The defense is solid. How good does the offense need to be to get you to that next level?

**Urlacher:** Shoot, they've been really good so far, I'll tell you that much! They've been averaging 30 points per game. Even last year when people were giving them all kinds of crap, we rushed for 2,100 yards as a team. That has to be pretty close to the top in the NFL. They didn't turn the ball over. They controlled the ball. They've done the same thing this year, but we've scored a lot of points. We've scored on some quick drives. We haven't got a chance to rest as much as we have in the past [on defense], but I'll take points over rest any day.

**Bensinger:** How rare is it for a team to return all 22 starters?

**Urlacher:** In this day, it's very rare because of free agency, trades, and people just not being happy. Our organization has done a good job at keeping guys together.

**Bensinger:** You've previously said this is definitely the Bears' best shot [at winning a Super Bowl]. Why?

**Urlacher:** Just for the reason you said ... We've got 22 guys returning. If we can stay healthy, we have the personnel to do it. Our lineup stacks up pretty well on both sides of the ball against any team we play. Also, we feel we have one of the best coaching staffs in the league.

**Bensinger:** Do you feel the team just now finally has the pieces in place to make a run or is this one of the last chances to get something going?

**Urlacher:** I don't think this is the last chance. I'd like to do it this year, but every year everyone has a chance to do it. You never know what's going to happen in the NFL. The No. 1 thing this year is we believe we can do it. Last year, we talked about it a lot, but we weren't quite sure. Now, we know we can do it. It's just a matter of playing well.

**Bensinger:** What do you think of QB [Rex Grossman](#)?

**Urlacher:** I think he's great. I talked about it in the preseason. The media here wanted to create a controversy between him and [Brian] Griese. All preseason long our team stood by Rex and for a good reason. We've seen what he can do in the first two games. The offensive line has done a good job of protecting him.

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**Bensinger:** You used to play on both sides of the ball. How much interest would you have now in playing offense?

**Urlacher:** I really don't like ... I shouldn't say I wouldn't like to ... I would definitely enjoy it, but I don't want to get hit, man ... If you're catching the ball, the dudes are going to hit you.

**Bensinger:** You wimp ... You're 6-4 and 260 lbs ...

**Urlacher:** It would be nice to catch a pass every so often, but I don't want to get hit, Graham!

**Bensinger:** This obviously hasn't been the case with all the teams you've played on, but with some ... The trend throughout your career has been you've always delivered while the rest of your team hasn't. How do you handle that?

**Urlacher:** That's not going to be a problem for us this year. Everyone is playing well. There are about 28 guys playing well counting the bunch on defense that come in and replace us when we get tired. Everyone needs to

worry about doing their job and not anyone else's.

**Bensinger:** Your goal every year is to win the Super Bowl, but how many years have you actually thought the Bears have had a legitimate shot?

**Urlacher:** The right answer is every year, but legitimately probably my second and third year. My fourth year I thought we were going to be pretty good, too. I definitely think so this year. Last year, we talked about doing what we did, but I don't think any of us were sure.

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**Bensinger:** How do you judge personal success?

**Urlacher:** How well the team does ...

**Bensinger:** If you won the Super Bowl and it's a season where you only recorded 30, 40, or 50 tackles -- you aren't going to be as pleased. Where's the middle ground?

**Urlacher:** Winning. There is no middle ground. I want to win. I'll take less tackles, less sacks, you can take all my stats away -- I could care less. I just want to win that big one [Super Bowl]. Most guys on this team would tell you the same thing.

**Bensinger:** I know one award you'd love: Super Bowl MVP.

**Urlacher:** That's one I would like to win because then that means we won the Super Bowl.

**Bensinger:** Why does it seem you enjoy your teammates' accolades more than your own?

**Urlacher:** Because it's a team game. I enjoy seeing my teammates do well and I can't do well without them. They feel the same way about me. It takes 11 guys to get it done out there. Anyone who plays football should know that.

**Bensinger:** Based on advice from Strength and Conditioning Coordinator Rusty Jones, you changed your diet. What did your diet consist of before the change?

**Urlacher:** It wasn't good. (laughs) I ate a lot of fast food. I'd eat it everyday for lunch. It's hard for me to eat well because I eat so much on the run.

**Bensinger:** What's your diet like now?

**Urlacher:** Now, I learned how to eat well on the run. We're eating more meals at work which is good. I don't eat as much junk food. I don't snack as much. My weight is still solid, but my body fat is down. I still eat fast food, but instead of McDonalds I'll go to places where I can get chicken burritos. I don't care about dinner. I'm going to eat what I want for dinner no matter what, Rusty knows that.

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**Bensinger:** Two days before a game, I understand you get rather moody ...

**Urlacher:** Who'd you talk to about all this? (laughs) ... Even in college I was the same way. I just turn into a jerk, man. I don't know what it is. I get moody. In college it was on Thursdays and now it's on Fridays. I get really short and really moody.

**Bensinger:** Why?

**Urlacher:** I think maybe because I'm getting close to gameday and trying to get my mind right ... I have no idea because there's really no reason. I'm usually pretty easy going. I like to joke around.

**Bensinger:** To what extent is it because you just hate the wait?

**Urlacher:** I think you're right. The work for the week has been done. After Friday's practice we're pretty much done. I'm ready to play. I don't want to wait till Sunday and especially Sunday night and Monday night games. It's just too long to wait.

**Bensinger:** So you aren't a fan of the prime-time games ...

**Urlacher:** No, I could do without all of those! I don't like playing late at night. You could sign me up for a 12 o'clock game every week.

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**Bensinger:** You care to disclose the Chicago athlete who won his first

championship in his seventh season?

**Urlacher:** Michael Jordan.

**Bensinger:** What do you think about that?

**Urlacher:** (laughs) There you go. This is my seventh season. That would be nice. It's a little different in football, but I'd like to follow in his footsteps in that aspect. I have to get six of them like he did.

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