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Williams adjusting to NFL life

By **Graham Bensinger**
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Editor's note: Each week during the season, Graham Bensinger will be talking with high-profile NFL figures for ESPN.com's Weekly Conversation. This week he checks in with Texans rookie defensive end Mario Williams.

Graham Bensinger: As Week 8 approaches, how would you describe your time in the NFL thus far?

Mario Williams: A lot of my time is spent watching film. I'm always trying to get ready for the next opponent. That's basically it.

Bensinger: How do you compare what you thought the NFL would be like versus the reality of what it actually is?

Williams: It's not too much different. I made it harder than what it actually is. I would think too much about situations that happened on the field. Then, things that I thought were going to happen didn't.

Williams: I don't have as much time now. I don't have free time like I used

Bensinger: Most people would agree that getting paid a lot of money to do something you love is a great profession, especially at 21 years old, but what's the most difficult part of it?

Williams: All the stress of everything: the money, the football, and the long days.

Bensinger: How different was your life one year ago?

"Well, if I'm the No. 1 pick and have 2½ sacks, how many Pro Bowlers are out there that have fewer sacks than me? I know some of my friends [in the league] either just received their first sack a couple weeks ago or have as many as me."

Mario Williams on criticism that he has only 2½ sacks

to. I'd much prefer having that free time back!

Bensinger: You said the toughest part of going to the NFL is adjusting to the athleticism of the players you compete against. How big of a transition have you found it to be?

Williams: Everybody is athletic, now. It's the best of the best. People recover so much faster after being beat in a pass rush or any one-on-one situation. I've known players in the NFL for a while so I knew that it was going to be this way.

Bensinger: Earlier this season, you were continually switching positions. What was that like?

Williams: I got to learn a lot more. There were many things I was able to recognize and adapt to. It was tough coming in as a rookie and having to do that. Now, we've stopped it. Things have been a lot better because of that.

Bensinger: I hear you are quite the shopper ...

Williams: No! Shopping for what?

Bensinger: Clothes

Williams: I don't even buy clothes. I wear the same stuff over and over again. OK, wait ... I don't wear it over and over again, but I'm not a big shopper. I don't go to the mall and buy everything I see.

Bensinger: When you do go shopping, how much trouble do you have finding your 4X size?

Williams: It's definitely hard to find. Most of the little guys buy big cloths. They end up buying all of them!

Bensinger: What are "big boy shoes?"

Williams: (laughs) Oh, man ... They're rims. They are real big rims. I've got some "big boy shoes."

Bensinger: How do they look?

Williams: They look pretty good. I have 28-inch rims on my Hummer. I got 28s when they first came out. I was going to get 30s, but I never did because I don't like switching them out.

Bensinger: Where'd the name come from?

Williams: I don't know. I wish I knew. It's something I've thought about. I've just always called them "big boy shoes."

Bensinger: How do you judge success?

Williams: Success probably comes with having no regrets. Never having to say I wish I would have done something differently.

Bensinger: What went through your head when you first heard people calling you a cross between Julius Peppers and Lawrence Taylor?

Williams: It's just talk. I don't listen to anything that anybody says. It doesn't matter whether it is good or bad. I've found that it gets you nowhere.

Bensinger: Obviously, you have critics. They say you're the No. 1 pick and only have 2 ½ sacks. What do you say to them?

Williams: Well, if I'm the No. 1 pick and have 2 ½ sacks, how many Pro Bowlers are out there that have fewer sacks than me? I know some of my friends [in the league] either just received their first sack a couple weeks ago or have as many as me. They're Pro Bowlers. My critics look at them as being great players and superstars. My stats are just like theirs. If you want to sit here and play the stat game, compare my stats to some of the Pro Bowlers that are in the league now.

Bensinger: For six months, you've had to endure being asked about the Texans decision to draft you instead of Vince Young or Reggie Bush. How annoying does that get?

"Everybody is athletic, now. It's the best of the best. People recover so much faster after being beat in a pass rush or any one-on-one situation."

Williams: You can't let the questions bother you. I just don't worry about it. I'm certainly not going to now.

Williams on the difference between college and the NFL

Bensinger: It seems like everyone asks it like they're the first person to think of it, right?

Williams: Yeah. I let them make a big deal about it.

Bensinger: Were you more surprised that you were asked [by the media] about getting the nails from your big toes removed or your mouth jewelry?

Williams: My toenails. They're my toes! Besides, I'm not the only player in the world that has mouth jewelry. That's really bizarre. It looks just like Vince Young's.

Bensinger: I heard you told people during draft week that you were Vince Young.

Williams: People thought I was! Everybody kept confusing the two of us ...



Ronald Martinez/Getty Images

Mario Williams has 2.5 sacks through the first six games.

(laughs) I guess we look alike. I have no idea.

Bensinger: What will it be like playing him on Sunday?

Williams: It'll be challenging. He's a quick QB. I can't predict the future though. (laughs)

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