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**Jim Brown's Voice, Again, Is Heard**

MIAMI, Fla. -- Well, I've arrived and I've joined the legions of those who'll chronicle the various Super Bowl XLI doings, and I can't say I've landed here kicking and screaming. A week in South Florida at this time of the year does a body good. Oh, and the game -- Indianapolis vs. Chicago -- may even be a memorable one.

From a local point of view, there's a lot to like about this affair because among the Colts, favored by a touchdown or so, are Syracuse University expatriates Marvin Harrison, Dwight Freeney, Josh Thomas and Ryan LaCasse, each of whom is on Indianapolis' Super Bowl roster, and James Mungro, who will be in Miami but remains on the Colts' injured list.

As it turns out, an Orangeman who pre-dates all of them -- but, alas, who never did make it to a Super Bowl -- is here in town, as well. Jim Brown, the greatest running back who ever lived, will serve as the host of a celebrity golf tournament that will be held to raise both funds and awareness of his Amer-I-Can program.

Too, he'll continue to serve as a flesh-and-blood-and-soul reminder of not only the way things were in the sports arena, but the way they should be. Long an advocate of competitive dignity, and long a critic of the behavior of the contemporary athlete -- particularly, the contemporary African-American athlete -- Jim Brown has a voice that should be heard.

And the other day, that voice was once again speaking the truth as its owner sees the truth.

Just last week, Graham Bensinger, the SU student/WHEN employee/ESPN correspondent, sat down with Brown at Brown's Hollywood Hills home for a 90-minute interview. And during it, Brown had this to say when he was asked by Bensinger why -- during a conversation he had with me a few years ago in that very abode -- he declared that modern black athletes are "the most embarrassing collection of individuals I've ever known":

"What drove me to make that statement? My observation. When you see the Willie Lynch syndrome being acted out. The buffoonery. The things we fought to get away -- the stereotypical gestures. The rolling of the eyes, the dancing, and all the Walt Disney stereotypical racial disgraces. You wonder how these individuals can be so stupid not to understand how the general public is looking at them.

"Yeah, I said that many times and I've said that to them. I don't think that it's cute. I don't think the majority of the fans in the stands think it's cute. I think it's like chasing the shadow of the rabbit instead of the rabbit.

"Entertainment was always used in slave quarters. In fact, they used to take fighters, blindfold them, put everybody in the ring, and let you fight until the last guy was standing. They'd be sitting around the ring in tuxedos, with their women and jewelry. That was entertainment, boss. If you study history, you don't want to emulate the things that were degrading and humiliating. The humiliation was unreal.

"Now, guys are voluntarily playing the 'yes-a-boss' slave. Yeah, that's embarrassing to me. To think in this day and age, these young men would be out there shaking their butts and not knowing much of anything else -- not understanding the dignity of a man and how to play a game and play it hard and let that speak for yourself.

"There's no debating this conversation. Anybody that takes the other side has got to be an enemy. Any man that would teach his son that that's the thing to do should be arrested. Education, family, character, intelligence, humility, okay? These are the things that make a culture live. The Jewish culture has a wonderful thing about education, it has a great thing about family, it has a great thing about unity, hard work, dedication. I would like to say the African-American community should emulate that. Let's refocus."

He has spoken these kinds of words for years, Jim Brown has. And it's my opinion that they need to be spoken -- and just not heard, but listened to -- because we've reached the point of near-shame out there where too many athletes, regardless of hue, are too eager to play the fools on the fields and courts of America.

There has always been much to admire about Jim Brown, flawed though he may be. His conversation with Graham Bensinger is merely further evidence.

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