

Remarks Honoring the 1973 Super Bowl Champion Miami Dolphins
August 20, 2013

The President. Come on over, Coach. Well, welcome to the White House, everybody. Please have a seat. Now, it's mid-August, which means football is in the air. And I love baseball, but SportsCenter is better when you've also got some football on there. [*Laughter*] College football kicks off next week; NFL regular season the week after that. And so today, just to whet everybody's appetite, I am proud to welcome the only undefeated, untied team in NFL history to the White House for the very first time: Give it up for the 1972 Miami Dolphins!

I know this is a little unorthodox four decades after the fact, but these guys never got their White House visit after winning Super Bowl VII. I know some of them are a little harder to recognize these days. They don't have the Afros or the mutton chops, the Fu Manchus. [*Laughter*] But I want to recognize and thank, first and foremost, their outstanding coach, Coach Shula: the legendary Hall of Fame Coach Shula. I want to thank the owners, Stephen Ross, and I want to thank Tim Robbie and everyone from the Dolphins organization who helped make this event possible after all this time.

And I know that some people may be asking why we're doing this after all these years. And my answer is simple: I wanted to be the young guy up here for once. [*Laughter*]

Player. That's cold.

The President. I did have to explain to my staff, who mostly are in their early thirties, what an incredible impact these guys had, including on me, when they were playing. These Dolphins made history back before Super Bowl champs started visiting the White House. The first teams didn't start coming until after 1980. And let's face it, this is also just a fun thing to do. I like doing it as President. I even let the Packers come a couple of years ago, which was hard to do. [*Laughter*] So I decided that it was high time to pay tribute to the NFL's only perfect team and to get Butch and Sundance and the "No-Name Defense" in here too.

In 1972, these guys were a juggernaut. They had a grinding running game that wore opponents down. They became the first team ever with 2,000-yard rushers. They had the league's best offense. They had the league's best defense. They posted three shutouts. They doubled the score of their opponents eight times. And they did most of it after their outstanding Pro Bowl starting quarterback, Bob Griese, broke his leg in week 5. And that brought in backup Earl "Old Bones" Morrall—[*laughter*]—who unfortunately couldn't be here today. As one teammate later said, "Earl couldn't run and he couldn't throw." But Earl could win, and that's what he and the Dolphins did again and again and again.

Winning the Super Bowl, however, was not a foregone conclusion. The Dolphins had to win in Pittsburgh just to make it there. And once they did, they still were slight underdogs to the Redskins in the big game. Plus, they'd lost in the Super Bowl the year before. People were stupidly, doubting whether Coach Shula was going to win the big one. So the pressure was on leading up to the big game. But the key to their victory, I am told, is that Csonka put an alligator in Coach Shula's shower. [*Laughter*]

So that loosened everybody up. The Dolphins went on to win their first of back-to-back titles. And with every year, this team's accomplishments just look better and better. They're one of only two teams to play in three-straight Super Bowls. Seven players have busts in the

Hall of Fame. Coach Shula retired with more wins than any coach in NFL history. Each and every time that perfect record has been challenged, team after team has fallen short.

But these Dolphins didn't always get the credit they deserve. Some said that they only had to play 14 regular season games. I've got to come clean here. A couple a years ago, I hosted the '85 Bears out on the South Lawn. They'd also missed their chance to have a White House visit, and that day I called them the greatest team ever. But, I mean, take it with a grain of salt. They're—[*laughter*—the Bears lost once in their nearly perfect season.

Player. Who beat them that year?

The President. It happened to be the Dolphins. [*Laughter*]

So I think you made your point. [*Laughter*] Nobody can argue with this record. Nobody can argue with what all of you have gone on to do after you hung up the shoulder pads for the last time. Players from this team have gone on to become a minister, a mayor, a doctor, a State senator, a high school counselor, many successful businessmen. Nick Buoniconti helped found the world's most comprehensive spinal cord research center. Some have dabbled in acting. [*Laughter*] I hear somebody serves up a pretty good T-bone as well. [*Laughter*]

So these are all men of accomplishment and character, and it showed on the field and off the field as well. We want to congratulate all of them, and we want to make sure that they're remembered for not only the history that sports fans will always remember, but also for all the countless contributions that they've made in their community as well.

So thank you, again. Congratulations. It's been a great honor to be here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:10 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Timothy J. Robbie, son of Joe Robbie, former owner of the National Football League's Miami Dolphins; James F. "Sundance" Kiick, former running back, Eugene "Mercury" Morris, former running back, Lawrence R. "Butch" Csonka, former fullback, and Nicholas A. Buoniconti, former linebacker, Miami Dolphins.

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