

## RICHARD TODD

Though many of my formative teen years were spent in a household run by a single mother, I was more exposed to sports than I was to fashion or beauty. Mother never wore makeup, and a girlfriend showed me how to shave my legs. But we watched football religiously, watched televised races such as the Indy 500, and watched the Olympics. Even today, the sounds from a baseball game are of comfort as it brings me back to my Grandparent's living room when was a child.

When Joe Namath retired, the Jets brought in Richard Todd, a handsome blonde from Alabama with a strong, chiseled jawline. He had good roots, but in hindsight, could likely never had made a name for himself as he had the unfortunate position of following a legend on and off the field. Except for an impressionable teenage girl. When I first laid eyes on him, the angels sang and my heart fluttered. To be honest, it was more that he reminded me so much of a classmate who was the subject of a years-long schoolgirl crush.

I was instantly hooked. I watched whenever Mother would allow a Jets game. She had her own favorite team, so I could not watch every week as I would have preferred. But when I was able to watch, I was glued to the television. I was a sponge to all things football. As a teenage girl, I became quite adept at football rules and strategy. Yet I watched just for a closeup of my Richard.

In the fall of 1981, I was off to college with my best friend from high school. She did not like football, but begrudgingly allowed me to watch a game now and then. More importantly, my move into a "city" allowed me the exposure to New York City newspapers, the Daily News and The Post. Every Monday, I would trek on down to the newsstand and purchase both papers with the hopes of obtaining a coveted photo.

At some point during my infatuation, I began to take notes - in a notebook. I recorded every game, every play, every stat. I had better stats than the networks. If someone needed to know how many plays it took to make a score in a certain game - I had it. Pass yardage, running totals, sack totals.....I was becoming obsessed. I clipped the articles from the newspapers and saved them in my game book. The photos of Richard became my posters.

During Richard's last full year with the Jets, he was injured late in the season - broken ribs. I was devastated to think that he was done for the year, but he came out again the next week. He had trouble projecting his voice and his audibles were barely audible, but he played. If I could have possibly loved him anymore, this act of strength endeared him even more.

Richard Todd finished out his career with the Jets as a lackluster QB. Again, no one could have followed up Joe Namath and made a good impression. To me, he was my first sport's hero. Now, forty years later, you would be hard-pressed to find anyone who could remember who the QB was that followed up Broadway Joe, but my heart remembers.

*'Make peace with your broken pieces.'*

*Smudge*