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Dorsett's Son Also Rises

Super Bowl: Tennessee free safety, pressed into starting role, will have famous father looking on today.

January 30, 2000 | [BILL BERKROT](#) | [REUTERS](#)

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ATLANTA — The Tennessee Titans consider themselves a blue collar team but they do have a touch of football royalty in free safety Anthony Dorsett, son of Hall of Fame running back Tony Dorsett.

When Dorsett, pressed into a starting role in Super Bowl XXXIV because of an injury to Marcus Robertson, takes the field at the Georgia Dome today, he will be the first son of a Super Bowl starter also to start in the big game.

Tony Dorsett starred for Dallas in Super Bowls XII and XIII in 1978 and 1979, scoring the first touchdown of the Cowboys' 27-10 win over the Denver Broncos in Super Bowl XII.

"When I was a kid running around Dallas I knew I wanted to play football, but it never really hit me that I would be here playing in the biggest game of the year," said the 26-year-old, fourth-year pro. "I never even took my imagination this far."

The baby-faced Dorsett has spent much of his first Super Bowl run-up week fielding questions about his famous father.

Dorsett said he had talked to his dad several times this week. "He just keeps telling me the same thing, 'stay focused during the game, stay focused during the game.'"

The Titans safety insists his father has lost none of his swagger from his glory days with "America's Team," but at the same time the Hall of Famer acts like any proud papa.

"He's pumped, man, he's really excited about it. That's all he keeps talking about. 'Man you are in the Super Bowl.' He can't believe it," Dorsett said.

Having spent his entire childhood around pro football, Dorsett tried to act nonchalant.

"I've been to Super Bowls before. I've been in NFL locker rooms before. I'm not easily moved," he said.

But when pressed, he changed his tune.

"I'm real excited. You probably can't look at me and tell but when it's me and a couple of guys on the team and we get a chance to sit back and reflect we are saying, 'Man, we're in the Super Bowl' and it's grins from ear to ear."

Since Dorsett is not a regular starter he figures to be tested early by St. Louis quarterback Kurt Warner and the Rams' talented corps of receivers. He insists he will be ready.

"Last week was the biggest game of my life and I came in and did fine," he said of his performance in the AFC Championship win over Jacksonville after Robertson went down with a broken leg.

"The week before was the biggest game of my life then, so this is just another one."

Robertson, normally the field general of the Titans defense, plans to do all he can to help his replacement.

"He knows it's going to be difficult, but his attitude is that he's going to go out there and have fun," Robertson said.

"I'm going to try and see the game through him and then make suggestions when he comes to the sidelines."

Defense wasn't always in the cards for Dorsett, who played running back in high school. He made the transition in college.

"When I got to the University of Pittsburgh they had had some guys get in a little bit of trouble and they got kicked off the team and three of them were defensive backs, so they needed DBs. When that happened it was just an easy fit," he recalled.

He says now he was happy to make the change. "I'd rather dish out the pain than take it."

Dorsett is very close to his two younger sisters and considers himself "a family man without a family."

When asked if he would like to have a son playing for the NFL championship some day, Dorsett beamed. "To have a third generation Dorsett in the Super Bowl . . .," he said, contemplating the pride he would feel.

Then, taking in the swarm of reporters badgering teammates with the same questions for the third successive day, Dorsett shook his head and said, "then he'd be sitting here going through the same thing I'm going through."

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