



“BEFORE HONOR IS HUMILITY. REMEMBER TO ALWAYS BE HUMBLE.”



Tuff Harris 25
Crow/Northern Cheyenne
Colstrip High School:
Lodge Grass High School
University of Montana
Professional Athlete, NFL

A typical workweek for Tuff Harris, defensive back for the Tennessee Titans, begins on Wednesday. He shows up at 7 a.m. and starts his routine of practices, meetings, weight training and walkthroughs. Saturdays he has a final practice with his team, then Sunday is game day in the NFL. “If we win,” says Tuff, “we get Mondays off. If not, we come in to watch the film and work out.” It’s a stressful job, he says, if you have the wrong priorities, especially being a free agent, because he’s always got to be at the top of his game. But Tuff is used to pressure and knows it’s all part of what it takes to realize his dream. “You have to understand the sacrifice it takes to get there,” he tells kids who want to play in the pros some day, “and know that you’re going to have to say no to a lot of things, but if that is your goal and that is your desire and that is your heart, then do it...Not just game time or every once in a while, but to do it every day and do it well.”

As a Native American playing in the National Football League, Tuff knows he has an even greater responsibility. “I have to represent my tribe,” he says. “I may be the only Crow and Cheyenne that a person will ever meet, so I need to be a good ambassador.” Tuff is used to being different because of his race, but sports, he says, have always made life easier. “Sports,” he says “are good for integrating and developing friends of different cultures.” Still, Tuff says about making it to the NFL, “I’m the only one from my area who has done this. I didn’t have a template or a guideline from anybody else...It was a lot of pioneering, a lot of figuring things out on my own.”

“BELIEVE IN SOMETHING YOU CAN’T SEE. INCREASE YOUR FAITH. IT WILL ALLOW YOU STAY IN IT EVEN IF YOU CAN’T SEE THE LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL. EVEN THOUGH YOU DON’T SEE IT NOW, IT DOESN’T MEAN IT WON’T HAPPEN. CONSTANTLY PURSUE IT EVEN IN THE MIDST OF STRUGGLE.”

Tuff, who graduated from the University of Montana with a degree in Sociology, was always a good student. He graduated from Colstrip High School with a 3.875 GPA. “I pushed myself there, too,” says Tuff. “I didn’t go straight from being a kid to playing in the NFL,” he says. “Along the way I’ve received a good education, held jobs, made good friends. All those things have helped in my development. All those things have been important in achieving my goals.” Tuff hopes to have a long career in the NFL, then he plans on giving back. “I want to give people hope and let them know that if they have a dream not to let anyone crush it or get in front of it.” In the meantime, Tuff is hard at work pursuing his childhood dream. “Almost every day I’m amazed by what I’m able to do with the gifts I’ve been given,” says Tuff. “Sometimes I take a step back and realize, ‘Wow, I’m playing in the National Football League.’ ”