

Steve Christie

Local Hero

Steve Christie played 15 years in the NFL, competed in two Super Bowls and remains the all-time leading scorer in Buffalo Bills history. He and his wife, Kelly, live in Lakewood Ranch where they work in real estate, support charities both here and in Buffalo, and love living on the Suncoast. It's a long way from Hamilton, Ontario, where he was born in 1967.

How did you become an NFL kicker?

I played in a soccer league at age 5 and loved it. I played for the Canadian Junior World Cup team. But when I was in high school I was approached about kicking a football. My parents discouraged it. I was also playing competitive badminton. We finally agreed I would play on the football team if it was only minimal practice and a Friday night game. I punted as well.

You received a scholarship to kick a football for William and Mary in Virginia and in 1990 you were signed by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. How come you wound up kicking and not punting?

I did both in college. but when I played for Tampa Bay, they had already had a good punter.

Didn't you get to Tampa when former Buffalo Bills quarterback Joe Ferguson was there?

You know it is funny. I signed (a contract) in Tampa around the time he was released. I was so excited to meet him- having watched him with the Bills when I was in Ontario. I saw his cowboy boots at his locker. Thats as close as I got.

You grew up watching the Canadian Football League which many people think is more wide-open and fun. What's the one rule you'd like to see adopted by the NFL?

I personally like multiple players in motion behind the line of scrimmage (opposed to one). More possibilities.

Were you ever involved in any trick plays in the NFL?



STEVE CHRISTIE

We had a great one with the Bills. The punter, Chris Mohr, was the holder. (Wide receiver) Eric Moulds would pretend to run to the sidelines (to leave the field). But when Chris got the ball he stood up and threw it to Moulds. Unfortunately the one time we tried in a game, it caught the referees off-guard and they blew the whistle. It takes a certain head coach to take the risk.

On kick-off returns, did you wince when it appeared you were going to have to get involved and make a tackle?

When I played for Tampa, I was involved in a lot of tackles. Not as many with the Bills since they were a winning team. (Legendary kicker) Gary Anderson from the Pittsburgh Steelers joked that he would kick the ball and immediately run to the sidelines! "There are ten of you out there paid to make the tackle, I'm not one of them!"

The older I got the less excited I was to see that guy break through. One coach chastised me for not making a tackle. He said, "It was nice of you to shake his hand on the way by." I said, "That's all I could touch. I was trying to congratulate him!" (Laughs.)

One time we were playing the Atlanta Falcons and we were up by 35. Deion Sanders broke free and began high-stepping on the way to the end zone, and as he passed me I heckled him, "Now you're only down by 28!"

What did you make of that fad of kicking barefoot?

I tried it once. You have to build up calluses, but for me, I liked wearing shoes. You try that in Buffalo, good luck. Frostbite!

Did you envy kickers who don't have to deal with the weather like you did?

(Special teams coach) Bruce DeHaven and I always joked about what we could have done in a dome stadium. But despite the fact my stats dropped going from Tampa to Buffalo- being close to home and being on a winning team- I wouldn't trade that for the world.

