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Small roles, maybe big rings

By TIM REYNOLDS, The Associated Press

MIAMI -- Rookie Drew Willy went 15-29 as quarterback for the University at Buffalo. Second-year pro Jamey Richard never enjoyed a winning season during his time with the Bulls.

Look at them now.

They're one win away from becoming Super Bowl champions.

"It's pretty crazy," Willy said.

No, neither exactly is a star for the Indianapolis Colts. Including post-season, Richard has appeared in 11 games on special teams for the AFC champions, while Willy spent time as Indy's scout-team quarterback -- not bad work for anyone since, well, the Colts are pretty solid under centre already with four-time MVP Peyton Manning.

They don't mind. Small roles still could lead to a big championship ring if the Colts beat the New Orleans Saints on Sunday night.

"It's been incredible," Richard said. "From draft day two years ago when they called me, I couldn't have been more excited to be part of an organization. When you get called by a team that is a proven winner year in and year out, to go from a program where you've struggled for years into that situation, it's excitement."

For Richard and Willy, it has been a whirlwind transformation, going from a Mid-American Conference program in Buffalo that's trying to build into something -- to, arguably, the elite program in the NFL right now.

And for Willy, working with Manning is another huge plus.

"Learning from the best in the game, it's pretty great every day," Willy said. "This whole opportunity to take all this in, look, some guys won't ever get to go to a Super Bowl after having storied careers and stuff. Being a rookie and being able to be around these great, veteran leaders, it's great to be a part of. I've been truly blessed to be a part of this team."

Phil's pick

Phil Mickelson will pick his Super Bowl winner in the most diplomatic fashion, by doing what he does best.

During the Super Bowl Today Pre-Game Show on CBS, Mickelson will appear in a spot for Callaway by driving two golf balls with the new Diablo Edge driver. One will represent the Saints, the other the Colts.

Longer drive, that'll be Phil's pick.

Callaway also will spend part of Super Bowl Sunday showcasing a new 90-second commercial.

Top coach

The three best coaches at the Super Bowl might be, in no particular order, Jim Caldwell, Sean Payton and Robert Johnson.

Robert Johnson?

The NFL's high school football coach of the year from Mission Viejo High School in California got a trip to the Super Bowl this week, along with a \$5,000 US prize and a \$10,000 grant for his program.

Another part of the perk package was getting to pose alongside NFL commissioner Roger Goodell with his trophy.

The NFL high school coach of the year award was created in 1995.

Undecided Young

Tennessee quarterback Vince Young isn't sure which way to lean for Sunday's Super Bowl.

On one hand, there's the great story that is the once-woebegone Saints. On the other, there's the Colts, whom Young and the Titans see twice a year in division play. Tough call, Young said.

"It'll be a great game," Young said. "Me having friends on both sides of the ball, I just want both teams to go out there and have a good game. If New Orleans wins, it'll be great for the city. I've got to roll with the AFC as well, because they're representing the AFC South."

Out on a limb

Carrie Underwood, who'll sing The Star-Spangled Banner before kickoff, did little to contain her excitement to be part of the spectacle.

"I think it's going to be an awesome game," Underwood said.

That being said, she isn't exactly an awesome oddsmaker when it comes to football. Asked who she's picking, the singing star said she's "51%" for New Orleans.