Life

Kordell Stewart documentary sheds light on experiences with Steelers

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A lot of NFL fans know Kordell Stewart as the mobile quarterback drafted 60th overall by the Pittsburgh Steelers in 1995.

Many fans also know that Stewart may have come along in the wrong era.

The documentary "Kordell Stewart: Slash & Burn," released on HBO Max on Oct. 27, tells the story of the Pro Bowl quarterback's career from draft night, his early days in the NFL, his time as a starting QB for the Steelers, rumors, racism and personal experiences.

Directed by NFL Films and Skydance Sports, the documentary gives an inside look at Stewart's career from himself, teammates, journalists and archival footage.

The opening segment sets the stage of how Stewart got to the Steelers and what happened when he was finally able to start. The segment has bits from head coach Bill Cowher, running back Jerome Bettis and Stewart himself talking about his first three seasons in the NFL.

It also talks about the struggles he had as a Black mobile quarterback in the NFL. They go over the racism Stewart endured with an excellent quote from journalist LZ Granderson about Black athletes: "you have to be twice as good to be considered half as bad."

In the middle of the documentary, the story goes to a rumor that was made up in 1998 that Stewart was arrested for lewd homosexual activities at Schenley Park. The rumor was not true and the documentary goes over perspectives from Cower, Stewart and Bettis about the handling of the rumor from Stewart, the team and the media.

The documentary then goes into the historical relevance of being a queer person in Pittsburgh, where it was particularly looked down upon to be gay. They play news footage from the time period and Granderson becomes a very prominent voice in the documentary because he had a firsthand account of being gay in Pittsburgh.

They then go more in-depth about the rumor's effect on Stewart over those couple of years. After that segment, Stewart is shown visiting Schenley Park for the first time with someone explaining the history of the gay "rumors" that the park is known for. During this point, Stewart gets emotional because of the effect the rumor had on his career and confidence.

The next segment talks about Stewart's benching in 1999 and his time as a wide receiver before coming back to play quarterback once again. The segment moves on to Stewart reminiscing about his childhood, his mother who passed away when he was 11 and how she shaped him to be the person he is today.

Then the documentary gets much happier with the introduction of offensive coordinator Mike Mularkey and how he built the offense around how Stewart shined as a quarterback, before going back to the rumor from 1998 that almost broke Stewart.

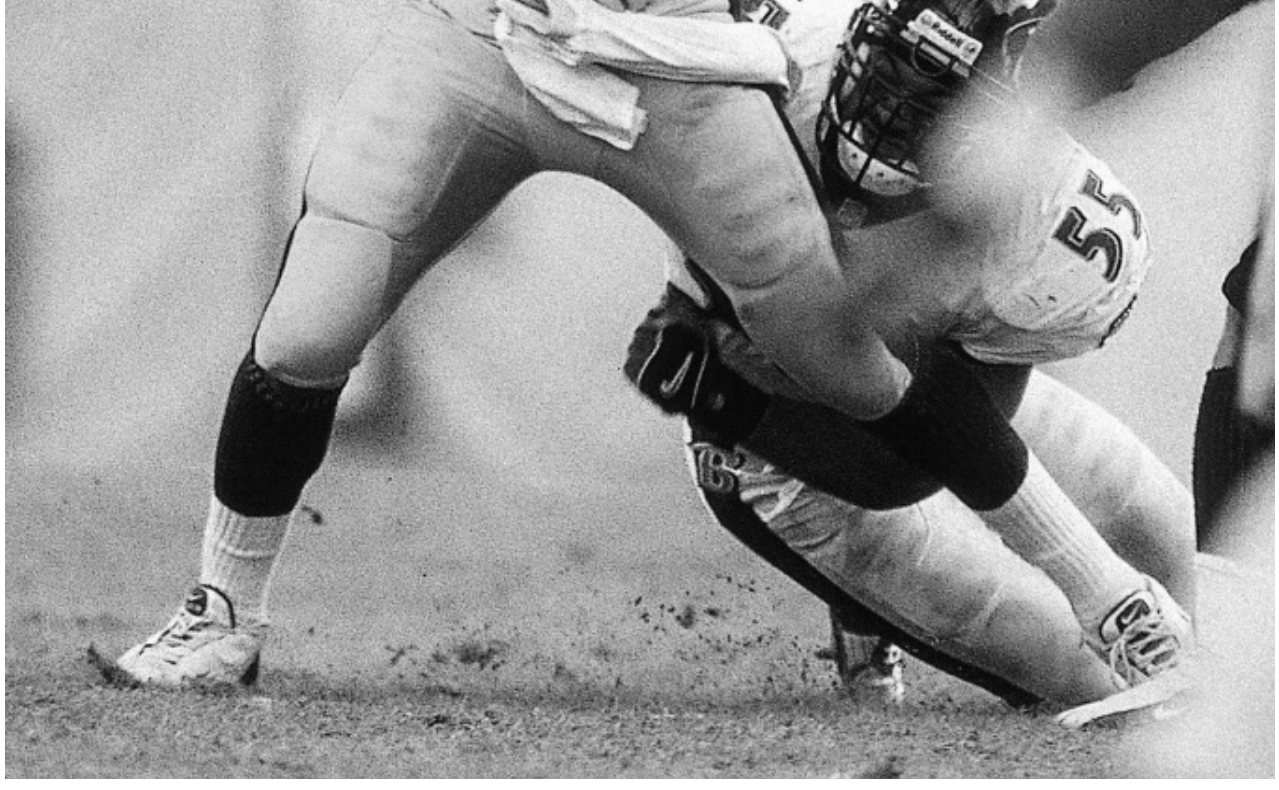
Finally, the documentary ends with a conversation between Cowher and Stewart about how happy he was to coach him and a statement from Stewart.

"I'm not perfect, I'm not what they claim, what they say about those rumors, but a guy that just loved the game," Stewart said. "All the ball that we played growing up, all of us as kids, I was able to take that and put that on the football field in the National Football League."

"If we look at the game today, tell me what do we see, who is that out on the football field, what are they looking for?" Stewart added. "So if I had to do it again, I promise you I will make a run at it to do it identical the same way again."

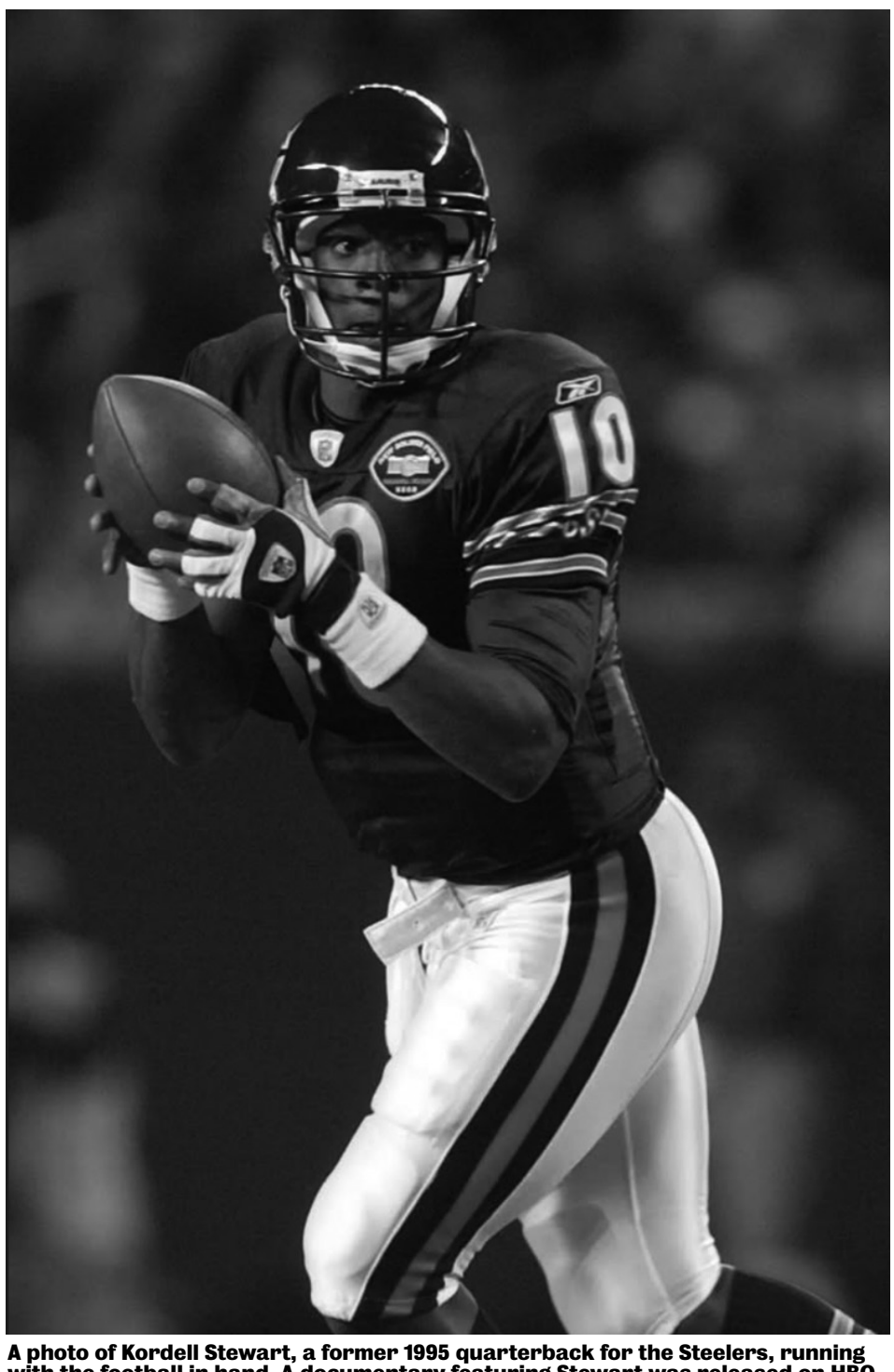
The documentary does a great job reflecting on the highs and the lows of Stewart's time as the Steelers quarterback, from getting drafted, the early rise, racism, rumors, lows and highs again. Stewart's, Cowher's, Bettis's, Bob Pompeani's and Granderson's perspective on his career on and off the field bring insight that hasn't been uncovered before now and really puts into perspective the legacy Stewart has made for himself.

Rating: 4.5/5



A photo of Kordell Stewart, the former 1995 quarterback for the Steelers, looking to toss the ball. A documentary featuring this star player was released on HBO Max.

PHOTO COURTESY OF @PLAYERSTRIBUNE ON INSTAGRAM



A photo of Kordell Stewart, a former 1995 quarterback for the Steelers, running with the football in hand. A documentary featuring Stewart was released on HBO Max.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CHICAGO BEARS HQ ON FACEBOOK

SUBOG Weekly Events:

October 19th – November 8th

November 4th – GTA VI Trivia @ 7:00 pm in the Student Union Theatre

November 5th - Coffee House @ 4:30 pm at the Benton Museum

November 6th – Jersey Day @ 6:00 pm in SU 325

November 7th – Harvest Fest @ 12:00 pm on the Student Union Mall

November 8th – Amazing Race @ 11:00 am across campus

Any questions? Email subog@uconn.edu