

Win over Cardinals was Bears' signature game

"Now, we, you know, we just, we, we, the Bears were what we thought they were. What, what we thought they were. We played them in the preseason. Who the hell takes a third game of the preseason like it's (expletive) (Expletive) We played them in the third game, everyone played three quarters, the Bears are who we thought they were! And that's why we took the damn field!"

"Now (slamming the podium), if you want to crown them, then crown their ass! But they are who we thought they were! And we let 'em off the hook!"

— then-Cardinals coach Dennis Green, Oct. 16, 2006



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MIAMI • In the hours after the Chicago Bears stunned the Cardinals on "Monday Night Football" back in October, two brothers rehashed the game.

Bears special-teamer Brendon Ayanbadejo had a bye week after Chicago grabbed the improbable 24-23 win, so before

going home to San Diego, he spent the night at the house of sibling Obafemi, a fullback for the Cardinals.

"Since he was the older brother and he always has to win," Brendon said, "he settled for moral victories that night."

Said Obafemi, "Brendon used the words, 'We definitely felt we stole one.' And I definitely felt they stole something from me."

Without the 'unbelievable events of that game, though, the Bears would have been, without their signature game in a 2006 season that has put



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with Internet-fueled popularity that will go down in the annals of the greatest meltdowns in league history.

If the Bears win Sunday, NFL commissioner Roger Goodell will indeed have to crown their backsides.

"It cracked me up," Bears linebacker Lance Briggs said. "I was on the 'Best Damn Sports Show' the next day and we laughed about it a lot."

The Bears, though, insist they weren't offended by the comments. Many said they re-

them in Super Bowl XLII. And it would have robbed the NFL of Dennis Green's memorable tirade, the one

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spected Green for being so honest.

That was Obafemi Ayanbadejo's reaction.

"The best thing about that was that Denny was being his real self," Ayanbadejo said. "He wasn't censoring his emotions and he epitomized what we all felt. The way he expressed himself is going to go down in history as one of the greatest let-it-go, say-what-I-feel postgame comments."

"People quote him now. It was bigger than football."

The germination of Green's tirade came earlier in the week. Not only were the Cards reeling from close losses against St. Louis and Kansas City, but the Bears were rolling to an undefeated record. Most considered the Monday night matchup a blowout-in-waiting.

Bears coach Lovie Smith, asked about the Cardinals' preseason win in Chicago, all but dismissed the Cards' performance in that game.

Smith's reasoning made sense because the game did not count. But starters from both sides played into the third quarter and the Cards handled Chicago. They also made life miserable enough for Bears quarterback Rex Grossman that fans booed Grossman throughout the game — setting the stage for Grossman's problems in October.

Then the Monday night game unfolded the way it did, with Grossman turning the ball over six times and the Cardinals leading 20-0 at

play hard I promise you we will win this game," said injured Bears safety Mike Brown, whose fumble return for a touchdown sparked the comeback. "There was no panic. Everyone believed it."

"The reason was because we knew that we were a good team, but also the Cardinals ... they didn't know how to finish."

Two fumble returns for touchdowns and Devin Hester's 83-yard touchdown punt return later — along with a missed field goal at the end of the game by Arizona's Neil Rackers — set the stage for Green.

Green hasn't talked to Arizona reporters since his dismissal, but he told the Chicago Tribune last week he thought the comparisons coming into the game between the Bears and their juggernaut 1985 counterparts were "premature."

The game didn't change his mind.

"I was very frustrated after losing three straight close games and this was a fourth," Green said. "I was frustrated. At some point, everybody has to blow off some steam."

And, apparently, drop himself into NFL lore.

"You can't really avoid (the speech)," Cardinals quarterback Matt Leinart said, revealing a small smile. "It's all over the place."

The game was the first real sign of the warts Grossman carries with him to this day.

But, Bears receiver Mushin Muhammad said, the comeback also "lets you know what kind of team you have and the kind of fight that's in

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