

# Tillman still marches to a different drum

**P**at Tillman knew he couldn't be all he could be as a Cardinal. So he joined the Army.

I know what you're thinking. You quit your midnight shift at Circle K to go through boot camp. You don't give up NFL paychecks for \$1,000 bucks a month.

But when I heard that Tillman was retiring for a life in drab khaki, I wasn't surprised.

That's Pat. Tillman is not like us. Or anybody else we know.

Which makes him such a breath of fresh air.

How many professional athletes would leave a \$1 million contract offer on the table to



Scott Bordow  
TRIBUNE

risk getting their head shot off in Afghanistan? How many people would turn their back on that kind of money?

Tillman, though, always has been a different breed of cat. He comes across as a California beach boy with the long hair and fondness for addressing everyone as "dude."

Tillman often played up to Please see **BORDOW**, Page C10

# BORDOW: Tillman still marches to different drum

From Page C1

his image. While he was playing at Arizona State, he once climbed a light tower at Sun Devil Stadium to pose for a photo for Sports Illustrated.

When a reporter from California asked him about his 3.84 GPA at ASU, Tillman replied, "Yeah, but we don't need to shout that from the rooftops."

Then there was the biography Tillman filled out as a Sun Devil freshman. He listed rock climbing, snow skiing and water skiing as hobbies.

Interesting pursuits. Too bad it wasn't true.

"I put that stuff in to make myself sound a little more interesting than I was," Tillman said. "I have done those things before. Just not too often."

What most people fail to understand about Tillman is that the surfer dude persona runs just skin deep. He was raised by an attorney and a teacher. He graduated summa cum laude from ASU in December of 1997. In 3 1/2 years.

Most athletes think summa cum laude is Latin for "Where's the beer?"

Tillman once told me he planned to use his marketing degree to make \$1 million by the time he was 30 years old.

"I don't have a real set plan," he said. "But I believe in reaching for the sky. That way, even if I don't reach it, I'll get close. I have lofty goals for myself."

"Does it count if you make \$1 million in the NFL?" I asked.

"No," he replied. "It's not a challenge."

I can imagine Tillman thinking about his place in life after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11. That day, he said, "The importance of football ranks zero compared to what happened. When you compare it . . . we're worthless. We're actors."

Many athletes expressed the same sentiment. Not many of them followed their conscience.

As much as I admire Tillman's decision, I also have to laugh. I was going through some old newspaper articles on Tillman when I found this quote:

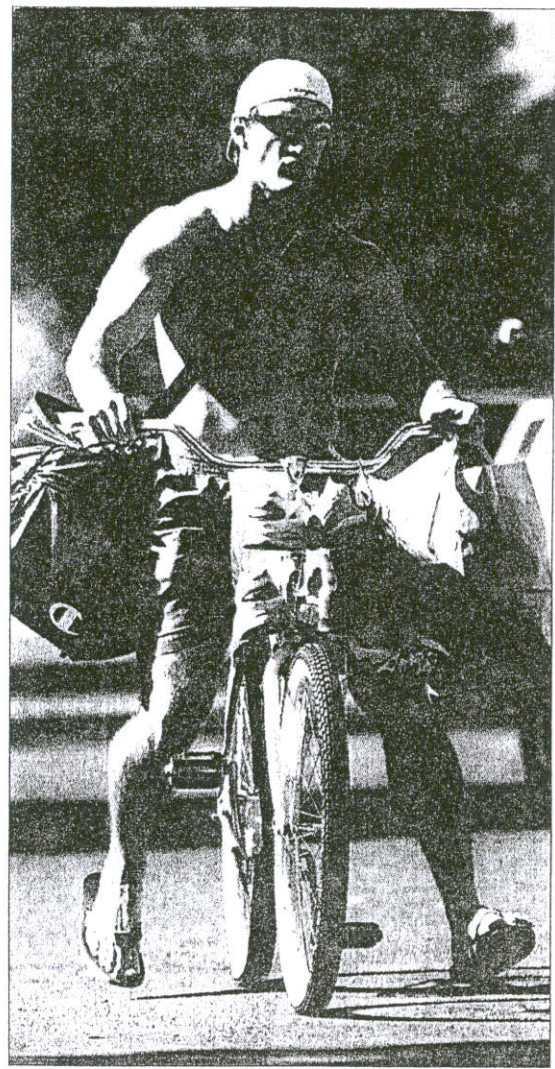
"I want to do what I want," Tillman said in 1996. "I don't want to live under anybody else's rules."

So he joined the Army?

But that's Tillman.

The world zigs, he zags.

— Scott Bordow can be reached at (480) 898 6598 or at sbordow@aztrib.com via e-mail.



BRIAN FITZGERALD/TRIBUNE

Arizona Cardinals safety Pat Tillman arrives at training camp last summer in Flagstaff.