

Odd Couple

Traditionally, pro football and basketball scouts have said, in effect, that the Ivy League is a nice place to visit, but they wouldn't want to recruit there. Cream puff schedules, an inferior, gentlemanly, old-school-tie kind of competition that would make Coach Woody Hayes of Ohio State just plain sick to his stomach. The chances of the basketball scouts signing up a Rhodes scholar and pro football getting hooked on a young man who aspires to the ministry would have been

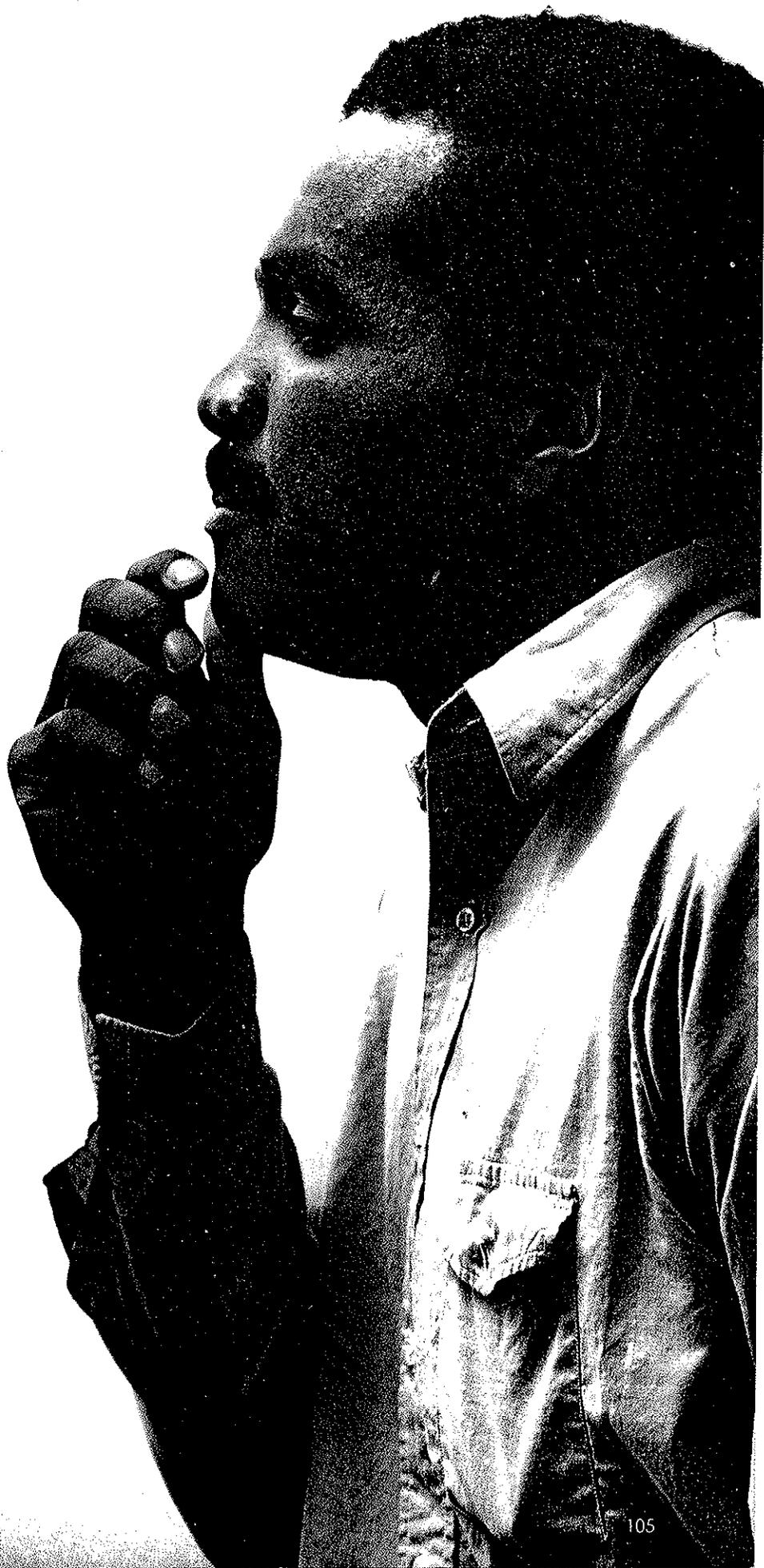
roughly a thousand-to-one in any Las Vegas future book.

But then came Bill Bradley, Princeton's six-foot-five scholar who now stars for the Knicks, and Calvin Hill of Yale, at the top of the NFL in rushing as a running back for Dallas, and what have you got? A lot of pro scouts eating ivy for breakfast—and the Rhodes scholar (Bradley) and the Reverend-to-be (Hill) comparing notes on their experiences on these and the following pages.

Bradley: Do you get needled much in pro football about being a product of the Ivy League?

Hill: Yeah. You know, it was especially bad at first because I went out to that All-Star camp, and I lost two valuable weeks of learning time. Then I came back and I was pretty far behind. And the guys would joke and say, "Well, we don't have to worry about you, because you went to Yale." Then, in a game against Philadelphia, I lined up in the wrong formation. Craig Morton called time out and he was pretty ticked off, 'cause we don't want to use any more time outs than we have to. We came back into the huddle and Hayes looked at me and said, "Boy, I don't think you went to Yale. I think this is all a publicity stunt." It's that kind of needling, pretty much. Say, Bill, how about you? You probably went through the same thing, coming from Princeton. When you first broke into the league, how did they react to you?

Bradley: Well, the same now as then. Not much was said, you know. There were no intimidating remarks about my background or anything like that. In fact, some of the people I played



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against were encouraging. They were aware of my situation. They would say, "Just relax and play."

Hill: That's great.

Bradley: And that really was an important thing to me. One of the guys who did this, of course, was Sam Jones, who was like in his tenth year.

Hill: A gesture like that you don't forget.

Bradley: No, you really don't. I never will. Calvin, that leads us to this, then. How have you proved yourself to the veterans on the team?

Hill: Well, I think the guys'll accept you for what you can do. I got hazed just like the other rookies, but no more so. And I think I was lucky in the sense that I missed most of the real concentrated hazing when I was out in Chicago. Which brings up something along the same lines that I'd like to ask you. Bill, do pro basketball players needle each other much on the court? In your case, especially, because of your educational background.

Bradley: No, Calvin, that's not really a professional thing. I mean, at least in basketball. There's very little talk on the floor, and when it's done, it's obviously done for a purpose. And if you're aware of the purpose, why, then, whatever is said is meaningless. But getting back to you. You're going to school in Dallas. What school, and are you still studying for the ministry?

Hill: Yeah, I'm studying at Perkins School of Theology. I'd like to eventually get into church administration work. I'm not sure I'm cut out to be a minister or have charge of a church. But

eventually I'd like to get up in the administration, you know, the hierarchy.

Bradley: Does studying theology and playing football conflict in your daily schedule in any way, and are there any philosophical conflicts in your mind?

Hill: No. I only have classes on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, and the classes are in the morning. We practice and work out in the afternoon, so it's no problem there.

Bradley: That's a pretty heavy load, though. Classes three times a week and football every day.

Hill: Well, at Yale I had classes throughout the week.

Bradley: What about the philosophical conflicts?

Hill: Well, I don't think that there's any philosophical ambiguities in playing football and studying for the ministry. I mean, I don't necessarily think that turning the other cheek is the only implication of Christianity. As a matter of fact, I think that football teaches a lot of things. You know, self-discipline, preparation before a big game, things that are going to benefit me living in this society.

Bradley: You said something interesting about basketball being as rough in some ways as football. Do you really think that?

Hill: Yes. I think it's even worse, because you're constantly running and guys are elbowing, and you don't have any pads, except on your knees. I think the big thing is that you're constantly running and you're constantly in a state of fatigue. I think that increases the chance of injury. In football you have three downs and four downs and if you don't make the first down, you come out

and you can rest. But, Bill, the physical side of basketball hasn't changed much over the years. If you could, what improvements would you make, if any, in the uniform or equipment? For example, in a frivolous vein, should basketball players wear any kind of protection or padding, like shoulder pads or head gear . . .

Bradley: No, no.

Hill: . . . face masks?

Bradley: I wouldn't make any change in the equipment. I think it's fine. Maybe somebody could design shoes or socks so your feet wouldn't get tired, but I don't think that's possible when you play over 100 games a year.

Hill: How many sneakers do you wear out in a season, and who has to pay for them?

Bradley: Well, I suppose this would be a good time to talk about the sneakers I endorse, but since I don't endorse any, I can say from an unbiased position that I usually wear out about 10 a year. And the club pays for them, of course. I have to have special arches put in my shoes, so the process is a rather long one. The shoes are bought in St. Louis, worked on out there and then shipped here. I'm sorry I can't tell you what brand I use.

Hill: I guess you have to stay a couple of shoes ahead, then. How do you suppose pro basketball would be if you only played one game a week like we do? Do you suppose there would be any changes in the style of play or technique or whatever?

Bradley: I don't think there would be any changes in the style or technique. It would be much harder to stay in shape though. Much harder. I think that if you only played one day a week,

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you'd have to practice at least four or five of the other days.

Hill: I see.

Bradley: And practices after the beginning of the season are primarily to sharpen offense or defense or to talk about what's going to happen the next day, not to get into condition. Conditioning isn't the question. I actually think that it's a better game because there are two or three games a week. The schedule is often, and maybe rightly, complained about because it's so long. I really wonder, though, if it's not the way the schedule is arranged—we play four games in four different cities in five nights—that's involved and not the length of the schedule or the number of games. I'm sure if you played four games in four nights in one city, that would be less of a drain than traveling 4,000 miles in between. Calvin, getting back to Yale, how did the recruiting of football players change during your four years there? Was there any greater outreach or pressure? How do you describe your involvement in it during the time at Yale and now?

Hill: Well, that's one thing I like about the Ivy League. There's no real great pressure. There's some, of course. I mean, a senior is contacted by some sort of . . . well, in many cases, a wealthy alumnus, and he's told that he should go to Yale because he can meet so-and-so and other important people. Then, he might be told that, besides, we give our Yale boys good jobs during the summer. But it's not like you have a coach coming to visit your house. There is some pressure,

though. For instance, Szaro, the guy from New York City who's up at Harvard now. He was approached by, I think, Robert Kennedy. When you have very important people coming to you and telling you to consider their school, it sort of puts a little bit of pressure on you.

Bradley: Calvin, where do you get your personal motivation?

Hill: I think you have to get it from yourself. You have to have a desire to succeed in whatever you're doing. I think everybody has some sort of instinct—you might call it the drum major instinct—to be out in front, to be leading the parade, and that's what you work for, really. I think that over the course of a season you try to mesh this instinct into a team feeling. But the basic motivation is a personal one. You want to succeed and you want to do well. It's almost a selfish instinct, really. It's personal, you know. It's just a question of limiting your personal wants or allowing them to be utilized in a team effort.

Bradley: Right. Calvin, can you trace for me the good things that have happened to you this year? You know, did you expect to be drafted in the first round? Did you expect to be able to perform at the level you have this year? That sort of thing.

Hill: Well, I expected to be drafted, but I thought if I was drafted in any of the first five rounds I would be lucky. Being drafted first was a complete shock to me. When I thought about it I had to check myself and sort of make sure everything was real. I almost fell out of my chair. I thought I must be dreaming or something like that, it seemed so

unreal. I sort of walked around New Haven for a couple of days trying to let it all soak in.

Bradley: That's surprising. Well, that leads me to my next question. When did it occur to you that you might play pro football? Was this an ambition of yours when you enrolled at Yale? If it was, did you consider one of the more obvious football schools in the Big Ten or on the West Coast?

Hill: Well, if you're a football player, you think about playing professional ball. But I think I realistically began to think about it in my junior year at Yale, when I saw other people who I'd played against or who I'd watched or who I'd practiced with going out for professional ball, and in some cases their making it, and in most cases, their coming back to me and telling me that I could make it.

Bradley: Calvin, are there any good prospects playing in the Ivies this season that you know about and would want to call attention to?

Hill: Yeah, I think there are. Quite naturally, there's Marinaro at Cornell. I think Yale has one, too, in Don Martin, who's only a junior right now. He's a halfback, but I think he's a good professional prospect.

Bradley: Listen, there are a lot of good basketball players scattered around pro football. Could the Cowboys make up a team that might want to play the Knicks . . . a scrimmage game or something.

Hill: Well, we have Ron Widby, who was a fine basketball player at Tennessee. He was All-America or All-Southeast Conference I think. And Cornell Green was All-America or something in 1960 at Utah State.

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Bradley: Calvin, how do you like living in Texas? Did you have to make much of an adjustment to Dallas?

Hill: Well, you know, after going to school in New York and New Haven, it's certainly a big change. But it's been a pretty pleasant adjustment. Of course, I'm in sort of an enviable position, in that I'm a Cowboy. Otherwise things might not be as pleasant.

Bradley: Right. Well, last question. How does your playing football fit into your ambitions beyond the sport itself?

Hill: Well, you know, if I do become a minister and follow up on what I'm doing, the fact that I'm known, the fact that people have heard of me, is going to make them want to listen to what I want to say. Take Bill Bradley, for instance. If he wants to become a banker like his father is, and he walks into a bank and says, "I'm Bill Bradley," people make the connection with Bill Bradley of Princeton and New York Knicks basketball fame. They're probably going to want to talk about what you've done in sports. It sort of opens the door.

Bradley: Right.

Hill: And then if there's anything to you, or to what you have to say, by opening the door you really let them know what you want to say. But, Bill, this brings up a question I guess you've been asked a lot of times. I read once that you would like some day to run for President. Is that true? If it is, can you find a spot for me on your ticket?

Bradley: I think that's a question that doesn't even . . . shouldn't even be answered. Right now my

main concern is playing basketball, and it's what I like to do, enjoy doing, and it requires pretty much all of my time.

Hill: Bill, your schooling was in political science, though, wasn't it? Are you still interested or active in politics?

Bradley: No, I studied history—American history, European history, and social science in general—and I'm still very interested in it.

Hill: And did you have an active role in any recent political campaigns or anything?

Bradley: No, I had no active role.

Hill: Bill, in football you hear the crowd, but you don't have to look them in the eye. What effect does it have on you, the fans being right on top of you like they are in basketball?

Bradley: I think that the fans in basketball are really in a rather unique position, particularly when you compare it with other major sports, like football, baseball, hockey, because they can see the human emotion that takes place on the floor, and they can see people running around in short pants, and they can see the pain, and they can see the tension mount in the faces. That is, unless you're in the top row of the Garden. And you can usually get a much better understanding of the human element than when you are in the top layer of Shea Stadium and can barely see the numbers or the players. So I think that's a very real difference from the other sports.

Hill: How do you respond to the crowd, though? I mean, do they ever bother you?

Bradley: Well, I think the crowd in New York really helps our team, and I know all the guys become

much more enthusiastic. It's all part of the psych process, the enthusiasm you have when you play the game, how you feel when you do something on the floor that's correct and the crowd responds. Not only that, but the crowd in New York is very knowledgeable in that it responds to the right things. When we play in other cities, they really don't recognize the good basketball moves. They will only cheer when someone scores a basket, and they often criticize the referee unnecessarily. They're just letting off steam. They're not watching the game and applauding when the game merits it.

Hill: Is there ever a situation on the road in which the crowd bothers you, disturbs you, or breaks your concentration? The hostility of the crowd?

Bradley: No, I think that most people, at least when they reach the professional level, aren't bothered by an opposing crowd. The only thing a crowd can do, in my opinion, is help a team. You expect the opposing noise. I'd much rather play in front of a crowd of 15,000 hostile fans than play before 2,000 apathetic fans.

Hill: That's interesting. Bill, is there any arena in the league where the crowd gets unusually unruly or vulgar or personal?

Bradley: Well, most of the places we play in the league are very good arenas, and part of being a good arena is to be slightly removed from the crowd; although you're very close and the human element is evident, you're still removed. Probably the poorer arenas in the league are Chicago, Atlanta and Boston. Of those three, only Boston has

crowds that could even possibly be considered to be hostile or large enough to generate any kind of enthusiasm. So Boston would have to be the place that comes closest to having the kind of crowd you describe.

Hill: Bill, after the long layoff, when did you accept yourself as a pro and feel that you could play the game, or was it a gradual adjustment without any sharp turning point?

Bradley: Well, it was a gradual adjustment in the sense that I was learning slowly and learning every day. I suppose the important thing was getting to play regularly, which was at the end of last year. And that's really important in a sport which has so many games in a season. Playing time is so important because it's only when you play in game conditions that you get a real sense of the flow of the game, which is what, I think, I have finally gotten.

Hill: What was the toughest adjustment for you? Was there anything that surprised you when you started to play with the Knicks? Like the body contact or the roughness?

Bradley: No, the body contact didn't surprise me at all, and the roughness didn't surprise me. I think probably the hardest thing for me when I joined the team was learning to play defensive guard. I don't think that I ever really mastered defensive guard, particularly against the smaller guards, because they're so much quicker than I am and could easily go around me. I would have to give them more room on defense, and if they were any kind of good shooters, they could shoot me out.

Hill: Are there any parallels that

you can see, Bill, that can be drawn between pro football and pro basketball?

Bradley: I've never been through a football training camp, Calvin, but I think I read where you said that the training camp with Dallas was no more difficult than the training camp at Yale.

Hill: Right.

Bradley: What I read in "Paper Lion" and "Instant Replay" is my information on what it's like to be a pro football player, so I really don't know how it is from a technical aspect. I think that one area of comparison is the human aspect of the game, particularly for a person who enters the game the first year. I mean, there is the same amount of learning that has to go on. I think in some ways your sport is better laid out. You learn plays and you learn maneuvers that you have to do. Ours is a much more intuitive thing, I think.

Hill: I guess emotionally you can't afford to reach a peak the way we do in pro football.

Bradley: Yeah, this is why the other people on the basketball team are so important, because in pro football you reach a peak and you can do a lot individually. You have a job to do, everyone has a specific job to do. But in pro basketball, the jobs are often interchangeable. I mean, obviously, I'm not going to play center, or Willis isn't going to play guard, but still, we have to really kind of mold ourselves together out there, and not only in the game itself, but also in the preparation for the game. Since we travel so much we're together 18 hours a day, and that's where attitude and spirit and a real feeling of respect and affection for the other

people that you're with is so important. When that kind of situation develops, the going out to play three or four nights a week becomes a collective kind of expression, in every sense of the word, instead of something you have to peak yourself for.

Hill: What do you do in the off-season?

Bradley: Two summers ago I worked in Harlem for the street academies, and last summer I worked for the poverty program in Washington. Those are the two things I've done in my two summers playing professional basketball.

Hill: Bill, this is the last one. Where do you go after pro basketball? Coaching, teaching, politics, where?

Bradley: I'm really not thinking that far ahead, Calvin. Right now I'm still learning, and I could go right down the list. Just like you could. ♡