



THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON

JUN 26 2002

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Mr. William H. Lyster ^{B6}
[REDACTED]
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Dear Bud,

Thanks so much for sending along the article from
the *Tribune*. I had not seen it.

You are quite right—this fellow, Pat Tillman,
sounds, like a world-class American. We're lucky to have
him.

I hope things are going well for you.

With my best wishes,

Sincerely,

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Marching to his own ideals

Idealize anyone in sports these days and you're setting yourself up to look foolish. Idolize and you're almost guaranteed to regret it.

And then right when you've finished wading through another week, another scandal and another reason to tell your kids to take down the latest poster they've tacked up on their wall, there's the story of Pat Tillman.

Tillman is the Arizona Cardinals safety who last week told his team thanks, but he was walking away from pro football and a multiyear, multi-million-dollar contract offer to join the Army Rangers, elite soldiers who throughout U.S. history have specialized in dangerous missions and a force that currently is playing a major role in Afghanistan.

At 25, Tillman said he was joining because he was approaching the Rangers' age limit of 28. He told this to his agent and his coaches and the general manager of the Cardinals, the people he had to tell.

He did not grant interviews or answer calls. Not because he hates talking or hates sports-writers, but because Tillman, and his younger brother, Kevin, a minor-league baseball player who also wants to join the Rangers, do not believe they merit any special consideration or attention.

Ken Caminiti says he's not doing interviews anymore either. After acknowledging at length in last week's issue of Sports Illustrated that he formerly used steroids, including the season in which he was named the National League's most valuable player, Caminiti told ESPN Radio he felt used and sandbagged by the magazine. He said he was shocked by the reaction his comments elicited inside baseball and across the country. Caminiti apologized to base-



AP photo by Brian Fitzgerald
Pat Tillman is an individualist, whether blking to Cardinals' training camp or enlisting in the Army Rangers.

ball for his comments, recanted some of the things he said in the magazine (despite lauding the article's author) and somehow managed to make himself sound even more of a weasel than he was in the first place. So now he's not talking, he said.

Jose Canseco's not talking either, except, of course, to say that you should buy his tell-all book when it comes out. Then you can bet he'll be talking in order to hawk as many as he can.

After that he no doubt will stop talking because, like Dennis Rodman once did, he will discover he has misquoted himself and taken himself out of context.

Caminiti had an even more unusual take on such things when asked by Dan Patrick about his SI quote that "at least half the guys are using steroids."

"I don't know if I mentioned half or not," Caminiti said. "That is something that might have been thrown in my face or in my mouth. That's not true.

That's a false statement. I didn't mean half ..."

That's the easy way out, of course. Just claim some reporter has taken advantage of you after you have spilled your guts in several lengthy interview sessions and you can bet a good number of people will not only forgive your sins but make a martyr out of you to boot.

Any way you look at it, it's still cowardice.

Then there's Tillman, who turned down a five-year, \$9 million offer sheet from the St. Louis Rams as a free agent last year out of loyalty to the Cardinals. Now he demonstrates an integrity and courage that comes not just from volunteering to fight the Taliban but from answering to his own ideals.

You might be tempted to think the guy is a little light on the uptake for walking away from the prime of a lucrative career, not to mention leaving a new wife at home. But this is a man who graduated summa cum laude after 3 1/2 years at Arizona State with a 3.82 grade-point average in marketing, not some crazy kid who enlists in the Army on a drunken dare.

A seventh-round draft pick thought to be too small and too slow for the NFL, Tillman has made a life of proving people wrong, setting a Cardinals franchise record with 200 tackles in 2000, and following his heart.

In exchange for lining up for Uncle Sam, Tillman will be paid little more than \$1,000 a month. He says he wants to return to football in three years.

You wouldn't want to be the unsuspecting flanker who comes across the middle on him after his hitch is up. You wouldn't want to be the enemy now.

Either way we're not likely to hear about it from Tillman.