

FANTASY FOOTBALL It's not too late to dominate *Page 38*

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THE PLAYOFFS

A World Series to savor

Game-day poundings turn Sunday's gods into aching mortals on Monday morning. **Jeremiah Trotter** knows that all too well—boy, does he know.
By Dennis Dillon

'Like I've been shot out of a cannon. Every part of your body hurts. You can barely walk. It's the worst feeling ever. And it only gets worse throughout the year.'

—Rams defensive end Anthony Hargrove, on how he feels Monday mornings

Isn't this a sight? Carrying his 18-month-old son, Josiah, in his right arm and holding on to the rail with his left hand, Jeremiah Trotter descends the stairs at his townhouse in Marlton, N.J. There's no hitch in his giddyup. No grunts of pain. Nary a grimace.

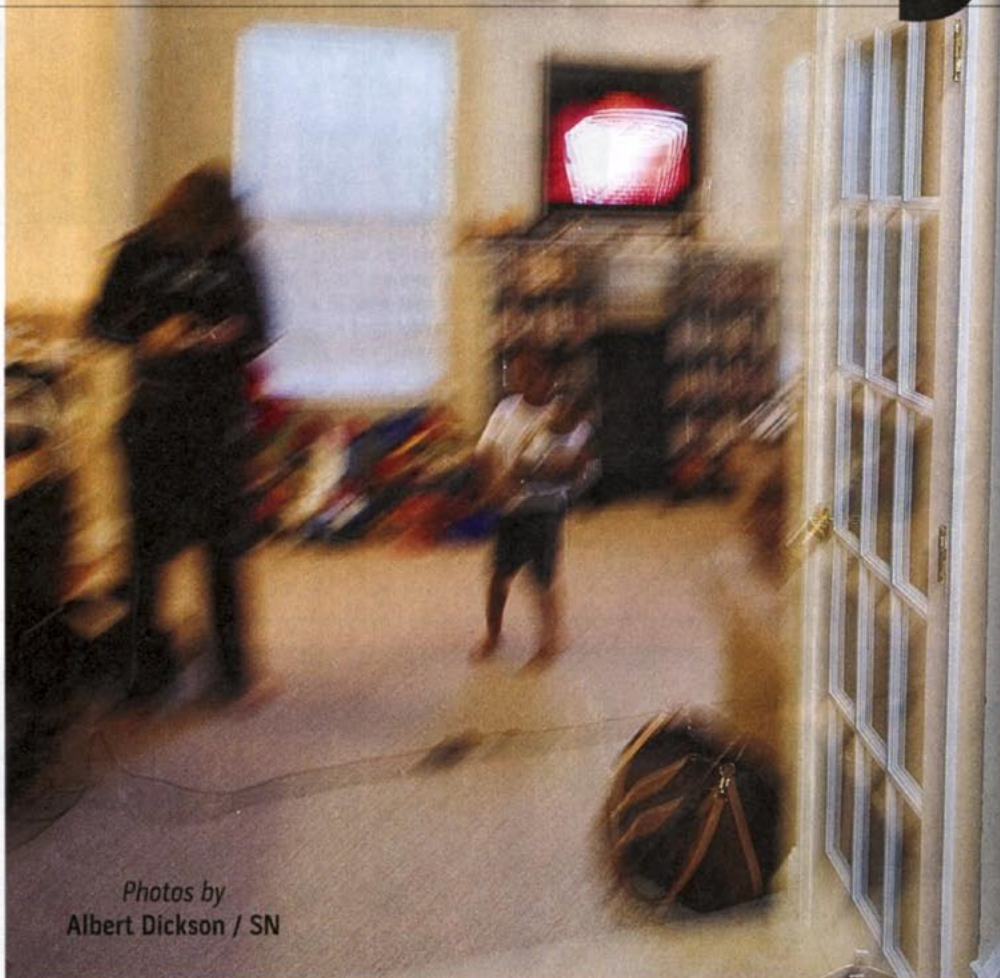
This is a picture to preserve.

Forget the family photo album. Blow

this baby up and hang it inside the training room at the NovaCare Complex, the Eagles' practice facility.

Monday morning usually isn't this kind to Trotter, the Eagles' starting middle linebacker. The day after the team's opener in Houston, during which his right knee was hurt in a pileup in the first quarter and his right ankle was rolled up on in the third quarter, Trotter barely could shuffle his feet. It took him five minutes to hobble from the family room to the front door, a distance of about 30 feet. He had to brace himself along the way against the basement door, a table and a wall. By the time he had driven across the Walt

NFL Case of the Monday



Photos by
Albert Dickson / SN

Whitman Bridge and arrived at the practice facility for treatment, he thought he would need crutches to get from the parking lot to the entrance.

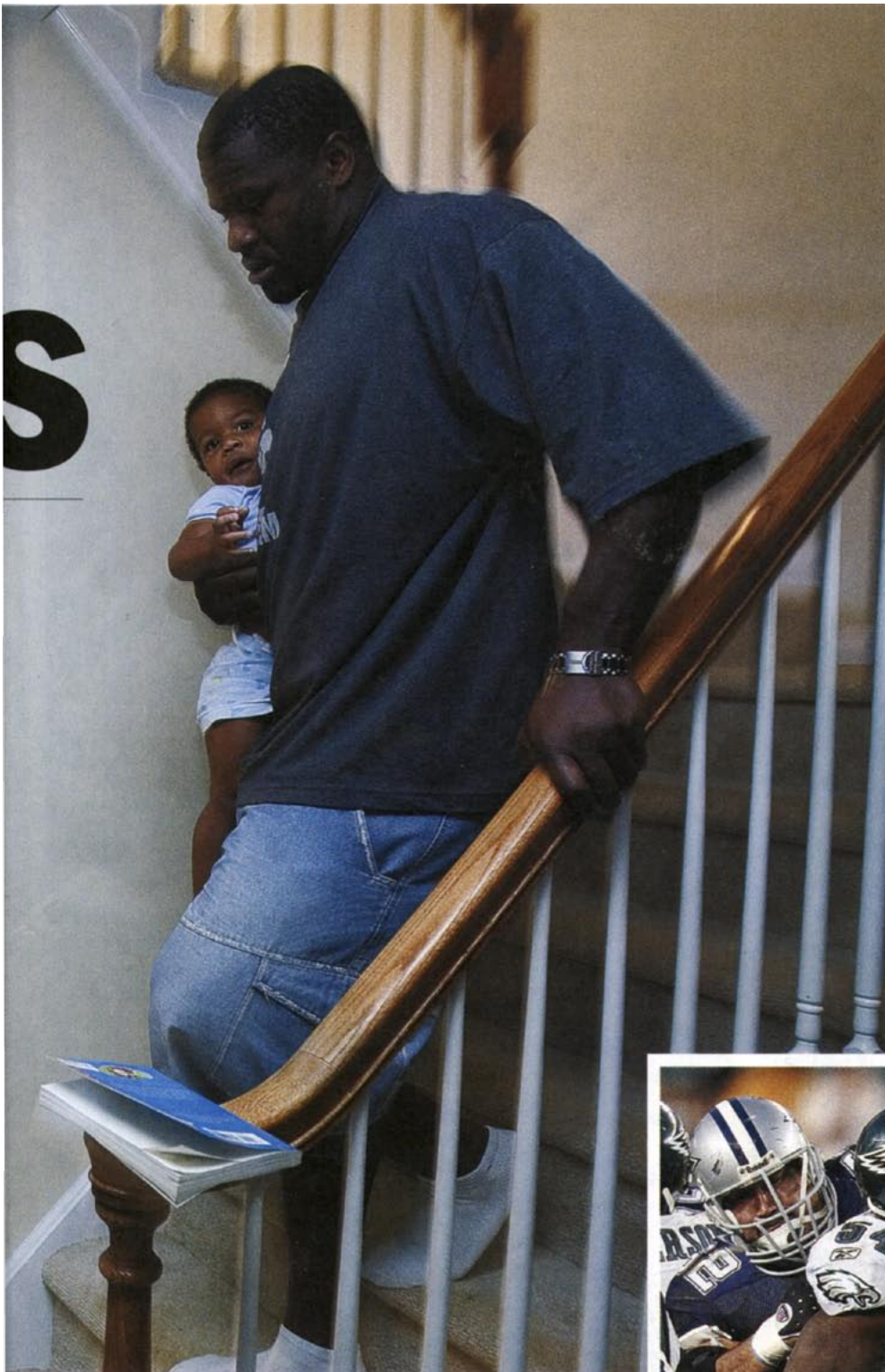
Even when Trotter's other body parts are in working order,

his knees send out distress signals. That's the byproduct of two shredded ACLs—he tore his left one in 1996, when he was a sophomore at Stephen F. Austin, and the right in 2002, when he played for the Redskins. Both

knees also have undergone arthroscopic procedures. Trotter is 29, but on some Mondays, he looks like a feeble old man.

"He has gone down the steps like he was an 85-year-old—on a cane," says Trotter's wife, Tammi.

SEE A
DIFFERENT
GAME



'Kind of like you got dragged behind a car for a couple of miles and then the car backed up and ran over you.'

—Texans tight end Mark Bruener

Although he shows no visible signs of pain, Trotter must indulge his knees. Twelve hours earlier, after the Eagles' 38-24 victory over Dallas, he emerged from the training room at Lincoln Financial Field with a white towel wrapped around his waist and large plastic bags filled with ice taped to the front and back of both knees. "Got to take care of the moneymakers," he said. As he stood at his locker and knotted his blue silk tie, he detected some soreness in his right shoulder. That likely was his reward for colliding head-on with Cowboys fullback Lousaka Polite on a running play in the second quarter.

Now, after setting Josiah down, Trotter sits on the family room couch to use his Game Ready ice machine. Consisting of a portable control unit with a reservoir full of cold water and ice cubes, a connector hose and a Velcro wrap that Trotter puts around his right knee, the system delivers active, cyclical compression and cold therapy to promote muscle recovery. The temperature can be adjusted between 35 and 50

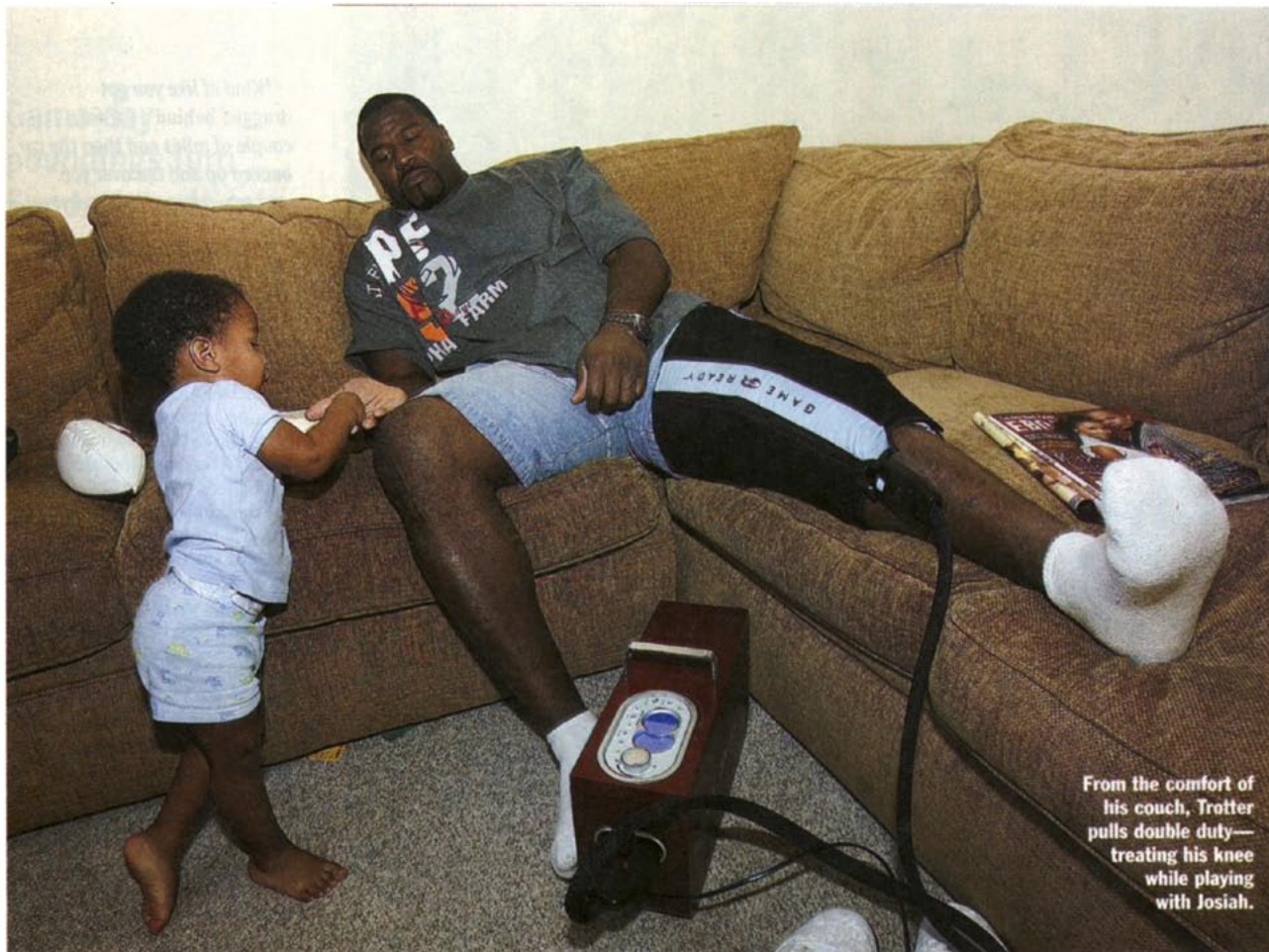
Considering all the head-snapping action Trotter endures, it's no wonder he needs extra support on Monday mornings.

"Many times."

Trotter has plenty of company. During NFL games, big bodies constantly crash into one another, violently and at a high velocity. These collisions result in pulled muscles, strained

ligaments, pinched nerves, headaches, backaches and myriad other infirmities. After a player has participated in the mayhem on Sunday, you can only imagine how his body feels on Monday morning.





From the comfort of his couch, Trotter pulls double duty—treating his knee while playing with Josiah.

degrees; Trotter has it set at 44.

Trotter has had the \$2,500 machine since he underwent arthroscopic surgery on his right knee two days after the 2005 season ended. He uses it the morning after a game and almost every night. He wraps each knee for 45 minutes in alternating 15-minute intervals. Having risen at 6, he already has treated each knee for 30 minutes.

"This machine works wonders," Trotter says, "but God is the only reason I stay on the field. The trainers don't understand how I'm ready to play every week. The doctors don't understand how I'm ready to play every week. God has me ready to play, no matter how I've looked during the week."

Trotter believes in the power of prayer. Wednesday and Thursday mornings, he stops by the house of his pastor, who prays with him for 30 to 40 minutes.

But there are secular reasons why since 1999, his second season in the NFL, Trotter has missed only five games (four

because of the torn ACL). In addition to his ice machine, he receives regular treatment at the Eagles' facility and gets a two-hour massage twice a week—Tuesdays at 10:45 a.m. and Fridays at 2 p.m.—at a gym near his house. He eats sensibly, takes a daily dose of Diclofenac (a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug) and gets plenty of rest, especially on Friday and Saturday nights.

"By the time you wake up Sunday, your body is ready to play again. But it's time to beat it up again," he says, laughing. "You go through that process for 16 straight

weeks, man."

Is it any wonder many NFL players are barely ambulatory on Mondays?

'I can hardly walk. Everything hurts. My bedroom is upstairs, so going down the stairs I have one hand on the rail, one hand on the wall. It doesn't wear off until Friday.'

—Broncos tight end Stephen Alexander

Even when his knees are throbbing, Trotter tries not to forget his role as daddy to sons Josiah and Jeremiah Jr., 3, and daughter TreMil, 7. "No matter how bad you're beat up, the kids still need to play," he says. As he sits on the couch using the ice machine, Trotter tosses a miniature football with Jeremiah Jr. and wrestles with Josiah. TreMil comes

> This is ... Jeremiah Trotter

Favorite music artist: Gospel singer Shirley Caesar. He has every one of her albums on his iPod.

His DVD library: Includes about 400 movies from various genres, including comedy, action and chick flicks. "Some of those chick flicks are the best ones. I love **Julia Roberts**."

Favorite meal: Wife Tammi's fried pork chops.

Favorite way to relax: Playing at home with his three kids. "Everybody knows you gotta be the horsey. You gotta be the monster, too."

Looking forward to: The February completion of his and Tammi's dream home, an 11,000-square-foot house that will sit on an 82-acre corn and soybean farm in Hainesport, N.J.

Best childhood memory: Chopping wood with his late father, who owned a family business. "He taught me a lot of stuff about hard work and being a man." After making a big play, Trotter sometimes honors the work ethic his father instilled in him by motioning like he's chopping wood.

Favorite vacation spot: The Dominican Republic. Trotter and his friend Victor Thomas are partners in a 74-unit condominium complex being built in San Isidro. Called "Projecto Philadelphia," it also will include commercial real estate. —D.D.



downstairs carrying her backpack, ready to grab a quick breakfast before heading off to second grade. "Want me to walk you to the bus?" Trotter asks.

TreMil learned by accident about her dad's fragile knees. After he had surgery in 2002, Trotter was lying on the couch with his leg elevated when TreMil tripped and fell on his knee. Trotter let out a scream, and Tammi came rushing over to pull TreMil away. Feeling a bit guilty, TreMil walked back over to Jeremiah and said a prayer. "She said, 'God, please let my daddy's knee feel better,'" Trotter recalls. "It almost brought me to tears."

By the nature of his position, Trotter usually is one of the

line, which uses a rotation of two four-man units; it is making more plays and taking some pressure off Trotter. And coordinator Jim Johnson has tried to limit Trotter's snaps by replacing him with Shawn Barber in nickel situations.

One of Trotter's distinctive characteristics is his ability to recover quickly. Even when he barely could walk on the Monday after the Houston game, he was back practicing on Wednesday.

"He always practices," Eagles coach Andy Reid says. "His knees aren't in the best shape, but he doesn't ever lead you to believe that."

Can any of us know the pain an NFL player feels on Monday?



Good luck getting Tammi Trotter to sit while Jeremiah is on the field.

PARTNERS IN PAIN

From a suite in the corner that overlooks the tunnel where the Eagles enter Lincoln Financial Field, Tammi Trotter watches the Eagles-Cowboys game with other players' wives. Her seat is a high-backed chair in the

back row, but she stands for most of the game. And when the Eagles' defense is on the field, her eyes are focused on the man in the No. 54 jersey.

Tammi has watched her husband, middle linebacker Jeremiah Trotter, play football since they were at Stephen F. Austin—"We're college sweethearts," she says—and has become a student of the game. She quizzes Jeremiah on different plays, so she often knows what gap he is supposed to fill.

"I want to see him performing up to the ability he has. I want him to be the first one in on a tackle. To wrap up. That's what I want to see," she says, sounding like a coach.

Tammi also understands football's violence and realizes a potential injury is one play away. Is she apprehensive when she watches Jeremiah? "I'm not necessarily fearful," she says. "I'm a praying woman. I just pray that God keeps him safe."

Her most anxious moment came on Thanksgiving Day in 2002. Pregnant with Jeremiah Jr., she was back home in Virginia, watching on TV with her sister-in-law, when Trotter, then with the Redskins, blew out his knee during a game in Dallas. "I saw the replay over and over again, and I realized he was really hurt," Tammi says. "When I saw he didn't get up, my heart started to race and then just dropped."

Her heart beats rapidly today because of the rhythm of the game. She's on her feet, yelling and clapping, as the Eagles take a 10-0 lead. Then the Cowboys go ahead, 14-10. As this back-and-forth pattern continues, Tammi feels the stress. At one point, she has to lay her head down because she has a headache.

Just when it looks as though Dallas is going to tie the game and force an overtime, Lito Sheppard picks off a Drew Bledsoe pass and returns it 102 yards for a touchdown in the Eagles' 38-24 victory. By this time, Tammi's blood pressure is high enough to raise a cardiologist's eyebrows. After the game, Tammi and Jeremiah go to some friends' house, but she's too wound up to eat.

Players may wake up on Monday morning feeling the pain, but their wives suffer on Sunday. —D.D.



Even after games in which his knees feel good, Trotter knows he needs to double bag 'em.

sorest players after a game. The four-time Pro Bowl linebacker, who had a team-leading 169 tackles in 2005, takes pride in being physical—"I like knocking helmets off"—and doesn't back down from any opponent, be it a lead blocker, tight end or lineman.

Except for after the Houston game, he has felt relatively good this season. One reason is he rested more during the offseason. Another is the improved Eagles

**'It's
incredible.
You're sore all over
and don't even
want to get out of
bed. It's like touch
soreness—don't
even touch me.'**

—Jaguars
cornerback
Rashean Mathis

Finished with the ice machine, Trotter applies a gel pad to the front of each knee, then pulls on white compression socks that stretch to his knees. He'll wear them today and tomorrow to reduce the swelling. After the Houston game, he wore them the entire week.

"Today, they feel great," Trotter says of his moneymakers.

"I came out pretty good this week. You can imagine what I go through when I get all rolled up on. It ain't a pretty sight."

As is his custom on Monday, Trotter will get treatment at the NovaCare Complex this afternoon. But first he hitches a ride to his Trott's Spot Car Wash in nearby Cherry Hill, N.J., one of three such facilities he owns with Victor Thomas, his friend and business partner. After he checks

up on his business, Trotter is going to go with Thomas to visit Thomas' dad, a man Trotter considers to be like a second father. Thomas' mother died recently.

During the ride, Trotter is asked about life after football. Does he worry about not being able to play with his kids, having knee replacement surgery or, worse, being crippled?

"On a normal basis, guys would be worried," he says. "But I'm not worried. They say I'm not even

supposed to be playing right now, but I'm playing."

When you're a young, fast, strong athlete, you tend not to look at the health risks of playing professional football. But Monday morning can be a wakeup call.

'We get hit from every angle—side, front, back. You hurt everywhere, from head to toe. I can see why some guys have arthritis after they retire.'

—Bills linebacker Takeo Spikes **SN**