

WACOAN: And you shared the award with Drew Brees, who you first met in high school.

LaDainian: Drew and I have been friends for a long time. We first met at the high school all-star game. Obviously, Texas high school football is huge, but the guys that stand out, you hear about those guys. I knew that he was committed to Purdue [University]. It was good to get a chance to know him, and then four years later we're being drafted by the same team [San Diego Chargers]. That's incredible.

WACOAN: I spoke to Cliff Dean yesterday, and in telling me about the 14 character traits that the Marine drill instructors teach at LT Academy, he told me to ask you which is your favorite. He has a bet on what it is.

LaDainian: I don't know that I have a favorite. Loyalty is very important to me, knowing they can depend on you and you're gonna be there and do what you say you're going to do. Dependability. As a running back, these characteristics are very important. You have to be there for your team. You have to be there as a guy that's gonna take up at least 30 percent of the offense.

Unselfishness.

WACOAN: That was his guess: unselfishness, selflessness.

LaDainian: I think the best way, from my experience, to build a really strong team is to be unselfish — everyone knows their role and then gives someone else the credit. To say, 'That was a great job. I couldn't have done that [on my own].' That's how you build a strong team and people that are dependable. That's one of the strong characteristic traits that I think all kids should learn.

WACOAN: When you used the phrase 'Team America' in your Hall of Fame speech, did you have an idea how it would impact your work overall?

LaDainian: Not directly, to be honest with you. I knew that what I talked about, what I was speaking about, I pretty much was already doing it. It was my vision coming to life from my experience building a great team. And I think it's everything that you would

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