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The green wave

You know they're coming.

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Friday, October 01, 2004

DAVIE — By day he's a Dolphins defensive end and by moonlight he's a pitchman for UnderArmour athletic apparel. In both roles, Jason Taylor subscribes to the company line: *We must protect this house.*

Too bad there is no proviso for what to do when unwanted guests not only come over, but bring their own keys.

Thousands of New York Jets fans have tickets for Sunday's game at Pro Player Stadium. Nothing new there, given the transplant factor. The question is, considering how each team is playing, will Taylor walk into his own stadium and face an atmosphere that's virtually neutral or, stunning as it sounds, becomes so hostile he wishes he were under armor?

"It'll be a typical Jets week," Taylor says. "We'll have some fans in there for us and we'll have a bunch of them in there and they'll be chanting their dumb chant and all that other stuff and being the ignorant fans that they usually are."

Jason, you really want to say that with so many green-clads lining up, threatening to huff and puff and blow the house down?

"Yeah, I'll say that," Taylor says. "I don't care if they get mad at me or not. They don't like me anyway and quite frankly, I don't care. I'm just being real. You carry yourself with some class, we'll talk about you like you've got class. But if you want to do all the crazy things they do, then I'll call a spade a spade."

Meanwhile, in New York and in South Florida, Jets fans are mobilizing, scooping up tickets and planning a massive tailgate party. Just look for the big Jets flag flying high, it says on the Internet.

"A sea of green," is what Sean Deegan, publisher of JetsInsider.com, envisions for Sunday.

"In Jets groups there's speculation there might be almost as many Jets fans as Dolphins fans, which is kind of weird to say," says Charlie Byrne, a Jets fan from Delray Beach.

One team is unbeaten (the Jets, 2-0). One team is winless (the Dolphins, 0-3). The Dolphins are an unheard-of six-point underdog at home, coming off a home loss in which receiver Chris Chambers said it sounded as if Steelers fans were as loud as Dolphins fans. If Pittsburgh fans could do that, what about New Yorkers?

"That's a great question in view of the state of the Dolphins now," says Boca Raton's Howard David, the voice of the Dolphins on flagship station WQAM-560AM. "I think it may be different than years gone by. How they get tickets is always an intriguing question. They get good tickets, too. It was that way with Pittsburgh. A lot of Steeler fans were in very advantageous locations. I was really surprised at the amount of Steeler fans that were in the building — and clad in Steeler jerseys with the Terrible Towels, the whole nine yards.

"I expect it's going to be more on Sunday. . . . I think the number could be in the 20,000 range, which is significant. You're talking about almost a third of the stadium being Jets fans."

So many Jets fans live in the area that two years ago, the South Florida Jets Fan Club was formed after eight years of informal gatherings. It's more than 200 strong, meeting at Davie sports bar Skittles, right down the street from Dolphins training camp.

"It's going to be a good 40 percent of Jets fans, from what I hear," says Pembroke Pines' Robert Nacarano, 45, a member of the club's organizing committee. "I'll give you a for-instance. One of the members of the club goes to the Coral Square Mall, the Ticketmaster, to see if he could get tickets. He got four tickets in the lower bowl."

Get ready for that four-letter word to Dolfans, J-E-T-S. The Dolphins hear it every time they play the Jets, home or away, but it hasn't echoed in their ears at Pro Player Stadium the way it could this time.

"If I'm going to suggest that may happen, I plan on not eating lunch before the game," says David, the voice of the Jets from 1998-2001. "I may give back my lunch."

Arrive fully nourished, Dolphins kicker Olindo Mare would tell David, because Jets fans won't rule the joint.

"That ain't going to happen," Mare says. "No way the Jets fans down here will outdo us. We've still got 60,000 or whatever it is season-tickets strong."

The Dolphins have long had one of the NFL's best home-field advantages, especially in the early season heat, but tight end Randy McMichael expects a standoff in the stands Sunday.

"I've played the Jets at home twice," says McMichael, from the University of Georgia. "It's really like a neutral game, like Florida-Georgia. It's so neutral because they have

great, supporting fans. I respect them a lot because they support their team whether they win or lose."

Linebacker Zach Thomas recalls eating at a South Florida restaurant when New Yorkers did their J-E-T-S chant.

"I was laughing," Thomas says. "It was kind of funny. But they kind of did it all . . . night . . . long. And then they come up to the table and chant it. I just told the dude to get a job or something."

Some Jets fans are more discreet. Lon Siegel brings a strategy for his third trip from Tampa to see the Jets play at Miami.

"It's advantageous to travel with children — you won't get picked on as much," says Siegel, a 45-year-old physical education teacher whose son will be his bodyguard. "I know how to conduct myself: Keep a low profile, enjoy your day, and if you're fortunate enough to win, make a quick exit."

Jets fans expect to win, although many aren't predicting a walkover. Reason? New York native Jay Fiedler, who has beaten the Jets three straight times and returns as Miami's starting quarterback over A.J. Feeley.

"Jay's a better quarterback, no question," Siegel says. "I'd rather have the other guy starting."

Opposing fans sweating Jay Fiedler? These are strange times, aren't they?

"Usually the Jets are the ones prone to bad starts," says Deegan, whose reporters are credentialed by the Jets, an NFL rarity for a fans' Web site. "The tide has turned, but obviously Jets fans are not upset about it. They're happy about it, starting with Ricky Williams. I don't think any Jets fans feel sorry for the Dolphins."

Actually, some do.

"The Dolphins are so down on their luck, they're almost to be pitied," Byrne says. "Imagine if the Yankees and Red Sox are playing. Part of the reason it's a great rivalry is they always have great teams. If it gets to the point one is lousy, it takes away a bit."

Nacarano says of Dolfans: "I think they realize now how Jets fans felt when we were 1-15 a few years ago. . . . I'm sure some Jets fans have compassion for them."

Compassion is fine on a Friday morning, but will any remain Sunday? David just hopes Dolphins fans don't double the abuse.

"You can second-guess all you want," David says. "That's one of the great pastimes of the American fan. But at least understand some things are out of their control. I believe if Dave Wannstedt owned a pumpkin farm, they'd call off Halloween."

It's October. Thousands of fans will arrive at Pro Player Stadium on Sunday clad in green. How spooky it gets from there, we'll all soon see.

Palm Beach Post staff writer Greg A. Bedard contributed to this story.

*Article reprinted courtesy of Palm Beach Post.