



# Q&A WITH CJ ANDERSON

BY REAGANNE GOODE

## **What is the mission behind your Dreams Never Die Foundation?**

"The Dreams Never Die Foundation was created to provide unlimited resources outside of athletics and entertainment for inner city youth. I have partnerships with Google, Harvard, MIT, UC Berkeley, Stanford, YouTube, Twitch, a couple painters, Carly Jackson, Blake Jamison and a couple chefs including Ayesha Curry. We have a lot of different resources. It's just to show kids where I come from, inner city youth, who know what I look like, who know what the drug dealer looks like, but wouldn't know what the PR person looks like, that they can be successful. They can be just as successful as I am. They're not on the streets, they're not selling drugs, they're not in gangs and things of that nature. That's the purpose of Dreams Never Die."

## **The hashtag #CrestKid has become your signature on most of your social media posts. What does being a Crest Kid mean to you? How has where you're from impacted where you see yourself going?**

"Everything. Growing up in the Crest, just seeing the things that I've seen, it means the world. My life story is probably similar to a lot of people in the NFL. I grew up in a single-parent home. My uncle sold drugs. I've had task force raid my house four times throughout high school. I've seen the FBI kick my door down, so I've seen some things as a young kid that are abnormal. However, the product of my environment didn't shape me or form me. Now I have a platform and get the opportunity to speak and make my voice heard. Hopefully, through my foundation, I can change my community. #CrestKid means everything to me because that's where it all started."

## **What do you hope to accomplish with your YouTube channel platform?**

"With the YouTube platform, I just want to expose that I have fun with fans. I do fan giveaways. I'm going to put a video out real soon, and I've done it before, where I actually fly fans to my house or fly fans to come kick it with me. It's a different way to get to know fans. It helps to expose my foundation. Having the partnership with Youtube, all the proceeds go to the foundation which is a good thing. Me and my team, we're slowly growing the channel, we understand that. We also have some other things cooking up for YouTube too. It's going to be a pretty amazing."

## **What are some personal goals you've set for yourself this season?**

"You always want to rush for a thousand yards. You know, a thousand-yard season is dying. There were only nine of us last year, including myself, even though I was with the Broncos. You want to have a good chance at trying to help contribute to win football games, which is another thing, of course, win a championship. That's always the goal every year. After tasting one, even though it was beating the Carolina Panthers, it's the best feeling in the world. I look at players like Ryan Kalil, where you know, this is his last year, and you never know when Greg Olsen is going to go, you never know when Julius Peppers is going to go. It was kind of the same thing back when I was in Denver with DeMarcus Ware, Peyton Manning and some of our big vets over there. It feels good to play for those guys and hopefully we can go get that accomplished."

## **How does having a Super Bowl ring motivate you to reach that level again?**

"That's the pinnacle, the highest of the highs of our sport. You know, I got the opportunity to play in two so early in my career, and another opportunity to win one. When you get there and you reach it, it means everything. It just lets you know in that season or that moment you have changed a lot of things during the season to get to that point. You played at a high level to get to that point too. Playing in Super Bowls means a lot. It just means that you're playing at a high level consistently. That's all you can ask for in this game."



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(CONT.)

**You've expressed your love for the Sonic the Hedgehog through your social media and occasional themed t-shirts. Why is this your favorite video game series?**

"When I was young, the goal was to be fast, for everybody, right? You're supposed to be fast. I was a fast kid when I was young. I fell in love with Sonic when I saw my brother play it with Sega. In 2015 I did an interview on NFL Network live right after the playoff game against the Pittsburgh Steelers, and I wear a Sonic shirt under my jersey every game, and the interview went viral. Sega, the creator of Sonic, reached out to me. Since then, I've got a deal with Sega. It just made the love that much better. Me and Sonic also text a lot. You know, it's funny, I've got him in my phone as "Sonic." I know it's the creator, but me and Sonic text a lot, talk a lot, so it's good things."

**Why is engaging with your fans important to you?**

"Fans make the game and I understand that. I try to let them know that even though they put us on a high pedestal, we're also human beings. The connection I had with certain fans when I was in Denver, it was more of a friendship than it was a fan-player relationship. They can come to me with problems, I can come to them with problems. It's just letting them know that I am a normal guy, I am down to earth. Yes, I understand that I am CJ Anderson and there are times I might not sign your autograph or I don't want to be bothered because of the outcome of a game or practice, but if you can get to know me on a personal level, I'm more willing to talk to you a lot more."

**How have you integrated yourself into the culture at Carolina?**

"I try to do it the best I can. I try to sit back and relax, take in information and take game as much as I possibly can. You've got veterans here like Luke [Kuechly] and Cam [Newton] and TD [Thomas Davis]. You know, I sit back and relax. I'm a leader myself and I understand that. I've been in this league and I've got a lot of games under my belt. I understand that too. I try not to step on too many toes, but when I feel like something is wrong or something needs to be said, I jump in with that role. As far as the culture, I think I have adapted really well."

**What are some of your hobbies outside of football?**

"I bowl, I read. I'm reading a book called, "How to Be That Dude" by my man Ernest Eastling. I'm a big bowler. I've been bowling professionally for four years now with Storm Bowling. I cycle, I ride bikes too."

**Why do you wear hoodies in the heat?**

"It's nothing, you know, I'm not hot. That's how I look at it. I'm a comfort guy. In the Bay area, it's always 75, but the breeze with a chill will get you a little cold. I've always been in a hoodie since I was very young. It just hasn't changed. There are days where if it's extremely hot, I'll wear it, but I don't think it's gotten to that point. I've been to Bermuda and Hawaii and I don't have a hoodie on, but I've had one in Florida, Texas, things of that nature. It hasn't gotten to that point where I need to take it off."

**You seem to be a big fan of Messi. Does he inspire your style of play?**

"Big fan. A bunch of them really, Neymar, Ronaldo, Luis Suarez, I can go on in the soccer world forever. A lot of the detail, the leadership that you see, the command that you see, it's just something that you try to take. You look at all those big athletes, and then you look at the Peyton Mannings and the Champ Baileys who I play with now... the Cam Newtons and the Luke Kuechlys, and the LeBron James and the Kobe Bryants of the world, you can pick and you can get something from them. You might not be as talented or as gifted as them, but hard work oversees all. You can pick and choose what you want to take from them and go from there."