



## Sports Central's Jason Kaplan Interviews Jason Kyle

May 2008

**Jason Kaplan:** Jason Kyle plays for the Carolina panthers, he's a linebacker... but he's also involved with proplayerconnect.com its a website that connects pro athletes with sponsorship and appearance opportunities and he joins us now the NFL draft is coming up, Jason welcome to WJN. Jason, how are you?

**Jason Kyle:** I'm good, Kap, thanks for having me

**Kaplan:** So you are a guy who, ya know there's a lot of guys who play in the NFL who think the gravy train will never end, and that's all they do is act like little boys in the locker room, and that's great thing to be paid to do that, but they don't think about life after football... That isn't you.

**Kyle:** Yeah well I guess at some point you got to face it right it's not gonna last for ever.

**Kaplan:** Correct

**Kyle:** At least that's what their tellin' me

**Kaplan:** And you've been playin' since '95 right?

**Kyle:** Yep I've been playin' for thirteen years, hopin' to steal a couple more, I mean I don't know if that's up to me, but hopefully it goes that way.

**Kaplan:** So tell us a little bit about proplayerconnect.com

**Kyle:** Yeah you pretty much hit the nail on the head, I wish it was a money maker, but at this point its really just something that there was a need for, ah a lot of your top end player, whether it's my sport football, or any sport, are the ones that really receive most of the opportunities, whether it's appearances or endorsements or even jobs after football and that's mainly because of their recognition in the community or around the nation, just bein' higher profile, but there's a lot of guys out there who are kind of your B level athletes, journeymen who have been on teams for 5 or maybe 8 years maybe on special teams or in back up roles or starters who aren't well known, but who are willing to do and looking to do appearances and autograph signings for a couple hundred or a thousand bucks, also additionally their looking for that life after football

As well, and a lot of companies, it appeals to them to have an athlete or a person with an athletic background, so it puts a lot of athletes in contact with companies for job opportunities, if nothing else when they retire.

**Kaplan:** So your not like the typical athlete, you graduated from Arizona state, your degree is in marketing, and you've also attended Northwestern for their Kellogg School of Business and also Pennsylvania at the Wharton school of business and you have some training in real estate, so you have really, even though you have had a career three or four times longer than the average NFL player, you've really thought about, what is Jason Kyle going to do after he's done snapin' footballs or tackling guys,

**Kyle:** Yeah well let me tell you, it usually happens around an injury that you start to wonder what's next, I've

had a few of those and then went out and got the real estate license and then went to some of those schools, and just really kinda figured out what I didn't want to do along the way. But actually this site proplayer-connect.com, Tom, is at this point, really a hobby, it actually fun to connect with some of these guys that I haven't had the chance to talk to in a while, and it's almost turned into a social networking program for some of these athletes. They sign up, and the person on that site is really that guy, it's by invite only, there's no body on the site who isn't who they say they are, you can kind of catch up and see how guys are doin', post their golf tournaments and their clinics and the business involvements that their into, and what their doin' outside of football, current and retired guys, so um a lot of them actually haven't been sittin' on their hands and are involved in a lot of things.

**Kaplan:** So you've actually got some investors, like Vinny Testaverde and Michael Waltrip.

**Kyle:** Yeah, um I played with Vinny this past year, he's been playin forever, I think he actually decided to retire this year.

**Kaplan:** At least for now.

**Kyle:** Yeah, ha-ha, we might need to bring him back it looks like, but um yeah he stepped in and did a great job for us this year, you can tell he's quite the leader. So I had a couple months with him, and I sat him down and see if he'd be a good investor to invest in this site, and I talked to him for about thirty minutes, and he recognized what we were doin' and the need for it, and there's just flat nothing' out there that does the same thing, so he was on board from day one and a lot of help as far as getting the word out and bringin' in some of his buddies and he's pretty active on the site as well, and we also have a handful of lesser know athlete, Christian Fortier who's a tightened and been in the league forever, and Jason baker who's a punter and on down the list, and a little NASCAR representation with Michael waltrip and these are all guys who see the value in the site and active on it, so it was easy to raise money for.

**Kaplan:** So were talking to Jason Kyle of the Carolina panthers, you were drafted in the fourth round in 95 by the Seattle Seahawks, this week is the nil draft so it brings back memories for you, the whole process, some people call it a meat market, can you tell us what it was like waiting for the phone to ring, how nervous were you?

**Kyle:** Well I'll tell ya, it's definitely a meat market, and ah it's an experience for sure, some guys are happy with where they end up and some are not, I was just one of those guys who was happy to drafted, and being in Seattle was great, ya know it's just nice to get drafted because that means that somebody wants ya, for me it was great it was a good experience, I went a little later than I hoped, at I think all guys think that

**Kaplan:** So at this point in your career would you say that you're a long snapper or a line backer?

**Kyle:** Ya know I'd like to be able to say that I still play both positions, but in reality at this point in my career, I'm a long snapper, ha-ha.

**Kaplan:** Okay, now a good friend of my Pat Canalie, and...

**Kyle:** Yeah he does a good job

**Kaplan:** Yes, he does, and ya know we were on the goal course one day and I asked him, Pat how long you gonna keep snappin, and he said as long as they'll let me keep snappin the ball. It is such a specialized art, how much do you practice that?

**Kyle:** A lot, I've got a place set up over at my parents place, with some turf and a mattress set up, and I'd just do it for 30 mins ya know, listening' to the radio, it's definitely a specialty and you've got to have zero pride, and expect to never get your name in the paper.

**Kaplan:** We'll I appreciate you takin' the time, [proplayerconnect.com](http://proplayerconnect.com) it's a website that connect pro players with appearance and sponsorship opportunities, if there's someone out there who says well ya know I'm lookin' to get an athlete out there to come to my business or my group or golf tournament or dinner to speak at, how do they get their stuff to you?

**Kyle:** I'll tell ya, you just head to the website, [proplayerconnct.com](http://proplayerconnct.com) and their an information line, ju8st drop us a note and tell us what your interested in doin' and we'll get you registered and who your lookin to get to come out, and whether you're a business, and eventually this is going to apply to fans, so down the road, if you're a fan and you want to bring a home town hero out to your sons birthday party, your gonna be able to make that offer, and you'd be surprised what some of these guys will do a couple hundred bucks.

**Kaplan:** I appreciate you takin time Jason, all the best,

**Kyle:** Hey thanks for havin' me

**Kaplan:** You got it

**Kyle:** Okay, bye

**Interviewer:** So there's a guy, Jason Kyle of the Carolina Panthers, who isn't just about, hey man I make some money and play football, he's planning for the future and helping' some other guys out along the way, that's pretty cool.