


# Of role models like Drew Brees - and false idols

The Super Bowl champion New Orleans Saints are in town to play the Ravens. Drew Brees, their quarterback, is fresh off a well-deserved honor, Sports Illustrated's Sportsman of the Year, in recognition of the work he did leading a team and a city - remember Hurricane Katrina? - to unanticipated heights.

In 2000, I was in Indianapolis to cover the U.S. Olympic Team swim trials, and one of my editors had the foresight to send me north to Purdue University, for the football team's media day, to interview the Boilermakers' Heisman Trophy candidate. Brees was cordial, engaging and a good story-teller to myself and another out of town reporter.

By all accounts, Brees is an honorable, faith-filled man. SI hit a home run with the selection of Brees, but it has been known to whiff on the Sportsman of the Year with people who turned out to be less than sportsmanlike after all. In 1998, the magazine dressed home run titans Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa as if they were Greek gods. They ended up having feet of clay, cheating the game and their bodies with the  use of performance-enhancers. 