

Ravens reflect on Christmas



John Harbaugh (Photo by Owen Sweeney III)

As Christmas approaches, Joe Flacco has one thing on his mind: the Cleveland Browns.

According to transcripts from the Baltimore Ravens' Wednesday media day, quarterback is not too worried about other matters.

Asked what Christmas means to him, Flacco said: "Just time to spend with your family and have a nice meal. I don't think too much of that will be going on with my family this year. We'll be traveling to Cleveland. So, it's usually just a time to spend with your family and have a good time."

And what about what he does outside of football during the holidays? "There are a bunch of guys on our team doing things in the community. Whether it's going over and helping kids shop and giving them some time to enjoy themselves or making a visit to a hospital to see some kids or to see some people, I think our team and the people that are in charge of that do a great job of getting us out in the community."

But, pressed about world peace at Christmas time, Flacco wasn't playing.

"No. No I don't think about that," he said.

OK, then.

John Harbaugh, Anquan Boldin and Ray Lewis were in much more reflective moods.

Said Harbaugh, a Catholic, of Christmas:

"We could have a sit down, 60-minute conversation about the holidays. I love Christmas. I think most people love Christmas. In our house, we try to keep it focused on the reason for the season a little bit. Of course, we've got a lot of presents for our little girl. It's just a very special time of year. We're going to make

sure on Saturday our guys get a chance in the morning to get time with their families.”

But, the father of a young daughter said there is no “normal” Christmas as an NFL coach.

“I’ve never had a normal [Christmas]. Well, with college coaching I guess we did. Not in the pros. Not since we got to the NFL. There’s always a game or practice or something. We’ll get the morning off.”

Boldin, a wide receiver, told the media that he was honored to win the team’s Walter Payton Man of the Year Award. His favorite gift as a child was a Payton jersey. He said giving back to the community is important for NFL players.

“I see it as almost an obligation for us,” Boldin said. “I feel like we’re here for a specific reason, and it’s more than to play football. We are here to make a difference in our communities, because if it wasn’t for those people supporting us, we wouldn’t be where we are today. For myself, honestly speaking, I was a kid in need growing up, so I stay real attached to the community where I’m from and also the cities where I play football.”

Lewis, the Pro Bowl linebacker, said he relies heavily on the Holy Bible. Does he have a favorite passage?

“Yeah, I just read a lot, really. Psalm 91 and pretty much whatever Proverbs, based off the date - whatever the date is that day - is pretty much what I read,” Lewis said.

“I grab something from that day, and then I hold onto that throughout the whole day, and that’s what I try to focus on that day. There are a lot of things I do read and I do go over, but there are some things I definitely stick to - whatever passages that grabs me that day.”

Bible study, Lewis said, brings many players together.

“ Sometimes, Rev. [team chaplain Rod Hairston] will get up there and deliver his message. Then, sometimes the guys will just get in there and we’ll have discussions ourselves, which really opens it up to a totally different thought process when you see how we actually interact with each other about that type of thing.”

Lewis was asked what Christmas meant to him and he was unabashedly Christian.

“First of all, we’re talking about the True Creator - the creator of all,” he said. “Jesus Christ was the creator of all. When you think about Christmas, we’re talking about birth; we’re talking about giving; we’re talking about sharing time of love. That’s what it’s all about when you bring all your family in town and everybody comes together. That’s what we’ve got to really get back to. I don’t think even... What I’m trying to train my kids to [understand about Christmas], it’s not about presents, per se. I know we go buy all these great gifts, but it’s really about fellowship; it’s really about servant hood; it’s really about love and coming together with family and being able to help the unfortunate who can’t have Christmas and who don’t understand what Christmas means. So for me, Christmas has a lot of different meanings.”