

Miami Dolphin linebacker, John Offerdahl

From great football pro to quick service restaurateur

By Jon Frangipane and Pattie Bendit, story coordinator

When I met him the other day, John Offerdahl looked tall, trim and strong, like a man still young enough to manage a great tackle on the football field. He played the game he loved for eight illustrious years, earning Rookie of the Year honors and five-time Pro Bowl middle linebacker with the Miami Dolphins between 1986 to 1994.

He joined the NFL, drafted out of Western Michigan University and quickly became defensive captain and signal caller in his first year with the Dolphins. I personally remember him as a fast and physical presence on the field. You could tell that this man loved the game of football.

In 1989, John married his college sweetheart, Lynn, and soon after began thinking of the future, by putting some thoughts together. "We discussed my career outside of football and knew that we needed to develop a plan while I was still playing."

After careful planning, the end result was the opening of Offerdahl's Bagel Gourmet in Weston. "From 1990 to 1995, Lynn and I developed a total of 9 bagel stores in South Florida. I got a lot of notoriety being a linebacker for the Miami Dolphins who sells bagels."



John Offerdahl and Rebecca

When John's football career ended in 1994, so did his love affair with bagels. The business assets were sold to Boston Market and in 1996 the name changed to Einstein Bros. Bagels. Because he was in a 5-year non-compete situation, John and Lynn waited until 2000 to rekindle their love for the food business, except that the concept would be very different. The bagel focus was dropped and the idea for a legitimate restaurant with quick service and freshly-cooked

food became a reality when Offerdahl's Café and Grill was born.

"We are working very hard now to communicate to the public that we are not a bagel store any longer, and it has been difficult for us to drop that image," says John. "We don't want to be thought of as a 'bagel' or 'coffee' shop," he adds.

"In 2000 there were not many options in quick service restaurants that served freshly-cooked foods, so what we are doing is very unusual in that we can deliver multiple choices of freshly-cooked meals. And everything we make is made to order!" he stresses.

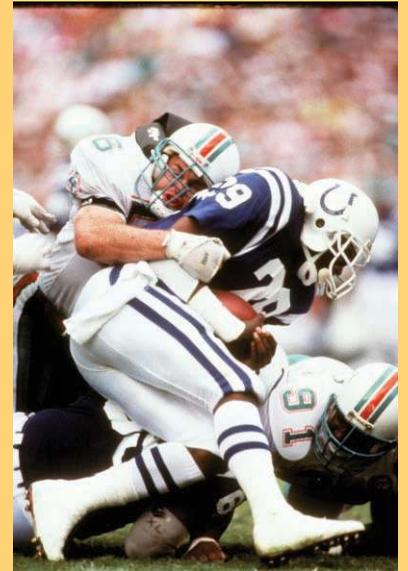
"So much of my job as owner and manager I can translate directly from watching the fine leadership of Wayne Huizenga and Don Shula and the manner in which they run their businesses. All 8 years as a Dolphin I got to play for Shula and Dan Marino and saw how they managed and led teams. Sports in general are a great metaphor for business," John explains.

In 2005, the grill received a prestigious award from a top restaurant publication who described Offerdahl's Café Grill as one of the top five up and coming restaurants. The café serves specialty steaks and chicken bowls, soups, salads, sandwiches, desserts, bagels and baguettes, and is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Still a disciplined athlete, John works out 3 days a week with a group of 20 men, doing field drills until he can hardly walk. "I love that stuff, just to maintain the lifestyle that I want."

Today, John Offerdahl realizes that there is nothing in this world more exciting than playing to 80,000 cheering football fans - but he does play an important part now in bringing fresh, quality food to a weight-conscious, clean-conscious public, looking for quick service in an environment that makes people feel great.

"Look, there are my two employees, Shelly and Megan eating here on their day off and paying for it. Doesn't that tell you something?" John exclaims.



An Offerdahl tackle