

Joe Gibbs will be profiled by NFL Network's 'A Football Life'

By **Dan Steinberg** August 8

NFL Network's "A Football Life" series feeds on nostalgia, and there's no bigger generator of Redskins nostalgia than Joe Gibbs. Thus arrived this week's announcement that Gibbs will be featured in the next season of documentaries, news that has already sent Washington fans into an expectant tizzy.

Gibbs has somehow managed to be both the most popular Redskins figure of the 1980s and the most popular Redskins figure of the 21st century, the best coach in the lifetime of millennials who have mostly seen mediocrity, and the best coach in the lifetime of middle-aged folks who lived through something different. It's hard to find many Redskins fans who don't love the man, and these NFL Network films are often crafted to make you love someone even more. Get ready for gushing, in other words.

The movie is scheduled to premiere on Nov. 24 at 9 p.m. on NFL Network, the night after Thanksgiving. That's also the night after the Redskins host the Giants in prime time, in the sort of big-stage NFC East battle that made Gibbs so beloved.

Producers will talk with a wide swath of figures, including all three Super Bowl winning quarterbacks (Joe Theismann, Doug Williams and Mark Rypien), John Kent Cooke, Bobby Beathard, Darrell Green, Jeff Bostic, Dexter Manley, Rennie Simmons, Don Breaux, Clinton Portis and Mark Brunell.

They'll also include figures from Gibbs's NASCAR world such as Dale Earnhardt Jr. and Denny Hamlin. And in fact, NFL Films spent a weekend in Charlotte with Gibbs and his family, including a visit to Charlotte Motor Speedway for the Coca-Cola 600. During that trip, cameras also followed Gibbs to Hickory Motor Speedway, for a race featuring grandson Ty Gibbs.

The series has in recent years featured [John Riggins](#) and [Sean Taylor](#), two of the most revered Washington players who starred under Gibbs. The seventh season of "A Football Life," produced by NFL Films, [will begin on Sept. 15](#) with a piece on Dan Marino. Later subjects will include Emmitt Smith, John Madden, Wes Welker, Sam Mills, Jim Kelly, Larry Fitzgerald, Eddie George, Jerry Jones, Aeneas Williams, John Randle and the duo of Lynn Swann and John Stallworth.

And now, to pad this item and make it look long enough to be worth publishing, please glance at this midseason Washington Post profile by Paul Attner from Gibbs's first season, when no one knew exactly how the rest of the decade would go. It tries to explain how Gibbs kept plugging away despite an 0-5 start.

The players never knew the self-doubts that troubled Gibbs during the losing streak. "In the worst moments, you question yourself, sure," he said. "I always have felt this is where I'm supposed to be, as a head coach in this league, in Washington.

"But to get off to that kind of start, you wonder. It couldn't have been a worse beginning, especially for a new staff that's a little more excited to begin with. You have to worry about what your owner is thinking and how tolerant the fans are going to be. But I was so sure what we were doing was right that I stayed with it. And just hoped I had made the right decision."

During those early weeks, Gibbs started sleeping three nights every week at Redskin Park on a pull-out sofa purchased by his wife, Patricia. He knew he was becoming drained but all his life he had met every crisis by working harder. So he put in longer hours, watched more film, looked at more computer printouts.

"I'd go home on Friday nights and sleep for 12 hours straight," he said. "I still do. You can feel the walls closing in, but there isn't much you can do about it. I know they took my blood pressure before the start of one season and it was something like 75 over 138. Before a game against Oakland, it was 95 over 155." ...

He looks back at those early weeks and tries to remember only the good things, and not that 17 years of preparation for the job might have been wasted.

"When you are 0-5, nothing that has ever happened to you can help you completely," he said. "But people like Bobby and Mr. Cooke were great. And so were a lot of the fans. One sent me a plant to cheer me up. I'll always remember that.

"And I'll remember the players, too, a guy like Joe Lavender. He came over to me after one of the losses and put his hand on my shoulder. 'Don't worry, coach,' he told me. 'Everything is going to be okay.'

"You know, he was right. If I mess up here, it will be my own fault, no one else's. I'm convinced of that more than ever now."

More from D.C. Sports Bog:

[D.J.s, slap bracelets and Britney Chicken Spears: What to expect at Nats' '90s Night](#)

[Max Scherzer offers Nats one exhale. Stephen Strasburg could offer another.](#)

John Wall will lobby Wizards to bring back stars-and-stripes uniforms

Dan Steinberg writes about all things D.C. sports at the D.C. Sports Bog and is a columnist for Sports.

 Follow @dcsportsbog