

A former NFL pro tackles weight gain on 'The Biggest Loser'

January 8 2015, by Frazier Moore

It's a huge weight off Scott Mitchell's shoulders—or, to be more accurate, off his formerly swollen midsection, which until not long ago helped him tip the scales at 366 pounds.

That's 130 pounds more than during Mitchell's dozen seasons in the NFL, where he played for the Miami Dolphins, Detroit Lions, Cincinnati Bengals and Baltimore Ravens.

On Thursday's edition of "The Biggest Loser" (NBC at 8 p.m. EST), Mitchell reveals his current physique: just 242 pounds on his 6-foot-6 frame.

In addition, he'll be sporting a whole new look on this special makeover episode, as fashion expert Tim Gunn and celebrity hair stylist Ken Paves transform Mitchell and his fellow contestant at Comeback Canyon as well as the four remaining ranch contestants.

All that, plus Mitchell will be reunited with his family after 15 grueling, sequestered weeks of training.

"I get a new wardrobe, and they even cut my hair," Mitchell said Wednesday in a phone interview. "I look pretty darn good."

That's a self-appraisal the 47-year-old Mitchell wouldn't have voiced a few months ago.

"I really struggled with my weight during my playing career," he recalled, having routinely gained 15 to 20 pounds each offseason that he had to lose before each season began. "When I retired in 2001, there were no more football seasons to get ready for. I had worked out because of my job, and after retiring I kind of resented exercise because of that. So I just slowly put on weight."

By the time "The Biggest Loser" came calling, Mitchell had reconciled himself to being fat the rest of his life.

But how long would that life be? By then he was in precarious health, he said—a borderline diabetic suffering from sleep apnea and [high blood pressure](#)

Even so, he agreed to take the "Biggest Loser" challenge filled with dread. Besides the physical demands he knew lay ahead, he was living with shame he neither wanted to confront nor share with an audience of millions.

"You have no idea how terrified I was," he said. "Pro athletes don't have emotional issues—or aren't supposed to. You can't show any kind of weakness. There's no crying in football."

Along with the exercise and nutritional regimen, he tangled with emotional issues he had long held at bay.

"Once I got there, they said, 'You're gonna lose weight, but you'll gain it all back unless you figure out why you gained it in the first place.'"

And, yes, he cried.

In particular, he recalled a morning hike when "I just lost it—I sat down on the trail and sobbed uncontrollably, about how in my life I was

focusing on the things that brought me pain and sorrow, and how that was a big part of why I gained weight. I wanted to quit. I didn't want to deal with it."

But he did.

"I realized I had shut myself off emotionally, and when I opened myself up, there was a lot more to me than I was giving myself credit for. I told myself, 'You're a great guy, Scott, and you have a great life.'"

He's determined to make good on that mantra, as "The Biggest Loser" powers to its season conclusion Jan. 29.

Mitchell calls the experience "beautiful, wonderful, lifesaving. And the hardest damn thing I've done in my life."

Harder than his rough-and-tumble football days?

He laughed. "Not even close."

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