

Chargers are powered up with an 'underdog' energy

Giants are confident of dampening effect on San Diego team

MIAMI (AP) — Although many aren't giving San Diego much chance in the Super Bowl, the Chargers believe they can pull off the improbable.

Load them down with the ballast of recent AFC failures. Stack on the record 19-point spread. Throw them up against perhaps the best team of the Super Bowl era. For good measure, add in a recent rout at the hands of that opponent, the San Francisco 49ers.

Then watch them quiver. Well, not exactly. Not only aren't the Chargers apologizing for making their first Super Bowl, not only are they expecting to make a game of it, but they are talking about winning

the thing, something no AFC team has managed in a decade.

"We know going into this game that we are the underdogs as a team and as a receiving group," said Chargers receiver Tony Martin, whose 43-yard touchdown catch beat Pittsburgh in the AFC title game. "The thing about us is that we have a lot of heart. We have a lot of pride about ourselves."

"We don't let anybody tell us that we can't do something. If we did that, we wouldn't be on this team today."

After the victory over Pittsburgh, Martin said the Chargers were confident they could beat anyone.

"We know that in our hearts we have enough character and enough pride about ourselves to go out there, and we're going to fight you tooth and nails the whole time," he said.

But the Chargers can't avoid the questions that, while phrased more kindly, all basically ask: What are you doing here?

Only twice in their NFL history have the

Chargers made the conference championship game, losing in 1980 and 1981. They've been in the playoffs just five times since the merger, including the 1982 strike season, when eight AFC teams got in.

Few thought they would finish among the top teams in their division, let alone knock off Miami and Pittsburgh in the playoffs and place themselves opposite an impressive 49er team.

"According to the national news and everything else, we're not supposed to be here," Charger linebacker Junior Seau said. "The ratings of ABC will probably go down because of us."

"But being the underdog is nothing new, and it's not going to hurt or help us. All it does is show you're not respected, and you're not to the level where you should be respected yet. And in order to do that, you have to do something rare, and that's to win a Super Bowl."

San Francisco has won four of them, scored 505 points this season, beat the two-time champion Cowboys for the NFC crown and is loaded

with talent. Some say overloaded, which could lead to overconfidence, particularly since the Niners routed the Chargers 38-15 in December.

"There is confidence and there is overconfidence, and I don't think this team is overconfident," said center Bart Oates, who won two Super Bowls with the Giants. "I think it is very confident. If you look at the accomplishments of the team, I think they justify a great deal of confidence."

"We have played well and we have won games the way we wanted to win games."

They have won games by dominating, scoring early, making big plays on defense, doing everything expected of a great team with four Super Bowl championships on its resume.

So shouldn't the 49ers be expecting to walk all over the Chargers for their unprecedented fifth Super Bowl title?

"That is the furthest thing from the way this team is handling this game," league most valuable player Steve Young said.

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All-American Jennings invited to '95 Pan American basketball team trials

Former Nebraska All-American Karen Jennings was named as one of 20 women invited to the USA Basketball Pan American Games Women's Basketball Team Trials Wednesday.

A pair of 1992 USA Olympians and three members of the United States' 1994 World Championship team are among the 20 women invited to the trials, which will be held Feb. 25-27 in Colorado Springs, Colo.

The 12-member USA Pan American Games Team will be selected by a subset of the USA Basketball Women's Player Selection Committee following the three-day trials.

The 1995 Pan American Games

are slated to be held March 9-26 in Argentina, with the women's basketball competition scheduled to begin Sunday, March 19 and run through Saturday, March 25 in Mar del Plata.

"Initially, the timing for the 1995 Pan American Games was such that we were concerned about whether we could even field a team, but in the end we were pleased with the quality of applicants and are very excited about the 20 players who have been selected to attend the trials," said Carol Callan, chair of the Women's Player Selection Committee.

"We have what we feel is an exceptional combination of experienced

USA Basketball players, including some former Olympians, as well as some younger players who will help shape the future of the the USA program."

The two Olympians are Teresa Edwards from Georgia, and Carolyn Jones from Auburn. Edwards has played in three Olympics in 1984, 1988 and 1992. Jones was an Olympian in 1992.

Both Jones and Edwards were on the World Championship team from last year. Joining both of them at the trials are Carla McGhee and Sheryl Swoopes, who were on the team as well.

Jennings

Continued from Page 7

Russell and other former Huskers will be on Jennings' team.

She will get a chance to play against former teammates Sara Offringa, Rissa Taylor, Nafeesah Brown and Amy Stephens.

"It should be pretty fun," Jennings

said. "I played with some girls that were All-Big Eight and could have been All-Americans."

Jennings said she had looked forward to getting her jersey retired since Coach Angela Beck told her about it in December.

"I was floored," Jennings said. "I was greatly flattered that they even considered that."

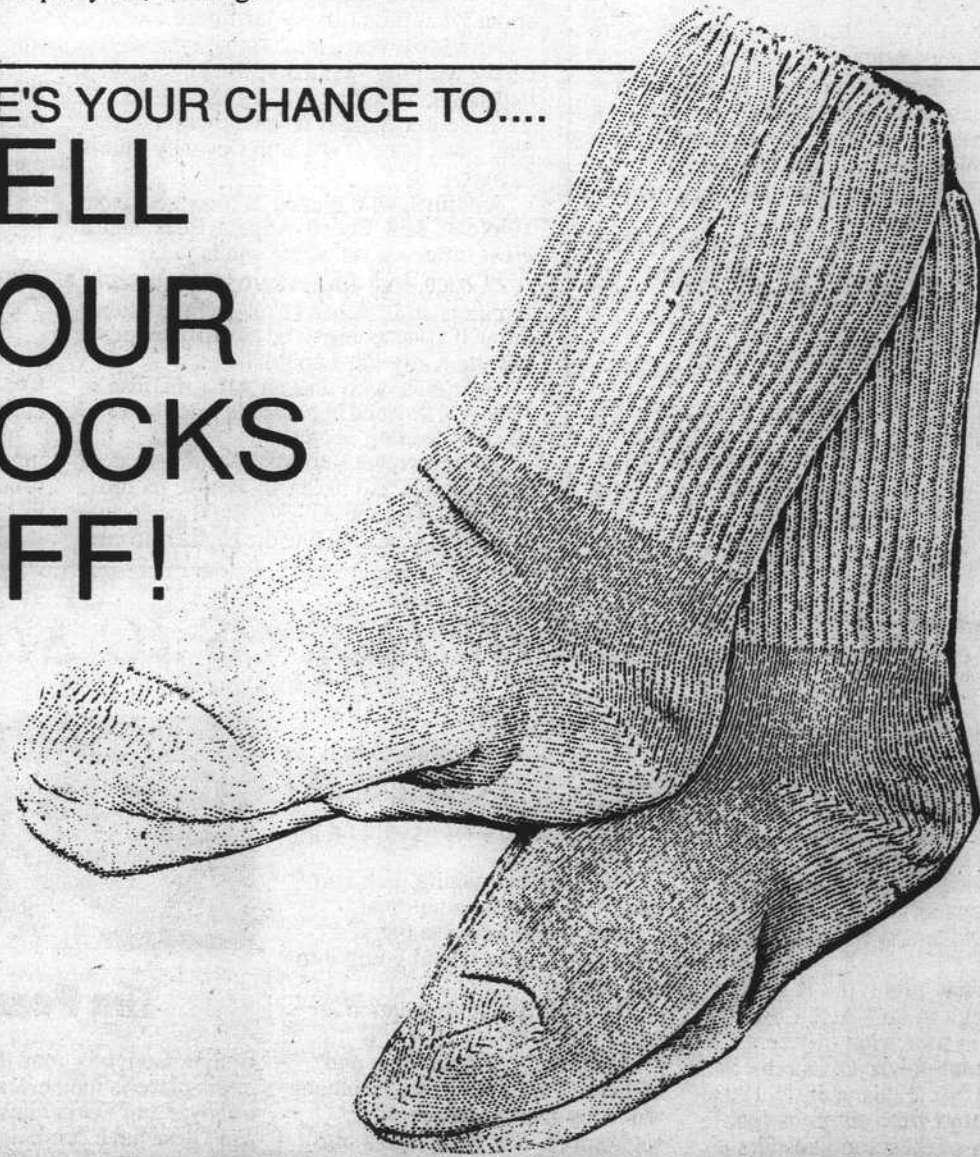
Jennings said this weekend would be the perfect cap to her career.

But she also had some words of advice for this year's injury-plagued Husker squad.

"I know they are doing everything they can," Jennings said. "It will make them tougher, not only at the end of the season, but for next year as well."

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