

# Dream comes true for Rice grad Morrison

BY MIKE ROSENBAUM  
STAFF WRITER

Like many Detroit-area boys, young Steve Morrison often watched Lions games and pictured himself playing on the Silverdome field. "It's something I always dreamed about," Morrison said. Last Sunday, Morrison's dream came true, although he wore the blue of the Indianapolis Colts, not the Lions.

Unfortunately for Morrison, the game's result was more like a nightmare — a 32-10 loss. Still, the former Birmingham Brother Rice All-Stater called it "a special day."

Plenty of Morrison's friends and family attended the game. Even Morrison's college coach, Gary Moeller, now a Lions assistant, was on hand.

"I've been looking forward to this game ever since the schedule came out last year," Morrison said, after the contest. Morrison provided tickets to many of his well-wishers. "I'm looking forward to seeing them," he added.

Morrison, a 6-foot-3, 246-pound linebacker, is in his third NFL season. He's been a defensive starter for much of that time, but played a backup role against the Lions until starting linebacker Elijah Alexander left the game. Morrison played most of the second half at linebacker, in addition to his special teams duty. Morrison plays regularly on the Colts' kickoff, kickoff return, punt, field goal and extra point teams. It's a job he takes seriously.

"I enjoy it, just getting the opportunity to play, no matter

what the role. You can't look at it as less important. It's just as important as offense or defense." Morrison entered last Sunday's game with 42 tackles on defense — tied for sixth on the team. He had 18 solo tackles,



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Steve Morrison  
—Brother Rice grad

including one quarterback sack, plus five tackles on special teams.

After starring at Brother Rice, Morrison enjoyed a standout college career at the University of

Michigan. Morrison was a three-year starter for the Wolverines. He was voted the team's top linebacker twice, started in U-M's last Rose Bowl victory, in 1993, and served as the defensive captain as a senior.

Today, the U-M connection gives Morrison and teammate Jim Harbaugh bragging rights in the Colts' locker room when discussions turn to college football, as it often does.

"Everybody does that, talk trash in the (locker) room about your school," Morrison said. "You're proud of your school. I'm real proud of (Michigan). This is one of the best teams they've ever had there. I hope they do it. I've never seen a defense play like that. It's a credit to all their coaches and players. They've done an outstanding job."

Many observers felt Morrison also did an outstanding job in college. As a senior he earned All-Big 10 and Honorable Mention All-America honors. Despite his strong college credentials, Morrison was not selected in the 1995 NFL draft.

"Some people might take that the wrong way, like, 'I got screwed,'" Morrison said. "I took it as a motivating factor. I knew I could play football. I had nothing to prove to myself. Fortunately, things worked out for me."

Several NFL teams expressed interest in signing Morrison soon after the draft. He chose the Colts, the first team which contacted him.

"I had a couple other offers," Morrison recalled, "but I thought I had a fighting chance to make the team here. Looking back, it was a perfect fit for me."

Morrison not only made the team, but he's been a regular contributor since his rookie season. His attitude and work ethic



STAFF PHOTOS BY JERRY ZIMSKAN

**Welcome home: Former Birmingham Brother Rice graduate Steve Morrison, right, fights off a block by Detroit Lions tight end Pete Metzelaars during a recent NFL game at the Pontiac Silverdome. Morrison, a 6-foot-3, 246-pound linebacker, is in his third NFL season. Morrison played most of the second half at linebacker against the Lions, in addition to his special teams duty. Morrison plays regularly on the Colts' kickoff, kickoff return, punt, field goal and extra point teams.**

may be the reason he's exceeded the expectations of NFL scouts.

"Once you make a step up (to the NFL) you have to learn — learn to be more physical, to be faster, just improve in every area and try to be consistent."

Morrison's NFL highlights include "getting the opportunity

to play and start some games. As I said, I'd always dreamed of getting an opportunity to play in this league. To do that is pretty special."

Morrison cites the Colts' playoff appearances the past two years as his most memorable NFL moments. The 1-11 Colts

won't make the playoffs this year, so he'd "just like to finish out the season with some wins. We had a big win last week (against Green Bay). I really thought that would be a turnaround for us. That didn't happen, but I'd like to have a strong finish to the season."

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