

For Jets' Darrelle Revis, family keeps him humble and hungry

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By Donald Miralle, Getty Images

Jets CB Darrelle Revis finished second in the voting for Defensive Player of the Year to Green Bay's Charles Woodson.

By [Tom Pedulla](#), USA TODAY

FLORHAM PARK, N.J. — [New York Jets](#) cornerback [Darrelle Revis](#) is isolated on the opponent's premier receiver so often that teammates say he plays on Revis Island.

"I want the weight of the world on me," says Revis, whose ability to stop the pass keyed the [Jets'](#) improbable run to Sunday's AFC Championship Game against quarterback [Peyton Manning](#) and the [Indianapolis Colts](#).

But no man is an island. And the leading figure in the NFL's stingiest defense feels ready to take on the world — or at least [Reggie Wayne](#), Manning's most productive target with 100 catches for 1,264 yards and 10 touchdowns — because he surrounds himself with a strong off-field supporting cast.

That group is led by his mother, Diana; his uncle, former NFL defensive end [Sean Gilbert](#), who has watched his back since his diaper needed changing; Will Sullivan, his personal trainer; and former Pro Bowl cornerbacks such as [Ty Law](#) and the retired [Deion Sanders](#).

Diana is as no-nonsense as mothers come. "My son is my son," she says. "I should be able to tell him anything."

And she does.

"I observe everybody around him," says Diana, ever wary of potential hangers-on and needless distractions. "If you are hanging around my son, I need to know who you are and why you are here."

Sullivan puts the precocious third-year cornerback through grueling workouts in Phoenix each summer before training camp begins. He says the 24-year-old's determination to become one of the finest cornerbacks to play the game stems from the "multiple anchors" in his life.

"I've dealt with athletes in the past who are comfortable. They've reached a level of success and they are comfortable," says Sullivan. "There is nothing comfortable about him."

Gilbert, a hard-charging defensive end who played for the St. Louis Rams, Washington Redskins, Carolina Panthers and Oakland Raiders in a pro career that stretched from 1992 until 2003, makes sure of that.

Yes, Revis was named to a second consecutive Pro Bowl with a league-leading 34 passes defended as well as a team-high six interceptions and 71 tackles. Yes, he finished as a runnerup to the Green Bay Packers' [Charles Woodson](#) for NFL Defensive Player of the Year.

Yes, he anchored a defense that led the league in points allowed (14.8), yards allowed (252.3) and passing yards (153.7) while helping to trigger fifth-seeded New York's startling emergence with key interceptions in each of the first two playoff games.

No, Gilbert will not allow his nephew to be content.

"He's playing good," he says, "but there is room for improvement. And that is what we talk about."

Revis, 5-11, 198 pounds, followed the same path as Gilbert to the NFL, gaining All-State honors in football and basketball at Aliquippa (Pa.) High School before concentrating on football at the [University of Pittsburgh](#) during his three seasons there.

He believes the mentoring provided by his uncle, and the ability to call on such accomplished performers as Law and Sanders with questions, gives him an edge in his quest for greatness.

"A lot of athletes don't have that type of background and support and a family member who played," he says. "High school and college ball can't even touch the NFL shield because it's a business."

Gilbert taught the need to push physical conditioning to the point of exhaustion.

"There have been days when I worked out with him," says Revis, "and I couldn't work out no more."

The strength and mental toughness he developed is critical to the physical style he relishes. He often negates the speed of the game's fastest receivers by jamming them at the line of scrimmage, giving them a steady pounding that inevitably takes its toll over four quarters.

In discussing his approach to a position at which one wrong move can translate into a touchdown, Revis quotes Gilbert: "There are two ways to deal with pressure. You feel it or you apply it."

Revis applied it in the regular season opener, when he limited the Houston Texans' [Andre Johnson](#) to four catches for 35 yards. Johnson would finish the year with 101 receptions for 1,569 yards and nine scores.

He maintained suffocating pressure on the New England Patriots' [Randy Moss](#) and the Buffalo Bills' [Terrell Owens](#), twice manhandling two of the finest wideouts in the history of the game as well as AFC East rivals.

THE HUDDLE: Revis won't back off assertion that Moss is a 'slouch'

Moss closed with four grabs for 24 yards in their initial duel, faring only slightly better with five catches for 34 yards and a score on Nov. 22. Owens was held to three receptions in each meeting, the first time totaling 13 yards and then 31 yards.

Revis outdid Carolina Panthers burner [Steve Smith](#) by hauling in two passes thrown in their direction by quarterback [Jake Delhomme](#) and turning one of those pickoffs into a 67-yard return for a score in a 17-6 win on Nov. 26. Delhomme found Smith one time for 5 yards.

Week after week, receivers ventured to Revis Island and could no longer be found.

Before the regular-season finale, the [Cincinnati Bengals' Chad Ochocinco](#) vowed to change his name back to [Chad Johnson](#) if he joined the missing. After going without a catch in the first half, Ochocinco did not return for the second.

When coach [Marvin Lewis](#) was asked about the nature of the presumed injury, he replied, "His pride got bruised."

For the time being, Ochocino has not reverted to his former name.

Wayne finished with three catches for 33 yards on Dec. 27. He was among the starters lifted in a controversial decision made by first-year coach Jim Caldwell, who wanted to make sure his team was as healthy as possible for the playoffs.

Despite being two victories away from a perfect 16-game regular season, he pulled Manning and several others with a 15-10 third-quarter advantage, inadvertently helping the Jets avoid mathematical elimination with a 29-15 victory.

Wayne looks forward to completing unfinished personal and team business.

"One thing about Revis, he's going to challenge you," he says. "He's going to make you play your best, and that's all you can ask for. I accept that challenge ... We've got a whole game to play each other. May the best man win."

Caldwell offers the highest praise for Revis.

"He's a great player," he says. "I'm not certain I've seen a corner play as well as he's playing right now. He's special. He's a complete ballhawk."

Contributing: Jarrett Bell in Indianapolis

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