



# Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

## Rams-Falcons

It was like stepping into a different world. I've watched professional football on television for a number of years, but getting up close to one of those hulking players is an experience which defies description. And being in a room filled with Los Angeles Rams goes even beyond that.

I have a friend in the public relations department for the Rams. He's the guy who has gotten me tickets for the Dodgers when I go to Los Angeles. And when he called a couple of weeks ago and asked if I'd like to meet the Rams when they came to Atlanta for their season opener, I grabbed the chance. Especially since the invitation included the opportunity of speaking to the football team at their pre-game chapel service on Sunday morning. And even more especially since I could take my 17-year-old son along.

There was no pay involved for speaking at the chapel service — so it meant examining our bank ac-

count to see if I could afford two plane tickets to Atlanta, plus car rental and motel bill. Jackie helped me along. "Look on it as an investment in your son," she said. "Not to mention an opportunity to share some spiritual truths with the Rams."

With that kind of encouragement, how could I say no?

A TV taping crew from the Christian Broadcasting Company's "700 Club" was present that Saturday afternoon for the pre-game practice. We shot some interviews with some of the Christian players. I sat back, thinking. It's one thing when a preacher comes down the street and tells me I ought to live for Christ. But when 245 pounds of sheer gristle like all-pro defensive end Jack Youngblood says it — well, it's hard not to listen.

Of course, you know what happened that Sunday afternoon. Even though I look upon myself as something of a motivator, I must

have been pushing the team in the wrong direction. The last time the Rams played the Atlanta Falcons the Rams came out on top 59-0. This time it was the Falcons, rising from the bottom of the heap, pushing the Rams all over the field and winning the game by a comfortable margin.

When we stepped off the plane in Melbourne, Jackie asked my impression of the Rams. I related my encounter with center Rick Nuzum in the locker room after the game. Everyone else was grim and tense. Rick was grinning. "It's at a time like this it's nice to know you're not playing for the Rams, but for the Lord."

My son Tim's reaction of the dressing room scene was not quite so spiritual. He could hardly wait to brag to his 14-year-old sister. "Hey, I saw Joe Namath naked."

I guess it all depends on what you're looking for — and who you want to impress.