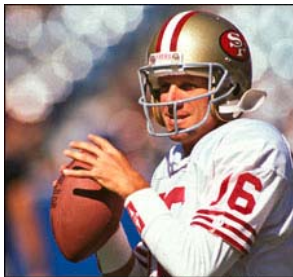


Are You Ready for Some Football (Wines)?

Unfiltered kicks off the new football season with an overview of NFL stars past and present who are donning the winemaking helmet

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- Retired NFL coach and Napa native **Dick Vermeil** has been making his own wine (and wine-centered controversy) for years, and now he has a brand-new Calistoga tasting room and wine shop in which to share and sell Jean-Louis Vermeil, the signature Cabernet Sauvignon named in honor of his father and great-grandfather, among other wines bearing the legendary coach's name. Vermeil's wine roots in the Napa Valley are deep: in the early 1900s, his maternal great-grandfather established the Calistoga Wine Company. As for the tasting room, coach Vermeil has filled it with sports memorabilia, photos from his NFL career and documentation of the history of winemaking in his family over the past century.
- **Carmen Policy**, the former president of the San Francisco 49ers who presided over that team's rise to greatness—starting in 1977, Policy helped build five championship teams from 1981 through 1995—as well as its unraveling, when then-owner Eddie DeBartolo lost control of the team. Policy still proudly displays his Super Bowl rings in his home office in Yountville. In 2003, he and his wife, Gail, purchased a property in Napa, where they hired **Jim Barbour** to plant 10 acres of Cabernet Sauvignon. The winemaker is **Thomas Brown**, who also owns his own label, Rivers-Marie, and makes Schrader's stunning Cabernets. Policy's label is named Casa Piena, the Italian card-playing term for "full house," and the debut bottling from 2006 (93 points, \$125) is a terrific wine—rich, intense, vibrant and full-bodied, with well-defined loamy currant, berry, herb and toasty oak flavors, yet made in a more elegant style than many Napa Cabernets.
- **Cathy Schembechler**, wife of former University of Michigan coach and icon **Bo Schembechler**, is behind the Bo wine brand. Bo wines were introduced last year with the 2005 Bo's Merlot from Monterey County, and \$2 of the \$17 to \$20 retail price of each bottle is donated to the University of Michigan Cardiovascular Center, which coach Schembechler credited with prolonging his life after his first heart attack in 1970. This year a Sonoma County Sauvignon Blanc—Bo Blanc—has also been introduced.
- One of the most serious winery owners among NFL alumni is former New England Patriots and Buffalo Bills star quarterback **Drew Bledsoe**. Bledsoe teamed up with Leonetti Cellars' **Chris Figgins** to make Doubleback Cabernet in Washington's Walla Walla Valley, where Bledsoe grew up. The first offering, from the 2007 vintage, will be available in 2010.



Mitchell Layton/Getty Images

Former 49ers QB Joe Montana struck gold when Ed Sbragia agreed to make his Napa Cabernet.

- Former San Francisco 49ers Super Bowl champ and Hall of Famer **Joe Montana** made a wise decision when he decided to create Montagia with Beringer Cabernet guru **Ed Sbragia**. The 2003 vintage is the current offering, and was made with grapes grown on Napa Valley's Howell Mountain. A portion of the high-end Cabernet-based blend's proceeds are donated to various charities.
- Continuing the quarterback California Cabernet trend, former Miami Dolphins QB **Dan Marino** is behind Marino Estates Vintage "13" California Cabernet. The proceeds go to the Dan Marino Foundation, which supports autism research and young adults with special needs. Marino's son Michal has autism, and the CBS analyst regularly sponsors wine-and-food themed charity events in Florida.
- Green Bay Packers cornerback **Charles Woodson** won't have anything to say about his wine until he someday retires thanks to a new NFL rule barring active players from endorsing alcoholic beverages, but you will see his signature on every bottle of TwentyFour Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Stags Leap District. Woodson, a former Oakland Raider, caught the wine bug when he took a tour at Robert Mondavi Winery.
- Even the NFL's new commissioner has shown off his wine savvy in organizing the 2008 NFL Global Sport Summit in London. Winemaker **Adam Lee**'s Siduri and Novy wines were selected as the event's exclusive wine selections. Unfiltered looks forward to seeing whose wines are featured at next month's summit, held the week before the New England Patriots play the Tampa Bay Buccaneers at London's Wembley Stadium.



Tom Dahlin/Getty Images

Charles Woodson is remaining mum regarding his own Napa Cabernet, at least until he hangs up his cleats.