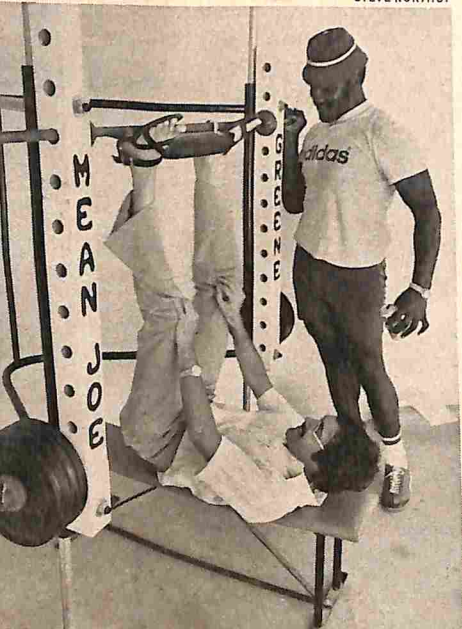


# A LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

Sportswriters share a special occupational hazard: they are both addicted to athletics and regularly reminded how far they fall behind the pros (and a good many amateurs too) in speed and agility. Staff Writer Philip Taubman, who wrote this week's cover story on football's Pittsburgh Steelers, is a weekend tennis buff, but he has warily declined opportunities to play Jimmy Connors and other stars he meets while working. Reporter-Researcher Jay Rosenstein had a typically humbling experience while interviewing the Steelers' defensive tackle "Mean" Joe Greene at his Texas home for this week's story.

STEVE NORTHUP



ROSENSTEIN & GREENE

At one point Rosenstein looked up from his note pad and noticed that Greene's two-year-old daughter had fallen into the swimming pool. Rosenstein, who played club football at the University of Pittsburgh and considers himself reasonably agile, threw his notes aside and dived into the pool. But as he thrashed furiously, he saw a "large shape" pass overhead and plunge into the water several feet ahead of him. Greene stood up and, says Rosenstein, "lifted the girl out of the water with a powerful swoop. It was the quickest that I've ever seen anyone react."

Later on, Rosenstein tried a short workout in the minigym that Greene has in his garage, but soon found that playing with Mean Joe's outsized bodybuilding gear was only good for "developing a dwarf complex." None of these considerations trouble Sport section Senior Editor Martha Duffy, however. Her favorite athletes

happen to be race horses. They can usually be watched from the safety of a warm clubhouse and need never be interviewed.

For this week's World section story on Syria and its pivotal position in the Middle East peace equation, TIME Correspondents Karsten Prager and William Marmon were granted a rare interview with Syria's President Hafez Assad. Prager also talked to two of Assad's closest advisers: Major General Naji Jamil, head of the Syrian air force, and Major General Mustapha Tlas, the Defense Minister. Following an old Syrian gift-giving custom, Jamil presented Prager with a small air-force pin, smilingly suggesting that it might make it easier for Prager to be a military correspondent in Syria in the unhappy event of more fighting in the area. Was there a more ominous symbolism in the Defense Minister's gift, a chrome-plated presentation pistol? Not at all, Tlas explained. He told Prager that he merely thought the present might come in handy some day in the correspondent's own troubled home base, Beirut.

Ralph P. Davidson

## INDEX

|                    |                    |                      |
|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Cover Story.....62 | Education.....44   | Nation.....8         |
| Behavior.....57    | Environment.....36 | People.....42        |
| Books.....87       | Forum.....4        | Press.....49         |
| Cinema.....71      | Law.....58         | Show Business.....61 |
| Economy            | Medicine.....74    | Sport.....62         |
| & Business.....77  | Milestones.....86  | Theater.....91       |
|                    |                    | World.....23         |

The Cover: Photographs counterclockwise from top right: L.C. Greenwood, Dwight White and Ernie Holmes by Shelley Katz—Black Star; Joe Greene by Steve Northup.

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