



Advertisers eager to pay to open door to Chicago's 'Refrigerator'

Associated Press
 CHICAGO — William "The Refrigerator" Perry, who is paid to push his massive self away from the dining table, may soon be pushing hamburgers, french fries and other fast-food temptations, as well as real refrigerators.
 The Chicago Bears' 308-pound rookie defensive tackle, whose girth makes him worth plenty to advertisers, stands to profit more from his endorsements this season than from his four-year, \$1.35 million contract with the National Football League club.
 "I don't know of a hotter property in the country right now," his agent, Jim Steiner of St. Louis-based Bry & Associates, said Monday.
 McDonald's, Coca Cola, and, of course, refrigerator-makers General Electric and Whirlpool are hungry for endorsements from the 22-year-old Perry.
 "They (offers) are coming in at the rate of 15 an hour," said Steiner,

whose firm represents more than 100 athletes.
 Offers were coming in even before Perry became an important factor on offense, scoring a touchdown and clearing the way for two TDs by Walter Payton against Green Bay two weeks ago. He victimized the Packers again Sunday, catching the first touchdown pass of his career as the Bears defeated Green Bay 16-10, raising their record to 9-0.
 That earned him a Monday appearance on the CBS Morning News, plus a front-page story in USA Today.
 Among the companies lining up to sign Perry are a toy maker which wants to market a William Perry robot, a manufacturer of hospital scrub suits and a thermal underwear company, Steiner said.
 Perry's show-biz career is being plotted carefully, Steiner said.
 "We cannot overexpose him, and we want to align him with quality companies," he said.

Perry, raised in Aiken, S.C., was a surprise first-round draft choice out of Clemson. Many pro analysts had figured Perry's weight would drop his value, but the Bears gambled that he would stay within the weight and body fat ratio clauses of his unique contract.
 His 120-pound wife, Sherry, is keeping him on a lean diet of baked chicken, vegetables and fruit. Perry said he didn't know if a slimmer profile would cost him fans, but added, "I'm sure trying to get under 300 pounds."
 The massive new Bear has taken Chicago by storm.
 The Wall Street Journal, a newspaper without a sports section, has featured Perry. And Sunday's Chicago Tribune carried an editorial declaring, "Mr. Perry has come to symbolize the revival of the Chicago Bears."
 And the robust rookie is to appear Nov. 11 on The David Letterman Show.

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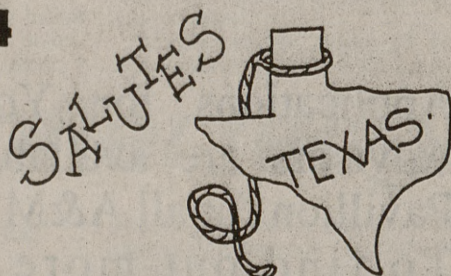
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