

Ranking the Super Bowls, Part Two

by Joe Mulder

We left off with the 28th best Super Bowl ever: Super Bowl XI (Raiders 32, Vikings 14).

Let's keep going...

27. XLI - Indianapolis Colts 29, Chicago Bears 17 (February 4, 2007; Miami, FL) Did anyone else remember that the Bears were leading 14-6 at the end of the first quarter? Because I sure didn't.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS/PLAYS: Devin Hester returns the game's opening kickoff 92 yards for a touchdown, giving the Bears the quickest score in Super Bowl history.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE: Tony Dungy becomes the first black coach to win a Super Bowl. The Super Bowl is played in the rain for the first time. The Colts become the second franchise to win Super Bowls representing two different cities (Baltimore and Indianapolis).

26. XVI - San Francisco 49ers 26, Cincinnati Bengals 21 (January 24, 1982; Pontiac, MI) It wasn't really as close as the final score would indicate; the Bengals, down 20-0 at one point, scored a touchdown with 00:16 left in the fourth quarter to pull within five.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS/PLAYS: None to speak of.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE: The 49ers win the first of what would be five Super Bowl titles. The Super Bowl is played in a cold-weather city for the first time.

25. XXXVIII - New England Patriots 32, Carolina Panthers 29 (February 1, 2004; Houston, TX) I understand that this was a close game, that Adam Vinatieri of the Patriots won it with a last-second field goal for the second time in three Super Bowls, that the Panthers were two seasons removed from a 1-15 campaign during which they became the first NFL team ever to lose 15 straight games in one season... still, for some reason, I don't feel like this was much of a Super Bowl. Maybe it's the taint of steroid allegations that surfaced against the 2003 Panthers later on (although, given what we now know about the Patriots, cheating-wise, it may have been a wash). Maybe it's that the whole Janet Jackson's halftime boob episode overshadowed the game itself, which really wasn't the game's fault. Whatever the reason, when I think about this Super Bowl, I just think, "bleh."

MEMORABLE MOMENTS/PLAYS: The winning field goal, sort of.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE: None to speak of.

24. XXXI - Green Bay Packers 35, New England Patriots 21 (January 26, 1997; New Orleans, LA) This one was more of

a coronation than a Super Bowl; the Packers were by far the best team in the NFL, and there seemed little doubt, even as the playoffs began, that they would win the title. Although it would have been interesting to see them play the Broncos team that got upset by Jacksonville in the divisional playoffs, since that was essentially the same Broncos team (only with way, way, way, way, way better uniforms) that would beat the Packers the very next Super Bowl. Also, since it's always fun to point out something negative about Brett Favre: he never beat the Cowboys when it mattered. In this, his Super Bowl season, the Panthers took care of that for him.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS/PLAYS: A youthful Favre runs around with his helmet held high after his first touchdown pass.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE: Green Bay, once known as Titledown, finally wins another Super Bowl after an almost 30-year drought.

23. XXIX - San Francisco 49ers 49, San Diego Chargers 26 (January 29, 1995; Miami, FL) "But this game was a blowout," you're undoubtedly saying to yourself. And you're right. For some reason, though, I remember it as being a fun blowout. Steve Young had what might have been the best day ever for an NFL quarterback, so there's that. Maybe I'm just giving it extra credit because we got to see Chargers tight end Alfred Pupunu do his "uncork the ball and drink from it" end zone celebration after scoring a garbage-time two point conversion; that was always one of my favorites.

(it should be noted that although I always thought Pupunu was pretending that the ball was a bottle of champagne, Wikipedia says he was pretending that it was a coconut in a nod to his Polynesian heritage. That's neither here nor there, really; it's still a top-notch end zone celebration either way)

MEMORABLE MOMENTS/PLAYS: The coconut thing, for one.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE: The 49ers become the first team ever to win five Super Bowls (with a perfect 5-0 Super Bowl record, no less). Steve Young throws for a Super Bowl record six touchdown passes and is also the game's leading rusher, with 49 yards. Not only does he win the Super Bowl MVP, he is immediately named the MVP of the next eleven Super Bowls as well (note: that's not true).

22. XVIII - Los Angeles Raiders 38, Washington Redskins 9 (January 22, 1984; Tampa, FL) Another blowout ranked a little higher than you might expect a blowout to be. I'm a little young to remember the particulars of this game, but the Redskins – who came in as defending Super Bowl champs with the best record in the NFL and the then-highest-scoring offense in league history – must not have known what hit them, getting flattened by the Raiders like they did. I'm not sure an underdog has ever delivered a bigger butt-whopping in a title game. In any sport, anywhere.

POOP READING

MEMORABLE MOMENTS/PLAYS: Marcus Allen makes a phenomenal 74-yard touchdown run; Los Angeles linebacker Jack Squirek picks off a Joe Theismann pass and returns it for a touchdown in the waning seconds of the first half to give the Raiders a 21-3 lead.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE: The Raiders become the first team to win Super Bowls representing two different cities (Oakland and Los Angeles).

21. IX - Pittsburgh Steelers 16, Minnesota Vikings 6 (January 12, 1975; New Orleans, LA) Our regular reader(s?) will remember that I don't care to talk about the ones that the Vikings lost.

So then; moving on...

MEMORABLE MOMENTS/PLAYS: The Vikings block a Steelers punt and recover it in the end zone to make it a 9-6 game with 4:27 left in the fourth quarter; that was easily the closest the Vikings would (or will) ever come to winning a Super Bowl.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE: The Steel Curtain defense surrenders 17 rushing yards and zero points as the Steelers win their first Super Bowl title ever, and first NFL title in over 40 years of existence.

20. XXXIX - New England Patriots 24, Philadelphia Eagles 21 (February 6, 2005; Jacksonville, FL) A close game, but hardly remembered as a classic. At least by me. Don't ask me why a couple of these close Patriots wins don't stick out in my mind as being particularly good games; maybe it's that, as great as the Patriots supposedly were, they always let their opponents hang around too long. The games *shouldn't* have been that close. That would eventually come back to bite them, of course, but let's not get ahead of ourselves...

MEMORABLE MOMENTS/PLAYS: The Eagles score a late fourth quarter touchdown to pull within three points of the Pats, but the drive takes an interminable 3:52 of valuable game time, leaving the Eagles little chance to win in the end. Also, Eagles QB Donovan McNabb reportedly spends a portion of the drive throwing up.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE: The Patriots repeat as champs, which is notable. They also become only the second team, after the Dallas Cowboys, to win three Super Bowls in four seasons.

19. XXIV - San Francisco 49ers 55, Denver Broncos 10 (January 28, 1990; New Orleans, LA) Not a close game at all, obviously, but fun to watch nonetheless.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS/PLAYS: My friend Tom calls a touchdown pass by Joe Montana to tight end Brent Jones just moments before it actually happens.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE: The 49ers become the second team to win four Super Bowls, while the Broncos become the second team to lose four Super Bowls. In a story that is too good not to be apocryphal, disgusted Denver fans spraypaint "Broncos 10" underneath "Speed Limit 55" on various Colorado road signs.

18. XXVII - Dallas Cowboys 52, Buffalo Bills 17 (January 31, 1993; Pasadena, CA) Another blowout, and another one that, even though I don't like the Cowboys, I remember fondly. And really, at this point, I think we need to stop and consider the plight of the Buffalo sports fan. Seattle and Kansas City have started to look like pretty good contenders in the Worst Places to Be a Sport Fan sweepstakes, but, can anybody really compete with Buffalo? At least Cleveland and Seattle have titles to their credit, albeit titles that were won generations ago and with a team that has since moved away, respectively. Buffalo fans had to endure four straight Super Bowl losses, the first of which saw their heavily favored Bills lose in heartbreaking fashion to an inferior Giants team and its backup quarterback and the last three of which were never competitive. They also had to endure the Music City Miracle, one of the most devastating losses ever, which knocked a loaded Bills team out of the playoffs and helped propel the Titans into the Super Bowl.

And, for good measure, their hockey team once lost the Stanley Cup to Dallas – *Dallas*, of all places – on what is easily the most controversial championship-deciding play in sports history.

Poor Buffalo.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS/PLAYS: With the outcome of the game long since decided, Dallas's Leon Lett picks up a Buffalo fumble and looks to be headed for a 64-yard touchdown return, which would give the Cowboys the all-time record for most points in a Super Bowl. As he holds the ball out to the side in a premature celebratory gesture, Buffalo's Don Beebe knocks it out of his hand and out of bounds for a touchback. Beebe's hustle will forever be praised by coaches across the country whose players will immediately think to themselves, "Wait a minute; didn't the Bills lose that game 52-17?"

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE: The Bills become the first and only team ever to lose three straight Super Bowls.

All right... this seem like as good a place as any to break things up. I'll be back later this week (hopefully) with greatest Super Bowls 17 through 1.
