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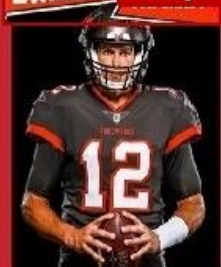
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Bruce Arians



BUCCANEERS < Brady



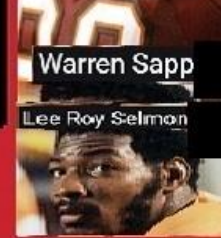
Gronkowski



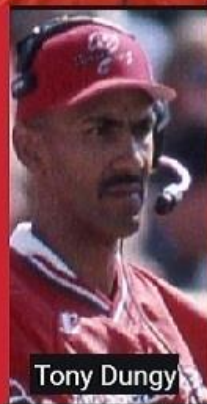
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Warren Sapp



Lee Roy Selmon



Tony Dungy



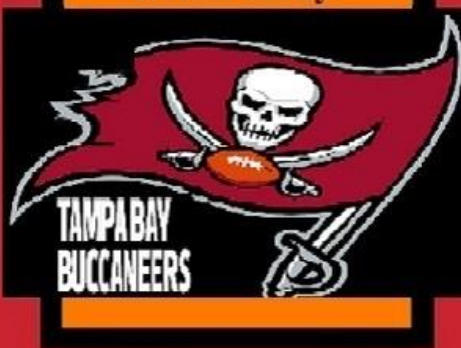
Jon Gruden



John McKay

*Great Moments  
in  
Tampa Bay  
Buccaneers  
Football*

By  
Brian Kelly





Tampa Bay Buccaneers - Wik...



Tampa Bay Bucs unveil new uniforms ...



Tampa Bay Buccaneers beat Ka...



Tampa Bay Buccaneers fall to Kansas ...



Tampa Bay Buccaneers: 2020 Preseas...



Tampa Bay Buccaneers are the ...



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How Tom Brady and Tampa Bay Buccane...



Tampa Bay Buccaneers: Were they as bad ...



2020 Tampa Bay Buccaneers Record Watch ...



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How Tom Brady and Tampa Bay Buccane...



Tampa Bay Buccaneers: Were they as bad ...



2020 Tampa Bay Buccaneers Record Watch ...

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# Great Moments in Tampa Bay Buccaneers Football

From the beginning of football through the Bruce Arians era.

This book is written for those of us who love the Tampa Bay Buccaneers (TBB) and their great free home state of Florida. Those who dislike the Bucs for their own reasons, will also want this book, so they can try to get a leg up on the facts missing from the bookshelves of those TBB fans who do not have this book. The book first tells the story about the founding of the Bucs as the newest team in the National Football League. Most real NFL fans know that The Buccaneers, (often shortened to The Bucs,) were established in 1976, and they posted what pundits have called for the ages an ignoble 0-14 record in their first season in the NF. The NFL wasn't sure what to do with them but after playing their first season in the American Football Conference (AFC) named after the old AFL, the Bucs moved to their current Conference (NFC) in 1977. Life did not change to greatness for TBB for a few more years.

This book would like to go back to the AFL because that's when football was at its greatest, but Tampa Bay came along seventeen years after the AFL played its first game. You'll find we do take a peek at the beginning of football just to get you warmed up.

After talking about how primitive man played football, this book quickly moves on to describe the beginning of football in the US and it recounts the first "American Football Game" in 1867. From there, the progression includes college football teams loving the new sport and their graduates looking for a place to play football after college. Eventually all of this build-up in the 1920's to the beginning of the National Football League and of course the American Football League (AFL) in 1960 and then the expansion which brought in the Buccaneers in 1976. Hugh Culverhouse, a successful Florida Tax Lawyer and broker gained the franchise. He hired USC's successful coach, John McKay as the first coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and he held the reins until 1984.

It seems like yesterday but for those pros trying to create a league in the 1920's out of nothing, we might have gotten nothing without their hard work. And of course, this great book about the Buccaneers would have been nothing without Culverhouse's decision to create a team in Tampa Bay. After starting out 0-26 with 26 straight defeats, McKay brought the team to its first win v the New Orleans Saints. And two years later they sported a 10-6 record and actually won their division and played in the conference championship game in 1979. You will learn that McKay was a great choice, He had achieved major success at the University of California with four national championships in his 16 years there. Coach McKay is responsible for orchestrating the building process that led to the Buccaneers stunning early success.

This book captures the great moments in Buccaneers Football. This Bucs first book takes the reader through stories about their 12 coaches to great stories about the 45 seasons worth of great games (708 games ) with 278 great wins. The book often stops in time and talks about a particular great player such as Lee Roy Salmon, Ricky Bell, Doug Williams, and of course Tom Brady. The Bucs picked up their first NFL Championship with John Gruden and won Super Bowl XXXVII with a convincing 48-21 win. Of course we all know about 2020's Championship and Super Bowl victory as the Bucs have come of age with Tom Brady as their new MVP.

And, so now, I dare you to pick up this book for, if you are a Bucs fan, and you will never put it down again. You cannot ever get enough of the Bucs greatness, but we do provide as many stories together in one spot as we can in this can't miss book.

## Brian Kelly



## Great Moments in Tampa Bay Buccaneers Football

Author:  
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Publisher/ Editor,

Brian W. Kelly  
Brian W. Kelly  
Brian P. Kelly

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Release Date:

April 2021

# Tampa Bay Buccaneers Season Records from 1976 to 2020

## 278-429-1

Total Games 708

Total Wins 278

Total Losses 429

Total Ties 1 \* Prior to Overtime Rules

Stats from 1976 \* Through Feb 2020

<u>Year</u>	<u>Record</u>	<u>Finish (Regular / Post Seas.)</u>	<u>Coach</u>	<u>Notes</u>
2020	11-5-0	2nd --NFC South	4-0 - Bruce Arians	Won Superbowl
2019	7-9-0	3rd -- NFC South--	Bruce Arians	
2018	5-11-0	4th -- NFC South--	Dirk Koetter	
2017	5-11-0	4th -- NFC South--	Dirk Koetter	
2016	9-7-0	2nd -- NFC South--	Dirk Koetter	
2015	6-10-0	4th -- NFC South--	Lovie Smith	
2014	2-14-0	4th -- NFC South--	Lovie Smith	
2013	4-12-0	4th -- NFC South--	Greg Schiano	
2012	7-9-0	4th -- NFC South--	Greg Schiano	
2011	4-12-0	4th -- NFC South--	Raheem Morris	
2010	10-6-0	3rd -- NFC South--	Raheem Morris	
2009	3-13-0	4th -- NFC South--	Raheem Morris	
2008	9-7-0	3rd -- NFC South--	Jon Gruden	
2007	9-7-0	1st -- NFC South	0-1 Jon Gruden	Lost Wild Card
2006	4-12-0	4th -- NFC South--	Jon Gruden	
2005	11-5-0	1st -- NFC South	0-1 Jon Gruden	Lost Wild Card
2004	5-11-0	4th -- NFC South--	Jon Gruden	
2003	7-9-0	3rd -- NFC South--	Jon Gruden	
2002	12-4-0	1st -- NFC South	3-0 - Jon Gruden	Won Superbowl
2001	9-7-0	3rd -- NFC Central	0-1 Tony Dungy	Lost Wild Card
2000	10-6-0	2nd --NFC Central	0-1 - Tony Dungy	Lost Wild Card
1999	11-5-0	1st -- NFC Central	1-1 - Tony Dungy	Lost Conf-Champ
1998	8-8-0	3rd -- NFC Central--	Tony Dungy	
1997	10-6-0	2nd --NFC Central	1-1 Tony Dungy	Lost Div. Playoffs
1996	6-10-0	4th -- NFC Central--	Tony Dungy	
1995	7-9-0	5th -- NFC Central--	Sam Wyche	
1994	6-10-0	5th -- NFC Central--	Sam Wyche	
1993	5-11-0	5th -- NFC Central--	Sam Wyche	
1992	5-11-0	T3rd NFC Central--	Sam Wyche	
1991	3-13-0	5th -- NFC Central--	Richard Williamson	
1990	6-10-0	T2nd NFC Central--	Ray Perkins & R.Williamson	
1989	5-11-0	5th -- NFC Central--	Ray Perkins	
1988	5-11-0	3rd -- NFC Central--	Ray Perkins	
1987	4-11-0	T4th -NFC Central--	Ray Perkins	
1986	2-14-0	5th -- NFC Central--	Leeman Bennett	
1985	2-14-0	5th -- NFC Central--	Leeman Bennett	
1984	6-10-0	3rd -- NFC Central--	John McKay	
1983	2-14-0	5th -- NFC Central--	John McKay	
1982	5-4-0	T4th -NFC	0-1 - John McKay	Lost Round 1
1981	9-7-0	1st -- NFC-Central	0-1 - John McKay	

<u>Year</u>	<u>Record</u>	<u>Finish (Regular / Post Seas.)</u>	<u>Coach</u>	<u>Notes</u>
1980	5-10-1	T4th -NFC Central--	John McKay	Lost Div Playoffs
1979	10-6-0	1st -- NFC Central 1-1 -	John McKay	Lost ConfChamp
1978	5-11-0	5th -- NFC Central--	John McKay	
1977	2-12-0	5th -- NFC Central--	John McKay	
1976	0-14-0	5th -- AFC West--	John McKay	

**Stats Total 278-429-1      10-9 in Post Season play**

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# Dedication

*I dedicate this book*

*To my wonderful brothers and sisters:*

*Angel Edward J. Kelly, Jr.*

*Carol & Amelia Kelly*

*Nancy "Ann" Flannery & Angel Jim Flannery*

*Mary A. Daniels & Bill Daniels*

*Joseph A. Kelly & Diane Kelly*

*I surely am a lucky person to have*

*Such a great family*

*Edward J Kelly and Irene McKeown Kelly  
Mom & Dad*



# Acknowledgments:

I appreciate all the help that I have received in putting this book together as well as all of the other 269 books from the past.

My acknowledgments were so large at one time that readers complained that they had to go through too many pages to get to page one.

And, so I put my acknowledgment list online, and it continues to grow. Believe it or not, it would cost about a dollar more to print my books with full acknowledgments.

Thank you and God bless you all for your help. Please check out [www.letsGOPublish.com](http://www.letsGOPublish.com) to read the latest version of my heartfelt acknowledgments updated for this book.

In this book, I received some extra special help from many fine American patriots including Dennis Grimes, Gerry Rodski, Joyce Edward Heck, Wily Ky Eyely, the best non-cartoon character niece there is—Wily would have loved Angel Irene McKeown Kelly, my mom as well as Angel Edward Joseph Kelly Sr., my dad and the other angels listed. Angel Edward Joseph Kelly Jr., Ann Flannery, Angel James Flannery Sr., Mary Daniels, Bill Daniels, Angel Robert Garry Daniels, Angel Sarah Janice Daniels, Angel Punkie Daniels, Joe Kelly, Diane Kelly, Brian P. Kelly, Mike P. Kelly, Katie P. Kelly, Angel Ben Kelly, and Angel Budmund (Buddy) Arthur Kelly.

*Thank you all!*





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I learned how to write creatively in Grade School at St. Boniface. I even enjoyed reading some of my own stuff.

At Meyers High School (HS Diploma) and King's College (BS Data Processing), and Wilkes-University, (MBA Accounting & Finance) I learned how to research, write bibliographies and footnote every non-original thought included in my writings. I learned to hate *ibid*, and *op. cit.*, and I hated assuring that I had all citations written down in the proper sequence. Having to pay attention to details took my desire to write creatively and diminished it with busy work.

I know it is necessary for the world to stop plagiarism, so authors and publishers can get paid properly, but for an honest writer, it sure is annoying. I wrote many proposals while with IBM and whenever I needed to cite something, I cited it in place, because my readers, IT Managers, and company management, could care less about tracing the vagaries of citations. I always hated to use stilted footnotes, or produce a lengthy, perfectly formatted bibliography. I bet most bibliographies are flawed because even the experts on such drivel do not like the tedium.

I wrote 269 other books before this book and several hundred articles published by many magazines and newspapers and I only cite when an idea is not mine or when I am quoting, and again, I choose to cite in place, and the reader does not have to trace strange numbers through strange footnotes and back to bibliography elements that may not be readily accessible or available.

Yet, I would be kidding you, if in a book about the great moments in Tampa Bay Buccaneers' Football, I tried to bluff my way, so you would think that I knew everything before I began to research and write anything in this book. I spent as much time researching as writing. I might even call myself an expert of sorts now for all the facts that I have uncovered.

Without any pain on your part, you can read this book from cover to cover to enjoy the stories about the many great moments in Tampa Bay FL football.

This book is not intended for historians *per se*, but it does teach a lot of history. It is for regular people of all levels of intelligence. It is for people that want to have a fun read, who like smiling when Bucs

football is the topic. It is fun reading about each of Tampa Bay's Kansas City's 278 wins. This book is for people who love Tampa Bay football and perhaps it is also for some Bucs' detractors who want to have command of the facts before they defend a point of view.

There are lots and lots of facts in this book. This book is not for sticklers about the mundane aspects of writing that often cause creative writers to lay bricks or paint houses instead of writing. It is for everyday people, like you and I, who enjoy the Bucs because they are the Bucs and who enjoy football because it is football. It is that simple.

When the Bucs play a team and they win or lose, that is a historical fact, but to discover such facts, it does not require fundamental or basic research. The NFL itself as well as the Bucs, copyright their original material but not public facts. They copyright so they can say "no" if somebody else's creativity affects the league or the franchise negatively. Even the NFL does not own publicly well-known facts that are readily available about legacies such as John McKay, Jon Gruden, Tony Dungy, or even Bruce Arians' fine seasons.

The great seasons championships and the coaches and the great players are well known and well defined, though some may think the facts belong to the NFL. Facts are facts, period. So, what? As the author of this book, I care but it is a sports book. I use a judicious approach to assure that I am not throwing the bull when I intend to be presenting the facts.

Nonetheless, this is not a book about heavy math algorithms, or potential advances to the internal combustion engine, or space travel, or the eight elements necessary to find a cure for cancer. So, I refuse to treat this book 100% seriously. If you find a fault, I will fix it. This is a book about sports and sports legends and stories about sporting events that have been recorded seven million times already someplace else. Though I tried for sure to get it all right and I used the work of others to assure so, I bet I made a mistake or two.

What is my remedy for the harmed if I have made a mistake? I did not write this book to harm anybody. If I did not write this book, would the harmed individuals from the book be unharmed? So, at the very least, I can unpublish those parts of the book. If any reader is harmed, let me know, and I will do whatever must be done for all to be OK.OK?



# Preface:

“It bothers me that they (the national media) have picked us to be the worst team in football. Because what they are doing now is challenging your physical and your mental capacity and my ability to coach you. Now, this hurts me. Second-worst team, I could stand it. But not the worst team.” “We’ve broken down the expansion teams and they’ve averaged winning 2.7 games their first year, which to me is rather difficult. I figured out the 2, but the .7 has got me wondering what the hell is going on.”

These are quotes from John McKay, the first and arguably the greatest Tampa Bay Buccaneers coach. Bruce Arians, after his recent Super Bowl season, may have a case to be the first quote in the preface of my next Bucs book. That, however, is up to Bruce. Right Bruce?

The late John McKay (RIP June 2001) is one of the more quoted of the Bucs past coaching masters. It is no wonder why. His quotes are numerous, and some are right to the point and a lot are very, very funny. According to a number of pundits, John McKay made losing fun.

Actually, the former Tampa Bay Buccaneers head coach definitely made losing funny. For example, after his highly successful coaching campaign at USC, McKay went on to the National Football League as we now know, to become the head coach of the expansion Buccaneers in 1976. The team was woeful. Some say it out and out stunk. The team lost its first 26 games. Luckily, McKay had a sense of humor.

Everything that is—can be made better. When football began in the fall of 2020, after a 7-9 record in 2019--Bruce Arians first season nobody I know expected a great win-loss record let alone a Super Bowl victory. I suspect that Bruce Arians had a dream but even he had a limit to his expectations.

That was before March 20, 2020 when Tom Brady signed a two-year deal with the Bucs. Even then, nobody was looking at a championship, let alone a Super Bowl Victory. But there was a certain expectation that the Bucs would do better than break-even. I don't think Bruce Arians saw a Super Bowl even with Tom Brady.

During his career, Arians was not known as a head coach. He has been an assistant coach in the NFL for years but a head coach for just seven seasons. His first time out as the top dog was with the Arizona Cardinals. He led the Cardinals for five seasons, compiling a record of 49-30-1. He retired from the Cardinals.

His next head coaching stint was with our Tampa Bay Buccaneers from 2019 to 2020. He led the Bucs to an 18-14-0 record. In 2020, we know he made history by leading the Buccaneers to a Super Bowl win against the Kansas City Chiefs 31-9. During his entire head coaching career, his two teams combined for a record of 67-44-1 across seven seasons including going 5-2-0 in the playoffs.

Looking back in history as we do in this book, we find a few especially great coaches, some good coaches, and some OK coaches out of the 12 on the Bucs list. Because of some very poor years, the Bucs do not sport a great overall record—far from a winning record at 278-429-1.

In fact there were six of the Bucs twelve coaches who did not have a single winning season. Two other coaches, Dirk Koetter, and Raheem Morris squeaked out one winning season out of their three seasons each. And, of course so far, Bruce Arians has just one winning season out of his two years with the team. Of course Bruce will tell you his one season was a big one, winning the Super Bowl.

Take a look at the season one-liner summaries at the beginning of this book and you will see what I mean. The Bucs have had a hot and cold experience from their first extra cold season with John McKay

Jon Gruden did quite well as a Bucs coach, making the playoffs three times with 1st place finishes in the NFC South. He lost two Wild cards but with the third try he won the a Superbowl on January 26, 2003. What a glorious time. The Buccaneers won their first (and only) Lombardi Trophy until Bruce Ariens team did it again this year (2021). Some of you may remember when Gruden's Bucs intercepted Oakland's Rich Gannon five times en route to a smashing 48-21 victory.

On their way to San Diego, the Bucs beat the 49ers (31-6 in Tampa) and the Eagles (27-10 in Philadelphia) on their way to San Diego.

That set the stage was set for an all-pirate Super Bowl—Raiders v Bucs. Coach Gruden had Tampa Bay prepared for Oakland's high-powered offense. Eventual MVP Dexter Jackson had two interceptions, as did Dwight Smith (who returned both of his for touchdowns). Derrick Brooks came up with a fine pick six in the fourth quarter to ice the game completely. Jon Gruden's Tampa Bay had limited Oakland put up just 269 yards against his vaunted Tampa Bay defense.

Tony Dungy was also a great Bucs coach with more winning seasons than he lost. Dungy had just one losing season in six years with one 1<sup>st</sup> place finish and two seconds in six years. Dungy made the playoffs four times losing in the Wild Card game twice, the Division once, and the Conference once. winning fifty four games and losing just forty-two.

Bruce Arians announced his retirement from coaching after the 2017 season. He says he's glad that he changed his mind. He was not expecting to jump back into it after walking away from the Cardinals three years ago. He took the job to coach the Bucs, who it is fair to say were wallowing with just one winning season in their last eight. To Bruce Arians, the Buccaneers job felt like the right opportunity in 2019, and he now rightfully views the 2020 season — which brought him a victory in Super Bowl LV — as his best year yet.

After writing about Notre Dame, Penn State, Clemson, Alabama, Florida, Syracuse, Army, and then the KC Chiefs last year, Brian Kelly, your author was moved by the Bucs' great season to take a shot at writing a book about this great pro-team led by a coach for whom your author has great respect. Of course having the opportunity to write about Super Bowl #10 for Tom Brady is an added treat.

This new book by Brian Kelly, which highlights the Great Moments in Tampa Bay Buccaneers football is one of the items that is expected to be available all 52 weeks of every year, and in fact all 365 days each year except in LEAP YEAR where the Bucs add an extra day for your book shopping pleasure. Amazon, Kindle, Barnes & Noble and other online sites in the US and overseas carry this new book and it will add to your year-round football experience especially in the off-season.

Once you get this book, it is yours forever unless, of course you give it away to one of the now many Bucs fans, who will be in awe of your new possession.

Reading this book is like reliving the last game, the last football season, and / or all the seasons before last season without ever having to get on or off a plane. Seeing a game in Raymond James Stadium is an exhilarating adventure. I know from other experiences, but I am waiting to get there next year, if invited by Coach Bruce Arians after I send him his complimentary copy of this book.

This book will help all the fans who enjoy the Raymond James games regularly to relive the phenomenon of the Bucs over and over. Besides the great read, with this book in your hand at your private venue, there is no limit on the hours for book-tailgating. Moreover, there is no charge for your guests to enjoy the read, as long as you have stocked up on victuals and libations before the read.

The book examines more than just great moments. There are some moments that are not so great in every team's football seasons and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers offer no excuses for those times. Your author shows the bad with the good to get the proper perspective for those great moments.

Not all Tampa Bay coaches for example, are named McKay, Gruden, or Dungy. And surely not all games are listed in the -W--column. However, all teams from the sixteen years after the inception of the AFL to the present, no matter who the coach was, were AFL and Bucs tough, nonetheless. That means they all fought hard for wins for the good of the team and the fans. Heck, after the first two years nobody thought the Bucs were even going to survive. But, John McKay was not a nobody!

Opening with its first story at the very beginning of Football as a sport in America, this book goes all the way to Coach Bruce Arians in his second season. which by many standards was a miracle season.

This book is written for those of us who love Tampa Bay Bucs football as played in a number of great stadiums over the years. After discussing the origins of football and then the origins of pro-football, the book first tells the story of the first Buccaneers game in 1976 and progresses from there.



It then advances to the games, the victories and losses, and then onward to the great immortal Bucs coaches of historical fame. If you are a great adder, that's 45 years of fine Bucs football, told in a year-by-year fashion.

This book is all about the Great Moments in Tampa Bay Buccaneers Football. It touches every aspect of the historical and mythical Bucs Football Teams. It tells exhilarating stories about the 12 coaches and the team's 45 seasons worth of great games. The book stops every now and then, and it takes the reader on a side excursion in time to learn about a particular event or a great player.

The players of excellence list is huge and includes such greats as Derrick Brooks, LB (1995-2008); Lee Roy Selmon, DL (1976 1984); Warren Sapp, DT (1995 2003) John Lynch, Safety (1993 2003); and of course Tom Brady, QB (2020 Present), the 2021 Super Bowl MVP. These stops will add substantially to your reading enjoyment. These Pro Bowlers made Bucs Football a bright light experience for the program's many years and many fans.

In my role as Editor in Chief of Lets Go Publish! and a die-hard Bucs fan, as I have watched a number of games with my dad, your author, and I predict that you will not be able to put this book down

You are going to love this book because it is the perfect read for anybody who loves the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and Bucs football, and who wants to know more about one of the most revered professional athletic teams in all of football—the World Champion Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

Few sports books are a must-read but Brian Kelly's Great Moments in Tampa Bay Buccaneers Football will quickly appear at the top of Americas most enjoyable must-read books about sports. Enjoy!

### **Who is Brian Kelly?**

Brian Kelly aka Brian W. Kelly, is one of the leading authors in America with this, his 270<sup>th</sup> published book. Brian continues as an outspoken and eloquent expert on a variety of topics. Moreover, Kelly also has written several hundred articles on other topics of interest to Americans.

Most of his early works involved high technology. Brian's books taught more than a handful of IT professionals how to excel at the IT game. Later, Brian wrote a number of patriotic books and most recently he has been writing human interest books such as The Wine Diet and Thank you, IBM. His books are always well received. If I could get the pen out of Dad's hand for just awhile, I might be able to write a few books of my own, but my editing chores at Lets Go Publish always come first.

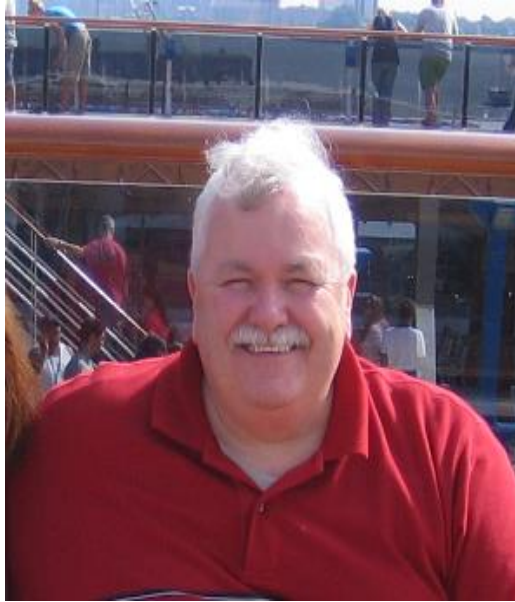
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The best!

Sincerely,

Brian P. Kelly, Editor in Chief  
I am author Brian Kelly's eldest son

# About the Author



Brian Kelly retired as an Assistant Professor in the Business Information Technology (BIT) Program at Marywood University, where he also served as the IBM i and Midrange Systems Technical Advisor to the IT Faculty. In his day, Brian was both a regular computer geek and a great problem solver. He always loved to write. Kelly designed, developed, and taught many college and professional courses. He continues as a contributing technical editor to a number of technical industry magazines, including "The Four Hundred" and "Four Hundred Guru," published by IT Jungle.

Kelly is also a former IBM Senior Systems Engineer. His specialty was problem solving for customers as well as implementing advanced operating systems and software on his client's machines. Brian is the author of 270 books, including this and 59 other Sports Books, and hundreds of magazine articles. He has been a frequent speaker at technical conferences throughout the United States.

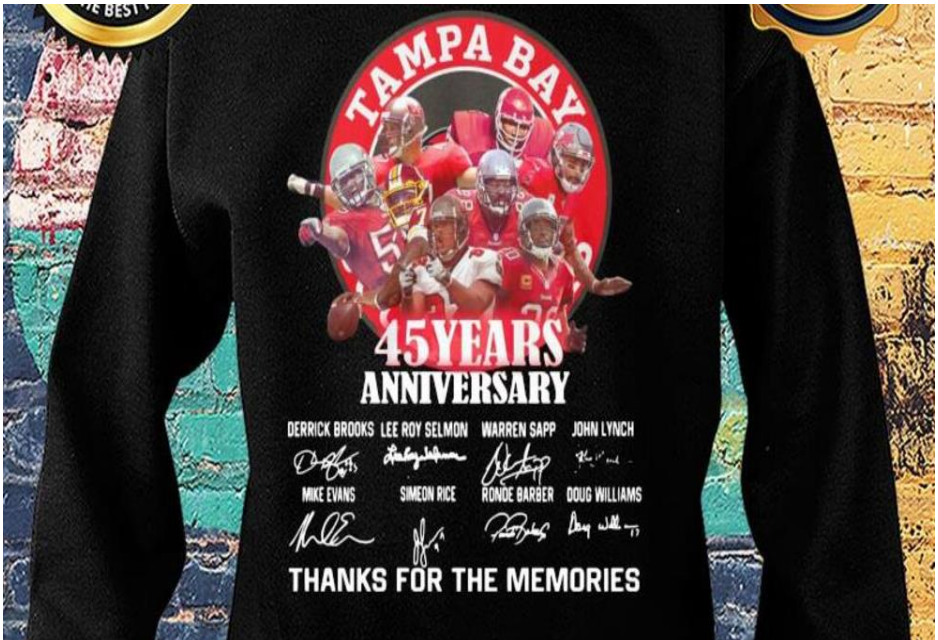
Brian was a candidate for the US Congress from Pennsylvania in 2010 and he ran for Mayor in his hometown in 2015. Kelly loves the Bucs and he became a big fan in the 1970's watching games with his dad on the Weekends on the family 21" Admiral B/W TV.

This is Brian's fourteenth "Great Moments" book and his sixth about a professional NFL team. Writing about the Tampa Bay Bucs, Bruce Ariens and Tom Brady in particular, has been a special treat.



# Chapter 1 Introduction to the Book

## The Buccaneers celebrate 45 years of football



Everybody loves the Bucs!

In the Super Bowl 2020 season, the Buccaneers celebrate 45 seasons of Tampa Bay Buccaneers football. Of course we are including the original purchaser, who was awarded the National Football League's 27th franchise in 1974 with the first kickoff scheduled for 1976. It was owner Hugh Culverhouse, who was a successful Florida tax lawyer and broker. He had the money and the smarts to hire USC's John McKay as the first coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Nobody thinks that was a mistake.

Before I start with some early history, let me talk about the timeline for this book. It is my 60<sup>th</sup> sports book and my first of four planned books about the Buccaneers. I started off as a big AFL fan as a twelve-year-old in the early 1960's. The Bucs would have been my favorite AFL team then, but Hugh Culverhouse never got to buy in back then and the Bucs had to wait until 1976 about sixteen years

after the NFL swallowed up the AFL to get a franchise—#27 in NFL history.

The Bucs were rarely known for greatness since 1976 but occasionally, such as in John McKay's fourth year with the Tampa Bay, McKay got one game away from the championship but lost in the Conference Playoff game. That was in 1979. McKay came close several more times before he retired.

Writing this book has given me even more respect for the Buccaneers and what a bunch of scrappers they were—from day one with a great legendary coach, John McKay.

The price of a current Super Bowl ticket is a little out of my league, but I did make it to Florida this year and last year with my brother and sister as snowbirds. Last year we saw the Super Bowl in Florida and this year we had already watched the Bucs win the Super Bowl when we were in Pennsylvania before our trip to the Sunshine State.

We noticed no change in Florida activity this year while we were there. If there were major restrictions we did not notice them. There was no lockdown and no talks about having to stay home. NY locked down the entire state and the city about 2/3 into March 2020 under duress and it has been that way ever since.

Both Cuomo and DeBlasio—the State, and the City of NY had not paid much attention to the pandemic 'til that point. The Speaker of the US House was not very concerned either. The signals were very mixed as only President Trump in early 2020 seemed to think we needed to worry.

The Speaker had been in Chinatown as I recall in 2020 on the West Coast inviting people to come on down and continue to have a good time. You've probably seen the video. The first impeachment debacle was already underway, and Congress had yet to begin work on COVID-19 in 2020, or so it seemed.

A lot of people had this pandemic wrong. The second impeachment as the president's first term was coming to an end and the election appeared to be over. The Dems wanted to bring Trump a parting gift

– never able to obtain even a dog catchers license. It did not work this time, but they did stop his election.

On January 31, 2020, long before anybody who was anybody was aroused enough to act, you may recall that President Donald Trump saw something and despite negatives from the opposing party, he, on his own authority as president banned travel from China to the US. The Chief's Superbowl had not yet been played. Shhhh!!!! Tom Brady was still a New England Patriot.

In retrospect, even the scientists say things would be much worse without that ban. Italy and Iran kept inviting Chinese from China and their countries paid dearly for their lack of social distancing from infected foreigners and guests. The analysts often suggest that is why their issue was so bad.

Florida governor Ron DeSantis had his own reason. Florida is so warm, nobody thinks flu. But even he eventually gave in under pressure. He finally issued a statewide lockdown in 2020 after revealing coronavirus first started circulating in Miami in early February during the Super Bowl from International travelers and soon state cases surged to 6,955.

Yes, concern in Florida began after we left for home after the Super Bowl but cases of coronavirus in Florida have surged to nearly 7,000, with 857 people hospitalized and 87 dead at the time this was originally written in 2020. When I was in Florida in 2020 on February 2 during the Super Bowl, I had no idea anything like this was happening. I am very glad I got to see the game with my family. God works in strange ways for sure. I never knew that a year later, by the time the Bucs were ready to win, the pandemic would still be controlling the action in many states—but not in Florida.

In September 2020, Governor DeSantis declared Florida open. Tampa Bay was permitted to play with reduced seating capacity. It was on July 30, 2020 that the Buccaneers announced reduced seating capacity for 2020.



The Pirate Ship

Many NFL teams had already announced that they were going to have reduced seating capacity at their stadiums this fall if fans were permitted to attend games. The Buccaneers joined that growing group.

The team announced their policy in a letter that was secured by the Tampa Bay Times. The Bucs had sent the letter to their season pass holders informing them that they will not be able to re-seat all of them at every game during the 2020 season. Management said that they were still working out the details of what the total capacity would be once the regular season got underway.

As expected, the excitement and extremely high demand resulted in a near sell-out situation on a season pass basis for all home games. Buccaneers COO Brian Ford had hoped to have Raymond James Stadium filled with Season Pass Holders to provide a great welcome to Tom Brady and Rob Gronkowski to Tampa and of course to provide an unmatched home field advantage. Unfortunately, capacity had to be limited, but management promised there would still be a memorable season of Buccaneers football. They were very right.

Though Governor DeSantis had opened up the state, but the NFL and Mayor Castor of Tampa Bay were not quite so obliging.



Tampa Bay's COO Brian Ford outlined the procedures for Raymond James Stadium once fans were to be permitted in the stadium.

Mayor Jane Castor of Tampa Bay was not as permissive as agreeing to fans on opening day. She said that her plan continued to be to allow fans in the stadium for games beginning with the team's Week 6 game against the Green Bay Packers on Oct. 18. She said there would be an on-sale period ahead of Oct. 18 where season ticket holders would be able to purchase tickets for specific games with priority determined by tenure.

The COO announced that the team would use a ticketless entry and cashless ordering system for concessions. Masks would also be required at all times unless eating or drinking, and masks would be needed on the concourse at all times. Seating wise, the bowl area of the stadium was to be broken up into pods of no more than 10 people. All groups in the stadium would be socially distanced by at least 6 feet.

Ford added that his priority was the following: "What can we do to provide the safest possible environment not just for our games, but for all events at Raymond James Stadium."

At this time, he did not give a total capacity for the stadium once fans are allowed to attend games, but the team already offered that the capacity would be reduced.

The Tampa Sports Authority operates the stadium. They had received \$10 million in funding from Hillsborough County to retrofit the stadium against Covid-19. Those improvements included contactless bathrooms and a hand sanitizer stations. Tampa Bay clearly took the pandemic very seriously.

Gov. Ron DeSantis said during the period this was being sorted out that he encouraged the team to allow fans at its first home games as he thought it would go a long way in showing the region is prepared to host Super Bowl LV in February, but that he respects the team's decision.

The Bucs opened their season in September in an away game against the New Orleans Saints. The team's first home game was be on Sept. 20 against the Carolina Panthers.

The Tampa Bay Buccaneers eventually announced that it would play its first two home games at Raymond James Stadium without fans. Those games were played on Sept. 20 v the Carolina Panthers and on Oct. 4 v the Los Angeles Chargers. COO Brian Ford said this about its decision.

"We share this disappointment along with at least 25 other NFL teams who also won't be hosting fans to begin the season...this September, we will deeply miss the energy and passion that our fans bring to Raymond James Stadium on gamedays."

Despite the problems in accommodating the fans, eat in February 2021, the Bucs were crowned as the Super Bowl Champions to about a ¼ capacity crowd. Mayor Castor of Tampa Bay then took pictures of face mask violators and tried to collect fines from them. Tampa Bay would be doing even better without Mayor Castor Oil.

You may know that even before April 1, 2020, Governor DeSantis had refused to initiate a statewide lockdown despite the fact that cases of coronavirus there were spiking. He gave the people their freedom to act properly rather than impose government on their freedom. His order went into effect Thursday April 2 at midnight and was scheduled to last 30 days. By September 2020, DeSantis had declared Florida free at last. Of course Mayor Castor Oil of Tampa did not agree but this is a sports book.

Testing in the state at the time of Super Bowl 2020 was only for those who had been to certain parts of China. No wonder I, celebrating the 2020 SB in Florida at my sisters did not know about it. The first confirmed case of coronavirus in Florida was a month later on March 1 , the first death was March 5. I was home for weeks from my 2020 winter vacation before that had happened. It was not until I decided to not go to the Barney Inn's St. Patrick's celebration that I felt the social effect of having a jerk, Governor Wolf, in charge of Pennsylvania.

As Chiefs fans know very well, the Chiefs Super Bowl victory took place at the Hard Rock Stadium in Miami Gardens with 62,000 people in attendance. Few people in the stadium had any issues with sickness if any. There are still no reported cases of Chiefs or 49ers coming down with the virus from experiencing the ambiance at Hard Rock Stadium. But there seems to be political pressure for states to lockdown their people any way. Humph!!!

A year ago, despite a reasonably good record, the left wing experts watching what is now happening, say that Florida is on track to become the next coronavirus epicenter in the US. They expected that the number of cases would spike there. I hope not. I hope the heat in the Florida air kills it. I do. By September 2020, Governor DeSantis had decided that lockdowns create virus spread and he declared Florida open for business. Thank God somebody in charge uses their head.

The shutdown of our county in 2020 in PA had not yet happened. We stay home most of the time anyway but in PA before this became a big deal, we had big family athletic plans that for parts of the family rivaled even the Super Bowl.

You see, we, the Kellys, were planning to go outside driving on March 12 to see my wonderfully talented niece compete in the AAA PA State diving championships held at Bucknell University in Lewisburg. By then we knew about social distancing and other than four of us being in the car both ways for the 100—mile trip, we kept our distances. We did not think it applied to us.

Nobody had clued us in seriously at this point. We had been back from Florida about three weeks or so, by then so we figured whatever it was, it was gone. Wow were we wrong at least on the perception part. The people thought that we were all going to die, and the press fed this fear.

Because we all support the finest who engage in athletic events, please permit a few paragraphs to help you know why this 2020 event was so important to us all. My niece, Sophia Ginochetti, had placed in the States Championship in each of the prior years from Freshman year through Sophomore, to Junior—in which she

competed. We had been there cheering her on each year. She was a Northeastern PA prodigy. NEPA was not known for its prowess in swimming or diving. We were all very proud.

Side note: Sophia's dad, Brian, was a high school State Champ, and her mom Liz was a diving star at Meyers High in Wilkes-Barre, PA. So what's that they say about the apple?

This year, 2020, Sophia's Senior year, after an early season injury, she almost had to drop out of diving completely. There seemed like there might be just enough time for her to recover. And, so, with just the right amount of determination, and great physical training and coaching, Sophia came back. It took much work on her part and her coaches.

Before her injury, she hoped to get a State-Level trophy in this her senior year at Wyoming Valley West High School. She did exactly that. But because of COVID, and her injury, she almost did not get to compete. The meet itself almost did not happen. In fact, we thought the whole competition had been called off.

My brother Joe was driving the newest vehicle in the extended family with my wife Pat and his wife Diane maintaining navigational duties. As we got halfway to Lewisburg, we got a call that made us confused about whether the meet was a go or no-go. In fact, we thought it was canceled. So, we turned around half-way to Lewisburg. We got the word at about 11:30 AM on March 12, 2020 that the meet was off because of the Governor. This was bad news but hopefully it would be rescheduled before graduation.

When we got all the way home we learned that the news we heard was about the AA-level diving not AAA. Sophia was competing in AAA. The meet had never been called off, but PA has such poor communication about what was or what might be that many were confused and many decided not to attend. We decided to begin the trip again. I credit the perspicacity of my brother Joe for that turnaround.

After a short while at home, to pack some extra sammiches, we got back in the car and got to see the whole event. We arrived a little after 2:00 PM and we are thankful that we did.



Sophia Ginochetti in Action—A winner--made the state champs finalists

Sophia Ginochetti, my wonderful and talented niece, performed better than ever. She was great and got on the medal stand in eighth place, which was her goal after recovering from injury. She was thrilled as all of us were.

After the diving, the call on the meet occurring was so close that Bucknell was shut down tight as a drum and the rest of the swimming & diving was canceled by the State to be rescheduled one day in the futures. The Governor canceled it for good a week later in 2020. He has no heart.

He could have waited until things were safer. Think of Bruce Ariens' people showing up for the Super Bowl and finding out it was postponed indefinitely for the coronavirus because of Governor Wolf.

So, the same day that Sophia earned her medal, the PIAA announced it was postponing the Class AA meet originally scheduled for Friday and Saturday as the sports world reacted to the coronavirus pandemic.

“On the way there, we were just hoping and praying that we were able to compete,” Sophia said. “We didn’t know if it was going to happen. Our family bought Sophia a cake, which she loved, and she had some great writeups in the local paper. We’ll see the Sophia

branch of the Kelly family with mom and Dad, Liz and Brian and siblings Fleure and Lukaduke soon. We can't wait.



Bruce Arians in some unexpected Super Bowl Action – A winning coach

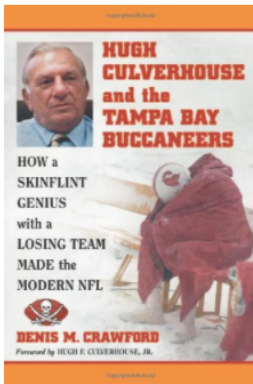
Super Bowl 2021: Bucs head coach Bruce Arians was showered with blue-colored Gatorade after his side's emphatic victory over the Chiefs on Super Bowl Sunday

Hugh Culverhouse was as pleased as punch when he was awarded the National Football League's 27th franchise in 1974. The new franchise's first kickoff was scheduled for 1976. Culverhouse was not known as an athlete per se, as in football, but he was a fine boxer in his day and thus he surely had athletic talent and he obviously appreciated sports teams.

This new owner, Hugh Culverhouse, a successful Florida tax lawyer and broker, hired John McKay as the first coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. McKay had achieved great success at the University of Southern California with four national championships in his 16 years and it was McKay who orchestrated the building process in his eight years at Tampa Bay that led to the Buccaneers' stunning early success.

There was a book written partially titled "How a Skinflint Genius with a Losing Team Made the Modern NFL." See the Amazon ad

for the book on the next page. They tell me it is a great read. I have not got to it yet.



#### Follow the Author



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## Hugh Culverhouse and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers: How a Skinflint Genius with a Losing Team Made the Modern NFL

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From 1976 until 1994, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers lost far more games than they won. The Bucs' status as a sporting punch line belied the fact that they were led by arguably the most important owner of that era. Known as the "Vice-Commissioner," Hugh F. Culverhouse, Sr., wielded his financial acumen as a weapon,

From 1976 until 1994, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers lost far more games than they won. The Bucs' developed a status as a sporting punch line because of its many years of poor records. Despite that there are those that still suggest that Hugh F. Culverhouse, Sr performed as arguably the most important owner of that era. Heck, he was often referred to as the "Vice-Commissioner."

He was a smart man in finance, and he was known to wield his financial shrewdness as a weapon. He is credited with keeping the other NFL owners in line during the economic downturn of the 1980s. You may recall that there were two work stoppages, and a multimillion dollar lawsuit from a rival league. The Vice Commissioner helped the NFL make it past those tough times.

Eventually, like all good men, Hugh F. Culverhouse, the founding owner of Tampa Bay's Buccaneers, who was indeed a Southern gentleman—a man who liked being called "Mr. C," passed away on

a Thursday morning August 25 in New Orleans from heart failure. He had endured a 20-month battle with lung cancer. Mr. C was 75 years of age.

I would not say he was all business, but the Bucs and the NFL were quite important to the man. I have read many obituaries in my day and I cannot recall the continuance of the deceased's business programs, namely the Bucs, was included as a major part of his obituary. Nonetheless it was.

The obituary assuaged those interested that his death at the Medical Center of Louisiana would not have a significant immediate impact on the day-to-day operations of the football team. The obituary writer suggested that the Bucs would play their final exhibition game that night in Tampa and they would open the regular season in Chicago on time.

They also noted that the Bucs Vice President Rich McKay and Sam Wyche, the team's coach and director of football operations, had been handling all of Tampa Bay's football-related decisions. In other words, the team would not be managed after Mr. C's death with amateurs.

Despite his fine work, Mr. C. did not live to fulfill his dream of seeing the Bucs win a Super Bowl. He missed that mark by nine years as Jon Gruden brought the big Super Bowl rings to Tampa Bay in 2002. The writer lamented that losing seasons since 1983 were a source of frustration. They admitted that Fans and media critics frequently blamed the Bucs' lack of success on Mr. C himself. For example, they had accused him of not paying enough to players and not establishing a football-smart front office.

They then say some nice things about the deceased owner. "Responsible or not for the Bucs' woes, Culverhouse will be remembered as the man who bought the Bucs for \$16 million in 1976. He also will be remembered in the NFL as perhaps its most powerful owner during the turbulent years of the mid-1980s. A lawyer, Culverhouse was chairman of the league's two most powerful groups - the Finance Committee and Executive Committee of the Management Council."



His first coach John McKay paid a tribute that "His legacy to the league, is that he brought the financial aspects of the league out of the dark ages and into the modern age."

The man had a lot of power.

Pete Rozelle, long time NFL Commissioner last year had offered: "He gave of himself...that's something that is overlooked about the man. The league owes an awful lot to Hugh Culverhouse. He was selfless when it came to give of his time."

In this obituary the writer also discussed the critics. They would counter that he was not nearly as selfless with his money. The two names most frequently mentioned as lost treasures are quarterback Doug Williams and running back Bo Jackson.

Mr. C. for example is blamed for allowing Williams to leave the Bucs for the USFL only to see him return to the NFL and lead Washington to a Super Bowl victory. They also blame Hugh Culverhouse because Bo Jackson did not want to play football for Tampa Bay. Jackson played major league baseball instead before later joining the Los Angeles Raiders.

In 1988, Culverhouse is quoted as saying: "Doug Williams? I know what I offered him. I did my best. "Bo Jackson? I regret the outcome but not the decision to pick him. He's a marvelous athlete."

Ironically, other team owners saw things just the opposite. They accused Culverhouse of spending too much money on players. They were upset for example in 1987 when he offered \$8 million to quarterback Vinny Testaverde, the first player picked in the draft. The other owners also complained in 1988 when he signed offensive tackle Paul Gruber for a reported \$3.8 million, the most money an offensive lineman ever had received in the NFL at that time.

They noted that Mr. C. had entered the NFL as a "hands-off" owner, freely admitting he knew nothing about coaching or stocking a football team. Boxing does not teach anybody a lot about football, but it is an indicator of Culverhouse's mettle and his overall physical toughness.

He is credited with luring coach John McKay away from a great job at Southern Cal with a \$2 million offer that included life insurance, a car and a home. He knew what he knew and knew what he did not know so he then turned the team over to McKay. The early results were mixed but only in the point spread. The Bucs made history by losing their first 26 games.

That all changed in McKay's fourth season. Coach McKay had put together a fine team that worked to compile a nice 10-6 record. They also beat Philadelphia in their first playoff game, and they lost the NFC Championship game to the Los Angeles Rams, in a tough 0-9 battle. Ironically his team needed just ten points in that game to have sent the Bucs young team to the Super Bowl. Now that surely would have changed club history forever and it would have helped Jon McKay's football legacy.

Fans in Tampa Bay loved to come to Bucs games. Not too far from the Villages, and the bustling Orlando Area and the Gulf Coast surely that was part of the draw. The Bucs did not have a home crowd below 62,000 from 1979 through 1982. Amazing.

Unfortunately for them and for Culverhouse, 1982 was their last winning season before his death. This had the consequence of creating a steadily dwindling attendance record and along with that a rising criticism of team management.

Culverhouse did not like to lose. He put his money where his mouth was but often guessed wrong with his coaching choices. Former Dallas Cowboys president Tex Schramm is quoted as follows: "The losing gnawed at him...one of the most frustrating things in his life has been the losing."

If one examines all other aspects of Mr. C's life, you will find that he was far more aggressive than he may have appeared as the Bucs' owner. He was considered a take-charge tax attorney and estate planner. He also was a boardroom gambler. He amassed a lot of wealth that enabled him to buy the Bucs in the first place.

He was not from an elitist family. In fact, Culverhouse was the son of a coal-mine owner. He reportedly made his first million by buying and selling a company in Puerto Rico - only to lose that million by

buying a couple of hotels in St. Petersburg. He obviously had enough success to make up for any failures but could not overcome losing seasons.

They say that his biggest known financial loss was the formation of a company to protect lawyers from malpractice suits. He lost \$8 million before he got out of that. Of course you don't make that much money in life without having far more financial victories than defeats, including buying the Bucs for just \$16 million.

Most estimates consider the franchise to be worth between \$85 million and \$100 million at the time of his death. In September 2020, the team was worth 2.28 Billion after having been sold in 1995 for \$196 million.

Mr. C admitted: "My life has been greatly enriched (by the Bucs)," He said this a year before his death when he was inducted into the team's Krewe of Honor. "Sure there have been heartaches and setbacks, but nothing worth doing is without its problems. To have been part of the birth of a team and to know the success we did in the early years was as great an experience as I've known."

Again he liked being considered a Southern gentleman by friends. He was born in Birmingham, Ala., on Feb. 20, 1919, and he never left that Southern accent behind. He liked it He was a great negotiator, a sort of fox, so to speak. At some point, he admitted that he used his accent as a legal tool to induce opposing lawyers into underestimating him.

He graduated from the University of Alabama in 1941 with a business degree and in 1947 with a law degree. As noted, he was a boxer in school, and it changed his appearance for good. He left with the legacy of a noticeably battered nose. While in school he also served with the U.S. Army Air Corps from 1941 through 1946. He was recalled to active duty (1951-53) in Korea and held the rank of colonel in the U.S. Air Force. He was no slouch.

He turned somewhat from his legal practices to his work in the NFL once he bought the Bucs. As a success in life, he was on quite a few boards such as Time Warner Inc., and the National Legal Center for

Public Interest. As a philanthropist, he donated millions to worthwhile causes.

He is survived by his wife, the former Joy McCann. They have two children - Gay, the Bucs' president from 1991 until she resigned this year, and Hugh Jr., an attorney in Miami - plus six grandchildren.

What happened to the Bucs after Hugh Culverhouse's death

This year, one of the cinderella stories in the NFL is that of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. After Hugh Culverhouse's death in 1994, the team was in turmoil. A number of fans are asking who the actual Tampa Bay Buccaneers' owner is now? Where did the owner come from, and what else do they have their money invested in?

<https://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/os-xpm-1997-03-02-9703014529-story.html>

By Mike McLeod and Mike Thomas of The Sentinel Staff--THE ORLANDO SENTINEL

Before we get there, I would like to talk just a bit about what happened in the two years following Hugh Culverhouse's death. To see the whole story, which is a very interesting read, see the links above. Mike McLeod and Mike Thomas of the Orlando Sentinel wrote a piece available at the above URL that will keep your interest.

When Hugh Culverhouse's cancer came back, he was left with few choices. One of those was a revolutionary treatment that was experimental. It required Culverhouse to occupy a full wing of the hospital all to himself. It had nothing to do with luxury or privilege. It was because Culverhouse was radioactive. To keep others safe, the walls of his room were lined with lead.

He had to be quarantined in an abandoned section of the Louisiana State University Medical Center. He was monitored with television cameras. If the treatment worked, he felt he would live forever with all of his excesses. If it failed, he would die. The stakes were high, but some would suggest the cost was even higher.

His medical team looked like nuclear power plant workers when visiting their patient. The problem with visitors was that standing near Culverhouse for two minutes and you would have absorbed the equivalent radiation as if you had gotten a chest X-ray. 65 nurses attended to him to limit staff exposure. His cancer had created hundreds of tumors and resisted all conventional treatment. In August 1994 doctors gave him one last-ditch effort to save him with this radical new treatment never tested on a human.

They infused him with 1.6 curies of iodine 131. This was five times more than the biggest dosage used to treat someone with thyroid cancer.

Not much longer than a week after the treatment, Mr. C. passed away. He had hoped that he would walk out of the hospital a new man at age 75. His big dream was to divorce his wife of 52 years and marry one of his many girlfriends. His son identified his two favorites-- Susan Brinkley, wife of broadcaster David Brinkley or thirty-something Charlton Ford, a beauty.

Mr. C. was not the same tightwad as he was in his business dealings. He gave his girlfriends whatever they wanted from checks drawn on his hidden bank account. They enjoyed many gifts and they traveled with him to exotic locations on his private jet. It was a secret life of which the public was unaware. The gifts he gave were worth more than the annual salaries of some of his top Bucs stars.

This was a far cry from the public image of Mr. C.—the generous philanthropist, affable businessman, and a lovable husband and father. Of course his other side soon became public. When he died not more than seven days after his treatment, it triggered a scandalous legal battle over his \$350 million estate.

The long-told fake story was that he was bankrupt, but he had millions and millions. He had tricked his wife into signing up for a total post nuptial settlement package worth \$9 million even though his net worth was huge. His family deserted him in the end though one time his son Hugh Jr. said, "Everybody in life deserves an eraser."



Hugh Culverhouse Sr.—Mr. C.

Whoda thunk? The smashed nose former pugilist did not look like a playboy, but he had the money to lead the life. He was short. He smoked stinky cigars and his nose was often described as bulbous. He wore non-stylish clothes. On the positive side, he was very smart, and his wallet was always available for the “ladies” in his life.

His mansion was so big that he and his wife Joy hardly ever met and according to the girlfriends, he had stopped sex with her years ago. I guess that legitimized their lack of celibacy with Mr. C. I suppose all the facts indicate that the relationship with the two babes he was hoping to marry even if he had to become a Mormon to do it was not celibate.

Here is one example of his cunning in business. But even Hugh Culverhouse could not take it with him.

In one typical venture, he paid \$12.25 million for Palmer Ranch in Sarasota County in 1972. Nine years later, he sold half the 10,000 acres for \$35 million.

Joy Culverhouse, his wife who, after his death, went after the estate she had signed away, testified that she never knew of her husband's infidelities. Later she told reporters: "I'd like to pull him out of the grave and shoot him." Her son had known of his father's infidelities but did not tell his mother, to spare her feelings.

"I think he planned to marry either or both - he might have become Mormon . . ." said Hugh Jr.

Culverhouse had been dead only a day when Hugh Jr. confronted Stephen Story and Fred Cone, his father's associates who had helped him draw up the post-nuptial swindle agreement that stole his mother's entitlements from the marriage and the trust. "I spent about three hours screaming at both of them for what they did to my mother," he said in a court deposition. They got the settlement they deserved.

The postscript on this suggests that more than two years after his death, Hugh Culverhouse is finally out of debt. His estate flourishes, in part because of the sale of the Bucs for a record \$192 million. The team appeared headed for respectability on the field, but the new owners originally claimed they had lost almost \$100 million.

Hugh Jr. in 1997 sat as a trustee on his father's estate. His mother lived happily in their Tampa condominium, walking six miles a day on her treadmill, enjoying the say she now has over which charities will benefit from her husband's millions. Daughter Gay is president of Notre Dame College in Cleveland. They were the family Culverhouse lost by his philandering. There is more to the story but that's enough from me. See the URLs above for more information.

## **Who is the Tampa Bay Buccaneers' owner today?**

The short answer is that the Glazer family currently owns the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Patriarch Malcolm Glazer purchased the Buccaneers in 1995 for \$192 million, a league record at the time. The previous owner, Hugh Culverhouse, had owned the team since it entered the NFL in 1976 as an expansion team. At the time of his death, records showed that the team itself was on the verge of bankruptcy, forcing the estate to sell its stake.

Tampa Bay fans can chalk up the team's meager record 'til 1993 to the tightwad owner, Mr. C. who went a meager 81-194 (.295) as an owner over 18 years. The team went 1-3 in the postseason, only finishing with a winning record twice. While the league flourished in the 80s and 90s, the Buccaneers floundered under Culverhouse's ownership. The team was largely considered a lower-tier franchise both among fans and players for most of Culverhouse's tenure. Then came a few Super Bowls and now the team is worth billions.

## Glazer makes immediate changes

One of the first things that Glazer did after purchasing the team was to demand a new stadium. Raymond James Stadium broke ground the next year and opened to the public in 1998. From its opening in 1998 through 2009, every home game at RJS sold out, a sign that things were going in the right direction.

Who does not have a high opinion of Coach Tony Dungy? The team hired Minnesota Vikings' defensive coordinator Tony Dungy as their head coach for the 1996 season. This was a great move as the Bucs would enter the playoffs in three of the following six seasons. Dungy was great at the helm but even he could not quite get the Bucs to the positive side of winningness. Impatient as most teams are, the Glazers fired Dungy in 2001 and they made a huge move to replace him with another first class coach and a number of deals.

Here is what they did. The Bucs put up four draft picks, including two first-rounders, along with \$8 million in cash to acquire Coach Jon Gruden's rights from the Oakland Raiders. The move was a risky one with an extremely high price tag, but it immediately paid off expected dividends.

Glazer, Gruden, and the Buccaneers would win the team's only title in 2003 at Super Bowl XXXVII, making Glazer a delighted owner of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Why not? He won the Super Bowl.



## **The team thrived temporarily under new management**

Malcolm Glazer, the new big boss, also made a great effort to make the team more fan-friendly. How? One change was that he increased gameday activities during his tenure. He also made the team much more visible in the community. How? He involved local charities much more often than previous ownership had. As a result, the team flourished under his leadership. Let's look at the Glazer record:

Tampa Bay went 146-158 (.477) under Malcolm Glazer from 1995 through 2013. In his 19 total seasons, the team had a winning record in nine of those 19 seasons. They went 5-6 in the postseason during that time as well, including the team's only championship. Glazer literally took the team from laughingstock to a contender and helped usher in an entirely new culture for the team at the same time. Nice Job MG.

## **Another Tampa Bay Buccaneers' owner transition in 2014**

Malcolm Glazer's health began to fail as he suffered multiple strokes starting in 2006. He was in poor health for the last years of his life. He ultimately passed away on May 28, 2014. Upon his death, ownership of the team transferred to his six children. Three of them, Bryan, Joel, and Edward Glazer have taken over the day-to-day operations of the team.

Both Bryan and Joel Glazer have been with the team since their Dad's beginning in the team's operations area since their father took over in 1995. Experienced managers helped the team weather the change with minor disruption from a management standpoint. Though the team operated OK, results were lacking as the team did not make the postseason since 2008. This is clearly something the current owners of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers would like to change. In the seven years since Malcolm's death, the team has had a losing record with multiple coaches, the record has been 45-67 (.402). The

team's only three postseason wins in this stretch came in the last three weeks. Under head coach Bruce Arians, the team advanced to only their second title appearance.

This has some bearing for Bucs fans who are glad to have some wealth behind the Bucs franchise.

### **How did the Glazer family make their money?**

Malcolm Glazer was a successful businessman. Like his predecessor owner, he was no slouch in business. He initially made his money in residential real estate, starting in 1956. He used his wealth to purchase a variety of businesses over the years, including healthcare facilities and television stations. In 1984, he founded the First Allied Corporation to house his many business ventures. First Allied has a portfolio that has included ownership in companies like Zapata Corporation, Harley-Davidson, Tonka Toys, among many others.

### **Glazer's other ventures**

The Glazer family also owns another sports team in addition to being Tampa Bay Buccaneers' owner. Prior to his death, Malcolm Glazer acquired majority ownership of Manchester United, an English Premier League football club. The purchase cost around \$1.4 billion and was somewhat controversial due to the amount of debt the team had accrued. The family currently owns around 83% stake of the team altogether.

Malcolm Glazer also founded the Glazer Family Foundation in 1999. This group assists charities in the Tampa Bay community. Since it began, the Foundation has donated millions in programs, tickets, grants, and other contributions to people and groups in the Tampa Bay area. Besides that, it chipped in to donate \$5 million toward constructing the Glazer Children's Museum in Tampa, which opened in 2010. The Glazers care about their community.

So that nobody has to worry about the financial sustainability of the Bucs, as of 2015, Forbes listed the Glazer family as the 63rd richest family in America with an estimated value of \$4.7 billion. Go get 'em Glazer family and thanks again for Bruce Arians, Tom Brady, Rob Gronkowski and all for without your support the great sports

teams in Tampa Bay would not include football. Thanks again. Estimates put the current value of the Buccaneers at just over \$2.8 billion and Manchester United at \$3.1 billion, making both purchases terrific investments based on their returns. Bravo! Now, on to Chapter 2

Even before we get into Bucs football, we discuss the beginning of football, the beginning of the NFL, and the reforming of the NFL after the AFL. Amen!

There are a ton of great stories for sure. More importantly, none of us should need to search further than this book for the truth about many of the depictions in this book. We'll be talking about a lot of Bucs football moments and some great athletes and coaches now that we are closing out this first chapter of this book highlighting the Great Moments in Tampa Bay Buccaneers Football.

The Bucs are alive and it is because of a lot of people including John McKay, Malcolm Glazer, Bruce Arians, Tom Brady, Rob Gronkowski and the basis team of the 2019 Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Bravo



## Chapter 2 History of Tampa Bay Buccaneers Football Stadiums



See why Old Tampa Stadium is nicknamed The Big Sombrero

### Stadium History in Tampa

Our thanks to the buccaneersfan.com group for the use of their collection of great facts on the stadiums used by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers for the past 45 years. Thank you very much. The URL for the web site information is shown below:

<https://www.buccaneersfan.com/Pages/TeamZone/History/history-stadium.htm>

### Stadium Groundbreaking & History

The Buccaneersfan site starts off this way: “*There is only one stadium in the country where you will find a \$3 Million, 103 foot replica pirate ship located beyond the north endzone in a 19th century Pirate village, better known as "Buccaneer Cove". If you guessed Raymond James Stadium you are correct, however, prior its \$168.5 million makeover, the stadium had a very humble beginning.*”

We know the Bucs got started in 1974 and played their first game at a relatively new Tampa Stadium in 1976. However, the stadium itself was alive and well almost ten years before the Bucs occupancy

**NOVEMBER 4, 1967 : TAMPA STADIUM DEDICATED –**

The inaugural ball for Tampa Stadium was held on Nov 4, 1967. The Buccaneers were not on anybody's mind the day that Tennessee defeated the University of Tampa, 38-0 in the first contest played in the facility. The 46,700-seat stadium had cost \$4.1 million to build. That seems like nothing compared to what stadiums cost today. At about 47,000 seats, it was quite substantial for a multi-purpose "college" stadium in 1967.

**AUGUST 10, 1968 : FIRST GAME IN TAMPA STADIUM –**

**Before Tampa had a team. The Sports Authority scheduled an NFL exhibition game in their almost brand new stadium. The Washington Redskins defeated the Atlanta Falcons 16-14 in a pre-season match before a crowd of 42,000 in the first NFL action at new stadium. So, yes, Virginia, the NFL was in Tampa before the Buccaneers.**

**APRIL 21, 1975 : STADIUM LEASE APPROVED –**

Enter the Buccaneers. The Tampa Sports Authority unanimously approved a 30-year lease agreement with the Buccaneers, a new NFL team formed in 1974 and hoping to play in 1976. The plan was to use Tampa Stadium. Three days later, the Tampa City Council voted 6-1 to approve the lease and expand the stadium to NFL size at 72,000 seats.

**JULY 9, 1975 : STADIUM EXPANSION BEGINS –**

Ground was broken for the expansion of Tampa Stadium. The stadium was financed by the sale of \$13 million in bonds by the Tampa Sports Authority. Though Hugh Culverhouse Sr. (Mr. C.) was the new owner, he was not asked to contribute to the stadium. As in most situations regarding NFL teams, the cities gain favor by building the stadiums to attract the teams and keep them.

## Tampa Stadium "The Big Sombrero" Houlihan's Stadium

When it was conceived, the shape of the stadium conjured up the notion of a sombrero. And so, Tampa Stadium was nicknamed *The Big Sombrero*. For a brief period of time, it was also known as *Houlihan's Stadium*. It was built as a large open-air stadium (with a maximum capacity of about 74,000) located in Tampa, Florida. It opened in 1967, and as noted above, it was significantly expanded in 1974–75. Funny though, it did not last long. It was demolished in 1999.

Though the Bucs were not there at the beginning, the facility is most closely associated with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers of the National Football League. The Buccaneers played there from their establishment in 1976 until 1997. The stadium enjoyed all the amenities of Florida, including the weather. It hosted two Super Bowls, in 1984 and 1991. Neither of these Super Bowls featured the Bucs whose time had not yet come.



Tampa Stadium construction, Jan. 1967

Not built for any specific team, besides the Buccaneers, Tampa Stadium was also the home to the Tampa Bay Rowdies of the original North American Soccer League, the Tampa Bay Bandits of the United States Football League, the Tampa Bay Mutiny of Major League Soccer, and the college football programs of the University of Tampa and the University of South Florida. It was well used. It also hosted many large concerts, and for a time, it held the record for the largest audience to ever see a single artist when a crowd of almost 57,000 witnessed a Led Zeppelin show in the facility in 1973.

## Pre-History & Construction

The land on which Tampa Stadium was situated had been the perimeter of Drew Field, a World War II-era airfield which was the precursor to Tampa International Airport. In 1949, the city of Tampa bought a 720-acre grassy parcel between the airport and West Tampa from the federal government with the idea of eventually building a community sports complex. Al Lopez Field was the first phase of the project, opening in 1955.

Cities that had major growth plans often hoped to attract major league sports to their cities. Tampa was definitely growing. By the early 1960s, Tampa's civic leaders were interested in attracting a National Football League team to the area. Several well-attended NFL exhibition games were held at Phillips Field near downtown Tampa. However, the venue was recognized as being too small to support a professional football franchise.

Where there is a will, there is a way. So with the encouragement of NFL officials, the city decided to build a larger facility which could be used by the University of Tampa's football team in the short term and could be expanded for use by a theoretical pro team in the future if the NFL were to so grace the city.

Construction of Tampa Stadium began in the fall of 1966. It was built right by Al Lopez Field, which was by then used by the Tampa Tarpons of the Florida State League as their home field. It was also the spring training home of the Cincinnati Reds. Even though it contained separate football and baseball venues plus the Reds' training grounds, the lot which the city purchased in 1949 was still



large enough to allow for ample parking in the open land surrounding both facilities.



## Tampa Stadium

As noted previously, Tampa Stadium opened in 1967. At the time, it consisted of a matching pair of large arch-shaped concrete grandstands with open endzones. The seating consisted of long, backless aluminum benches that were accessed via short tunnels (vomitoriums.) These connected the seating area to wide, open concourses at the rear of the grandstands.

Benches were arranged in two large tiers divided by a horizontal walkway about halfway up the grandstands. The slope of the grandstands was relatively steep, giving every seat a direct and unobstructed view of the field. The official capacity was 46,481, though temporary bleachers could be placed in one or both endzones if needed.

## Playing Surface

Over the lifetime of Tampa Stadium, the natural grass turf consisted of several varieties of Bermuda grass, most notably Tifway 419. The playing surface was consistently one of the best in the NFL and was regularly named a players' favorite in surveys conducted by the National Football League Players Association.

## Heat

Tampa Stadium was built almost exclusively of concrete. Throughout its existence, exterior walls were painted light tan or white or left as bare concrete, as were the flooring surfaces. Seating consisted of long aluminum benches, and there was no roof or overhang of any kind over the field or seating areas.

It has been said that the stadium had a minimalist design. This permitted very good sight lines. It also exposed both spectators and players to the full brunt of Tampa's subtropical climate. This was especially true after the stadium was fully enclosed for the Bucs' 1976 inaugural season, cutting off breezes which had flowed through the open endzones.

While technically, fans could retreat under the grandstands to the shade of the wide concourses where concessions and restrooms were located, players and personnel on the field had no such recourse from the elements. Cooling equipment was usually placed near the sideline benches.

The Buccaneers were also allowed to wear their white jerseys at home, forcing their opponents to suffer in their darker (and hotter) jerseys. During the summer and early autumn, the events that took place in the stadium were often scheduled in the evening hours to avoid the often oppressive afternoon heat and humidity.

In another acquiescence to local weather, the natural grass playing surface was highly crowned to provide rapid drainage during Tampa's intense thunderstorms. This was manifested by the sidelines almost 18 inches lower than the center of the field. It worked.

## Expansions & Renovations

After the original stadium was built, it was periodically improved and expanded. Here is a history of the expansion

### Tampa Stadium Capacity

<u>Years</u> -----	<u>Official Capacity</u>
1967–1975 ----	46,481
1976–1978 ----	71,951
1979–1981 ----	72,126
1982–1984 ----	72,812
1985–1988 ----	74,315
1989–1992 ----	74,296
1993–1998 ----	74,301



### Tampa Original Stadium construction, Jan. 1967

The first expansion for Tampa Stadium was extensive. It was undertaken in 1974–1975 after the city was awarded an NFL expansion team – the Bucs. Over 27,000 seats were added by

completely enclosing the open end zones, making the venue one of the largest in the NFL with a capacity of 71,908. The resulting arena was not in the shape of a simple bowl. It was highest at the center of the two sideline grandstands and gently sloped downward to a rounded corner where it met the new sections, which were about half as tall. Much later, the stadium was dubbed "The Big Sombrero" by ESPN's Chris Berman for the unique undulating hat / wave shape created along the top of the stadium by the 1975 additions.

### **Tampa Stadium renovation in 1984**

The last major renovation took place in the early 1980s when, in preparation for its first Super Bowl in January 1984, the press box atop the west grandstand was updated and a large suite of luxury boxes was added atop the east grandstand. This configuration gave the facility its maximum seating capacity of 74,301.



For the 1990 season, large flagpoles were mounted on the upper rim of the stadium as part of a stadium update that included the addition of a Jumbotron screen in the south end zone and smaller scoreboards above the field-level tunnels in two corners of the

stadium. The poles were used to fly large flags for each of the NFL's teams until 1997, when the Buccaneers adopted a uniform redesign featuring a red flag on their helmets. Large versions of the flag were hoisted on the stadium's flagpoles when the Buccaneers penetrated their opponents' 20-yard line. The franchise continued this practice when it moved to Raymond James Stadium next door a year later.

## **Sporting History**

### **First Stadium Tenants -- University of Tampa Spartans**

Tampa Stadium was completed just in time to host its first sporting event – a football game between the University of Tampa Spartans and the #3 ranked University of Tennessee Volunteers on November 4, 1967. While the Spartans lost that game 38-0, they would enjoy later success in their new home, moving up to Division I football in 1971 and sending several players to the NFL, including Freddie Solomon and John Matuszak.

However, university officials were unsure of continued community support after Tampa was awarded an NFL expansion franchise. "Tampa U" president B. D. Owens ended the football program after the 1974 season, saying that the school would face bankruptcy if it had to subsidize the sport.

### **Tampa Bay Rowdies**

The Tampa Bay Rowdies were the stadium's first professional tenant, starting play in 1975 and winning their only (outdoor) championship in their inaugural season. (The team also won several indoor soccer championships playing at the Bayfront Center across Tampa Bay in St. Petersburg.)

The Rowdies played their home games in Tampa Stadium every summer until the original North American Soccer League disbanded in 1984. Subsequently, the Rowdies continued on, first as an independent team, then in other leagues (ASL, APSL) and used the stadium every year through 1990. In 1991 and 1992 they moved across town to the smaller USF Soccer Stadium, before returning to Tampa Stadium in 1993 for their final season of play in the APSL.

## **NFL Expansion Exhibition Games**

Looking to showcase the city's new facility for the NFL, community leaders arranged for several exhibition games in Tampa Stadium in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The first such game featured the Atlanta Falcons and Washington Redskins in August 1968 and drew a near-sellout crowd. Eleven more games were held in the following seasons with similarly enthusiastic crowds, including three featuring the Baltimore Colts in 1972, when the team trained in Tampa during the NFL preseason.

These preseason games gave NFL owners and officials ample opportunity to assess the Tampa Bay area and the stadium, and on April 24, 1974, Tampa was awarded an NFL expansion team to begin play in the 1976 season.

## **Tampa Bay BUCCANEERS**

The Buccaneers' first regular season home game was held on September 19, 1976, when the Bucs lost to the San Diego Chargers 23-0. That would become a trend, as the team began their existence with an NFL-record 26-game losing streak. They would not win a game on their home field until defeating the St. Louis Cardinals on the last game of the following season, December 18, 1977. Jubilant fans swarmed the Tampa Stadium turf and tore down the goal posts.

The Buccaneers had improved enough by the 1979 season to host the NFC Championship Game, which they lost 9-0 to the Los Angeles Rams. The Bucs played 18 additional seasons in the facility but struggled through most of them. They would only host one more playoff game on their original home turf: an NFC Wild Card Game vs. the Detroit Lions on December 28, 1997, which they won 20-10. This would be the last game the team ever played in Tampa Stadium, as they moved next door to Raymond James Stadium in 1998.

## **Tampa Stadium Krewe of Honor**

In 1991, the Tampa Bay organization initiated the "Krewe of Honor", which featured a mural of the first class of three members.



Quarterback Doug Williams was inducted September 6, 1992 and owner Hugh Culverhouse on September 5, 1993. No additional members were added before Tampa Stadium was closed and demolished.

The Krewe of honor members are listed below



### **John Harvey McKay - Head Coach (1976-1984)**

**1991 - KREWE OF HONOR:** In 1976, John McKay moved to the NFL as the first head coach of the expansion Tampa Bay Buccaneers. The Buccaneers made the playoffs three times under coach McKay, including an appearance in the NFC Championship Game in 1979. McKay was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame as a coach in 1988. On January 1, 2014, McKay was named the All-Century Coach of the Rose Bowl Game during the celebration of the 100th Rose Bowl Game. His son represented him in the 2014 Rose Parade.

### **#42 Ricky Lynn Bell - RB (1977-1981)**

**1991 - KREWE OF HONOR:** In 1977, Ricky Bell was the first overall NFL Draft choice, selected by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Bell signed a five-year contract for a reported \$1.2 million, by far the richest contract ever signed by an NFL rookie. Bell's selection was not a surprise, however, because Tampa Bay was coached by John McKay, Bell's former head coach at USC through 1975. In 1979, Bell enjoyed his finest season, rushing for 1,263 yards and leading the Buccaneers to the championship of the NFC Central Division.

### **#12 Douglas Lee Williams - QB (1978-1982)**

**1992 - KREWE OF HONOR:** In 1978, Doug Williams was the first franchise quarterback of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers when he was selected in the NFL draft's first round and started for five seasons leading the Bucs to the playoffs in three of those years. In 1987 Williams became Super Bowl MVP. He had two separate spells in the Buccaneer front office. Williams is known for his remarkable performance in Super Bowl XXII. Williams, who was named the Super Bowl MVP, passed for a Super Bowl record 340 yards and four

touchdowns, with one interception. He also became the first player in Super Bowl history to pass for four touchdowns in a single quarter, and four in a half. Williams was the first African American quarterback to start in an NFL league championship game and the first to win a Super Bowl, in 1988 (Russell Wilson became the second to win in 2014 with Super Bowl XLVIII).

## **Hugh Franklin Culverhouse, Sr. Owner (1976-1994)**

1993 - KREWE OF HONOR: Culverhouse was the longtime owner of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers of the National Football League (NFL). He was a successful tax lawyer, and his real estate investments made him one of the nation's wealthiest men. His work brought him into contact with National Football League team owners, and his failed purchase of the Los Angeles Rams placed him in line to become the owner of the fledgling Buccaneer franchise.

He owned the team from its inception until his death. Culverhouse became one of the most influential team owners in the NFL, and was credited with modernizing the league, even while his teams were rarely competitive on the field. He oversaw the league's course of direction through two player strikes, and the modern league's financial stability is in great part due to his leadership. He held influence for over a decade, before stepping back due to criticism of what other owners saw as his overly-secretive ways.:

## **1998 was the end of the Bucs Krewe of Honor**

No additional members were added before Tampa Stadium also referred to as "Ray Jay" or "The New Sombrero", a spinoff from "The Big Sombrero", or Houlihan's Stadium was closed and demolished; when the stadium was demolished in 1998, so was the Krewe of Honor program.

## **November 6, 2009 Buccaneers Initiate Ring of Honor**

Buccaneers have introduced a Ring of Honor program, replacing the retired Krewe of Honor, in time for the Bucs 30th anniversary



celebration of the 1979 Buccaneer team. Presentation will occur during a Throwback games halftime with the unveiling of the individual's name added to the "Ring of Honor" stadium facade. The Buccaneers planned to induct just one player into the Bucs Ring of Honor each season, in 2015 two individuals were inducted

### **"Houlihan's Stadium"**

Malcolm Glazer also acquired naming rights to Tampa Stadium when he purchased the Buccaneers in 1995. In October of that year, he had the Houlihan's restaurant chain, another business in his portfolio, pay the Bucs \$10 million for those rights. This resulted in the official name of the facility being changed to "Houlihan's Stadium" in 1996 and in Glazer being sued by Houlihan's stockholders, who were not happy about purchasing stadium naming rights in an area in which the chain had no restaurants.

In 1978 and 1979, the stadium hosted the Can-Am Bowl, which was a college all-star game, pitting seniors from the United States against seniors from Canada. The contest used the rules of Canadian football, which required that the playing field be extended wider and longer than usual.

From 1978 to 1996, Tampa Stadium hosted the Florida Classic rivalry game between the Bethune-Cookman University Wildcats and the Florida A&M Rattlers, two in-state historically black colleges that play in the NCAA's Football Championship Subdivision.

On July 15, 1984, Tampa Stadium hosted the 2nd USFL Championship Game between the Philadelphia Stars and the Arizona Wranglers.

From 1986 to 1998, college football's Outback Bowl (previously held in Birmingham, Alabama as the Hall of Fame Bowl) was played in Tampa Stadium on New Year's Day. The 1999 Outback Bowl and all subsequent editions have been played at Raymond James Stadium.

Tampa Stadium hosted a large annual USHRA monster truck rally in late January or early February (after football season, when turf

damage wouldn't matter) for many years. Raymond James Stadium is the event's current site.

Beginning in 1971, Tampa Stadium served as host for the American Invitational show jumping competition each spring, which brought together the USEF's top 30 ranked equestrians to compete for the sport's largest purse. The event is now held in Raymond James Stadium.



## Demolition of Tampa Stadium

### Final event in Tampa Stadium September 13, 1998

Upon buying the Buccaneers in 1995, new owner Malcolm Glazer declared that Tampa Stadium was inadequate and threatened to move the franchise to another city unless a new stadium was built at taxpayers' expense. To accommodate these demands, Hillsborough County raised local sales taxes and built Raymond James Stadium just south of Tampa Stadium in 1997–98.

The Demolition of Tampa Stadium occurred on September 13, 1998. It proceeded soon after the Tampa Bay Mutiny's final home game on September 13, 1998. Wrecking balls and long reach excavators were used for much of the process. The last portion of the stadium (the east side luxury boxes built for the stadium's first Super Bowl), was imploded on April 11, 1999. The land was then cleared and converted into a parking lot. Part of that demolition was featured in a 1999 Modern Marvels episode entitled "Demolition".



The Demolition

## Raymond James Stadium.

### The new Raymond James Stadium September 21, 1998

The new Raymond James Stadium, which is also known as the "Ray Jay", became the new home of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers of the National Football League (NFL).



It also became the home stadium for the NCAA's South Florida Bulls football team. The stadium seats 65,890, and can be expanded to 75,000 for special events. The stadium also hosts the annual

Outback Bowl on New Year's Day and the Monster Jam tour for monster trucks holds an event at the stadium. Over time, I suspect it will be used for more.

Already, Raymond James Stadium has hosted Super Bowls XXXV and XLIII, as well as the 2017 College Football Playoff National Championship. The piece de resistance was in 2021 when it was the site of Super Bowl LV. In this game, the Buccaneers became the first team in NFL history to play a Super Bowl in their home stadium, which, of course they won by defeating the Kansas City Chiefs 31–9.



## Construction of Raymond James Stadium

### History

Raymond James Stadium was built to replace Houlihan's Stadium at the demand of the new Bucs owner Malcolm Glazer. It is located adjacent to the site of the old stadium on the former location of Al Lopez Field, referenced above in this chapter. It had been a minor-league baseball stadium that was demolished in 1989. Once completed, the final cost of the new stadium was \$168.5 million, with the entire cost publicly financed. Considering the cost, the stadium was about the same value as what Malcolm Glazer originally paid for the Bucs, give or take about \$20 million.

It was originally known as Tampa Community Stadium while under construction, but the naming rights were bought for US\$32.5 million for a 13-year deal by St. Petersburg-based Raymond James Financial in June 1998.

On April 27, 2006, an extension was signed to maintain naming rights through 2015. In May 2016 the Buccaneers announced that the naming rights were extended an additional 12 years ensuring that Raymond James Financial's name will continue to appear through 2028. We do not have the amount paid in each of the naming rights extensions, but they must have been substantial.

Raymond James Stadium officially opened on September 21, 1998, when the Tampa Bay Buccaneers defeated the Chicago Bears, 27–15. A half-year later, the stadium hosted its first soccer game on March 20, 1999, when the Tampa Bay Mutiny lost to D.C. United, 5–2.

The stadium was selected to host the ACC Championship Game in 2008 and 2009.

The stadium is home field for the University of South Florida Bulls of the American Athletic Conference. The team's record crowd at Raymond James Stadium is 69,383, on September 29, 2012, when the Bulls – during their worst season ever – played a non-conference game against the popular Florida State University Seminoles from the powerhouse Atlantic Coast Conference for the first time.

The largest crowd ever recorded in Raymond James Stadium came on January 9, 2017 as the stadium hosted the 2017 College Football Playoff National Championship. 74,512 people were in attendance.

Through to the 2009 season, every Buccaneers game at Raymond James Stadium sold out. In 2010, no home game achieved a ticket sell out, so none could be broadcast on local television. The streak carried over until week four of the 2011 season, when it sold enough tickets for its Monday night game with the Indianapolis Colts on October 3 to avoid a local blackout.





Sold out Raymond James Stadium for USF Game

The stadium was also home to the former Tampa Bay Mutiny of Major League Soccer and continues to periodically host other soccer matches due to its accommodating field dimensions. For example, on June 8, 2012, it hosted the United States men's national soccer team's opening qualifying match against Antigua and Barbuda for the 2014 FIFA World Cup, which the United States won 3-1.

## Features



Discussed briefly in this chapter before this, one of the most recognizable features of the stadium is a 103-foot (31 m), 43-ton

steel-and-concrete replica pirate ship, which fires replica cannons each time the Bucs score points or enter the other team's red zone. The cannon fires once for each point scored.

In addition, when the Buccaneers enter their opponent's red zone, stadium hosts hoist team flags around the perimeter of the upper deck. During various times throughout the game, the song "Yo Ho (A Pirate's Life for Me)" is played on the stadium public address system (taken from *Pirates of the Caribbean*), Skull & Crossed Swords In Buccaneer Bay, which signals patrons on board the ship to throw beads, t-shirts, and other free prizes to the people below.

The segment is also known as a "Mini Gasparilla" to most fans. An animated parrot sits on the stern of the pirate ship. Controlled by radio and remote control, the parrot picks fans out of the crowd and talks to those passing by.

During Super Bowl XXXV on CBS, the pregame, halftime, and post-game desk reporting took place from aboard the pirate ship. NBC's Super Bowl XLIII and ESPN's 2017 College Football Playoff National Championship coverage also emanated from the ship.



The two "Buc Vision" 2,200-square-foot (200 m<sup>2</sup>) Daktronics video displays were among the largest in the league when they were built and in 2016 they were replaced with a 9,600-square foot, high-

definition video board in both end zones. 'Buccaneer Cove' features a weathered, two-story fishing village facade, housing stadium concessions and restrooms. All areas of the stadium are ADA compliant.

Temporary bleachers were erected in the end zones for Super Bowl XXXV, which set a record stadium attendance of 71,921. The stadium attendance record has since been surpassed by the 2017 College Football Playoff National Championship, which also made use of temporary seating.

In 2003, the corner billboards in the stadium were replaced with rotating trilon billboards and these were replaced in 2016 with new high visibility displays.

Raymond James Stadium boasts the second-best turf in the NFL, according to a 2009 biannual players' survey.

In early 2016, the stadium was given an extensive facelift. The most notable improvement was the replacement of the 2,200-square-foot (200 m<sup>2</sup>) video displays with state of the art, high visibility 9,600-square-foot (890 m<sup>2</sup>) video displays in both the north and south 2916 Stadium Renovation New Video and Sound System end zones along with the addition of a new 2,300-square-foot (210 m<sup>2</sup>) video tower in each corner.

Altogether, the video displays cover more than 28,000-square-foot (2,600 m<sup>2</sup>), making Raymond James Stadium the third-largest video displays in the NFL. The original sound system and the stadium's luxury boxes were also upgraded. A second round of improvements are planned for after the 2016 season is complete.

## **Nicknames**

As previously noted, the stadium is referred to as "Ray Jay" or "The New Sombrero", a spinoff from "The Big Sombrero", the nickname of Houlihan's Stadium. Somewhat derisively, it has been occasionally referred to as "the CITS", a name coined by long-time local sportscaster Chris Thomas which stands for "Community Investment Tax Stadium", referring to the fact that the stadium was entirely financed by local taxpayers.



## Timeline

Immediately upon purchasing the Bucs in 1995, new owner Malcolm Glazer declared Houlihan's Stadium inadequate and began lobbying local government for a replacement. When the community did not move quickly enough to suit the Glazer family, the new owners openly contacted several other cities around the U.S. about possible relocation.

The city of Tampa and Hillsborough County came up with a plan to fund a new stadium as part of a "Community Investment Tax", which was voted on in a referendum in September 1996. As part of the campaign to pass the referendum, Glazer promised to pay half the cost of the new stadium if fans put down 50,000 deposits on 10-year season ticket commitments. The drive fell 17,000 deposits short, the offer was withdrawn, and the Bucs did not pay any of the stadium's construction cost.

On September 3, 1996, the voters of Hillsborough County, Florida approved, by 53% to 47% margin, a 30-year, half-cent sales tax to build new schools, improve public safety and infrastructure, and to build the Buccaneers a \$192 million new stadium entirely with public money.

The team signed a stadium lease in which the local government must pay for almost all of the stadium expenses while the franchise keeps almost all of the proceeds. Former Tampa mayor Bill Poe sued to stop the deal, claiming that giving such a "sweetheart deal" to a private business violated Florida's state constitution. A local court agreed with Poe, but the Bucs and local government appealed. Eventually, the Supreme Court of Florida ruled that the agreement was constitutional, and construction continued as planned.

On October 31, 1996, the NFL owners met in New Orleans to select the host site for Super Bowl XXXIII and Super Bowl XXXIV. Pro Player Stadium in the Miami area was selected to host Super Bowl XXXIII. Atlanta, Tempe and Tampa were candidates for Super Bowl XXXIV, with Tampa the favorite, following the successful tax referendum. The Georgia Dome in Atlanta, however, was awarded

the game. As a compromise, Tampa was awarded Super Bowl XXXV, which the NFL had not originally planned to select that day.

The last Major League Soccer game played at Raymond James Stadium was on September 9, 2001 when the Mutiny lost to the Columbus Crew, 2–1, in front of 9,932 people. Although the September 11 attacks resulted in the cancellation of the remainder of the 2001 MLS regular season, the Mutiny did not have any more home games scheduled anyway.

The Mutiny were subsequently disbanded by the league. National-level soccer matches are still occasionally played at Raymond James, as its wide field makes it ideal for hosting soccer.

In April 2003, the Tampa Sports Authority proposed passing ownership of the stadium to Hillsborough County to avoid having to pay millions of dollars in property taxes (The Bucs' lease agreement dictated that they not have to pay property taxes). However, Bucs had a right of refusal and refused to sign off on the plan unless the local government paid more of the cost for game-day security and increased the amount of (county-purchased) insurance coverage for the stadium.

The dispute continued for months until December 2003, when the county legally declared the stadium a condominium and took ownership. As part of the change, the Bucs were given ownership of portions of the structure. To win the Bucs' approval, the county agreed to refund the team's resultant property tax payments annually.

On May 25, 2005, NFL owners met in Washington, D.C. to select the host site for Super Bowl XLIII. During the balloting, Raymond James Stadium defeated the Georgia Dome (Atlanta), Reliant Stadium (Houston), and Dolphins Stadium (Miami Gardens).

After a nearly two-year legal battle, the Tampa Sports Authority came to a settlement with popular sports-seating and telescopic platform/bleacher company Hussey Seating of North Berwick, Maine.

Following the stadium's opening in 1998, roughly 50,000 Hussey-manufactured seats at Raymond James Stadium began to fade from their original color – a bright, vibrant shade of red – to a shade of washed-out pink. Spotting this obvious defect, the Buccaneers organization pleaded to the TSA to sue the seating manufacturing company for the cost to replace the affected chairs in 2003.

Initially, in May 2004, after testing samples of the seats, Hussey Seating did not find any cause for the fading, and thus, found no reason to replace the seats at the company's cost under the current 10-year warranty. After the TSA cited a portion of the warranty which did, in fact, state that Hussey would replace seats if any fading were to occur, Hussey president Tim Hussey admitted an error in the research and eventually would come to a \$1.5 million agreement with the TSA to replace the problem seats.

Reportedly, the seat-fading occurred due to a manufacturing error by Hussey, as a UV inhibitor – a sunscreen-like component for the plastic – was forgotten in the mixture used to create the seats. All of the problem seats were replaced by new, non-pink seats in the spring of 2006.

In December 2015, the Buccaneers and the Tampa Sports Authority reached an agreement to complete over \$100 million in improvements and renovations to the stadium.

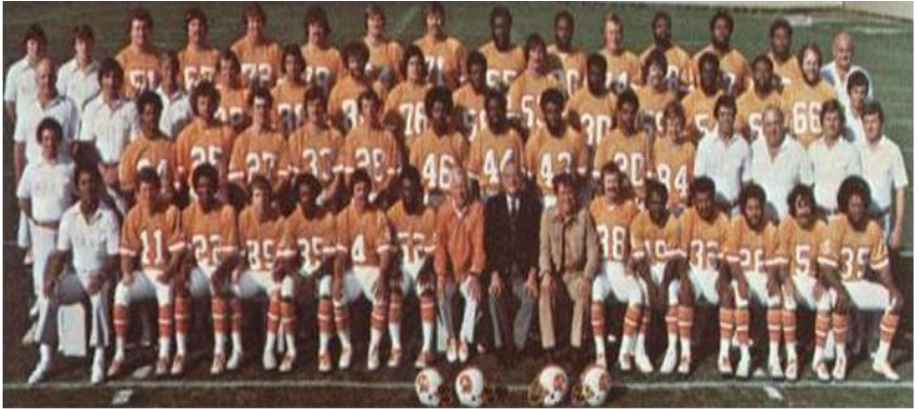
The negotiations took months and were extended by Bucs' lawyers demanding additional concessions after an agreement was near in September 2015. In the end, the upgrades were paid with at least \$29 million of public money, with the remainder paid for by the Bucs in exchange for the right to play a home game at another site beginning in the 2018 season and other concessions.

Renovations began in January 2016, and the first phase was complete in time for the 2016 football season.



# Chapter 3 Buccaneers' First Football Team;

## 26 Losses in a Row



**1976 TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS**

Having just turned seventy-three years of age, the best thing in my life is my young looking very beautiful wife of 46 years who just turned 74. She still looks like a kid We were married the year before the Bucs had their 26 losses in a row in 1976 and 1977. We knew about the Buccaneers back then but did not pay much attention. Nobody really knew whether the new teams would make it and I had not had my first trip to Florida yet, so I did not know what I was missing.

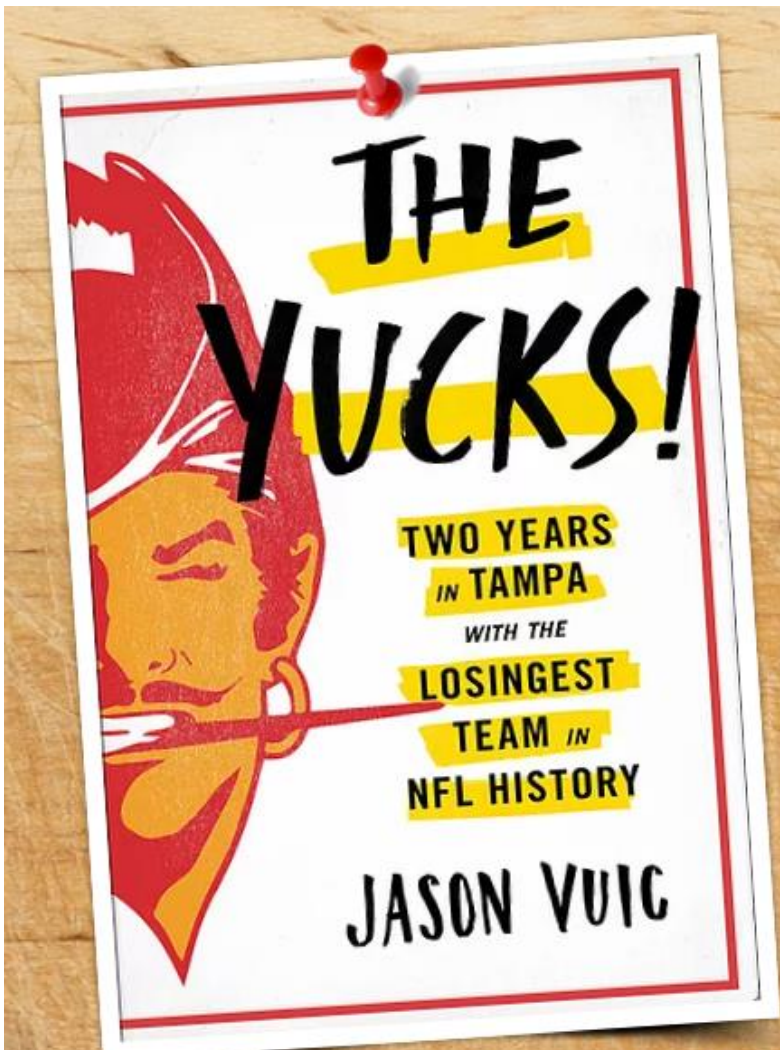
Forty-five years ago, nonetheless, with few people rooting in their corner, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers entered the NFL as an expansion team. They made big-time negative history They lost their first 26 games.

The Buccaneers had a great coach in John McKay, but something was intrinsically wrong with the team from the beginning. Historians say that the Buccaneers had some reasons for some optimism, having selected the highly regarded defensive end Lee Roy Selmon with the No. 1 pick in that year's draft. But they proved quickly that

one person doth not make a winning team. They had to fill out the rest of their roster.

Alan Schechter wrote a review of Jason Vuic's new book and he coined a few phrases used in this chapter. Thank you Alan and Jason. <https://thepewterplank.com/2016/08/28/interview-jason-vuic-buccaneers-book/>

Jason Vuic, is the Author of a somewhat New Buccaneers' Book written long before Tom Brady came to town. Some of the facts and quotes in this chapter come from his book "The Yucks". It is a good read – funny .



Permit me please before I begin this chapter to reprint the cover description of Vuic's "new" book. I think you'd like it.

# *The Yucks!*

## **Two Years in Tampa with the Losingest Team in NFL History**

Simon and Schuster, 2016 (ISBN-13-9781476772264)

*During the 1976 and 1977 seasons, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers cemented their place in football history, not with a Super Bowl win, but with the longest losing streak in the history of the NFL. The Buccaneers—affectionately and mockingly called the “The Yucks” by fans—lost their first twenty-six games. No other team in professional football has ever come close to this streak. Their on-field failures were so hilarious that Tonight Show host Johnny Carson used to joke about them in his opening monologues. Still, the team was beloved, because even as losers they brought a sense of a collective identity to a group of Florida Gulf Coast communities now known as Tampa Bay. When they finally won their first game, 8,000 people attended a victory party at the team's headquarters, One Buc Place. When they won their next game, the final game of the 1977 season, fans tore down the goalposts.*

*Jason Vuic's *The Yucks!* is about more than just a team and its near-comedic inability to play football. It's the tale of larger-than-life characters and the real human moments that make us love the game. There's Hugh Culverhouse, the miserly owner, and John McKay, the notoriously quotable four-time national championship-winning coach who promised a playoff run in five years. There's Steve Spurrier, the arrogant coaching icon and Heisman trophy winning Florida native who was quarterback for the Bucs. Lee Roy Selmon was the Bucs' gentle giant and first-ever draft pick who became the best pass-rusher in the league.*

*Then there's Ricky Bell, the star running back who played just four years before dying tragically of a rare tissue disease, and Pat Toomay, the witty defensive end whose tell-all book on the Cowboys led to his banishment to Tampa Bay.*

*A book about a team so outrageously bad it's hilarious, *The Yucks!* flips the long tradition of celebrating great teams to give a can't-look-away account of the team that the entire nation loved to hate—the best worst team in NFL history.*

## **Here we go**

When the 1976 season was in the books, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers became the first team since the AFL-NFL merger in 1970 to complete a winless season. They seemingly learned nothing with all those losses as they lost 12 more games to begin the 1977 season before picking up their first win ever by pounding the New Orleans Saints 33-14 on Dec. 11, 1977. The poor Saints who finished 1977 at 3-11 did not know what hit them. They expected nothing and they actually got pounded.

Once Tampa Bay got that first win, in the second last game of the 1979 season, the big question was, could they create a two-game winning streak to close out the season? Their next game was against the St. Louis Cardinals, who had a winning record at 7-6 before facing the once hapless Buccaneers. Tampa Bay kept its streak alive by crushing the Cardinals 17-7 to finish its second season at 2-12. Nobody in Tampa Bay was ecstatic but they were sure happy that they had placed some marks on the winning side of the ledger. Actually they were ecstatic, and they ripped the goal posts down to prove it after just their second win.

The Bucs were almost out of the losing woods in 1978 as the NFL added two more games to be played in each subsequent season. It has been 16 game seasons ever since then. In 1978, the Bucs won 5 games before breaking loose in 1979 with a division-best super 10-6 season. From that point on the team had what can be called the proverbial up and downs.



## The Beginning of Buccaneers Football

You can believe that there were a lot of Bucs jokes until they began to win those last two games in their second year. One of the jokes was that they were finding players on the streets and the next day they were in uniform. One rumor was that they found one player from the streets of Watts. They claimed he had been out of football for three years. They found guys who were cut by the Canadian League and they plopped them onto the Buccaneers' roster.

They found others from the defunct World Football League, Vuic's books cites the following: "I know for a fact that the Buccaneers actually tried out a Coca Cola delivery man at one point." There is no question that for a spell, lots of people did not want to be linked with one of the worst football teams in history, but if you were making a living off the Bucs, you had no choice.

We already discussed that Tampa Bay owner Hugh Culverhouse had made a fortune as a tax lawyer. He was a reported tight wad who paid almost a record low amount for the franchise and he still had not gotten all the dust out of his wallet. The pundits excused Culverhouse because as they say, much of his money was tied up in real estate, so he didn't have a lot to spend on players. Or even on refreshments. Don't mention the ladies.

There is a team rumor that Mr. C. once had a Coke machine in the locker room. So there were not even free NA drinks. The players made do. Some could have played for any team but not many in year one or year two. Here is a quote from a pundit: "You know, the great Lee Roy Selmon would say, 'Hey, you got a quarter?' in the middle of an interview, because he wanted a Coke."

Mr. C. it is reported to be so cheap that he refused to cover players' phone calls when they were at hotels during away games. "There were two roommates on the road. If for example, someone made a 75-cent phone call, Mr. C. would bill each roommate 38 cents. He'd make a penny on the deal. He was such a spendthrift that there is a report that "One time a player separated his shoulder, and he couldn't get his arms up. So they cut his jersey off and billed him for the jersey." If just one of those points are true, it is easy to see why players were not motivated to play so well for the new franchise.

The brother of Leroy Selmon, who was their biggest star is credited with this quote: "The whole scene when we arrived in Tampa was not that good, for so many reasons. Dewey Selmon asked a reporter for a quarter. He asked his bother the star "Lee Roy, are we sure we're supposed to be here?"

In this pre-first season scenario obviously the Bucs eventually did cobble together an NFL roster. It was surprising. They got on the field to compete for the first time on Aug. 21, 1976, in their first preseason game at their home stadium. The reports suggest that Hugh Culverhouse, who was not a fashion plate, wore what looked to some to be a very inexpensive plaid polyester suit. He expressed optimism about this preseason game. .

"May I say that we're here for one reason and one reason only, and that's to bring the fans great professional football," he told the crowd. Veteran defensive end Pat Toomay, who'd won the Super Bowl with the Dallas Cowboys, was picked up in the 1976 expansion draft. He said it felt like being "exiled to Siberia."

He told folks that very early on, Toomay saw the train wreck that was developing. He comes out of a film room one day with Larry Ball, a linebacker who had played on the perfect Miami Dolphins team. And Ball goes, 'What do you think?' And Toomay made the prediction, '0-14.' He was right. Things were tough for sure and nobody on the staff other than John McKay the head coach even tried to make them better.

The Bucs began their first season by racking up losses against Houston, San Diego, Buffalo and Baltimore while being outscored 99-26. The "defense," behind the Selmon brothers, performed reasonably well, but the offense was inept. Bucs punter Dave Green was a busy man. And that brought him closer -- literally and figuratively — to the fans in the wheelchair section near the end zone at Tampa Stadium.

"I was having one of those games. And of course, when I was punting, it was always 4th and 80 every time I went in," Green says. "I was always on that end line. We were just always so backed up. I heard one of the guys in the wheelchair yell out at me. He says,

'Green, if you shank this one, I'm jumping out of this chair and kicking your ass.' And I'm starting to go — but it kinda woke me up. I'm going, 'Here's a guy in a wheelchair, and he's got a better attitude than I got.'"

## Pat Toomay's Prediction Comes True

The Bucs dropped their next four games to Cincinnati, the previously winless Seattle Seahawks, Miami and Kansas City. The losing began to wear on Dave Green and Dewey Selmon.

"After you lose eight straight games, well, at that point you're hurting inside pretty bad," Dewey says. "Coaches, players, the fans. But then you kinda grow up. You say, 'Well, we can't beat ourselves up after every loss, cause we're going to lose a few more.' You start reading between the lines. You say, 'We're not very good.'"

"You didn't like losing. You hated it," Green says. "I remember one morning, getting up Monday morning, and it was a bad game. I wanted to get up that morning and run through the neighborhood and pick up all the newspapers. I knew the press was going to be all over us."

*"The '76 season, Lee Roy and I did not go into restaurants and sit down to eat. We always went through the drive-through. He said, 'Last time I'm going in and taking all them questions. Let's get our drive-through and head home.'"*

DEWEY SELMON

"The '76 season, Lee Roy and I did not go into restaurants and sit down to eat," Dewey says. "We always went through the drive-through. He said, 'Last time I'm going in and taking all the questions. Let's get our drive-through and head home.'"

Jason Vuic says all across the country, people noticed the struggles of the Bucs.

"There was something farcical about it," Vuic says. "Like the '62 Mets. There were signs on the 10 yard line, this guy would hold up a sign every game that said, 'The Bucs stop here.' People wore bags on

their heads. And Johnny Carson would make a joke, and it would be in newspapers and it would be water cooler talk in the morning. And other comedians followed, other TV shows followed. Chuck Barris on The Gong Show would give Buccaneer tickets to the losers. And it became a national punch line."

"Some of those jokes, even I would completely crack up," Dewey says, laughing. "And I'd say, 'Catherine,' to my wife, 'did you hear that? Buccaneers played like Samsonite luggage, and we lost.' I'd say, 'That's pretty good.'"

"Before the last game that season, everybody, for that game, everybody drove up in their U-Hauls," Dewey continues, "everything's already packed up, and, soon as that game's over with, we're hitting the road, getting out of there. And we needed to get out and take a break. You just wanna get out of Dodge."

Pat Toomay's prediction had come true: 0-14. But Dewey Selmon and many of his 1976 teammates returned after a long offseason with a new mindset. Sort of ...

"Hey, we're a few players away from winning one game," Dewey remembers thinking. "We're OK. We're not good at all, but we're OK."

In fact, the 1977 Bucs were bad. And Dave Green says that means Tampa Bay now had a new challenge.

"Nobody wanted to get beat by us. And they were putting a little extra effort in there," he says. "I mean they were doing everything they can, because nobody wanted to be that first team to get beat by us."

## **The Franchise's First Win**

The Bucs lost 12 straight, and there were predictions of back-to-back winless seasons.

But on Dec. 11, 1977, the Bucs accomplished the almost unimaginable: They won. They beat the Saints 33-14 in New Orleans.

"It was crazy. We didn't know how to act," Dewey says. "You know, you've lost 26 straight games, so you're used to walking into a room and put your helmet up and let's see what's in your lunch box. And, for once, we had a reason to walk into there and we're going to be celebrating and happy, and it was a big contrast of emotions for us. It made our season."

"The wildest thing was the flight home from New Orleans. We started partying right after the game," says Jack Harris, the Bucs' pregame and halftime television host. "And it's the only time I've ever seen the plane land where nobody was sitting down. And the pilot kept saying, 'Please, you'll have to take your seats and fasten your seat belts before we can land the plane.' There were people dancing in the aisles. And we were just saying, 'Well, don't land. We don't care.'"

### **Jason Vuic says the Bucs' party went on and on.**

"They arrived at Tampa International Airport, and there were 8,000 fans who then reassembled at One Buc Place for a party into the wee hours of the night. They opened the ticket window — Culverhouse was smart. They opened up the ticket window at midnight, and people were lined up. And the next game, almost 50,000 fans came to Tampa Stadium — the last game of the season — and the Bucs just beat the tar out of the Cardinals. And the fans ran out on the field after the game and tore down the goalpost. A 2-26 team just beat a mediocre team that didn't make the playoffs, and the fans tore down the goalpost. They were that thrilled with the victory."



# Chapter 4 The Best & Worst Bucs Coaches Ever

## Coach John McKay 1976-1984

<u>Year</u>	<u>Record</u>	<u>Finish (Regular / Post Seas.)</u>	<u>Coach</u>	<u>Notes</u>
1984	6-10-0	3rd -- NFC Central--	John McKay	
1983	2-14-0	5th -- NFC Central--	John McKay	
1982	5-4-0	T4th -NFC	0-1 - John McKay	Lost Round 1
1981	9-7-01st	-- NFC-Central	0-1 - John McKay	
1980	5-10-1	T4th -NFC Central--	John McKay	Lost Div Playoffs
1979	10-6-0	1st -- NFC Central	1-1 - John McKay	Lost Conf-Champ
1978	5-11-0	5th -- NFC Central--	John McKay	
1977	2-12-0	5th -- NFC Central--	John McKay	
1976	0-14-0	5th -- AFC West--	John McKay	



The pundits who examined the Bucs over their 45 years of play found six or so coaches who did not really make the grade. Shhh!! I found a few others. Nonetheless, in 1974, John McKay signed up for the best team he hoped he could produce. He produced a 26-loss record before he finished his second season but miraculously McKay won the last two games, five the next year and ten the next year with just six losses. He actually was nine points away from a Super Bowl appearance in his fourth season, which was also the team's fourth in the NFL. Therefore John McKay is not included in the Worst Bucs Coaches Lottery. He gets a far exceeds ranking.

## Leeman Bennett 1985-1986

<u>Year</u>	<u>Record</u>	<u>Finish (Regular / Post Seas.)</u>	<u>Coach</u>	<u>Notes</u>
1986	2-14-0	5th -- NFC Central--	Leeman Bennett	
1985	2-14-0	5th -- NFC Central--	Leeman Bennett	



When McKay retired after nine years, in 1985, he left a two-year losing streak. Coach Leeman Bennett continued the losing streak when he succeeded him after a 6-10 season from McKay. Leeman changed one of the numbers, the loss number to higher in the double digits category as he produced two identical poor seasons of 2-14 seasons making it seem like he is a definite candidate for the worst if not one of the six worst coaches in Bucs history.

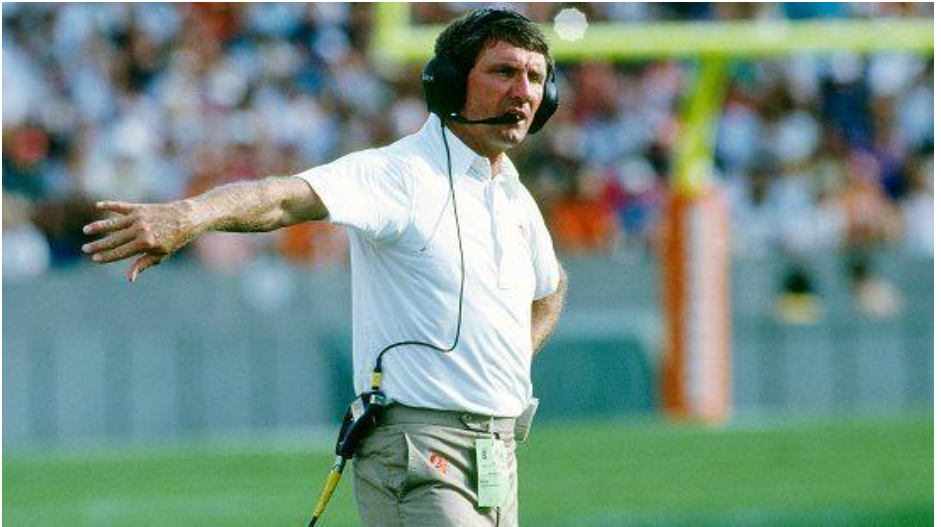
Greg Schiano will be examined later, and he is probably in the top six bad coaches—but back in 2012 and 2013, pundits were looking at Schiano as the worst coach that the Buccaneers have ever had? Many pundits could not answer the query because it was not part of their football studies. Some suggested that If you think Schiano was bad; how about Leeman Bennett's 4-28 record? Now that argument is compelling. Nobody was out analyzing team talent because they knew from experience that Mr. C. would not spend a thin dime on



talent even though he admitted hating to lose. Coach Leeman definitely makes the top six.

### Ray Perkins 1987-1990

<u>Year</u>	<u>Record</u>	<u>Finish (Regular / Post Seas.)</u>	<u>Coach</u>	<u>Notes</u>
1990	6-10-0	T2nd NFC Central--	Ray Perkins & R.Williamson	
1989	5-11-0	5th -- NFC Central--	Ray Perkins	
1988	5-11-0	3rd -- NFC Central--	Ray Perkins	
1987	4-11-0	T4th -NFC Central--	Ray Perkins	



The Buccaneers lost their second former coach in 2020, when Ray Perkins passed at home in Northport, Alabama on a Wednesday in December. Having lost former head coach Sam Wyche back in January 2020. Ray Perkins was 79 years young. Perkins had a better coaching record than he showed for the Buccaneers and he is more than likely in the Bucs lop six worst coaches.. He had no winning seasons with Tampa Bay. He was replaced before the season ended in 1990 by Richard Williamson.

### Richard Williamson 1990-1991

<u>Year</u>	<u>Record</u>	<u>Finish (Regular / Post Seas.)</u>	<u>Coach</u>	<u>Notes</u>
1991	3-13-0	5th -- NFC Central--	Richard Williamson	
1990	6-10-0	T2nd NFC Central--	Ray Perkins & R.Williamson	

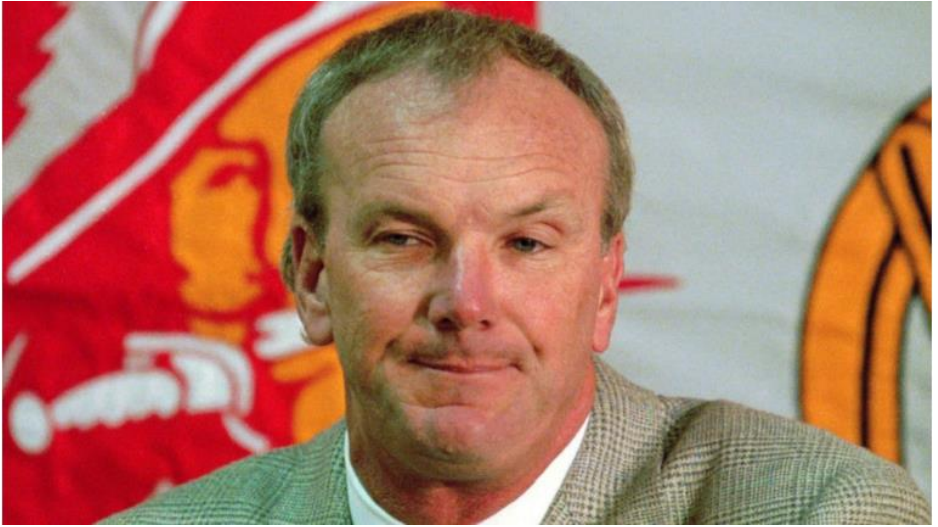


Richard Williamson, the fourth head coach in Tampa Bay franchise history and a long-time NFL assistant, passed away after a brief illness in September 2015. Williamson spent 27 years coaching in the NFL and another 18 tutoring players on the collegiate level. He became the fourth head coach in Buccaneers franchise history on December 3, 1990, remaining in that position for the remainder of the 1990 season and all of 1991.

Williamson's final coaching stop was his longest one, as he was an assistant for the Carolina Panthers from 1995-2009. He had about as much luck with the team as his predecessors compiling a 6-10 record in 1990 snaring the load with Ray Perkins and then he managed to get 3 wins without Perkins in his last year with the team in 1991.

### Sam Wyche 1992-1995

<u>Year</u>	<u>Record</u>	<u>Finish (Regular / Post Seas.)</u>	<u>Coach</u>	<u>Notes</u>
1995	7-9-0	5th -- NFC Central--	Sam Wyche	
1994	6-10-0	5th -- NFC Central--	Sam Wyche	
1993	5-11-0	5th -- NFC Central--	Sam Wyche	
1992	5-11-0	T3rd NFC Central--	Sam Wyche	



Former Tampa Bay Buccaneers head coach Sam Wyche died in early January 2020 on a Thursday at the age of 74. Wyche was the head coach for Tampa Bay football for four seasons, leading the Bucs to a 23-41 record from 1992 through 1995. While his wins and losses continued the pattern of his predecessors (no winning seasons), it doesn't tell of much success during his tenure with the Bucs.

Yet, Wyche presided over the most impactful NFL draft in franchise history when he drafted future Hall of Famers Derrick Brooks and Warren Sapp in the first round of the 1995 draft.

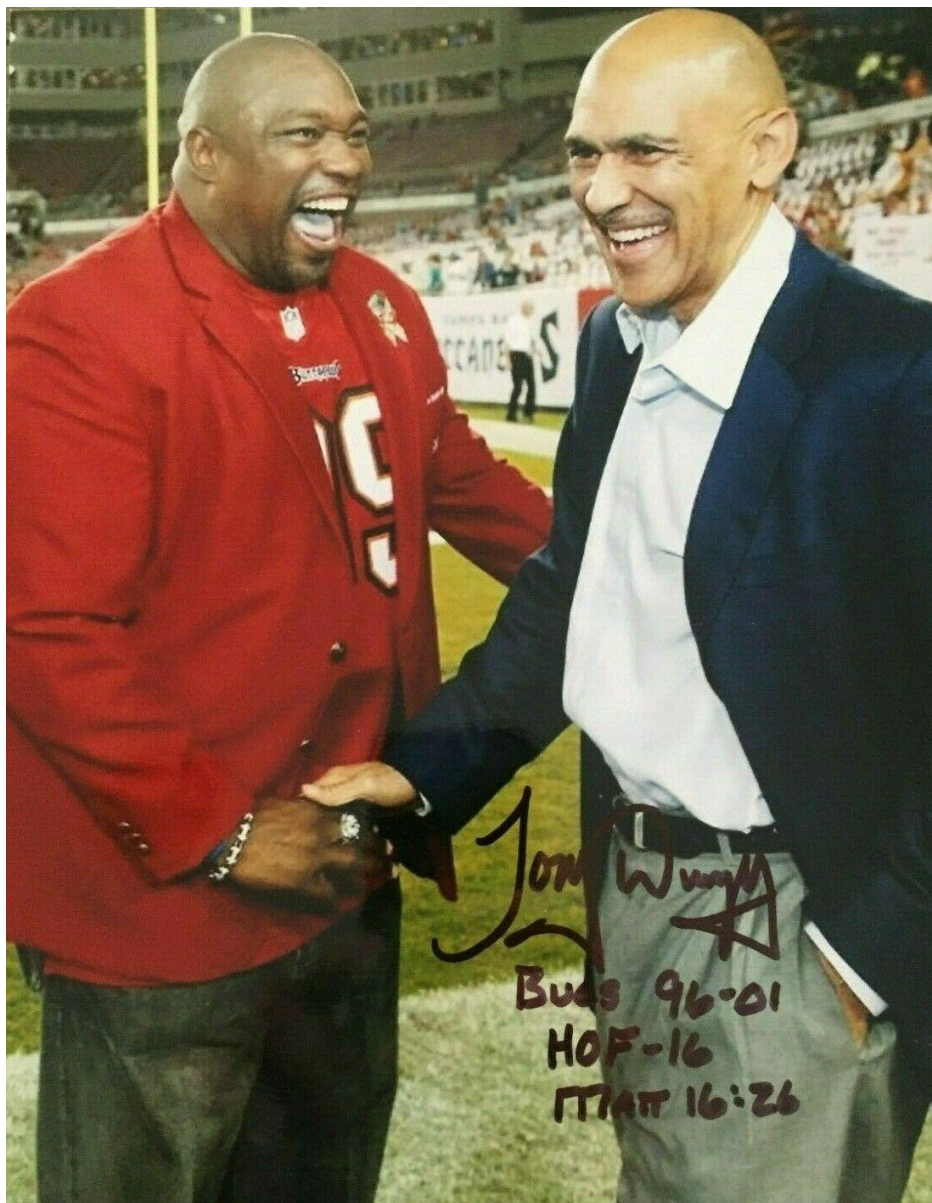
With other teams and even with the Bucs, he was one of the most innovative offensive coaches of his era. Wyche led the Cincinnati Bengals to their only Super Bowl appearance in franchise history following the 1988 season.

As the Bucs coach, he kept increasing the wins and might have had a break-even or winning season if he got one more year. Unfortunately, with four losing seasons, he probably fits in the bottom six worst coaches in Tampa Bay history.



## Tony Dungy 1996-2001

<u>Year</u>	<u>Record</u>	<u>Finish (Regular / Post Seas.)</u>	<u>Coach</u>	<u>Notes</u>
2001	9-7-0	3rd -- NFC Central	0-1 Tony Dungy	Lost Wild Card
2000	10-6-0	2nd - - NFC Central	0-1 - Tony Dungy	Lost Wild Card
1999	11-5-0	1st -- - NFC Central	1-1 - Tony Dungy	Lost Conf-Champ
1998	8-8-0	3rd -- NFC Central--	Tony Dungy	
1997	10-6-0	2nd -- NFC Central	1-1 Tony Dungy	Lost Div. Playoffs
1996	6-10-0	4th -- NFC Central--	Tony Dungy.	



Tampa Bay Buccaneers former head coach and former Pittsburgh Steelers safety Tony Dungy was honored during halftime of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and Pittsburgh Steelers Monday Night Football game during the 2010 football season, as he was inducted into the Buccaneers' Ring of Honor.

Though Wyche was increasing his wins and it looked good for 1996, coaching changes are always tough to deal with. Consequently, the lonely losing season Tony Dungy had with Tampa Bay was his first. In 1996, Dungy lost one more game than Sam Wyche did in 1995. But, it was his last losing season. In 1997 Tony Dungy began a string of five winning or break-even seasons making him one of the best coaches in Tampa Bay history.

### Jon Gruden 2002-2008

<u>Year</u>	<u>Record</u>	<u>Finish (Regular / Post Season.)</u>	<u>Coach</u>	<u>Notes</u>
2008	9-7-0	3rd -- NFC South--	Jon Gruden	
2007	9-7-0	1st -- NFC South	Jon Gruden	Lost Wild Card
2006	4-12-0	4th -- NFC South-	Jon Gruden	
2005	11-5-0	1st -- NFC South	Jon Gruden	Lost Wild Card
2004	5-11-0	4th -- NFC South--	Jon Gruden	
2003	7-9-0	3rd -- NFC South--	Jon Gruden	
2002	12-4-0	1st -- NFC South	Jon Gruden	Won Superbowl



Everybody knows what Tom Brady did for Tampa Bay in the 2020 season but not everybody knows what Tampa Bay did for Tom

Brady in 2002. Here is this little known secret. From 2001-04, Tom Brady and the New England Patriots won three Super Bowls while establishing a major dynasty for Coach Bill Belichick, Tom Brady and the New England Patriots.

There was just one Super Bowl which Tom Brady's Patriots did not win while the team became a dynasty in this four-year period. The one they didn't win during that span. That one was won by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, who wiped away nearly three decades of irrelevance by whitewashing the Raiders in Super Bowl XXXVII.

Tampa Bay's convincing 48-21 win over the Raiders also ended the narrative that those Buccaneers couldn't win the "big one," a narrative that was born from previous playoff failures. Three years earlier, the Tony Dungy's Buccaneers suffered a five-point loss to the eventual champion Rams in the NFC Championship Game. They then suffered consecutive playoff losses to Andy Reid's Philadelphia Eagles by a combined score of 52-12.

Despite his success in bringing a winning culture to Tampa, Tony Dungy was fired after the 2001 season. For some reason, Dungy's winning record was not good enough. To get his successor, the Malcolm Glazer's Buccaneers traded two first and two second-round draft picks to the Raiders for Jon Gruden, who ironically was coming off of a controversial playoff loss to Brady and the Patriots.

Gruden parlayed Dungy's winning team for all it was worth and set an early tone in Tampa, as he gleefully challenged his defense during summer practice sessions. During one practice, Gruden caught his defense off-guard after running a quarterback bootleg during a power running drill. He knew how to win and was determined to win.

"I looked at [Gruden] right in the eye and I said, 'If you're scared, say you're scared,'" former Buccaneers defensive tackle Warren Sapp said several years later. "He looked back at me and said, 'Well, it looks like they've been running boot on you for the last three years, so now what?' And that's where the challenge started."

Gruden was also tough on his offense, a unit that didn't always carry its weight under Tony Dungy. While Gruden's offense took time to develop, quarterback Brad Johnson enjoyed a breakthrough

performance in Week 9, throwing five touchdowns in a 38-24 win over the Vikings. Johnson earned a Pro Bowl selection that season along with fullback Mike Alstott, whose devastating run in a Week 6 win over the Browns exemplified the '02 Buccaneers' rallying cry: "Pound the rock."

The rest is history. Gruden won it all his first year and he won the Super Bowl. The pundits say he was the best Bucs coach before Bruce Arians.

He had a letdown the next two years with losing seasons, but he came back in 2005 with an 11-5 season but lost the Wild Card 10-17 v the Redskins. His team let down the following year with a losing season. He finished his tenure with the Bucs by getting fired after two medsa-medsa 9-7 seasons in a row.

The Tampa Bay Buccaneers apparently thought that coaches are a dime a dozen as they fired the coach that brought them a Super Bowl and they fired general manager Bruce Allen on a Friday, just three weeks after the team completed one of the biggest collapses in NFL history, losing four straight games following a 9-3 start to miss the playoffs. I bet management would like to have that decision back and you will too as the Bucs had a hard time finding a win until Bruce Arians came out of retirement more than ten years later.

### **Raheem Morris 2009-2011**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Record</u>	<u>Finish (Regular / Post Seas.)</u>	<u>Coach</u>	<u>Notes</u>
2011	4-12-0	4th -- NFC South--	Raheem Morris	
2010	10-6-0	3rd -- NFC South--	Raheem Morris	
2009	3-13-0	4th -- NFC South--	Raheem Morris	





Raheem Morris

After the Bucs fired Jon Gruden after two more winning seasons (9-7 each one) – one in which the team made the playoffs, they took a shot with a newcomer Raheem Morris who met the challenge of being head coach with a dismal accomplishment record of 3-13—six more losses that Gruden compiled in his last season. Morris came back the following year with a 10-6 record but had another bad season in his third year 4-12.

Thus, he was the head coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers from 2009 until the 2011 season, during which time the Buccaneers went 17-31-0. During his career he was a head coach for just three seasons after which he was fired by the Bucs, a fate shared by other fine coaches.

While pundits blamed cheap management, management always blamed the coaches for their failings. Morris was fired on a Monday after three seasons. That firing raised questions about ownership's commitment to winning because the club has resisted spending large amounts of money in free agency. The 45-24 loss to the Atlanta



Falcons in Sunday's season finale was the 10th straight loss following a 4-2 start that never got right.

### Greg Schiano 2012-2013

<u>Year</u>	<u>Record</u>	<u>Finish (Regular / Post Seas.)</u>	<u>Coach</u>	<u>Notes</u>
2013	4-12-0	4th -- NFC South--	Greg Schiano	
2012	7-9-0	4th -- NFC South--	Greg Schiano	



Greg Schiano did not make the recent three and out limit of Bucs coaches. The Tampa Bay Buccaneers relieved head coach Greg Schiano of his duties after just two seasons on the job on Monday.

Schiano's latest statement to remain employed with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers wasn't the strongest: a listless 42-17 loss to the New Orleans Saints on Sunday. The Bucs decided it was their turn to speak. They said: "Results over past two years have not lived up to our standards. We believe time has come to find a new direction.

The former Rutgers coach was fired, along with general manager Mark Dominik after Schiano posted a dismal 11-21 record in just two seasons with the Bucs. According to a report in the Tampa Bay Times, Schiano didn't see it coming. Schiano had just spoken to the players as if he and his staff were returning for the 2014 season.

According to receiver Mike Williams, he went so far as to say we have our quarterback in rookie Mike Glennon. He conducted the rest of the meeting like nothing was up. It was just another exit meeting. Then, he was gone. Schiano makes the list of the top six worst Bucs Coaches.

Players and staffers were not happy with Schiano. Some thought it would be good for him to return to the college ranks but Schiano denied after his last game that he was actively seeking a job at Penn State. It did not happen.

The coach spent some time coaching in different capacities at Ohio State and at the New England Patriots, but he missed his good days at Rutgers. Schiano, a New Jersey native, went 68-67 at Rutgers from 2001 to 2011 and turned the Scarlet Knights into consistent winners after years of being one of the worst major college football programs in the country. He rejoined the Scarlet Knights in 2019 and coached the team to a 3-6 record winning against a number of very strong teams and his losses were close. Good Luck Greg in 2021.

**Lovie Smith 2014-2015**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Record</u>	<u>Finish (Regular / Post Seas.)</u>	<u>Coach</u>	<u>Notes</u>
2015	6-10-0	4th -- NFC South--	Lovie Smith	
2014	2-14-0	4th -- NFC South-	Lovie Smith	



Lovie Smith: The Right Man at the Right Time

Two and out at Tampa Bay. That's all heavily experienced coach Lovey Smith got to turn the team around after Greg Schiano left for the great beyond. Lovey was a good choice for Tampa Bay with an 81-63 record at Chicago and three first place finishes. He was a pro, but he did not mesh with Bucs Management's thinking.

And so, the Tampa Bay management fired coach Lovie Smith after two seasons and gave him just one season with # 1 overall draft pick Jameis Winston under center. Smith went 6-10 in his last season and 8-24 over two years in charge of the team. In terms of the Bucs organization over the years, he would land in the bottom six of head coaches.

Management made a statement: "After careful consideration, we informed Lovie that we have decided to make a change, I want to thank Lovie for his hard work and dedication to the Buccaneers during his time here."

Over the past week, the owners had been discussing the direction of the franchise and the path they wanted to take to get back on track. They were concerned about the Buccaneers' regression on defense, the struggles in the secondary, their record the past several seasons, the high number of penalties and the disappointment of some of Smith's coordinator hires, etc. Their ideas to correct flaws and Smith's ideas to get issues resolved did not match up, and so the Buccaneers' ownership made a decision to part ways with the head coach they had hired just two years ago. The pattern seems familiar.

**Dirk Koetter 2016-2018**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Record</b>	<b>Finish (Regular / Post Seas.)</b>	<b>Coach</b>	<b>Notes</b>
2018	5-11-0	4th -- NFC South--	Dirk Koetter	
2017	5-11-0	4th -- NFC South--	Dirk Koetter	
2016	9-7-0	2nd --NFC South--	Dirk Koetter	

Tampa Bay found itself in a familiar place after three years with Dirk Koetter—back to the Drawing Board. The Bucs had bet their future that Koetter could bring the best out of their star QB Jameis Winston, the no. 1 overall pick in 2015. But, after two consecutive 5-11 seasons and another last-place finish in the NFC South, they

resigned themselves to a familiar fate: They had to look for a new head coach to again. turn their franchise around.



Koetter finished his stint with Tampa Bay with a 19-29 record, going 5-11 this season, including the season ending 34-32 loss to the Falcons.

"We sincerely appreciate the hard work and commitment shown by Dirk over the past several years," Buccaneers owner/co-chairman Joel Glazer said in a statement. "Working with Dirk has been a pleasure and we wish him and his family all the best in the future. Our search for a new head coach will begin immediately and will be conducted by General Manager Jason Licht."

Having one winning season of three, it looks like Dirk Koetter has escaped being in the bottom six coaches of all time at Tampa Bay.

### **Bruce Arians 2019-2020**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Record</u>	<u>Finish (Regular / Post Seas.)</u>	<u>Coach</u>	<u>Notes</u>
2021				Something good!
2020	11-5-0	2nd --NFC South	4-0 -	Bruce Arians
2019	7-9-0	3rd -- NFC South--		Bruce Arians



Back in 2019 it appeared that Bruce Arians could fix quarterback Jameis Winston and would love to work with general manager Jason Licht. For those reasons, the former Cardinals' head coach was a favorite to fill the Buccaneers open coaching job. On January 8, 2019, Arians agreed to terms on a four-year contract to come out of retirement and become the 12th head coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Bruce Arians is both a master coach and he is one lucky guy. He had a 7-9 year in 2019 and was looking forward to a better 2020 but I think ole Bruce never dreamed his luck would get so strong.

My dad knew me like a book. I was the first of five in my family with a college degree and then a masters. I never thought of myself as a miser around family. But my dad knew the patterns of my spending better than even I and he once said, "You have to get to Brian when the hole is open." I guess he was right but what do I know.

We might say the same of the Glazer family. After being afraid to spend the big bucks on available free agents, the Glazers went hog wild in early 2020. They opened the whole and the organization made sure it stayed open until they got the team on the field that would win the Super Bowl. It's like the hole stayed open for whatever Bruce Arians and Tom Brady wanted.

For example, on a Tuesday near the end of October in the middle of the season, the Bucs thought they needed a little help. So, they officially signed WR Antonio Brown, who has averaged 86 receiving yards per game and scored 80 touchdowns in his career, adding even more firepower to an offense that already features Mike Evans and Chris Godwin. Did the Bucs plan to win the Super Bowl. I rest my case.

Of course we all know that they picked up Tom Brady and somebody talked tight-end Rob Gronkowski out of retirement to join Brady.

They also added some other familiar faces from around the NFL, including a six-time Pro Bowler in LeSean McCoy and a recent top-five draft pick in Leonard Fournette, as well as a talented rookie class with many players who will be expected to contribute early and often on both sides of the ball.

Yes, Virginia the Bucs did sign Sean McCoy as a veteran for help in the backfield, but when things got hot, he served on a back seat to Ronald Jones and Leonard Fournette while the Bucs were on the road to Super Bowl 55.

There were a bunch of new stars, but their Super Bowl hopes also depended on a strong core of returning starters on both sides of the ball.

Returning stars such as Mike Evans, Chris Godwin, Lavonte David, Shaq Barrett, Jason Pierre-Paul, Vita Vea, and more did their best to assure the Bucs their first Superbowl in twenty years and were as responsible as the new guys for whatever winning the Bucs did in 2020 as well as the playoffs and of course the Superbowl..

On Sept 6, 2020 Tampa Bay showed they planned to keep Tom Brady around for a little longer than his two-year contract. They signed the all-everything quarterback to a four year special contract extension.

That was before the season even began. The Bucs also brought back reserve linebacker Kevin Minter on a one-year deal, Minter's

experience and knowledge of Todd Bowles' defense makes him a valuable piece of Tampa Bay's dominant defense.

After re-signing Lavonte David, the Bucs have now shored up the linebacker position even further by bringing in Mintner. Like my dad always said, strike while the hole is open. Tampa Bay figured out how to spend money wisely in 2020.

Bruce Arians is not in the bottom six coaches. Most will probably rank him #1 as he joins John Gruden and Tony Dungy in the fans hall of fame for favorite Bucs coaches. What a season. There is lots more to tell.





# Chapter 5 The Evolution of Modern Football



**Lots of playing before playing became official**

The official agreed upon date for the first American-style football game is November 6, 1869. There would be more than one hundred seven years to pass before the Tampa Bay Buccaneers played their first real football game before fans in Tampa Stadium.

If you can find a replay of the first game from 1869 someplace in the heavens, however, you would find its replay would not look much like football as we know it. But, it was not completely soccer or rugby either.

Before this game, teams were playing a rugby style similar to that played in Britain in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. At the time in the US, a derivative known as association football was also played. In both games, a football is kicked at a goal or run over a line. These styles were based on the varieties of English public-school football games. Over time, as noted, the style of "football" play in America continued to evolve.

On November 6, 1869, the first football game in America featured Rutgers and Princeton. Before the teams were even on the field it was being plugged as the first college football game of all time. Syracuse

University opened in 1870, the year after the first college football game.

The first game of intercollegiate football was a sporting battle between two neighboring schools on a plot of ground where the present-day Rutgers gymnasium now stands in New Brunswick, N.J. Rutgers won that first game, 6-4.

There were two teams of 25 men each and the rules were rugby-like, but different enough to make it very interesting and enjoyable.

Like today's football, there were many surprises; strategies needed to be employed; determination exhibited, and of course the players required physical prowess. As you can see the protective gear was wanting in those days. See if you can spot one helmet in the mix below:



**1<sup>st</sup> Game Rutgers 6 Princeton 4 College Field, New Brunswick, NJ**

Before we begin to focus solely on the Buccaneers, the next bunch of chapters will describe the origins of football, the origin of the football itself, and how the NFL grew out of something that became known as American football that was first played on college campuses.

## Chapter 6 The First American College Football Game



Early American Football

We can all read Walter Camp's books about how the rules of American football came about. Walter Camp as many already know is known as the father of American football. We can also learn a lot from the writings of the day. However, since nobody alive today was alive way back when, it is safe to say that nobody actually knows. But from all the accounts, we do have a pretty good idea.

There are a lot of guessers and some wrong readers out there because nobody from November 1869, of which I am aware can refute anything via an eye-witness account. So, there are a lot of great stories, some duplicated many times over. Some are right on the money and others are inexact. We'll do our best to bring you the story as it really happened in this book.

Once the first College football game was played, the next major game to be played was the first professional football game. Though there were dribs and drabs of pro football being played by some famous coaches such as Knute Rockne, it took a while for professional football to take off. It took even longer for an expansion team such as the Tampa Bay Buccaneers to get good enough to win a Super Bowl. Yet, they did. Twice!

In these pre-pro-football chapters that eventually get us to the first pro-football game, know that the facts in this section come from a book written by your author that sells much better in England than in the US. Its title is *The Birth of American Football*. The modified excerpts from this book help set the stage for a proper introduction to professional football, the NFL, and the road to Super Bowl LV, a game won by our very own Bucs.

It has been almost 150 years since the first American College Football game. Therefore, it helps to recall the old schoolroom exercise of whispering into a person's ear a little passage and thirty students later seeing what comes back. The good news is that the further back that you get from the time of Walter Camp, the stories are all similar and there are fewer and fewer of them.

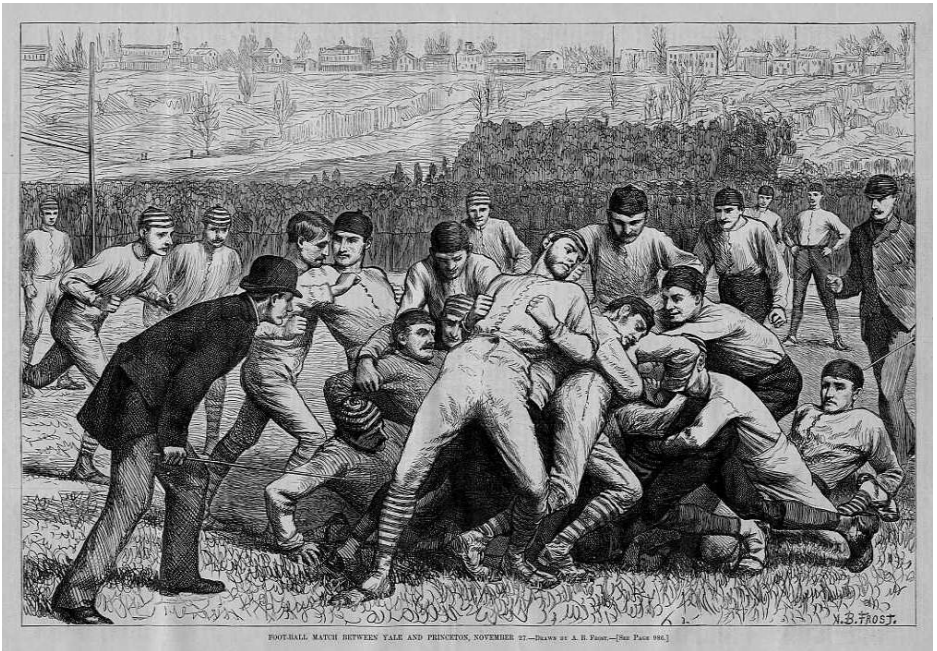
## **Camp had all the future rules in his head!**

Eventually, in the 1870's, shortly after the very first recognized collegiate football game in America, the great Walter Camp began to get really interested and he wrote a lot about football history and he wrote a lot of football rule books. These are trusted implicitly today by most experts as the defining moments of American football.

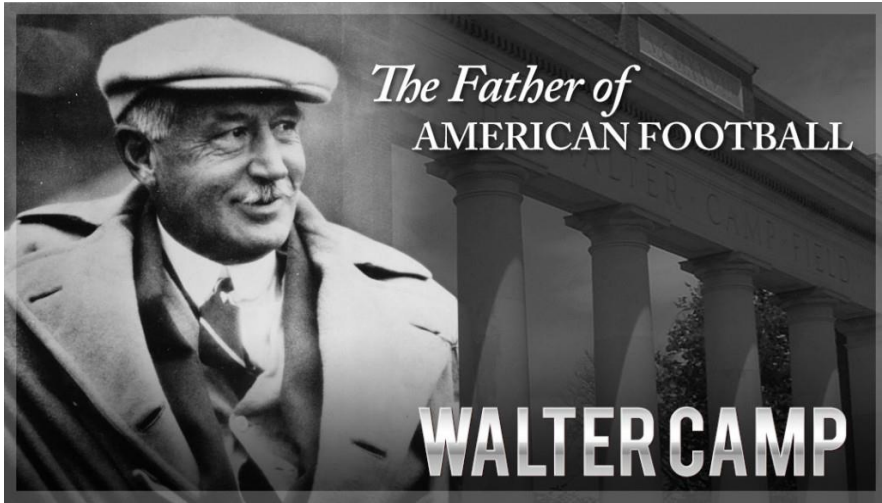
One of the few things about early football that we do know with reasonable certainty is that professional football as we understand it, was non-existent until long after collegiate football was established. It can also be said with certainty that if it were not for the colleges and Walter Camp, in particular, there probably would be no American football today at any level. Of course, more than likely there would still be rugby and soccer.

We also know that there was a great gifted athlete who played every sport imaginable including soccer and rugby, and then American football. His name is Walter Camp. He is universally recognized as the Father of American Football.

There is some irony in putting this out as a two plus two equals four story, however. You see, Walter Camp, as noted, widely considered the most important figure in the development of American football, was not playing organized football when the first football game took place in 1869. So, who gave them their football rules. Voila, a conundrum!



1879 Football Game Depiction



As a youth, we know that Walter Camp excelled in sports such as track, baseball, and association football. After enrolling at Yale in 1876, he earned varsity honors in every sport the school offered. But, what about 1869?—the year that is the consensus origin date for the beginning of American football in the US?

Many apologists have written about this period from 1869 onward as if it were the beginning of American football that, at the time was played only at the collegiate level. In essence, the true beginning of college football was in fact, the beginning of American football. However, the rules of the game began more as rugby rules than football rules but over the years, changes were made. Today, no other country plays the type of football played in America. America created its own game of football and it is unique to our shores.

There were other rough games out there at the time and they still exist across the world. One might conclude that football was unnecessary as those who played soccer and rugby could be maimed or killed in a contest without needing Camp's American football rules.



Scenes from First Football Game

Considering that the centennial of the US was approaching in 1869, the year of the first game, some felt there was a need to create a game besides the American past-time of baseball, that was a cool-weather sport. Yes, there was soccer and rugby, but these have a European or English heritage, from which America had a longtime ago declared independence—about 100 years prior. England for the most part owned the rules of soccer and rugby for some time.

Nonetheless, historians trace the roots of American football to early versions of rugby football and association football. Both games have their origin in varieties of football played in Britain in the mid-19th century. In the game, a ball (a football) is kicked at a goal or kicked over a line. These varieties of style in England were based on the various English public school football games.

It helps to be reminded in this story that our nation's birth date is July 4, 1776 and so 1869 was just 93 years from the founding.

There are lots of stories about the evolution towards American football, and this part of the stories discusses many ideas supplied by

Walter Camp for the transition. American football resulted from several major modifications from association football and rugby football, most notably they included the rule changes instituted by Camp at Yale University and as a Hopkins School graduate. To repeat, Camp is significant as he is attributed as being the designated "Father of American Football." Since he wrote the rule books, it is safe to say whatever Camp believed and could be codified, it became a written football rule.

One of the changes not attributed to Walter Camp, however, was the shape of the ball. As you will see, the forward pass did not become legal until 1906 and so the spherical shape of modern footballs was not required until accurate passing became a larger part of the game.

The football itself was evolving steadily from the first game. But, it was not completely perfected until 1935. The ball used in the very first game was round, like a soccer ball and it looked a lot like early rugby balls. It was tough to carry, and awkward to throw. In 1874, in a McGill and Harvard game, they used a ball that looked like a watermelon. Over time, balls became more plum-like and easier to throw. The problem was that pigs' bladders, not balloons were used and they, by definition since all pigs were different, were inexact. We refine this study of the ball later in this section before we look at Buccaneers' season summaries, so please hang on. For now, know that Walter Camp was not involved in the evolution of the ball itself.

Among these important changes to rugby that Camp brought into American football were the introduction of the line of scrimmage, of down-and-distance rules. He also introduced the notion of legal interference, which today is called blocking. Camp was the rules guy but before he went to Yale, like most New Englanders of the day, he played soccer, which was the preferred cool-weather fall sport of the day. He did not play much rugby football until his time at Yale University from 1876 to 1881.

Camp was not the first person to play football—any kind of football—be it soccer, rugby, or Harpastum. Some joke that Adam and Eve may have played football with a round fruit. Most of us would hope it was an orange or a grapefruit.



## A sport called Harpastum and others

You can go back through history and find sports that had some of the roughness and rudiments of soccer, rugby, and American football but the games they played were not very rule-based.

In a “sport” called *Harpastum*, a form of ball game played in the Roman Empire, for example, the Romans enjoyed their own form of football.

There have been many forms of traditional football that have been played throughout Europe and beyond since the beginning of mankind.

We have already discussed the possibility that there may have been nicht-verboten round or oval fruits in the Garden of Paradise used for football.

From the beginning of antiquity, knowing man’s propensity to exercise, have fun and use various shaped balls in so doing, if not in the garden, then one can bet it was not long after Paradise that ancient forms of football abounded. See pic of *Harpastum* next page.



Many of these ancient matches would involve handling of a ball and scrummage-like formations. Several of the oldest examples of football-like games include the Greek game of *Episkyros* and the Roman game of *Harpastum* (both pictures on next page).

Over time many countries across the world developed their own national football-like games. For example, New Zealand

has Ki-o-rahi, Australia has Marngrook, Japan has Kemari, China has Cuju, Georgia has Lelo Burti, and the Borders have Jeddart Ba' and the Cornwall Cornish have Hurling.



The pictures of balls and balls in play are interesting and make the point. Left to right, are Ki-o-rahi ball, Marngrook ball, and a snap of a game of Kemari in process. None of these forms appear to have a direct link to American football but they surely are forerunners.



In football-story-telling, there is also an often-told story about a ship in 1586, almost 100 years after Columbus, in which the men from the ship wanted to play a little sport. The ship was reportedly commanded by an English explorer named John Davis. The young crew would go ashore to play a form of football with the Inuit (Eskimo) people in Greenland. There are other later accounts of an Inuit game played on ice, called Aqsaqtuk.

This game had a similarity to football in that each game, which was called a match, began with the two teams facing each other in parallel lines. The objective was to kick the “ball” through each other team's line and then kick it at a goal. Moving along in time, it is recorded from 1610 that William Strachley from Jamestown Virginia, an English Colonist, wrote the account of a game played by Native Americans. They called the game Pahsaheman.

Though there are stories of Native Americans playing games, a variety of American football historians agree that the game has its roots from the traditional football games played all over Europe in villages, towns, and schools for centuries before Columbus.

The scuttle on those is that the early games appear to have had much in common with what has been called "mob football" from England. There were typically no uniforms or coaches nor hard and fast rules.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, intramural games of rugby, soccer, and association football began to be played on American college campuses. There were no rules committees and no Walter Camp at

the time and so each school played its own variety of football with its own rules.

Princeton University students, for example, are reported to have played a game called ball-own, as early as 1820.

Harvard had its own tradition known as "Bloody Monday," which began in 1827. This was all about a mass ballgame between the freshman and sophomore classes. In 1860, both the town police and the college authorities agreed the Bloody Monday had to go. There was too much blood for the good of the game.

The gendarme would not permit "football" for well over twelve years. Then the game was played again. Dartmouth had its own version which they called "Old division football." Its rules were first published in 1871, though it is said they played the game from the 1830's.

There were commonalities in all these games Yet, they remained largely "mob" style games, with huge numbers of players on the "field" or whatever makeshift was available. All players were on the field at the same time. There was a little rhyme and some reason as the objective seemed always to be to advance the ball into a goal area, quite often by any means possible and necessary.

There were no complicated rules as the games were played for sport—just for fun. Rules were simple, and so without protection by rules, violence and injury were common. There was supposedly no beer drinking at the games, but plenty was consumed shortly thereafter by the young adult participants.

Yes, to be sure, the games were often heated as no group wanted to lose. Some games were actually violent. Yet, afterwards, sometimes after beating each other to a pulp, both squads normally would choose to gather together from their rivalry for some post-game revelry that often included the singing of songs, awarding of small prizes, and of course lots of beer-drinking.

There is an old football / rugby saying that parallels the US Las Vegas slogan: "What happens on the pitch, stays on the pitch. "This is an oft-quoted rugby truism.

## Take away the violence!

The brutality and frequent bloodshed of these mob-style games led to widespread protests and there were many separate decisions from cities and schools to abandon the games. Yale, for example, under pressure from the city of New Haven, banned the play of all forms of football in 1860. Eventually, because of popular pressure, the games would be brought back in one form or another.

From 1854 to 1882, there was a variant of the mob football style that was once again played at Yale in the form of bladderball. The objective, of this "game" was to gain control of an oversized inflatable ball and bring it through the gates of the residential college represented by another on-campus intramural team.

As one would expect, this game was eventually banned by school authorities for a number of reasons, not the least of which was alcohol fueled violence. The violence and the alcohol were most often precipitated by the game. Revival games were played in 2009 and 2011, and very briefly, in 2014. The revivals are most often scripted though the grog surely flows.

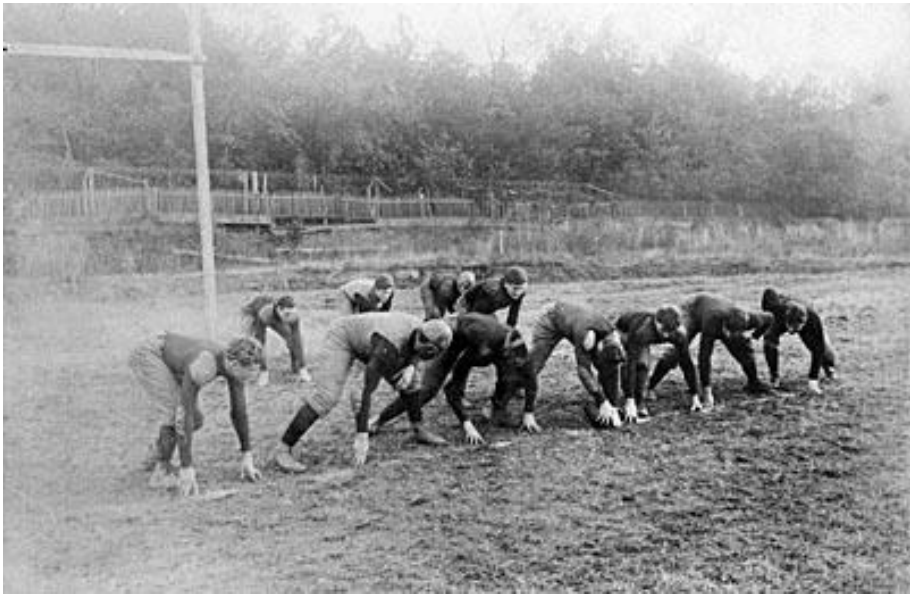
Eventually, the informality of the matches gave way to formality as bona fide institutions began to sponsor collegiate level teams. The 1869 college football season is recognized as the first season of intercollegiate football in the United States, though at the time, there were only two teams in the league – Rutgers and Princeton.

The rules were not refined and so the teams used "agreed-upon improvised rules" resembling soccer and rugby as much as the modern American sport. 1869 is considered by historians as the inaugural college football season.

This 1869 football season consisted of only two total games and as noted, there were just two teams – Rutgers University and Princeton University; The first game was played on November 6 at Rutgers' campus, and the second was played on November 13 on the Princeton's campus.

## 1869–1875

As noted, the November 6, 1869 football game between Rutgers and Princeton, which by the way was then known as the *College of New Jersey*, was played with a round ball. The rules were provided by Rutgers captain William J. Leggett. They were based on the Football Association's first set of American football rules.



Rutgers Scarlett Knights practice 1869

Walter Camp did not write the very first set of rules, but he made them all better. These rules were an early attempt by those who had studied football in England's public schools, to codify the rules and create what hopefully would become a universal and standardized set of dictates for the game. Let me posit an analogy of the *evolution* of American Football Rules.

I remember back in the late 1980's when Windows 2.0 came out and it was a major improvement on DOS and the prior Windows version. I am sure if the hardware were capable then, the Bill Gates led Microsoft team would have built Windows 10 or Windows 11 instead of going through all the iterations to make the program better over the next forty years. But, for lots of reasons, they could not.

Rules changes work well through an iterative process of testing new rules, introducing them to the "game," and then removing objectional parts. In the process, some rules are enhanced; others eliminated; while still other rules are added.

The 1869 football games bore little resemblance to the American game, which would be developed slowly in the following decades through the continual work of Walter Camp and others. Nonetheless, it is still regarded as the first game of Intercollegiate American Football.

Think of the mob playing this first game at a Rutgers field. It could have been worse. Two teams of 25 players lined up and attempted to score by kicking the ball into the opposing team's goal. Throwing or carrying the ball was not allowed, but there was plenty of physical contact between players. The first team to reach six goals was declared the winner. Rutgers won by a score of six to four.

A rematch was played at Princeton a week later under Princeton's own set of rules. There was a major difference in the rules of this game as a team was awarded a "free kick" when any player caught the ball on the fly. This feature had been adopted from the Football Association's rules. The fair catch kick rule has survived through our modern American game.

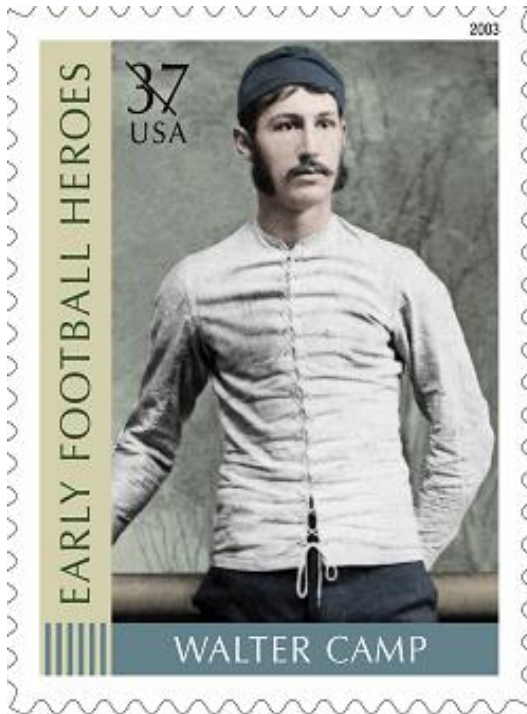
Princeton won the second game with home field advantage by a score of 8–0. More teams began to play each other in 1870. Columbia was next to join the series and then by 1872 several other schools began to field intercollegiate teams, including Yale and the Stevens Institute of Technology.





# Chapter 7 Moving Closer Towards Real American Football

## Nothing happens overnight



Soon after the early football changes, in the late nineteenth and into the early twentieth centuries, more game-play type developments were introduced by college coaches.

The list is like a who's who of early American College Football. Coaches, such as Eddie Cochems, Amos Alonzo Stagg, Parke H. Davis, Knute Rockne, John Heisman, and Glenn "Pop" Warner helped introduce and then take advantage of the newly introduced forward pass.

In later chapters, we will look at the enhancements attributed to these football greats.

We have learned that American College Football as well as professional football, were introduced prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Pro football remained ragtag until 1920 when the American Professional Football Association was formed. Fans were lured into watching again and again once they saw the game played. How could we not love American football?

American college football grew especially in popularity even after the beginning of professional football. It became the dominant version of the sport of football in the United States. It was this way for the entire first half of the 20th century. For many fans, it still is this way. There are pro football fans who do not enjoy college football and vice versa.

Bowl games made the idea of football even more exciting in the college ranks. Rivalries grew and continued, and the fans loved it! This great football tradition brought a national audience to college football games that still dominates the sports world today.

This is Edgar Allan Poe – No kidding!



In researching this section, I found that some players with some great names played football in the early years. For example, Edgar Allan Poe was an All-American for Princeton in 1889. Additionally, in 1889, first-year players were permitted to wear numbers representing their names in college football games.

This particular Edgar Allan Poe was also a great historical figure. He served as Attorney General of the State of Maryland from 1911 to 1915. Born in Baltimore, Poe was named for his second cousin, twice removed, the celebrated author & poet, Edgar Allan Poe, who died in 1849.

## What number is he?

Another interesting tidbit on the formation of football is that teams played without uniform numbers. Nonetheless somehow the players were identified. Just two years after Penn State as well as Notre Dame formed their teams and played their first official football games in 1887, the first All-America team was named in 1889.

There is some scuttle about that as Walter Camp and some others with mostly Eastern College roots were accused of picking players from the big Eastern Colleges almost exclusively and so there were few All Americans at Notre Dame or Penn State or Alabama in the early years.

Seventeen years after the first all-American for example, W. T. (Mother) Dunn was Penn State's first All-American in (1906). He was named by Walter Camp. He was both a linebacker and a center. The next All-American for PSU was Bob Higgins, the long-time PSU football coach who, as an End, gained the honor both in (1915 & 1919). The PSU football program has produced 88 consensus all-Americans in total. Notre Dame has 90. Alabama has 68.

Notre Dame had two All-Americans in 1913 – Knute Rockne, an End, and Gus Dorais, a quarterback. By 1913, the forward pass was legal and that is how ND was winning its games in this undefeated season.

As touched on in this section, in 1889, numbers to identify individual players were permitted but not recommended. It took until 1915 that they were recommended. But, it wasn't until 1937 that numerals were required on both the front and back of game jerseys. In 1967 this rule was further modified to require numbering according to position, with offensive players ineligible to receive forward passes assigned numbers in the 50-79 range.

## **Pro football came from American college football**

There is no denying that the greatest college football players more often than not eventually find their fortunes in professional football. Pro football can be traced back to 1889, just a few years after Penn State and Notre Dame rolled out their programs, and just before Alabama got in the game.

As previously noted, it was 1892 when William "Pudge" Heffelfinger signed a \$500 contract to play for the Allegheny Athletic Association against the Pittsburgh Athletic Club.

Twenty-eight years later, the American Professional Football Association was formed. This league changed its name to the National Football League (NFL) just two years later.

Eventually, the NFL became the major league of American football. Originally, pro football was just an unaffiliated sport played in Midwestern industrial towns in the United States. Yet, professional football eventually became a national phenomenon.

We all know this because from August to February, in America, every year, many of us are glued to our TV sets or chained to our seats in some of the most intriguing pro-football stadiums in America—mostly on Sundays.

## The end of football?

Football was never a game for the light of heart. You had to be tough physically and tough mentally to compete. Way back in 1906, for example complaints were many about the violence in American football. It got so bad that universities on the West Coast, led by California and Stanford, replaced the sport with rugby union rules.

At the time, the very future of American college football, a very popular sport enjoyed by fans nationwide was in doubt. The schools that eliminated football and replaced it with Rugby Union believed football would be gone and Rugby Union would eventually be adopted nationwide.

Soon other schools followed this travesty and made the switch. Eventually, due to the perception that West Coast football was an inferior game played by inferior men when compared to the rough and tumble East Coast, manhood prevailed in the West over the inclination to make the game mild.

The many tough East Coast and Midwest teams had shrugged off the loss of the few teams out West and they had continued to play what was known as American style football.

And, so the available pool of Rugby Union "football" teams to play remained small. The Western colleges therefore had to schedule games against local club teams, and they reached out to Rugby Union powers in Australia, New Zealand, and especially, due to its proximity, Canada. American cities and states at the college level at the time was almost exclusively playing American football.

## American football OK without the west

The famous Stanford and California game continued as rugby. To make it seem important. The winner was invited by the British Columbia Rugby Union to a tournament in Vancouver over the Christmas holidays. The winner of that tournament was rewarded

with the Cooper Keith Trophy. Nobody in the American football America cared. Eventually the West Coast came back to American-style football ala Walter Camp.

Nonetheless the situation of injury and death in football persisted and though there was a lot of pushback, it came to a head in 1905 when there were 19 fatalities nationwide. Nobody wanted this.

President Theodore Roosevelt, a tough guy himself, is reported to have threatened to shut down the game nationwide if drastic changes were not made. Sports historians however, dispute that Roosevelt ever intervened with any wielded power.

What is certified, however, is that on October 9, 1905, the President held a meeting of football representatives from Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. The topic was eliminating and reducing injuries and the President, according to the record, never threatened to ban football.

The fact is that Roosevelt lacked the authority to abolish football but more importantly, he was a big fan and wanted the game to continue. The little Roosevelts also loved the sport and were playing football at the college and secondary levels at the time.

This was over 110 years ago, a century plus. That is why they say football was an even more brutal sport then, than some believe it is today. There are accounts of games that left dozens of dead on college and prep school gridirons. Though I have the reference, I cannot find any of the games in which such carnage may have occurred.

Many in the country were asking for action from politicians. With the very existence of the sport in jeopardy, President Theodore Roosevelt, who actually loved the sport, entered the fray and urged the schools noted above to institute some radical reforms that according to observers at the time saved the sport and gave another birth to the modern game of American football.

On the next page is a picture of a Teddy R. Nephew being carried off the field after an injury in the brutal game of football.

There are those who went as far as calling the turn of the 20th century America's football gridirons killing fields. College games drew tens of thousands of spectators and had even more fan appeal than professional baseball, the national pastime.

Baseball was a gentle sport compared to football. American football in the early 1900s was lethally brutal. It was a grinding, bruising sport that required major physical contact on each play. In 1905, the forward pass was still illegal and, so it was sheer brute strength that was required to move the ball.



One of the Roosevelt offspring carried off after injuring his ankle.

Huge players were permitted to lock their arms in mass formations, and they would use their unprotected helmetless heads as battering

rams. Gang tackles routinely buried ball carriers underneath a ton and a half of “tangled humanity.”

## Football players fought like gladiators

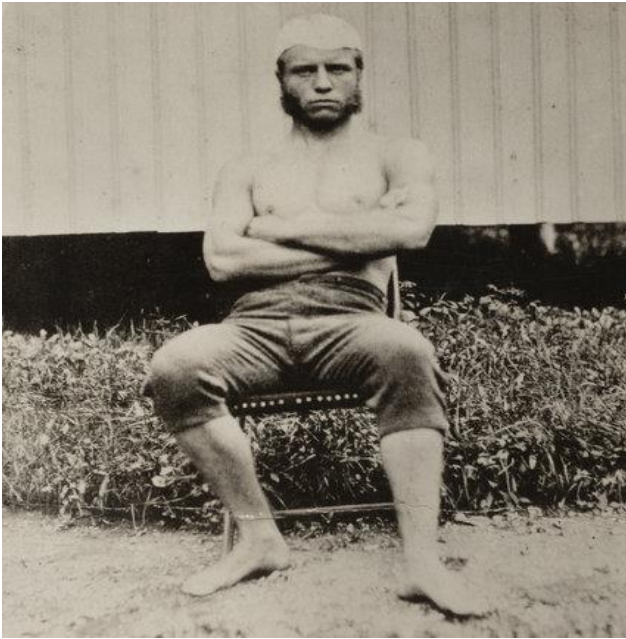
There was little in the way of protective equipment. Apparently, nobody had ever thought of pads and helmets. Players would often sustain gruesome injuries such as wrenched spinal cords, crushed skulls and broken ribs that were sometimes so severe they pierced their hearts. It did not go unnoticed.

The Chicago Tribune wrote a piece that in 1904 alone, the year before Roosevelt’s involvement, there were 18 football deaths and 159 serious injuries, mostly among prep school players. It was sad.



A look at tangled humanity





TR as a college undergraduate; Theodore Roosevelt Collection, Harvard College Library

There were obituaries of young pigskin players on a near-weekly basis during the football season. The carnage appalled America. Everybody loved the sport but not the maimings. The Newspapers did not take it easy on the game. Editorials called for the outright banishment of college and high school football.

Football was often compared to the Roman Gladiators: “The once athletic sport has degenerated into a contest that for brutality is little better than the gladiatorial combats in the arena in ancient Rome,” opined the *Beaumont Express*. The sport had reached such a crisis that one of its biggest boosters—President Theodore Roosevelt—got involved.

Roosevelt’s glasses gave away his nearsightedness. But, as a youth in college he did not wear them. This, however, was more than enough to keep this tough man from making the Harvard varsity squad. Yet, he was always a vocal exponent of football’s contribution to the “strenuous life,” both on and off the field.

When “Teddy” was New York City police commissioner, he helped bring back the old Harvard-Yale football series after it had been canceled for two years following the violent 1894 clash that was labeled “the bloodbath at Hampden Park.”

He believed that the football field was more or less a proving ground for the battlefield. This was validated by the performance of his fellow Rough Riders who were mostly former football standouts. “In life, as in a football game,” he wrote, “the principle to follow is: Hit the line hard; don’t foul and don’t shirk but hit the line hard!”

## **Teddy Roosevelt liked football**

In 1903, the president told an audience, “I believe in rough games and in rough, manly sports. I do not feel any particular sympathy for the person who gets battered about a good deal so long as it is not fatal.” Unfortunately, in 1904-1905, football injuries were too often fatalities, and it was not improving.

Yes, even the President knew that football had become fatal, and he acknowledged that it needed reform if it were to be saved. With his son, Theodore Jr. who had begun to play for the Harvard freshman team, he had a major league paternal interest in reforming the game as well.

Roosevelt was the guy to negotiate with the foot-ballers for sure. He was straight from having negotiated an end to the Russo-Japanese War. He sought to end violence on the football field as well as the battlefield. Using his “big stick,” the gentleman known as the “First Fan” brought the necessary parties together—especially those from the premier collegiate football powers of the day—Harvard, Yale and Princeton—to the White House on October 9, 1905.

Roosevelt made no threats. But, he did urge them to curb excessive violence and set an example of fair play for the rest of the country. The schools responded with a heartfelt and effective press release condemning brutality and pledging to keep the game clean.

Ironically, Roosevelt, in taking on the problem of football fatalities, learned that real war may be even easier to gain peace than getting this new American sport to clean up its act. Fatalities and injuries continued and in fact increased during the 1905 season. In the freshman tilt against Yale, the president's son was bruised and his nose broken—some say quite deliberately. This would not do. Yet, it continued

The following week, Harvard's entire varsity were ready to leave the field of play against Yale, after their captain was felled by an illegal hit on a fair catch. His nose was broken and bloodied. Union College halfback Harold Moore suffered a cerebral hemorrhage and died the same afternoon after being kicked in the head while attempting to tackle a New York University runner.





THE TWELFTH PLAYER IN EVERY FOOTBALL GAME.

It was a grim and savage season and it finally ended. There was work to be done. The Chicago Tribune saw the senseless deaths as a “death harvest,” The football season had brought about 19 player deaths and 137 serious injuries. Newspaper artists had a field day creating “cartoons” of figures such as the Grim Reaper on a goalpost surveying a twisted mass of fallen players. It was similar to the cartoon above.

As noted, football was so tough that some tough schools such as Stanford and California switched to rugby while Columbia, Northwestern and Duke dropped football all together. Harvard president Charles Eliot, who considered football “more brutalizing than prizefighting, cockfighting or bullfighting,” warned that Harvard would be next. This would be a totally crushing blow to the college game and the Harvard alum, President Roosevelt who worked hard every day in the Oval Office.



Helmet testing was quite animated in the early 1900's

Roosevelt appreciated the need for men to play men's sports and he captured his views in a letter to a friend. He stated that he would not permit the Harvard College president Elliott to "emasculate football," and that Roosevelt hoped to "minimize the danger" without football having to be played "on too ladylike a basis."

Roosevelt was a tough man and, so he again used his bully pulpit. He urged all parties from the Harvard coach to other leading football authorities to quickly adopt radical rule changes. He invited other school leaders and football aficionados to the White House in the offseason for productive discussions. Can you imagine if a Nambi Pambi were president. Would football have survived?

## Good rules made football even better

Many good rules were put forth at an intercollegiate conference, which would become the forerunner of the NCAA. The “radical” rules were approved for the 1906 season. They would have a very positive effect on the game and eventually would substantially reduce injuries.

The rules legalized the forward pass, abolished the dangerous mass formations, created a neutral zone between offense and defense and doubled the first-down distance to 10 yards, to be gained in three downs. The rule changes did not completely eliminate football’s dangers, but fatalities declined—to 11 per year in both 1906 and 1907—while injuries fell sharply. A spike in fatalities in 1909 led to another round of reforms that further eased restrictions on the forward pass and formed the foundation of the modern sport.

So, the rule changes were good. There were others such as the notion of reducing the number of scrimmage plays to earn a first down from four to three in an attempt to reduce injuries. The LA Times reported an increase in punts in an experimental game and thus considered the game much safer than regular play. Football lovers did not accept many of the new rules because they felt they were not “conducive to the sport.” There was a period when rapid rule changes interfered with coaching strategies as a favored play in early season might be illegal before the season ended.

Because nobody wanted players injured or killed in a game, on December 28, 1905, to be sure the rules were put out for 1906, a group representing 62 schools met without the president in New York City to discuss the proposed major rule changes to make the game safer. From this meeting, the Intercollegiate Athletic Association of the United States, later named the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), was formed.

### The forward pass is legalized

One particular rule change that was introduced in 1906 was devised to open up the game and thus reduce injury, eventually gained favor with the coaches, players, and fans. This new rule introduced the legal forward pass. Though it was underutilized for years afterwards, this proved to be one of the most important rule changes in the establishment of the modern game. Those coaches, such as Eddie Cochems, who adopted the pass early, had a major advantage in winning games.



Because of these 1905-1906 reforms, mass formation plays in which many players joined together became illegal when forward passes became legal.





## Chapter 8 Origin of the Oval-Shaped Sports-Ball



### **The coming of the sports-ball!**

One of my great curiosities in researching this book is who would have ever thought of using an oval ball shaped like today's modern football? Secondly, why don't we all know that answer?

To answer the question, I got some help from the people at *Inventors-Handbook* as surely the oval football was a key invention for the game of football.

Please note that the folks from the Inventor's handbook had a different interest than I, in pursuing this information. They use the invention of the football as a reason why inventors should patent their works while I was merely interested in learning who the inventor was and how he came about inventing the football.

The invention of the *football*, the ball used in the popular team game is not necessarily attributed to one inventor. But most historians agree that one English shoemaker is more than likely responsible for the way footballs look today.

This description is not for the faint of heart, and in fact, there is a death reported in this account.

Early footballs were essentially pig's or other animals' bladders which were inflated by the power of the human lungs (blowing hot air into them). They were then tied and sealed, much like balloons would be sealed – knotted at the end.

As a result, they were often plum, or pear shaped, and not round, depending on the size of the individual animal's bladder.

Before the invention of football as we know it, balls were often prone to exploding while in use. This led to shoemakers selling leather cases to protect the inflated bladders. Shoes and boots makers used leather on a daily basis and were the most appropriate people to be able to sew the ball's leather cases around the bladder.

You may ask why rubber was not used instead of animal bladders. It took a while to be able to work rubber into all the uses we have today. Rubber was invented in 1839 by Charles Goodyear. He accidentally dropped Sulphur and white latex from a rubber tree onto a hot stove. This resulted in the formation of a dark elastic substance which came to be called vulcanized rubber, and the rest is history but not yet for football.

Until the 1860's, football, soccer and rugby were all played with a plum or pear-shaped ball made of leather, encasing an inflated animal bladder.

In Europe, the first proper football invention is attributed to two shoemakers: Richard Lindon and William Gilbert who invented round and oval shaped balls. Lindon is credited for inventing the rubber inflatable bladder.

In 1849, at the age of 33, Lindon, who worked just in front of the rugby school in Rugby England, was constantly asked to create footballs for the school's boys.

As a shoemaker, he was regularly receiving leather supplies for making shoes and, so he used some of this supply to also create balls for the boys' teams by covering the pig's bladders with leather.

Both Lindon and his wife worked at the craft and prepared the balls when requested. Because she was not a craft shoemaker and yet wanted to help with the many orders, Lindon's wife took on the additional responsibility of inflating the bladders by blowing air into them.

This was not as simple and innocuous as it sounds. In many ways, it was downright dangerous as many bladders were infected, having originated from diseased pigs. Even a diseased pig had a usable bladder.

It was around 1862 that Lindon had begun looking for an alternative to inflated pig's bladders that would be safer than the current practice. For his wife, those efforts came way too late. She eventually died by falling ill from inflating too many infected pig's bladders. I guess the bladder sellers were not concerned because nobody was going to be eating the animal bladders.

Lindon later invented an inflatable inner tube made of natural rubber, instead of the existing animal bladders. Because of the newly understood pliability of rubber, the shape of the football was able to be molded to the shape of a perfectly round sphere.

His first prototype was made from such a rubber inflated tube covered with 7 strips of leather, stitched at the end with "bottoms" on

both sides. The ball was almost spherical. This design gained popularity and became the one he used for all of the “footballs” that he sold.



Lindon's Brass Pump Invention

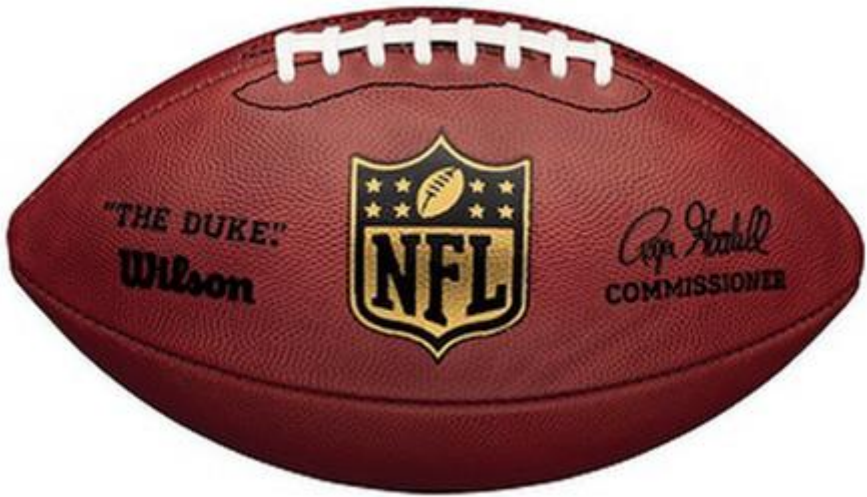
Since he found inflating the rubber that he used too hard to do by hand, Lindon also invented a brass pump, inspired by a simple ear syringe. This could be used to inflate his footballs without the need to blow them up by one's mouth.

Thus, he is also credited not only for the invention of the football but also for the invention of the air pump. Until his death, Lindon had never patented the bladder, ball or air pump, which he invented. Yet, these were key inventions for football. The moral of the story for the invention people is that he could have made a ton of money, which could have been passed on to his family on his death if he had only patented his invention.

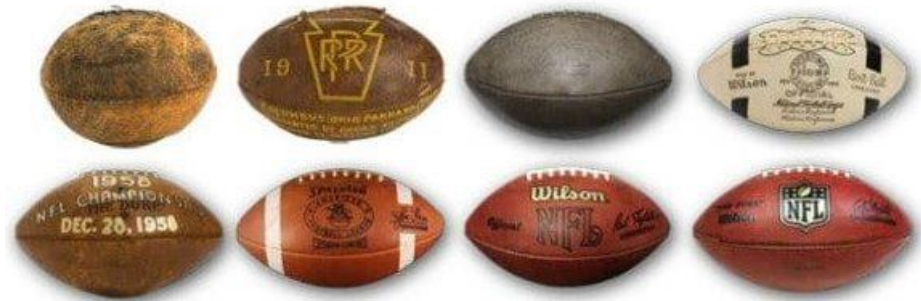
## The shape of the football

On October 5, in 2012, Jimmy Stamp of Smithsonian Magazine wrote an expose on how the “pigskin” for modern football got its shape. “How Did the Pigskin Get Its Shape?”

Stamp put forth that even though American football may have evolved from soccer and rugby, the football was never truly designed; it just sorta happened.



Like the shoemaker’s invention, Stamp also points out that the “pigskin” is not made of pig skin or pig’s bladders but is, in fact, made from cowhide, aka leather, and not the tanned skin of a pig.



He cites that the shape is mysterious, but we know it is because of the inexact shape of the original pig's bladder. He asks, "If the sport evolved from soccer and rugby, how and when did the football gain its distinct shape – technically known as a prolate spheroid?" Stamp answers:

"Well, it turns out that the football was never truly designed, it just sorta happened." This fact comes from one Henry Duffield, a man who happened to be a spectator at the Princeton and Rutgers American Football Game in 1869, which as we know is considered the first intercollegiate game ever:

"The ball was not an oval but was supposed to be completely round. It never was, though — it was too hard to blow up right. The game was stopped several times that day while the teams called for a little key from the sidelines. They used it to unlock the small nozzle, which was tucked into the ball, and then, the players took turns blowing it up. The last man generally got tired and they put it back in play somewhat lopsided."

This would surely indicate that the football that bounces erratically all over a field and can fly through the air in a perfect spiral is not, in fact, the product of a grand design. According to Stamp, it is simply the result of a leaky sphere and some lazy inflators.

Rugby balls had been constructed long before this game but for some time, the round ball dominated the scene in soccer style / association football. The rugby balls were always in the shoemakers for repair because of their pointy ends.

In 1879, Thomas Sherrin, from Australia took the point off the ends of the rugby balls and made his own design. His nephew noted that "He made a ball and created the ball that had less pointy ends." It was still able to bounce unpredictably but it was a little more consistent in its movement." Sherrin also made leather punching bags.

Stamp wraps up his Smithsonian article with an interesting summary:




“Initially, football was a very different game – or perhaps I should say games. There were kicking games and running games, but as those two games began to merge together, as rules began to standardize, the ball began to slightly stretch out in order to accommodate more types of use. The unique shape of the ball was somewhat formalized in the early 20th century and that form was exploited to great success when the forward pass was introduced to football in 1906.”

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(Signed), E. L. WILSON, Secretary.

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## Chapter 9 The Birth of Play with Pay



When you look at the records of the college teams in the early years of their sports programs, you find they did not always play other colleges. Sometimes they played associations such as the Frankford Athletic Association, a precursor of the Philadelphia Eagles, and sometimes, they played high school powerhouses and they did not always win those games. Football was no different in its growth as a respected sport than other sports.

It was very popular with the many athletic clubs that proliferated in the late 19th century. Just like high school teams and prep schools and junior colleges, full four-year colleges often played athletic clubs from their area to get a good football game on a Saturday afternoon. When the pros fired up, Sunday was the only day of the weekend that was available.

These clubs were formed to compete against one another, but they had no problem saying yes to play Notre Dame or Penn State, or

Alabama or any great college team of the day. Soon, the players who were not in college were making real money.

The first documented professional football player was Pudge Heffelfinger. He broke the bank on November 12, 1892, when he received \$500 for just one game with the Allegheny Athletic Association. He was quite a player. There were no easy ways to record information other than pencil and paper back then, so a lot of stories and their history did not make the newspapers and, so they are lost forever. The Pudge Heffelfinger story is the exception.

It is a safe bet that many other athletes played for money but managed to keep their earnings a deep secret. In 1893, the Pittsburgh Athletic Club signed one of its players to a contract to play for the entire season. By 1896, several of the clubs from the Pittsburgh area were openly professional.

For years after college football took off, there were attempts by graduates and coaches and others to create leagues with rules and better opportunities for players and fans. The first documented attempt came in 1902 with a Pennsylvania league known as the National Football League (NFL) with no relationship to the modern-day league. A lot of the action in these endeavors came about in Pennsylvania and then later, Ohio.

John Rogers, who at the time owned the Philadelphia Phillies baseball team, founded a football team called the Phillies in 1901. This prompted another man with some extra change in his pocket, Ben Shibe, who owned the Philadelphia Athletics to create another new team in 1902. The baseball rivals tried to get other teams to join with them to compete for a self-proclaimed “football world championship.” Great ideas, however, are easier to conceive than to implement.

There was just one taker, a promoter in Pittsburgh. Out of nowhere, the National Football League was conceived, and it got a bump start. It was also a bumpy start. The three teams enjoyed being THE National Football League and they went ahead and played each other in a round-robin tournament.

The beauty of a “league” without rules is that each team, though each finished with a 2-2 record, could claim the national championship. Who could cast aspersions on three teams with equal records?

I surely do not want to make light of this effort as many of the best football players of the day participated in this league, as did three well-known baseball Hall of Famers who happened to love the emerging sport of football. Christy Mathewson, ace pitcher for the New York Giants played halfback and punter for the Pittsburgh Stars. Connie Mack, manager of the Philadelphia Athletics baseball team also managed the Athletics football team, and Rube Waddell one of the best left-handed pitchers in history, was a reserve lineman for Mack’s squad.

Waddell put his weight in each pitch, and it was enough weight for him to change sports at will, and block for the backs in this pro-league or tackle as many opponents’ backs as may have made the mistake of running his way.

Think about how exciting those days had to be. There was no real NCAA and there was no real NFL to tell the players or the organizers that they needed to behave one way or another. Nobody said they had to wear stuff under their eyes during games or that they could not have a beer after practice. There was no bureaucracy with which to deal.

Nothing good happens overnight. Nothing worth having in life is easy. And, so players and investors with a lot of chutzpah chose to face the difficulties and they took up the challenge of making football, which was beginning to be very successful in American colleges, into a professional sport. Players, other than twenty-year old college kids could compete and could earn a few dollars on Sunday after they passed the hat among the crowds which always came. It was like “Field of Dreams,” which I saw again for the seven thousandth time last week. “If you play it, they will come. “ And they did—and the pro football leagues eventually flourished.

As noted, the earliest “NFL” was three teams that played a yearly football tournament in New York in 1902 and 1903. It was dubbed the “World Series of Football.” With less than 2000 tickets sold for each game, there wasn’t much evidence that there was much money to be made by running a football team. But, somehow baseball teams were making it; but then again, baseball teams played a lot more games.

Baseball teams played games every day for six months, and that produced enough revenues that teams could afford to travel from New York to Chicago, Boston to Cincinnati, or St. Louis to Philadelphia. The pageantry of college football drew fans in droves, and it wasn’t unusual for crowds of 60,000 to see a matchup between rival schools when they could book a big stadium. That helped colleges pay to build their own stadiums and eventually pay coaches handsomely.

It was tough to do when everybody had to reach into their pockets in order to be able to put something into their pockets from pro-football. The pro game did not draw the numbers of college games with ardent fans. It was just a passing interest, so teams were forced to minimize costs in whatever ways they could.

There was no concentration on player safety in the early days so that cost nothing. The best way to reduce expenses was to limit team travel. Consequently, big entrepreneurs, who knew how to make a buck, were not stepping quickly into unorganized pro-football so they could make a killing. There was no killing to be made.

There was not much of an incentive for a nation-wide league of professional football teams in the 1910s. It made more sense to stay closer to home, with teams sponsored by local businessmen, whose chief interest was promoting their company. If local businesses were not gaining sales, they too would have abandoned pro-football in its infancy, in a heartbeat.

Over the next few years, the center focus of pro football moved from Pennsylvania to central Ohio. By 1905 there were at least seven pro teams playing in Ohio. They had great names such as the Massillon Tigers and the Canton Bulldogs. There was no really organized league, so these were independent teams. They had to fend for

themselves. Though some were more successful than others, they all faced the same challenges.

## **Pro football needed to be profitable**

Prior to television and the phone technology revolution, fans looked upon football as a great form of entertainment, even better, say some, than movie theatres. World War I soured a lot of people on life and everybody in the second decade of the twentieth century needed a pick-me-up. Football and the movies often lifted their spirits.

Nonetheless, it was tough for pro football teams to generate revenues without really good players. Since such players cost pro-teams big bucks, it became tougher for small football enterprises to make ends meet. Besides player raiding, steadily rising salaries made it difficult for many teams who wanted to win games and not be also-rans, to continue operating.

Finding and signing players was tough enough; but keeping them was even tougher. There were no rules for players having to stay with a team and their major opponents would often snatch players by offering bigger paydays. The poorly financed teams just as today did poorly in the standings.

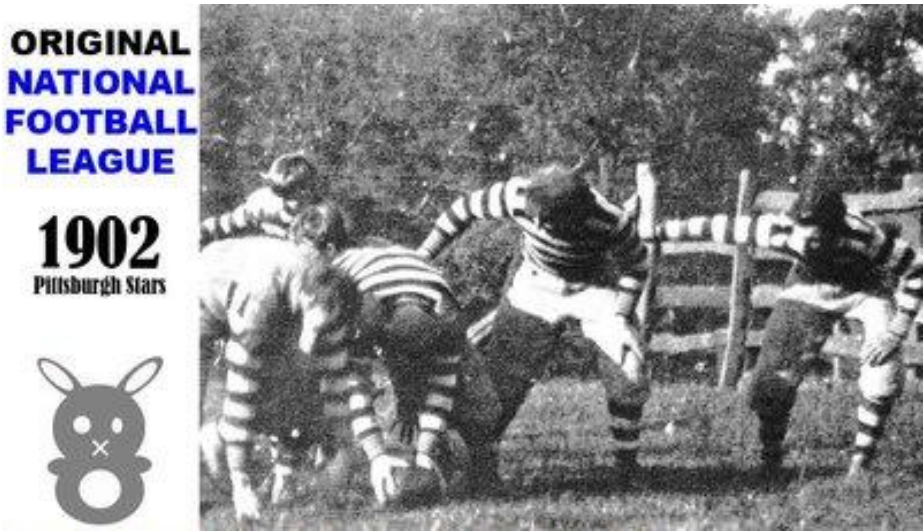
There were also issues with what were known as “ringers.” Knute Rockne was a ringer in his day. There were lots of other college athletes who either coached or played while still enrolled in school. Rockne played pro football to make a few bucks and to have fun.

The pros were offering them comparatively big bucks to move out and join them. Certain teams with lots of cash were “stockpiling” college stars to make sure their teams won. If your team could not afford the going rate, your team’s talent level was at a major disadvantage.

Cooperation of the teams without a formal league framework could have resolved most of these issues in the twenty-years from 1900 to 1920 but it did not happen. The teams were more concerned about surviving and winning than they were about cooperating.



# Chapter 10 When Pro Football Was Unorganized



## Former college players and coaches wanted to keep playing football

There were no million-dollar players in the professional football ranks at the beginning of the twentieth century, but there were a lot of players and coaches who wanted to play football and hoped to get paid to play their favorite sport. It was the same in all sports that were just starting out.

Just like there are social clubs, dart clubs, shuffleboard clubs, rod and gun clubs, and a host of other clubs, before the NFL pro football league, there were a lot of athletic clubs that focused on football as it was evolving into American football.

The current NFL compiled a brief snapshot of what was going on in these early football days from 1900 to 1909 and then the Football Hall of Fame continued their work from 1910 to 2012. It is nice work and I hope the Hall of Fame picks it up again and keeps it current.

We thank these groups for putting together this very brief compendium that takes us through the Early Pro Football period right up until the formation of a league that lasted, the NFL. And, so the rest of this chapter is courtesy of the NFL and the Pro football Hall of Fame.

Ladies and gentlemen, the writers of this twenty-year history can be credited with writing Genesis of Pro Football. It was not written by the hand of God, but it would not tell a good story if somebody in the know did not write it for us to enjoy so: Enjoy!

### **1900**

William C. Temple took over the team payments for the Duquesne Country and Athletic Club, becoming the first known individual club owner.

### **1902**

Baseball's Philadelphia Athletics, managed by Connie Mack, and the Philadelphia Phillies formed professional football teams, joining the Pittsburgh Stars in the first attempt at a pro football league, named the National Football League. The Athletics won the first night football game ever played, 39-0 over Kanaweola AC at Elmira, New York, November 21.

All three teams claimed the pro championship for the year, but the league president, Dave Berry, named the Stars the champions. Pitcher Rube Waddell was with the Athletics, and pitcher Christy Mathewson a fullback for Pittsburgh.

The first World Series of pro football, actually a five-team tournament, was played among a team made up of players from both the Baseball Athletics and the Phillies, but simply named New York; the New York Knickerbockers; the Syracuse AC; the Warlow AC; and the Orange (New Jersey) AC at New York's original Madison Square Garden. New York and Syracuse played the first indoor football game before 3,000, December 28. Syracuse, with Glen (Pop) Warner at guard, won 6-0 and went on to win the tournament. Wow!



**1903**

The Franklin (Pa.) Athletic Club won the second and last World Series of pro football over the Oreos AC of Asbury Park, New Jersey; the Watertown Red and Blacks; and the Orange AC. Pro football was popularized in Ohio when the Massillon Tigers, a strong amateur team, hired four Pittsburgh pros to play in the season-ending game against Akron. At the same time, pro football declined in the Pittsburgh area, and the emphasis on the pro game moved west from Pennsylvania to Ohio. It did not disappear from PA. It simply became more and more popular in Ohio.

**1904**

A field goal was changed from five points to four. Ohio had at least seven pro teams, with Massillon winning the Ohio Independent Championship, that is, the pro title. Talk surfaced about forming a state-wide league to end spiraling salaries brought about by constant bidding for players and to write universal rules for the game. The feeble attempt to start the league failed. Halfback Charles Follis signed a contract with the Shelby (Ohio) AC, making him the first known black pro football player. Bet you did not know that?

**1905**

The Canton AC, later to become known as the Bulldogs, became a professional team. Massillon again won the Ohio League championship. The teams loved the game of football and even if the fans gave not a dollar, they would have been playing pickup ball on the weekends when they were not working.

**1906**

The forward pass was legalized. Walter Camp's rules had permeated the game. Camp, however, was not a fan of the forward pass but he was overruled this time.

After unsuccessfully attempting for 3 years to convince Rules Chairman Walter Camp to legalize the forward pass, John Heisman an influential committee person enlisted the valuable support of committee members John Bell and Paul Dashiell instead. Finally, in 1906, the Rules Committee, college football's governing body,

legalized the forward pass. Of course the pros which were looking for rules adopted the forward pass as a staple.

'The first authenticated pass completion in a pro game came on October 27, when George (Peggy) Parratt of Massillon threw a completion to Dan (Bullet) Riley in a victory over a combined Benwood-Moundsville team. Arch-rivals Canton and Massillon, the two best pro teams in America, played twice, with Canton winning the first game but Massillon winning the second and the Ohio League championship.

A betting scandal and the financial disaster wrought upon the two clubs by paying huge salaries caused a temporary decline in interest in pro football in the two cities and, somewhat, throughout Ohio.

## 1909

A field goal dropped from four points to three.



1909 Shibe Park Opened. It became Connie Mack Stadium, Philadelphia

**1912**

Kicking for points became less favorable as the forward pass permitted more touchdowns to be scored. As the field goal went to three points, a touchdown was increased from five points to six. Jack Cusack had the pleasure of reviving a strong pro team in Canton.

**1913**

Jim Thorpe, a former football and track star at the Carlisle Indian School (Pa.) who grew up in PA and who has a town in PA named after him was also a double gold medal winner at the 1912 Olympics in Stockholm. He was a phenomenon on any football field, and he enjoyed playing pro ball for the Pine Village Pros in Indiana. Every team wanted players such as Jim Thorpe to make their teams more competitive.

**1915**

Massillon again fielded a major team, reviving the old rivalry with Canton. Cusack signed Thorpe to play for Canton for \$250 a game. This helped Thorpe rely on his sustenance from playing sports without having to be tied down to a job. A job for Jim Thorpe would keep him off the field.

**1916**

With Thorpe and former Carlisle teammate Pete Calac starring, Canton went 9-0-1, won the Ohio League championship, and was acclaimed the pro football champion. Jim Thorpe was the name back then.

**1917**

Despite an upset by Massillon, Canton again won the Ohio League championship. Ohio dominated the unorganized pro ranks.

**1919**

Canton again won the Ohio League championship, despite the team having been turned over from Cusack to Ralph Hay. Thorpe and Calac were joined in the backfield by Joe Guyon. It was tough for any team to compete against the talent of Jim Thorpe. Football began to spread west.

Earl (Curly) Lambeau and George Calhoun organized the Green Bay Packers. Lambeau's employer at the Indian Packing Company provided \$500 for equipment and allowed the team to use the company field for practices. The Packers went 10-1. Football became successful because some important people with money decided it was worth spending money on supporting football while their teams often sported their logos on their jerseys.

## 1920

Pro football was in a state of confusion due to three major problems at the time: dramatically rising salaries; players continually jumping from one team to another following the highest offer; and the use of college players still enrolled in school. A league in which all the members would follow the same rules seemed the answer.

The ad-hoc unorganized days of pro football in which anything goes were heading to an end. An organizational meeting, at which the Akron Pros, Canton Bulldogs, Cleveland Indians, and Dayton Triangles were represented, was held at the Jordan and Hupmobile auto showroom in Canton, Ohio. Ohio was the natural source for football to be organized as a professional sport.

The meeting was on August 20, 1920. Just seven men, including legendary all-around athlete and football star Jim Thorpe, met with the purpose as noted above of organizing a professional football league. There was no NFL even the old two year NFL so the meeting led to the creation of a group that would behave such as today's NFL. It was named the American Professional Football Conference (APFC). As you probably figured out already, it was the forerunner to the hugely successful National Football League of today. The year was 1920—a long time after the first college game and a long time after the legalization of the forward pass. Walter Camp was still involved in writing college football rules which were often adopted by the pros. But, Camp was about five years from his death at this time and the committees took over his work.

The APFA began play on September 26, with the Rock Island Independents of Illinois defeating a team from outside the league, the St. Paul Ideals, 48-0. A week later, Dayton beat Columbus 14-0 in

the first game between two teams from the APFA, the forerunner of the modern NFL.

The teams were from four states-Akron, Canton, Cleveland, and Dayton from Ohio; the Hammond Pros and Muncie Flyers from Indiana; the Rochester Jeffersons from New York; and the Rock Island Independents, Decatur Staleys, and Racine Cardinals from Illinois. Tampa Bay's team would come about 60 years later in a more polished league.

Hoping to capitalize on his fame, the members elected Thorpe president; Stanley Cofall of Cleveland was elected vice president. A membership fee of \$100 per team was charged to give an appearance of respectability, but no team ever paid it. Scheduling was left up to the teams, and there were wide variations, both in the overall number of games played, and in the number played against APFA member teams.

Four other teams-the Buffalo All-Americans, Chicago Tigers, Columbus Panhandles, and Detroit Heralds-joined the league sometime during the year. As noted, on September 26, the first game featuring an APFA team was played at Rock Island's Douglas Park. A crowd of 800 watched the Independents defeat the St. Paul Ideals 48-0.

A week later, October 3, the first game matching two APFA teams was held. At Triangle Park, Dayton defeated Columbus 14-0, with Lou Partlow of Dayton scoring the first touchdown in a game between Association teams. The same day, Rock Island defeated Muncie 45-0.

By the beginning of December, most of the teams in the APFA had abandoned their hopes for a championship, and some of them, including the Chicago Tigers and the Detroit Heralds, had finished their seasons, disbanded, and had their franchises canceled by the Association.

Four teams-Akron, Buffalo, Canton, and Decatur-still had championship aspirations, but a series of late-season games among

them left Akron as the only undefeated team in the Association. At one of these games, Akron sold tackle Bob Nash to Buffalo for \$300 and five percent of the gate receipts. It was the first APFA player deal. It would not be the last.

## 1921

At the league meeting in Akron, April 30, the championship of the 1920 season was awarded to the Akron Pros. The APFA was reorganized, with Joe Carr of the Columbus Panhandles named president and Carl Storck of Dayton secretary-treasurer. Carr moved the Association's headquarters to Columbus, drafted a league constitution and by-laws, gave teams territorial rights, restricted player movements, developed membership criteria for the franchises, and issued standings for the first time, so that the APFA would have a clear champion. Ohio still ruled the league but not for long.

The Association's membership increased to 22 teams, including the Green Bay Packers, who were awarded to John Clair of the Acme Packing Company.

Thorpe moved from Canton to the Cleveland Indians, but he was hurt early in the season and played very little.

A.E. Staley turned the Decatur Staleys over to player-famous coach George Halas, who moved the team to Cubs Park in Chicago. Staley paid Halas \$5,000 to keep the name Staleys for one more year. Halas made halfback Ed (Dutch) Sternaman his partner.

Player-coach Fritz Pollard of the Akron Pros became the first black head coach.

The Staleys claimed the APFA championship with a 9-1-1 record, as did Buffalo at 9-1-2. Carr ruled in favor of the Staleys, giving Halas his first championship.

## 1922

After admitting the use of players who still had college eligibility remaining during the 1921 season, Clair and the Green Bay management withdrew from the APFA, January 28. Curly Lambeau

promised to obey league rules and then used \$50 of his own money to buy back the franchise. Bad weather and low attendance plagued the Packers, and Lambeau went broke, but local merchants arranged a \$2,500 loan for the club. A public nonprofit corporation was set up to operate the team, with Lambeau as head coach and manager.

The American Professional Football Association changed its name to the National Football League on June 24. The Chicago Staleys became the Chicago Bears. How about that. A lot happened in the 1920s that saved pro football.

The newly named NFL fielded 18 teams, including the new Oorang Indians of Marion, Ohio, an all-Indian team featuring Jim Thorpe, Joe Guyon, and Pete Calac, and sponsored by the Oorang dog kennels. Canton, led by player-coach Guy Chamberlin and tackles Link Lyman and Wilbur (Pete) Henry, emerged as the league's first true powerhouse, going 10-0-2.

Thank you to the NFL and to the Football Hall of Fame for these facts about the formation of the NFL. The Bucs were not there yet as they got their start in a different time as an expansion team to the NFL after the AFL had become defunct.





# Chapter 11 NFL's Fast Start from 1920 Set the Stage for Today



## 1920 American Professional Football

### Association (1920 - 1922)

#### Consisting of 12 Teams:

**Canton Bulldogs**

**Dayton Triangles**

**Cleveland Indians**

**Akron Professionals**

**Rochester Jeffersons**

**Rock Island Independents**

**Massillon Tigers**

**Muncie Flyers**

**Decatur Staleys**

**Racine Cardinals**

**Hammond Pros**

**Buffalo All-Americans**

Pennsylvanians were still mining a lot of coal and *would-be players* made a lot more money working in the mines. And, so, my hometown, Wilkes-Barre and a lot of other PA football clubs did not have the human resources to compete with the Ohio League bosses. And, so, PA came on a bit later.

## NFL growth: One thing right after another

Americans, and in fact the whole world sports community, know that the National Football League today is a multi-billion-dollar if not trillion dollar enterprise. The net worth of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers today, for example is well over \$2 Billion.

Few know the early history provided by the NFL et al in Chapters 10 & 11. We just learned that its origins as the American Professional Football Association were much humbler than today's millionaire players and billionaire players and luxury-box stadiums with capacities of over 100,000 fans.

Pro-football lovers look back at the league's inaugural 1920 campaign, which we know featured its birth in an Ohio auto dealership. They see strange teams such as Decatur and Muncie and

the crowning of a champion that was not immediate as today in the middle of the Super Bowl Field. Instead, it took four months after the last snap was taken to get it right—back in 1921.

As promising as the pro-football scenario was in 1920, even though things looked good for the future of the pro sport, just like today, College Football dominated. Pro football remained completely overshadowed by the college game. This was tough for team owners, as we discussed. Most were in it for the profits and there were few profits to none. Only stubborn entrepreneurs kept at it.

The owners were almost literally bleeding cash because of soaring player salaries and intense bidding wars as the teams poached players from competing squads. The owners of these independent pro teams desired a strong league using the baseball model which had worked for so long. They wanted to gain more control over the sport—and their finances. A fully functional NFL was right around the corner and it would eventually provide this stability. But none of the prospective investors had such a powerful crystal ball as hindsight.



As we learn in exploring the early days of American football, everything was changing to comply with Camp's rules and others—even the field size. Yes, even the field size in early American football was changing regularly but by 1920, the size had stabilized.

The gridiron dimensions were the same in 1920 as today. However, the game of professional football was much different. Back then, there were no Johnny Unitas's, Charley Conerly's, Norm Van Brocklin's, Bart Starr's, Joe Namath's, Carson Wentz's, Nick Foles's, Patrick Mahomes', or Tom Brady's.

As football evolved, The QB slot on the offense was often a running position. Forward passes were rare. Even things we take for granted today were prohibited. Can you imagine that coaching from the sidelines was not permitted?



When the pass was legalized in 1906, it still was not like today. It was not readily accepted by “real teams.” Established coaches in the elite Eastern schools such as Army, Harvard, Pennsylvania and Yale did not embrace the pass. It was also a gamble. You had to be pretty darn good to not lose more than the potential gain.

Here are some of the stipulations. Passes could not be thrown over the line on five yards to either side of the center. An incomplete pass resulted in a 15-yard penalty, and a pass that dropped without being touched meant possession went to the defensive team. According to Kent Stephens, a historian with the College Hall of Fame in South Bend, “Because of these rules and the fact coaches at that time thought the forward pass was a sissified type of play that wasn’t really football, they were hesitant to adopt this new strategy.”

Each athlete played on both offense and defense. The late great Chuck Bednarik was the last consistent two-way player in the NFL, Bednarik played center and linebacker for a franchise-record 14 seasons with the Eagles from 1949 to 1962. By the time the Bucs got in the NFL, nobody played both ways.

In 1920, like I said, just about every player competed on both offense and defense. Money was so tight that the great coach of the Bears, George Halas carried equipment, wrote press releases, sold tickets, taped ankles, played and coached for the Decatur club. Having two platoons would cost twice as much and such an approach would bankrupt most teams.

Today the league has a standard 16-game schedule, all nice and tidy and made up by the NFL itself. Back then, in 1920, the teams scheduled their own opponents and could play nonleague and even college squads if they chose and it all counted toward their records. Each game they played they expected to make a few bucks. Why not?

There simply were no established guidelines. Everything was ad hoc—the number of games played, and the quality of opponents scheduled. The league did not even maintain official standings in its fledgling years.

Let’s look at the makeup of football in 1920 and before we continue, let’s take the makeup of the NFL right to 2020. Here goes

## 1920–1931: The Birth of the NFL [\[edit\]](#)

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### 1920

In 1920 when the American Professional Football Association was formed, Ohio was the main source for its teams. The APFL basically tapped into the Ohio League, the Chicago Circuit, The New York Pro Football League and some other teams from the lower Midwest. The fledgling league charged a modest \$100.00 membership fee. The first team to go away from the organization was the Chicago Tigers which paid its \$100 but could not make it as a team. It folded after the season

The AFPA teams that began in 1920 were as follows.

1. Akron Pros
2. Buffalo All-Americans
3. Canton Bulldogs
4. Chicago Cardinals
5. Chicago Tigers
6. Cleveland Tigers
7. Columbus Panhandles
8. Dayton Triangles
9. Decatur Staleys
10. Detroit Heralds
11. Hammond Pros
12. Muncie Flyers
13. Rochester Jeffersons
14. Rock Island Independents

That ladies and gentlemen was the humble founding of the National Football League just two years before it acquired the name that it still holds today. There have been changes since 1920 in terms of teams entering and leaving the league beginning in its first year. The new teams brought in the league in 1921 are as follows:

### 1921

Number of teams increased to 21. Four teams lasted only one season. Three other franchises folded. There were also a number of name changes in 1921 as follows.

1. The Decatur Staleys became the Chicago Staleys
2. The Detroit Heralds became the Detroit Tigers
3. The Cleveland Tigers became the Cleveland Indians

1. Akron Pros
2. Buffalo All-Americans
3. Canton Bulldogs
4. Chicago Cardinals
5. Cleveland Indians
6. Columbus Panhandles
7. Dayton Triangles
8. Chicago Staleys
9. \*\*Detroit Tigers
10. Hammond Pros
11. \*\* Muncie Flyers
12. Rochester Jeffersons
13. Rock Island Independents
14. Minneapolis Marines
15. Evansville Crimson Giants
16. Green Bay Packers
17. Louisville Brecks

\* One Season

\*\* Folded after this season e

## 1922

The APFA itself had a name change. It was renamed the National Football League. Four new franchises were awarded.

1. Milwaukee Badgers
2. Oorang Indians
3. Racine Legion
4. Toledo Maroons

One team name changed from the Chicago Staleys to the Chicago Bears  
One team folded at the end of 1922 –Evansville Crimson Giants

## The teams that played in 1922

1. Akron Pros
2. Buffalo All-Americans
3. Canton Bulldogs
4. Chicago Cardinals
5. Cleveland Indians
6. Columbus Panhandles
7. Dayton Triangles
8. Chicago Bears
9. Hammond Pros
10. Rochester Jeffersons

11. Rock Island Independents
12. Minneapolis Marines
13. Evansville Crimson Giants
14. Green Bay Packers
15. Louisville Brecks
16. Oorang Indians
17. Racine Legion
18. Toledo Maroons

## 1923

A new and distinct Cleveland Indians franchise was formed. Two other teams joined the NFL, the Duluth Kelleys and the St. Louis All Stars.

One team folded after one season – St. Louis All-Stars

One team had a name change -- The Columbus Panhandles became the Columbus Tigers.

## The teams that played in 1923

1. Akron Pros
2. Buffalo All-Americans
3. Canton Bulldogs
4. Chicago Cardinals
5. Chicago Tigers
6. Cleveland Indians
7. Columbus Tigers
8. Dayton Triangles
9. Duluth Kelleys
10. Green Bay Packers
11. Hammond Pros
12. Louisville Brecks
13. Milwaukee Badger
14. Minneapolis Marines
15. Oorang Indians
16. Racine Legion
17. Rochester Jeffersons
18. Rock Island Independents
19. St. Louis All Stars
20. Toledo Maroons

## 1924

Before the season, the owner of the Cleveland Indians bought the Canton Bulldogs and "mothballed" it, taking the team's nickname and players to Cleveland for the season. The Canton Bulldogs had won the NFL championship in 1923 and won it again as the Cleveland Bulldogs in 1924.

1. Akron Pros
2. Buffalo Bisons
3. Chicago Bears
4. Cleveland Bulldogs
5. Columbus Tigers
6. Dayton Triangles
7. Duluth Kelleys
8. Frankfurt Yellow Jackets
9. Green Bay Packers
10. Chicago Staleys
11. Hammond Pros
12. Kansas City Blues
13. Kenosha Maroons
14. Milwaukee Badgers
15. Minneapolis Marines
16. Racine Legion
17. Rochester Jeffersons
18. Rock Island Independents

## 1925

The Canton Bulldogs were reactivated. Four other franchises were awarded. This was the final season for the Rochester Jeffersons. Akron Pros

1. Buffalo Bisons
2. Canton Bulldogs
3. Chicago Bears
4. Chicago Cardinals
5. Cleveland Bulldogs
6. Columbus Tigers
7. Dayton Triangles
8. Detroit Panthers
9. Duluth Kelleys
10. Frankfurt Yellow Jackets
11. Green Bay Packers
12. Hammond Pros
13. Kansas City Cowboys
14. Milwaukee Badgers
15. New York Giants



16. Pottsville Maroons
17. Providence Steam Roller
18. Rochester Jeffersons
19. Rock Island Independents

## 1926

The league grew to 22 teams, a figure that would not be equaled in professional football until 1961, adding the Brooklyn Lions, the Hartford Blues, the Los Angeles Buccaneers, and the Louisville Colonels, with Racine Tornadoes re-entering.

1. Akron Indians
2. Brooklyn Lions
3. Buffalo Rangers
4. Canton Bulldogs
5. Chicago Bears
6. Chicago Cardinals
7. Columbus Tigers
8. Dayton Triangles
9. Detroit Panthers
10. Duluth Eskimos
11. Frankford Yellow Jackets
12. Green Bay Packers
13. Hammond Pros
14. Hartford Blues
15. Kansas City Cowboys
16. Los Angeles Buccaneers
17. Louisville Colonels
18. Milwaukee Badgers
19. New York Giants
20. Pottsville Maroons
21. Providence Steam Roller
22. Racine Tornadoes

## 1927

Prior to the season, the league decided to eliminate the financially weaker teams. As a result, the league dropped from 22 to 12 teams, and a majority of the remaining teams were centered around the East Coast instead of the Midwest, where the NFL had started. The New York Yankees were added from the American Football League and the Cleveland Bulldogs returned. The Buffalo Rangers changed their name back to the Bisons

1. Buffalo Bisons
2. Chicago Bears
3. Chicago Cardinals
4. Cleveland Bulldogs
5. Dayton Triangles
6. Duluth Eskimos
7. Frankford Yellow Jackets
8. Green Bay Packers
9. New York Giants
10. New York Yankees
11. Pottsville Maroons
12. Providence Steam Roller

## 1928

The NFL dropped to ten teams. Two teams had folded, the Buffalo Bisons sat out the season and the Cleveland Bulldogs moved and played as the Detroit Wolverines.

1. Chicago Bears
2. Chicago Cardinals
3. Dayton Triangles
4. Detroit Wolverines
5. Frankford Yellow Jackets
6. Green Bay Packers
7. New York Giants
8. New York Yankees
9. Pottsville Maroons
10. Providence Steam Roller

## 1929

The league increased back to 12 teams with the addition of two franchises, the Staten Island Stapletons, and the Orange Tornadoes. Two mothballed teams activated for the season. Minneapolis re-entered as the Red Jackets and the re-entry of the Buffalo Bisons.

1. Boston Bulldogs
2. Buffalo Bisons
3. Chicago Bears
4. Chicago Cardinals
5. Dayton Triangles
6. Frankford Yellow Jackets
7. Green Bay Packers

8. Minneapolis Red Jackets
9. New York Giants
10. Orange Tornadoes
11. Providence Steam Roller
12. Staten Island Stapletons

## 1930

Prior to the season, Brooklyn businessmen William B. Dwyer and John C. Depler bought the Dayton Triangles, moved it, and renamed it the Brooklyn Dodgers. The Orange Tornadoes relocated to Newark. The Portsmouth Spartans entered as a new team. The 1930 teams were as follows:

1. Brooklyn Dodgers
2. Chicago Bears
3. Chicago Cardinals
4. Frankford Yellow Jackets
5. Green Bay Packers
6. Minneapolis Red Jackets
7. New York Giants
8. Newark Tornadoes
9. Portsmouth Spartans
10. Providence Steam Roller
11. Staten Island Stapletons

## 1931

The league decreased to 10 teams due to financial hardships caused by the Great Depression. While the Cleveland Indians joined as an expansion team, the league lost the Minneapolis Red Jackets and the Newark Tornadoes, and the Frankford Yellow Jackets folded midway through the season.

1. Brooklyn Dodgers
2. Chicago Bears
3. Chicago Cardinals
4. Cleveland Indians
5. Frankford Yellow Jackets
6. Green Bay Packers
7. New York Giants
8. Portsmouth Spartans
9. Providence Steam Roller
10. Staten Island Stapletons

# The Championships Begin

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## 1932]

The Boston Braves (now the [Washington Football Team](#)) enfranchised.

1. Boston Braves
2. Brooklyn Dodgers
3. Chicago Bears
4. Chicago Cardinals
5. Green Bay Packers
6. New York Giants
7. Portsmouth Spartans
8. Staten Island Stapletons

## 1933

Three new teams enfranchised:

Cincinnati Reds

Philadelphia Eagles

Pittsburgh Pirates (now Pittsburgh Steelers)

League split into [Eastern and Western Divisions](#)

First season in history of the league no team folds or suspends operations

1. Boston Redskins
2. Brooklyn Dodgers
3. Chicago Bears
4. Chicago Cardinals
5. Cincinnati Reds
6. Green Bay Packers
7. New York Giants
8. Philadelphia Eagles
9. Pittsburgh Pirates
10. Portsmouth Spartans

## 1934

Portsmouth Spartans moved to Detroit; renamed the Lions

Cincinnati Reds cease operations during season and are replaced by the St Louis Gunners for the final 3 games.

1. Boston Redskins
2. Brooklyn Dodgers
3. Chicago Bears
4. Chicago Cardinals
5. Cincinnati Reds / St. Louis Gunners
6. Detroit Lions (formerly Portsmouth Spartans)
7. Green Bay Packers
8. New York Giants
9. Philadelphia Eagles
10. Pittsburgh Pirates

## **1935–1936**

Neither Cincinnati Reds nor St. Louis Gunners returned for 1935 season.

1. Boston Redskins
2. Brooklyn Dodgers
3. Chicago Bears
4. Chicago Cardinals
5. Detroit Lions (formerly Portsmouth Spartans)
6. Green Bay Packers
7. New York Giants
8. Philadelphia Eagles
9. Pittsburgh Pirates

## **1937–1939**

Cleveland Rams (now Los Angeles Rams) enfranchised  
Boston Redskins moved to Washington, D.C.

1. Brooklyn Dodgers
2. Chicago Bears
3. Chicago Cardinals
4. Los Angeles Rams
5. Detroit Lions
6. Green Bay Packers
7. New York Giants
8. Philadelphia Eagles
9. Pittsburgh Pirates
10. Washington Redskins

# The 1940s: World War II mergers

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## 1940–1942

Pittsburgh Pirates new name was the Pittsburgh Steelers. They “mothballed the team after the season and it rejoined the league in 1944. In 1943 the Steelers and the Eagles joined and were called Phil Pitt and the Steagles

1. Brooklyn Dodgers
2. Chicago Bears
3. Chicago Cardinals
4. Cleveland Rams folded
5. Detroit Lions
6. Green Bay Packers
7. New York Giants
8. Philadelphia Eagles / Pittsburg Steelers (Steagles)
9. Washington Redskins

## 1943

Philadelphia and Pittsburgh merge to form "Phil-Pitt"

## 1944

- Boston Yanks enfranchised.
  - Cleveland Rams resume operations.
  - Steagles end merger, Eagles resume operations
  - Steelers merge with Cardinals to form "Card-Pitt"
1. Boston Yanks
  2. Brooklyn Tigers
  3. Card-Pitt
  4. Chicago Bears
  5. Cleveland Rams
  6. Detroit Lions
  7. Green Bay Packers
  8. New York Giants
  9. Philadelphia Eagles
  10. Washington Redskins

## 1945

Card-Pitt splits into Chicago Cardinals and Pittsburgh Steelers  
 Brooklyn Tigers merge with Boston Yanks, named simply "The Yanks"

1. Chicago Bears
2. Chicago Cardinals
3. Cleveland Rams
4. Detroit Lions
5. Green Bay Packers
6. New York Giants
7. Philadelphia Eagles
8. Pittsburgh Steelers
9. The Yanks
10. Washington Redskins

## 1946–1948

Brooklyn Tigers cease operations  
 Boston Yanks resume normal operations  
 Cleveland Rams move to Los Angeles

1. Boston Yanks
2. Chicago Bears
3. Chicago Cardinals
4. Detroit Lions
5. Green Bay Packers
6. Los Angeles Rams
7. New York Giants
8. Philadelphia Eagles
9. Pittsburgh Steelers
10. Washington Redskins

## 1949

Boston Yanks cease operations  
 New York Bulldogs enfranchised from the remains of the Boston Yanks

1. New York Bulldogs
2. Chicago Bears
3. Chicago Cardinals
4. Detroit Lions
5. Green Bay Packers

6. Los Angeles Rams
7. New York Giants
8. Philadelphia Eagles
9. Pittsburgh Steelers
10. Washington Redskins

## The 1950s: AAFC merger

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### 1950]

- Eastern Division renamed to American Conference
- Western Division renamed to National Conference
- San Francisco 49ers, Cleveland Browns, and the first [Baltimore Colts](#) all enfranchised from now-defunct [All-America Football Conference](#). The Colts fold after the 1950 season.
- New York Bulldogs change name to New York Yanks, move to National Conference
- Chicago Cardinals move to American Conference

### American Conference

1. Chicago Cardinals
2. Cleveland Browns
3. New York Giants
4. Philadelphia Eagles
5. Pittsburgh Steelers
6. Washington Redskins

### National Conference

1. Chicago Bears
2. New York Yanks
3. Detroit Lions
4. Green Bay Packers
5. Los Angeles Rams
6. San Francisco 49ers
7. Baltimore Colts

### 1951]

- The New York Yanks fold after the 1951 season.



## **American Conference**

1. Chicago Cardinals
2. Cleveland Browns
3. New York Giants
4. Philadelphia Eagles
5. Pittsburgh Steelers
6. Washington Redskins

## **National Conference**

1. Chicago Bears
2. New York Yanks
3. Detroit Lions
4. Green Bay Packers
5. Los Angeles Rams
6. San Francisco 49ers

## **1952**

Dallas Texans enfranchised with the remains of the now-defunct New York Yanks, but fold after one season and to date last NFL team to fold.

## **American Conference**

1. Chicago Cardinals
2. Cleveland Browns
3. New York Giants
4. Philadelphia Eagles
5. Pittsburgh Steelers
6. Washington Redskins

## **National Conference**

1. Chicago Bears
2. Dallas Texans
3. Detroit Lions
4. Green Bay Packers
5. Los Angeles Rams
6. San Francisco 49ers

## 1953–1959

American Conference renamed the Eastern Conference

National Conference renamed the Western Conference

A second and distinct Baltimore Colts team (now Indianapolis Colts) enfranchised from the remains of the Dallas Texan

### Eastern Conference

1. Chicago Cardinals
2. Cleveland Browns
3. New York Giants
4. Philadelphia Eagles
5. Pittsburgh Steelers
6. Washington Redskins

### Western Conference

1. Baltimore Colts
2. Chicago Bears
3. Detroit Lions
4. Green Bay Packers
5. Los Angeles Rams
6. San Francisco 49ers

## The 1960s: NFL and AFL<sub>1</sub>

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### 1960

American Football League (AFL) begins operations with eight teams as a rival to the NFL.

Dallas Cowboys enfranchised by NFL

Chicago Cardinals move to St. Louis

### Eastern Conference

1. Cleveland Browns
2. New York Giants
3. Philadelphia Eagles
4. Pittsburgh Steelers
5. St. Louis Cardinals
6. Washington Redskins

## Western Conference

1. Baltimore Colts
2. Chicago Bears
3. Detroit Lions
4. Green Bay Packers
5. Los Angeles Rams
6. San Francisco 49ers
7. Dallas Cowboys

## 1961–1962 [\[edit\]](#)

NFL enfranchises the Minnesota Vikings  
 Los Angeles Chargers move to San Diego  
 Dallas Cowboys move to Eastern Division

## 1961-1962 AFL Teams

### Eastern

1. Boston Patriots
2. Buffalo Bills
3. Houston Oilers
4. Titans of New York

### Western

1. Denver Broncos
2. Dallas Texans
3. Oakland Raiders
4. San Diego Chargers

## 1961-1962 NFL Teams

### Eastern Conference

1. Cleveland Browns
2. Dallas Cowboys
3. New York Giants
4. Philadelphia Eagles
5. Pittsburgh Steelers
6. St. Louis Cardinals
7. Washington Redskins

## Western Conference

1. Baltimore Colts
2. Chicago Bears
3. Detroit Lions
4. Green Bay Packers
5. Los Angeles Rams
6. Minnesota Vikings
7. San Francisco 49ers
8. Dallas Cowboys

## 1963–1965

- Dallas Texans move to Kansas City; renamed the Chiefs
- Titans of New York renamed New York Jets

## 1963-1965 AFL Teams

### Eastern

1. Boston Patriots
2. Buffalo Bills
3. Houston Oilers
4. New York Jets

### Western

1. Denver Broncos
2. Kansas City Chiefs
3. Oakland Raiders
4. San Diego Chargers

## 1963-1965 NFL Teams

### Eastern Conference

1. Cleveland Browns
2. Dallas Cowboys
3. New York Giants
4. Philadelphia Eagles
5. Pittsburgh Steelers

6. St. Louis Cardinals
7. Washington Redskins

## **Western Conference**

1. Baltimore Colts
2. Chicago Bears
3. Detroit Lions
4. Green Bay Packers
5. Los Angeles Rams
6. Minnesota Vikings
7. San Francisco 49ers

## **1966**

Atlanta Falcons enfranchised by NFL

Miami Dolphins enfranchised by AFL

First AFL-NFL championship game played.

## **1966 AFL Teams**

### **Eastern**

1. Boston Patriots
2. Buffalo Bills
3. Houston Oilers
4. Miami Dolphins
5. New York Jets

### **Western**

1. Denver Broncos
2. Kansas City Chiefs
3. Oakland Raiders
4. San Diego Chargers

## **1966 NFL Teams**

### **Eastern Conference**

1. Atlanta Falcons
2. Cleveland Browns
3. Dallas Cowboys

4. New York Giants
5. Philadelphia Eagles
6. Pittsburgh Steelers
7. St. Louis Cardinals
8. Washington Redskins

## **Western Conference**

1. Baltimore Colts
2. Chicago Bears
3. Detroit Lions
4. Green Bay Packers
5. Los Angeles Rams
6. Minnesota Vikings
7. San Francisco 49ers

## **1967]**

NFL Eastern Conference divided into Capitol and Century Divisions

NFL Western Conference divided into Coastal and Central Divisions

New Orleans Saints enfranchised by NFL

Atlanta Falcons move to Western Conference

## **1967 AFL Teams**

### **Eastern**

1. Boston Patriots
2. Buffalo Bills
3. Houston Oilers
4. Miami Dolphins
5. New York Jets

### **Western**

1. Denver Broncos
2. Kansas City Chiefs
3. Oakland Raiders
4. San Diego Chargers

## 1967 NFL Teams

### Eastern Conference

1. Cleveland Browns
2. Dallas Cowboys
3. New Orleans Saints
4. New York Giants
5. Philadelphia Eagles
6. Pittsburgh Steelers
7. St. Louis Cardinals
8. Washington Redskins

### Western Conference

1. Atlanta Falcons
2. Baltimore Colts
3. Chicago Bears
4. Detroit Lions
5. Green Bay Packers
6. Los Angeles Rams
7. Minnesota Vikings
8. San Francisco 49ers

## 1968

Cincinnati Bengals are enfranchised by AFL  
New York Giants move to Capitol Division  
New Orleans Saints move to Century Division

## 1968 AFL Teams

### Eastern

1. Boston Patriots
2. Buffalo Bills
3. Houston Oilers
4. Miami Dolphins
5. New York Jets

## Western

1. Cincinnati Bengals
2. Denver Broncos
3. Kansas City Chiefs
4. Oakland Raiders
5. San Diego Chargers

## 1968 NFL Teams

### Eastern Conference

9. Cleveland Browns
10. Dallas Cowboys
11. New Orleans Saints
12. New York Giants
13. Philadelphia Eagles
14. Pittsburgh Steelers
15. St. Louis Cardinals
16. Washington Redskins

### Western Conference

9. Atlanta Falcons
10. Baltimore Colts
11. Chicago Bears
12. Detroit Lions
13. Green Bay Packers
14. Los Angeles Rams
15. Minnesota Vikings
16. San Francisco 49ers

## 1969

New York Giants move back to Century Division

New Orleans moves back to Capitol Division



## 1969 AFL Teams

### Eastern

1. Boston Patriots
2. Buffalo Bills
3. Houston Oilers
4. Miami Dolphins
5. New York Jets

### Western

1. Cincinnati Bengals
2. Denver Broncos
3. Kansas City Chiefs
4. Oakland Raiders
5. San Diego Chargers

## 1969 NFL Teams

### Eastern Conference

1. Cleveland Browns
2. Dallas Cowboys
3. New Orleans Saints
4. New York Giants
5. Philadelphia Eagles
6. Pittsburgh Steelers
7. St. Louis Cardinals
8. Washington Redskins

### Western Conference

1. Atlanta Falcons
2. Baltimore Colts
3. Chicago Bears
4. Detroit Lions
5. Green Bay Packers
6. Los Angeles Rams
7. Minnesota Vikings
8. San Francisco 49ers

## The 1970s: AFL–NFL merger

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### 1970]

#### AFL and NFL merge

AFL Eastern and Western Divisions become AFC East and AFC West, respectively

AFC Central formed.

NFL Century Division teams split up between AFC Central and NFC East

NFL Capitol Division becomes nucleus of NFC East

NFL Central Division becomes NFC Central

NFL Coastal Division becomes nucleus of NFC West

Houston moves from AFL East to AFC Central

Cincinnati moves from AFL West to AFC Central

New Orleans moves from NFL Capitol to NFC West

Cleveland moves from NFL Century to AFC Central

New York Giants move from NFL Century to NFC East

Pittsburgh moves from NFL Century to AFC Central

St. Louis moves from NFL Century to NFC East

Baltimore moves from NFL Coastal to AFC East

### 1970 NFL Teams

#### **AFC East**

Baltimore Colts

Boston Patriots

Buffalo Bills

Miami Dolphins

New York Jets

#### **AFC Central**

Cincinnati Bengals

Cleveland Browns

Houston Oilers

Pittsburgh Steelers

## **AFC West**

Denver Broncos  
Kansas City Chiefs  
Oakland Raiders  
San Diego Chargers

## **NFC East**

Dallas Cowboys  
New York Giants  
Philadelphia Eagles  
St. Louis Cardinals  
Washington Redskins

## **NFC Central**

Chicago Bears  
Detroit Lions  
Green Bay Packers  
Minnesota Vikings

## **NFC West**

Atlanta Falcons  
Los Angeles Rams  
New Orleans Saints  
San Francisco 49ers

## **1971–1975**

Boston Patriots are renamed New England Patriots.

## **1971-1975 NFL Teams**

### **AFC East**

Baltimore Colts  
New England Patriots  
Buffalo Bills

Miami Dolphins  
New York Jets

## **AFC Central**

Cincinnati Bengals  
Cleveland Browns  
Houston Oilers  
Pittsburgh Steelers

## **AFC West**

Denver Broncos  
Kansas City Chiefs  
Oakland Raiders  
San Diego Chargers

## **NFC East**

Dallas Cowboys  
New York Giants  
Philadelphia Eagles  
St. Louis Cardinals  
Washington Redskins

## **NFC Central**

Chicago Bears  
Detroit Lions  
Green Bay Packers  
Minnesota Vikings

## **NFC West**

Atlanta Falcons  
Los Angeles Rams  
New Orleans Saints  
San Francisco 49ers

## **1976**

Seattle Seahawks are enfranchised  
Tampa Bay Buccaneers are enfranchised

## 1976 NFL Teams

### AFC East

Baltimore Colts  
New England Patriots  
Buffalo Bills  
Miami Dolphins  
New York Jets

### AFC Central

Cincinnati Bengals  
Cleveland Browns  
Houston Oilers  
Pittsburgh Steelers

### AFC West

Denver Broncos  
Kansas City Chiefs  
Oakland Raiders  
San Diego Chargers  
Tampa Bay Buccaneers

### NFC East

Dallas Cowboys  
New York Giants  
Philadelphia Eagles  
St. Louis Cardinals  
Washington Redskins

### NFC Central

Chicago Bears  
Detroit Lions  
Green Bay Packers  
Minnesota Vikings

## **NFC West**

Atlanta Falcons  
Los Angeles Rams  
New Orleans Saints  
San Francisco 49ers  
Seattle Seahawks

## **1977–1981**

Seattle moves from NFC West to AFC West  
Tampa Bay moves from AFC West to NFC Central

## **1977-1981 NFL Teams**

### **AFC East**

Baltimore Colts  
New England Patriots  
Buffalo Bills  
Miami Dolphins  
New York Jets

### **AFC Central**

Cincinnati Bengals  
Cleveland Browns  
Houston Oilers  
Pittsburgh Steelers

### **AFC West**

Denver Broncos  
Kansas City Chiefs  
Oakland Raiders  
San Diego Chargers  
Seattle Seahawks

### **NFC East**

Dallas Cowboys  
New York Giants  
Philadelphia Eagles  
St. Louis Cardinals  
Washington Redskins

## **NFC Central**

Chicago Bears  
Detroit Lions  
Green Bay Packers  
Minnesota Vikings  
Tampa Bay Buccaneers

## **NFC West**

Atlanta Falcons  
Los Angeles Rams  
New Orleans Saints  
San Francisco 49ers

## **The 1980s and 1990s**[\[edit\]](#)

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### **1982–1983**[\[edit\]](#)

Oakland Raiders move to Los Angeles.

### **1984–1987**[\[edit\]](#)

Baltimore Colts move to Indianapolis

### **1988–1993**[\[edit\]](#)

St. Louis Cardinals move to Phoenix

### **1994**

Phoenix Cardinals renamed Arizona Cardinals

## 1995

Carolina Panthers enfranchised  
Jacksonville Jaguars enfranchised  
Los Angeles Raiders move back to Oakland  
Los Angeles Rams move to St. Louis  
Cleveland Browns franchise deactivated.  
Baltimore Ravens enfranchised with remains of deactivated Cleveland Browns  
*See also: Cleveland Browns relocation controversy.*

## 1997–1998

Houston Oilers announce that they will move to Nashville and are renamed the Tennessee Oilers. They play the 1997 season in Memphis and the 1998 season at Vanderbilt Stadium in Nashville while a new stadium is built in Nashville. *See also: History of the Tennessee Titans*

## 1999–2001

Cleveland Browns franchise reinstated  
Tennessee Oilers renamed Tennessee Titans

## AFC East

Buffalo Bills  
Indianapolis Colts  
Miami Dolphins  
New England Patriots  
New York Jets

## AFC Central

Baltimore Ravens  
Cincinnati Bengals  
Cleveland Browns  
Jacksonville Jaguars  
Pittsburgh Steelers  
Tennessee Titans



## **AFC West**

Denver Broncos  
Kansas City Chiefs  
Oakland Raiders  
San Diego Chargers  
Seattle Seahawks

## **NFC East**

Dallas Cowboys  
New York Giants  
Philadelphia Eagles  
St. Louis Cardinals  
Washington Redskins

## **NFC Central**

Chicago Bears  
Detroit Lions  
Green Bay Packers  
Minnesota Vikings  
Tampa Bay Buccaneers

## **NFC West**

Atlanta Falcons  
Carolina Panthers  
Los Angeles Rams  
New Orleans Saints  
San Francisco 49ers

## **The 2000s: Realignment**[\[edit\]](#)

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### **2002–2015**[\[edit\]](#)

The NFL realigns to create four divisions with four teams each in both conferences.

Arizona (NFC East) and Seattle (AFC West) join the NFC West

NFC Central renamed NFC North

AFC Central renamed AFC North

NFC South created

Tampa Bay moves from the old NFC Central  
New Orleans, Atlanta, and Carolina move from the NFC West  
AFC South created  
Jacksonville and Tennessee move from the old AFC Central  
Indianapolis moves from the AFC East  
Houston Texans enfranchised

## 2016]

St. Louis Rams return to Los Angeles after 21 seasons

## 2016 NFL Team Alignment

### AFC East

Buffalo Bills  
Miami Dolphins  
New England Patriots  
New York Jets

### AFC North

Baltimore Ravens  
Cincinnati Bengals  
Cleveland Browns  
Pittsburgh Steelers

### AFC South

Houston Texans  
Indianapolis Colts  
Jacksonville Jaguars  
Tennessee Titans

### AFC West

Denver Broncos  
Kansas City Chiefs  
Oakland Raiders  
San Diego Chargers

## **NFC East**

Dallas Cowboys  
New York Giants  
Philadelphia Eagles  
Washington Redskins

## **NFC North**

Chicago Bears  
Detroit Lions  
Green Bay Packers  
Minnesota Vikings

## **NFC South**

Atlanta Falcons  
Carolina Panthers  
New Orleans Saints  
Tampa Bay Buccaneers

## **NFC West**

Arizona Cardinals  
Los Angeles Rams  
San Francisco 49ers  
Seattle Seahawks

## **2017–2019**[\[edit\]](#)

San Diego Chargers return to Los Angeles after 56 seasons.

## **2017-2019 NFL Team Alignment**

### **AFC East**

Buffalo Bills  
Miami Dolphins  
New England Patriots  
New York Jets

## **AFC North**

Baltimore Ravens  
Cincinnati Bengals  
Cleveland Browns  
Pittsburgh Steelers

## **AFC South**

Houston Texans  
Indianapolis Colts  
Jacksonville Jaguars  
Tennessee Titans

## **AFC West**

Denver Broncos  
Kansas City Chiefs  
Oakland Raiders  
Los Angeles Chargers

## **NFC East**

Dallas Cowboys  
New York Giants  
Philadelphia Eagles  
Washington Redskins

## **NFC North**

Chicago Bears  
Detroit Lions  
Green Bay Packers  
Minnesota Vikings

## **NFC South**

Atlanta Falcons  
Carolina Panthers  
New Orleans Saints  
Tampa Bay Buccaneers

## **NFC West**

Arizona Cardinals  
Los Angeles Rams  
San Francisco 49ers  
Seattle Seahawks

## **2020–present**

Oakland Raiders move to Las Vegas.

The Washington Redskins adopt the temporary name Washington Football Team for the 2020 season until they choose a new name in response to controversy over their previous name.

## **2020 NFL Team Alignment**

### **AFC East**

Buffalo Bills

Miami Dolphins

New England Patriots

New York Jets

### **AFC North**

Baltimore Ravens

Cincinnati Bengals

Cleveland Browns

Pittsburgh Steelers

### **AFC South**

Houston Texans

Indianapolis Colts

Jacksonville Jaguars

Tennessee Titans

### **AFC West**

Denver Broncos

Kansas City Chiefs

Las Vegas Raiders

San Diego Chargers

## **NFC East**

Dallas Cowboys

New York Giants

Philadelphia Eagles

Washington Football

## **NFC North**

Chicago Bears

Detroit Lions

Green Bay Packers

Minnesota Vikings

## **NFC South**

Atlanta Falcons

Carolina Panthers

New Orleans Saints

Tampa Bay Buccaneers

## **NFC West**

Arizona Cardinals

Los Angeles Rams

San Francisco 49ers

Seattle Seahawks

## Chapter 12 NFL Snippets from 1925 to the Buccaneers Era



Red Grange puts NFL on the map

### The Post Walter Camp Days Begin

By 1925, the year Walter Camp, the modern day football founder passed away, it began to look like the NFL was going to make it. Late in the season, it pulled off its greatest coup in gaining national attention. The University of Illinois season had ended in November, and that made All-America halfback Harold (Red) Grange eligible conflict-free to do as he wanted with his life. So what would he do?

Grange signed a contract to play with the Chicago Bears, a pro team. On Thanksgiving Day, a crowd of 36,000, which was the largest in pro football history at the time watched Grange and the Bears play the Chicago Cardinals to a scoreless tie at Wrigley Field. At the beginning of December, the Bears hit the jackpot when they went out on the road playing all around the country in 12 days. If they did not play, they made no money for their families.

They actually played eight games in 12 days, in St. Louis, Philadelphia, New York City, Washington, Boston, Pittsburgh, Detroit, and Chicago. A crowd of 73,000 watched the game against

the Giants at the Polo Grounds. It was a harbinger that Americans would pay to see pro football.

This helped assure the future success of the troubled NFL franchise in New York. The Bears then played nine more games in the South and West, including a game in Los Angeles, in which 75,000 fans watched them defeat the Los Angeles Tigers in the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum. Owners, players, and coaches were ready to do anything to make sure the new league was a success. Money was attracted because money could be earned if the league operated well.

In 1930, the league had changed its whole complexion, literally.

Dayton was one of the NFL's original franchises. In 1930, it became the last of the NFL's original franchises when it was purchased by William B. Dwyer and John C. Depler, and the whole team was moved to Brooklyn, and renamed the Dodgers. They were a football team, nonetheless even with the Dodgers name. The Portsmouth, Ohio Spartans also entered the league at the same time. Things were changing rapidly. Pro football seemed destined to survive.

Other things were happening such as the Packers edged the Giants for the title, but the most improved team was the Bears. George Halas retired as a player and replaced himself as coach of the Bears with Ralph Jones. Jones refined the T-formation by introducing wide ends and a halfback in motion. He also brought in rookie All-America fullback-tackle, the great Bronko Nagurski. Whoah – named players became important to the NFL success.

The rules did not stop pro teams from making a buck to pay their expenses. Anybody would still play anybody.

The Giants whooped a team of former Notre Dame players coached by Knute Rockne 22-0 in a successful match before 55,000 at the Polo Grounds in New York on December 14. This was a charity game as the proceeds went to the New York Unemployment Fund to help those suffering because of the Great Depression. The easy victory helped the NFL's credibility with the press and the public. Everybody likes an act of kindness.



## **Carl Storck takes over the NFL as its 2nd commissioner**

In 1939, as the league was moving closer to 20 years in operation, Joseph Carr, who had been NFL president since 1921, died in Columbus on May 20. Carl Storck was named acting president of the NFL on May 25. Technology was about to help the NFL. The first televised NFL game saw NBC broadcast the Brooklyn Dodgers v Philadelphia Eagles game from Ebbets Field to the approximately 1,000 TV sets that were known to be in the New York Area. Do you remember those days. If so, you are very old! So am I!

Championships were beginning to be a big thing in pro-football as Green Bay defeated New York 27-0 in the NFL Championship Game, December 10 at Milwaukee. This was the first year that NFL attendance exceeded 1 million in a season, reaching 1,071,200. Looks like the NFL made it!

## **Pro Bowl gave football an All-Star Game**

In 1939, The New York Giants defeated the Pro All-Stars 13-10 in the first Pro Bowl. It was played in Chicago at Wrigley Field on January 15. The NFL also decided to change the format of the field, but not the dimensions. Each field would need just a paint job, not new landscaping. The inbounds lines or hashmarks were moved from 15 yards away from the sidelines to nearer the center of the field-20 yards from the sidelines.

Funny things were happening that were unexpected. For example, Brooklyn and Boston merged into a team that played home games in both cities and was known simply as The Yanks. Additionally, George Halas rejoined the Bears late in the season after service time with the U.S. Navy during World War II. He took over much of the coaching duties, but he kept the prior coaches throughout the season. Steve Van Buren of the Philadelphia Eagles led the NFL in rushing, kickoff returns, and scoring.

Rookie quarterback Bob Waterfield led Cleveland to a 15-14 victory over Washington in the NFL Championship Game,

At the end of World War II, after the Japanese surrender, 638 players had served in the Armed forces and 21 of them had died in action. As many as could came back to play football.

After the 1942 Pro-Bowl game, during the war period, the game was not played again until 1951. This classic contest was revived. On January 14, the American Conference defeated the National Conference in a nail-biter 28-27.

More rules were passed including some we might think were in the rulebook forever. For example, no tackle, guard, or center would be eligible to catch a forward pass.

The 1951 NFL Championship Game was televised coast-to-coast for the first time The Rams defeated the Browns 24-17.

Ted Collins sold the New York Yanks' franchise back to the NFL in 1952 and a new franchise was awarded to a group in Dallas after it purchased the assets of the Yanks on January 24. The new Texans went 1-11. This of course was not too good for the new owners.

At the end of the season the franchise was canceled. It was the last time than an NFL team would fail. This team was not the same Dallas Texans formed in 1960 by Lamar Hunt, which played for three years before moving to Kansas City.

The Pittsburgh Steelers abandoned the Single-Wing for the T-formation, the last pro team to do so. The Detroit Lions won their first NFL championship in 17 years in 1952 defeating the Browns 17-7 in the title game, played before New Year's on December 28.

In 1953 the Old Yanks came back to life again as a Baltimore group headed by Carroll Rosenbloom. He got the franchise and the holdings of the defunct Dallas organization. The new team became The Baltimore Colts. It was the product of the largest trade in league history, acquiring 10 players from Cleveland in exchange for five. In a cosmetic name change, American and National conferences were

changed to the Eastern and Western conferences. All improvements at the time were evolutionary. Most fans did not notice.

Another major happening was that the immortal great Jim Thorpe died on March 28. Mauch Chunk, Pennsylvania agreed to terms with Thorpe's widow to build a memorial and change the Town's name to Jim Thorpe. Thorpe's bones are buried in this beautiful memorial, which I visit every year on my annual visit to this wonderful town where Sean Connery and Richard Harris tipped a few in the filming of the Molly Maguires.

In 1956, the NFL Players Association was founded to give players a bigger voice in what was going on in the NFL. In 1959, the immortal Vince Lombardi was named coach of the Green Bay Packers and Tim Mara of New York Giants fame passed away. The NFL had gained a lot of power and prestige—so much that if it had not modified its monopolistic ways, the AFL in the next year, would have subsumed it.

## **The NFL was so successful, it spawned the AFL**

The American Football League (AFL) was formed as a major professional American football league in 1960 and it was very successful. It was a lot of fun watching all the new teams in action. The teams included the Dallas Cowboys, Houston Oilers, New York Jets, Kansas City Chiefs, Boston Patriots, and even John Madden's Oakland Raiders. It operated for ten seasons from 1960 until 1969, when it merged with the older National Football League (NFL), that had been established in the 1920-1922 period.

The first AFL-NFL World Championship Game in professional American football was dubbed retroactively as Super Bowl I. It had been referred to in some contemporaneous reports, including the game's radio broadcast, as the Super Bowl. The name stuck. It was played after the 1966 season on January 15 at Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum. In this game, NFL Green Bay Packers defeated our AFL champion Kansas City Chiefs by the score of 35–10. KC was not yet ready to take on the NFL—but almost!

John Madden is still a people's favorite at 86 years of age. He was hired by Al Davis when the AFL was in its prime as the linebackers' coach for the AFL's Oakland Raiders. This was in 1967 and the league would last only two more seasons. Madden helped the team reach Super Bowl II that season. A year later, after Raiders head coach John Rauch left, John Madden stepped in to become the Raiders' head coach. This made Madden professional football's youngest head coach at the age of 32. John M. had not yet met his first smoked Turkey Leg.

Former Raiders coach Dennis Allen in interviews noted that John Madden was arguably the best Oakland Raiders coach in the history of the team. His Raiders reached but lost five AFC Title games in seven years. This left the Raiders with the same image that the Dallas Cowboys had previously had—as a team unable to "win the big one."

Despite a 12–1–1 mark in 1969, for example the Madden team lost 17–7 to the Kansas City Chiefs in the final American Football League championship game. The next year, the Raiders would be in the AFC Division of the NFL as the Lamar Hunt AFL had lost its identity.

## **Was the AFL Any Good? See Super Bowl III**

Joe Namath may like to comment the next time this book is printed.

Super Bowl III was the third AFL–NFL Championship Game in professional American football, and it was the first to officially bear the name "Super Bowl". It was not AFC v NFC. It was the last interleague Super Bowl and the world knew that the AFL had not won either of the first two interleague games.

This third match was played on January 12, 1969, at the Orange Bowl in Miami, Florida. Everybody over five years old at the time remembers Broadway Joe Namath, cocky as can be, making a prediction that the AFL's Jets would win the game. What did Joe know?

This game is still regarded as one of the greatest upsets in American sports history. The heavy underdog American Football League (AFL) champion New York Jets, led by former Alabama QB Joe Namath defeated the National Football League (NFL) champion Baltimore Colts by a score of 16–7. The KC Chiefs were not contenders but Lamar Hunt, the KC owner, who had a big stake in the outcome of the game looked for an AFL victory along with Broadway Joe. I was a senior in College at the time. What a great football game. I watched it from pre-game through post-game.

This was the first Super Bowl victory for the AFL. Though the AFL had been in existence ten years, before the start of this game, most sports writers and fans had written off the AFL teams as being less talented than every one of the NFL clubs. There were few who expected anything less than for the Colts to whoop the Jets by a wide margin. It did not happen.

The Baltimore Colts had posted a 13–1 record during the 1968 NFL season before defeating the Cleveland Browns, 34–0, in the 1968 NFL Championship Game. The Jets finished the 1968 AFL season at 11–3, and they had defeated John Madden’s great Oakland Raiders, 27–23, in the 1968 AFL Championship Game.

Some oldsters may recall that Darryl Lamonica had a poor game and Kenny, the Snake, Stabler, who took Oakland to Super XI had just joined the Raiders. The Snake took nothing for granted.

After beating the Raiders and despite the hype saying the Jets did not have a shot, Joe Namath was undaunted. This unafraid Jets quarterback, who today everybody knows, made an appearance three-days before the Super Bowl at the Miami Touchdown Club and brashly guaranteed a victory.

The Jets could not have been more pleased with the prediction and they backed up Broadway Joe’s words by controlling most of the game. They built a 16–0 lead by the fourth quarter off from a touchdown run by Matt Snell and three field goals by Jim Turner. The Jets were for real and so was the AFL!

Colts quarterback Earl Morrall, who started because the legendary Unitas’s arm was still sore from a season beginning hit, threw three interceptions. At the end of the third quarter, Morrall was replaced

by the great Johnny Unitas, who then led Baltimore to its only touchdown during the last few minutes of the game. It was not enough.

With the victory, the Jets remain the only winning Super Bowl team to only score one touchdown (either offensive, defensive, or special teams). Namath, who completed 17 out of 28 passes for 206 yards, was named as the Super Bowl's Most Valuable Player, despite not throwing a touchdown pass in the game or any passes at all in the fourth quarter. The recap of the game is not as exciting as its reality.

And that, my friends, is how the AFL & the NFL got to where it is today.

# Chapter 13 Buccaneers Football-After Inaugural Seasons 1978-1984

## Coach #1 John McKay

<u>Year</u>	<u>Record</u>	<u>Finish (Regular / Post Seas.)</u>	<u>Coach</u>	<u>Notes</u>
1984	6-10-0	3rd -- NFC Central--	John McKay	
1983	2-14-0	5th -- NFC Central--	John McKay	
1982	5-4-0	T4th -NFC	John McKay	Lost Round 1
1981	9-7-0	1st -- NFC-Central	John McKay	0-1 -
1980	5-10-1	T4th -NFC Central--	John McKay	Lost Div Playoffs
1979	10-6-0	1st -- NFC Central	John McKay	1-1 - Lost Conf Champ
1978	5-11-0	5th -- NFC Central--	John McKay	
1977	2-12-0	5th -- NFC Central--	John McKay	
1976	0-14-0	5th -- AFC West--	John McKay	



1978 Tampa Bay Buccaneers Team Picture

## Intro to Tampa Bay's next six years of football

The 1978 NFL based Tampa Bay Buccaneers competed in their third season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. They were led by John McKay in his third season of nine as head coach of the Kansas City Chiefs. See chapter 4 for the Bucs inaugural season. In Chapter four we look at the first two seasons in which John McKay coached the Bucs to an inglorious 26 losses in a row.

This season was the third season of Hugh Franklin Culverhouse's National Football League franchise from Tampa Bay Florida, Texas. Head coach John McKay led the team to a 5-11 record, his last really bad record. The team finished in fifth place out of five in the NFL's AFL's Eastern Conference

Team owner Hugh Culverhouse was not actively involved in the affairs of his new team. He is said to have pursued legendary University of California coach John McKay to lead his Buccaneers franchise and he let the football up to McKay. Culverhouse had no problem spending money on a fine coach but after that he was pretty tight-fisted on spending. Some never thought McKay would ever win a game with Culverhouse holding the purse strings to real league success. However, it is reported that McKay increased his USC salary by a factor of 5 over \$2 million or more by making the run to the other coast.

“My dad told me that, looking back on it, he knew within the first week he got to Tampa that he’d made a mistake,” said J.K. McKay, the former Trojans receiver whose father became the first coach of the expansion Tampa Bay Buccaneers in 1976. John McKay died in 2001.

Writer Sam Farmer has a unique perspective on Junior McKay’s above revelation:

By SAM FARMER JAN. 12, 2007 12 AM PT

“You aren’t just USC’s football coach, you’re a crossover star who gets the red-carpet treatment all over Los Angeles. You’ve coached multiple Heisman Trophy winners and have filled Heritage Hall with national championship trophies.

But an NFL team from Florida beckons, and you’re attracted to the challenge and money associated with coaching at the next level.

What are you going to do, John McKay?

*The answer: Leave USC -- and wind up regretting it for the rest of your life.*

He did. But, he as a man who agreed to what he agreed even if he got snookered.

John McKay was one of the best coaches any pro team might possibly gain. Michael McKnight writes a fitting beginning to this saga experienced by John McKay and Tampa Bay fans after



Culverhouse used his big stash of money to persuade McKay to take a shot at taming the Buccaneers first team. Try this on. It is precious.

“THE PRACTICE FIELD on which the 1976 Buccaneers first gathered is now a lumpy savanna where untended palmetto trees stand off to the side like backups wearing blown-out Afros. This is the spot where the members of the least talented team in NFL history first looked askance at one other, realizing that the season ahead might not go so well.

“The crickets still screech at the heat, and Tampa International Airport still rumbles in the distance. But in '76 there weren't as many trees between the field and the runways, so the players could see the team plane from the practice field. It was a 16-year-old Boeing 720 that had been acquired on the cheap that bicentennial summer by thrifty Bucs owner Hugh Culverhouse, and it had as many functional flaws as the team it carried.

"There was no AC until after we took off," says Steve Young—not Steve Young the Hall of Fame quarterback, whom the Bucs traded away in '87, but Steve Young the offensive tackle, who didn't so much earn a starting job with the '76 Bucs as get shoved in its general direction.

Young, 60, is standing near the plane's old parking spot, now a patch of pines that separates the fallow practice field from the airport. "They figured [the players] were heavier than normal people, so they backed off the air until we were up and cruising."

Former guard Howard Fest, 68, speaking from his drought-stricken property in south Texas, remembers, "We were waiting on the runway one time, burning up, and the pilot goes, 'Sorry folks, but we don't have any oil pressure.' So we wait 30 more minutes for somebody to come look at this oil thing, but nobody shows up. "And then we took off."

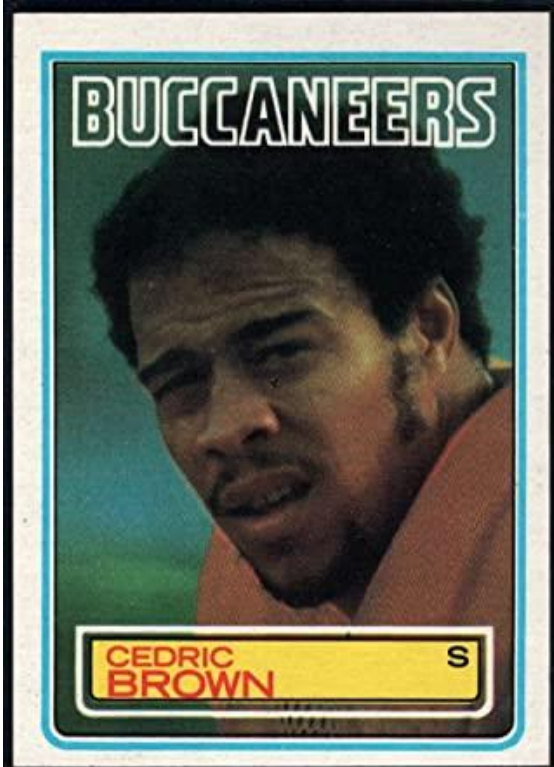
Culverhouse had leased the plane from his friend R.P. McCulloch, the ruler of the McCulloch chain saw empire, who ran a tiny airline on the side. Lee Roy Selmon, future Hall of Famer and the rookie

prince of that inaugural Buccaneers team, who died in 2011 after having a stroke, once told NFL Films about the first time he saw the name of the chain saw maker on the side of the Bucs' plane: "Right away I was a little worried."

That faulty machine would carry another faulty machine—one that would be shut out five times and outscored 125-412 in a winless 14-game season. In all, more than 140 players would go through Tampa Bay's Tang-colored meat grinder in 1976, in part because of a staggering number of injuries but mainly because you could count on two hands the Bucs who were good enough to play past college.

Coach John McKay (all suntan, jowls and jokes, God rest his soul) and chain-smoking general manager Ron Wolf searched high and low for fringe players willing to board their flight to futility. By the end of the season they would hire a 190-pounder nicknamed Psycho off the streets of Watts and start him at linebacker against the world-champion Steelers.

## Top Bucs Players Cedric Brown, Safety 1976-1984



As discussed, Buccaneers began their existence in the NFL with 26 consecutive losses. Cedric Brown was one of the few bright spots of the early years, showing his talent despite being on a losing team. During his nine seasons in Florida, Brown flashed his brilliance, setting the franchise record for interceptions that stood until Donnie Abraham broke it in 2001. His mark of 29 interceptions still ranks third all-time in franchise history.

At 6-foot-1 and nearly 200 pounds, Brown was a relatively large ball-hawking safety who was also capable of laying the wood. In today's NFL, especially with the new rules regarding tackling, Brown would likely not have found as much success as he did.

During his nine-season stint with the Buccaneers, Brown only went one season without an interception. That season was his rookie year in which he only appeared in one game. It's kind of hard to expect him to do anything with only one appearance.

However, in the next eight seasons, Brown recorded a minimum of one interception, typically finishing with three or more. He finished his total with 29. If you excluded his rookie 1976 season, that is an average of three per season.

Because Brown was on bad teams and didn't truly contribute to their success, he finds himself near the bottom of this ranking. His ability to play the safety position goes unquestioned, he was a talented player, but because he wasn't able to contribute to some sort of franchise success, he falls below 25 other players.

### **1978 John McKay, Coach #1**

The 1978 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their third season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. They were led by John McKay in his third season of nine as head coach. This Buccaneers team finished with a losing season record of 5-11, winning just five games. They gained a fifth (last) place finish in the NFL Central Division. They failed to qualify for the playoffs for the third consecutive season. There were not many losing seasons in John McKay's tenure as coach before coming to Tampa Bay, but this was his third in a row. Next year things would be different. McKay would see to that.

It was a big third place for John McKay and the 1978 Tampa Bay Buccaneers season. It was the franchise's third season in the National Football League; the third playing their home games at Tampa Stadium; and the third under head coach John McKay. As their two 1977 victories had been in the last two games of the season, they entered the 1978 season with the longest active winning

streak in the NFC Central. Yes, we are grasping for straws for something positive to say.

After two wins in thirty games the first two seasons—no wins in a 14-game season followed by two wins in their first 16-game season, the Bucs expected a little more than they got in 1978.

This year. The Buccaneers entered the season with new offensive talent, having selected Doug Williams with their 17th overall pick of the draft. This choice was questioned by many experts and many pundits who claimed there was still an element of society who would offer that a black quarterback was not capable of winning in the NFL. They would add that prejudice is believed to have been a factor in Williams having been drafted as low as seventeenth.

Nonetheless, according to Buccaneer coach, John McKay, "All things being equal, Williams would have gone higher in the draft". Second-year tight end Jimmie Giles, part of the trade that landed Williams, emerged as the Buccaneers' first receiving threat and years later, he still holds several of their scoring records

### **Games of the 1978 season**

The Bucs opened the season at home on September 2, 1978 against the New York Giants in a losing effort L (13–19). The game was played in Tampa Stadium before a nice crowd of 67,456. On Sep 9, the Detroit Lions beat the Bucs L 7–15 at home before 64,443. Then, on Sep 17, at Minnesota, the Bucs defeated the Vikings W (16–10) at Metropolitan Stadium before 46,152. Then, on Sep 24, the Bucs made it two in a row by defeating the Atlanta Falcons at home W (14–9) before 58,073. On Oct 1. The Vikings came to Tampa Bay and made up for the early season loss by defeating the Bucs L (7–24) before 65,972. On Oct 8, at Kansas City, the Bucs pounded the Chiefs Chiefs, W 30–13 at Arrowhead Stadium before 38,201.

On Oct 15, Tampa Bay lost to the New York Giants L (14–17) at Giants Stadium before 68,025. Then, on Oct 22, the Bucs defeated the Chicago Bears W 33–19 at home before 68,146. At 4-4, It was the last time they would have a break-even or winning record this season. On Oct 29, 1978, Green Bay beat Tampa Bay in a close

match L 7–9 at Lambeau Field before 55,108. At the Los Angeles Coliseum on Nov 5, the Rams beat the Bucs in another close match L (23–26). The Bucs were having a better season than their record showed. The crowd did not quite fill the stadium at 55,182.

On Nov 12, at Detroit, the Lions prevailed L (23–34) at the Pontiac Silverdome before 60,320. On Nov 19, 1978, the Bucs came back at home and beat the Buffalo Bills W (31–10) before 61,383. Then, on Nov 26, 1978 at Chicago, the Bears beat the Bucs L (3–14) in Soldier Field before 42,373. Then, on Dec 3, 1978, at home, the Green Bay Packers beat Tampa Bay L (7–17) before 67,754. In the second to last game of the Season it was close but no cigar as San Francisco defeated the Bucs at Candlestick Park L (3-6) before 30,931. In the season finale at home, the New Orleans Saints got the best of the Bucs L (10–17) before 51,207.

## **Top Bucs Players Jimmie Giles, TE 1978-1986**

They say that Tampa Bay Buccaneers tight end Jimmie Giles was cut from the same cloth as the modern-day great tight end Rob Gronkowski — only three decades earlier.

He is clearly one of the game’s greatest blocking tight ends, but as of 2020, Giles is still waiting for his call to the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

He was the third player, first offensive member, inducted into the Bucs’ Ring of Honor in 2011. A generational-type tight end that came into the league when the tight end position was asked to play a different style of football than today. Giles answered the call and then some.

“I committed myself to be the best all-around football player I could be,” Giles said. “First of all, as a tight end you had to block.” Giles was drafted by Houston in 1977, then traded to the run-first Bucs in ’78.

He played 13 seasons and went to four pro bowls. He is worthy of hall of fame. To make my point, look at his stats  
Highest Career Yards Per Reception, Tight Ends, NFL History  
(minimum 350 receptions):

1. Jackie Smith - 16.5
2. Rob Gronkowski - 15.1
3. Jimmie Giles - 14.5
4. Riley Odoms - 14.5



### <<< **Jimmie Giles**

Giles was a player that opposing teams would specifically game plan to stop — including one of the greatest defenses in the history of the NFL - the 1985 Chicago Bears.

“There were not many players that we feared or talked about when we put our game plan together,” former Bears defensive back Leslie Frazier said. “But when it came to Jimmie Giles, Buddy (Ryan) would always talk about how good he was, how big of a factor he was and how under-used he was. He did not take

Jimmie for granted. We would find ways to double-team him.”

Giles retired in 1989 after a 13-year NFL career.

Not counting Gronk, Jimmie Giles is the fifth-ranked receiver in Buccaneers history. Even more impressive, Giles is the only tight end in the top-15 in terms of receiving yards in team history. Simply put, Giles is the best tight end in franchise history, and second place is not even within reach.

In my opinion, the tight end is one of the most undervalued positions in the sport of football, especially in recent times. Back in the day, tight ends were focal points of offenses. Perhaps it was due to a lack of game-breaking talent at wide receiver like we are seeing

now? But how many tight ends are pivotal in NFL offenses? Three, maybe? Rob Gronkowski, Travis Kelce, and... exactly.

In stark contrast, Giles was a key cog in Tampa Bay offenses in the late '70s and '80s. This is evidenced by his rankings in team records, but also proven by his four Pro Bowl appearances in the nine seasons spent with the Buccaneers. Oh yes, forgot to mention that. Giles spent nearly a decade with the team, showing how irreplaceable he was.

In those nine seasons, Giles recorded exactly 4,300 yards and 34 touchdowns. To say Giles did nearly all of his damage in Tampa Bay would be putting it lightly. For his career, Giles had 5,084 yards and 41 touchdowns. That means, in the four other years he spent with other teams he only tallied roughly 800 yards and seven touchdowns. A Buccaneer for life, Giles was one of the best players the franchise has ever had.

### **1979 John McKay, Coach #1**

The 1979 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their fourth season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. They were led by John McKay in his fourth season of nine as head coach. This Buccaneers team finished with a fine record of 10-6, winning in double digits for the first time. And to top it off in only their fourth year as a new franchise, they grabbed first place in the NFC Central Division.

They qualified for the playoffs for the first time ever. John McKay showed the same form that he used to grab four college football championships at USC. This was a great year. The 1979 Buccaneers won ten games making this their first winning season. As noted, they finished as NFC Central division champions, and won the first playoff game in franchise history

This year, the Buccaneers added offensive threats to complement their solid defense. For the first time their star QB was healthy. Doug Williams played his first full season and Ricky Bell became the team's first 1,000-yard back, rushing for a career-high 1,263 yards. The guns were all clicking big time in this hallmark year.

This great 1979 not only posted their first winning record, but as noted, they earned a playoff spot by winning the NFC Central division title. It did not come easy. They gained their playoff spot in the final week of the season in a rain-sodden game against the Kansas City Chiefs. The only score was a 19-yard field goal by Neil O'Donoghue.

They were not through. The Bucs then recorded their first-ever playoff win by defeating the Philadelphia Eagles behind Ricky Bell's 142 yards rushing. Tampa Bay then hosted the 1979 NFC Championship Game the following week, but lost 9–0 to the Los Angeles Rams. Yes, only 9 points separated John McKay's chiefs from the team's first Super Bowl.

## Major Storylines

The Buccaneers, led by an improved Doug Williams and an even better defense than the year before, shocked the NFL with a 5-0 start to the 1979 season, ultimately leading to the franchise's first winning record and playoff berth.

Lee Roy Selmon was named NFL Defensive Player of the Year in 1979, thanks to his usual double-digit sack production to go with a ton of tackles, a defensive touchdown, and being the leader of the best defense in the league against the run and pass. Selmon said in an interview during the season that being around his teammates was a lot more fun than previous years, because of the winning environment.

But Selmon didn't, and couldn't, do it alone. Jeris White, Mike Washington and Cedric Brown continued to disrupt passing games from their defensive back positions, while Richard Wood and Dewey Selmon racked up tackles for the front seven. The defense was dominating, even in the season-ending loss to the Rams, while the offense sputtered and stalled more often than it ran smoothly.



## Games of the 1979 season

The Bucs opened the season with a win at home on September 1, 1979 against the Detroit Lions W(31-16) before 68,225. The game was played in Tampa Stadium before a nice crowd of 67,456. On Sep 9, the Bucs beat the Baltimore Colts in two OT periods, W (29-26) at Memorial Stadium before 36, 374. Then, on Sep 16, at Lambeau Field in Green Bay, the Bucs made it three in a row defeating the Packers W (21-10) before 55,498. Then, on Sep 23, the Bucs made it four in a row by defeating the Los Angeles Rams W (21-6) at home before 69,497. That was not it. On Sep 30 at Chicago, the Bucs made it five in a row. All good things must come to an end, but it was close. On Oct 7, at New York, the Giants beat the Bucs L (14-17) at Giants Stadium before a packed crowd of 72,841.

The NO Saints took advantage of the brief slide on Oct 14 L (14-42) at home before 67,640 for their second loss in a row. The Bucs won again on Oct 21 at home v Green Bay W (21-3) before 67,186. In a close game on Oct 28, the Bucs prevailed over the Minnesota Vikings W(12-10) at Metropolitan Stadium before 46,906. Then in a close loss on Nov 4 at Atlanta, the Falcons squeaked out a win v the Bucs L(14-17) before 55,150. On Nov 11, at Detroit, the Bucs beat the Lions W (16-14) at the Pontiac Silverdome before 70,461.

On Nov 18, the Bucs pounded the New York Giants at home W (31-3). Before 70,261. It would definitely be a winning season for Tampa Bay. On Nov 25, in a nail-biter, the Minnesota Vikings nosed out Bucs L (22-23) at home before 70,039. On Dec 2, the Chicago Bears edged out Tampa Bay at home L (0-14) before 69, 508. On Dec 9, San Francisco beat the Bucs at Candlestick Park L (7-23) before 44,506. In the season finale at home, on Dec 16, the Bucs edged out the Kansas City Chiefs W (3-0) before 63,624. This was a great season for the Bucs.

## The Playoffs--The NFC Championship Game:

Well folks, 1999 wasn't the only year that saw Tampa Bay fall short of the Super Bowl thanks to the LA Rams. Unfortunately the first time was this year, 1979 when the Rams knocked the Bucs out of the running for an NFL title with a 9-0 victory at Tampa Stadium—nine

points in an otherwise Cinderella season. Midnight came early for Cinderella unfortunately. It was just a three short field goal game—the only scoring the Rams could muster, but that was enough to overcome a lackluster Buccaneer offense that managed only 177 total yards. Finally the Bucs had arrived and were a force with which to be reckoned.

## Top Bucs Players Lee Roy Selman, De 1976-1984



Lee Roy Selman could have easily been the #1 Bucs pick in this position. Nonetheless, Selman was an incredible player, and had his career not been cut short, he likely would have become #1.

In college, Selman won two championships at Oklahoma, and was the first overall pick in the 1976 NFL Draft. Being the first overall pick is a huge honor, but how about being a franchise's first draft selection? Selman was the first-ever player selected by the new franchise in Tampa Bay, and he showed why in the nine seasons he spent there.

In those nine seasons, Selman recorded a total 78.5 sacks, and added in 28.5 forced fumbles (although sacks were not an official stat until 1982). That kind of production is very rare, and usually, results in numerous awards and honors. In 121 games, including 117 starts, Selman established himself as one of the league's premier pass-rushers, arguably the best.

A member of both the College and Pro Football Hall of Fame, Selman is an all-time legend in the sport of football. Selman is also a member of the Buccaneer Ring of Honor, inducted in 2009.

A back injury cut Selmon's career short, which is a real shame considering he surely would have continued to play at a high level for a number of additional years. Unfortunately, Selmon passed away due to a stroke in 2011. May he rest in peace.

The Tragic Death of Tampa Bay Buccaneers Legend on Lee Roy Selmon happened to an otherwise young man and a great football player on September 4, 2011

Selmon had paved the way for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers' tradition of employing excellent defensive players. He was among the best in the NFL. Long before the likes of defensive lineman Warren Sapp or linebacker Derrick Brooks, Selmon was the Buccaneers' first star player. It was tough to be a star for Tampa Bay during his time there. Nonetheless, Selmon created havoc in the trenches and retired as one of the NFL's first true sack artists.

Unfortunately for Selmon and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, he died very early in his life. He is a true Buccaneers legend., The fact is that when the Tampa Bay Buccaneers opened play in 1976, they did so with Lee Roy Selmon leading their defense. He was the bright light in an otherwise dim season. Tampa drafted Selmon, who was a standout defensive lineman at Oklahoma. He was the #1 overall pick in 1976. He made an immediate impact in Tampa Bay and earned second-team All-Pro honors by his third season.

The fourth year, 1979, is when Selmon really took off and led the team to its best season at the time. Over the next six seasons, Selmon reached the Pro Bowl every year and received first-team All-Pro honors three times in that span. He was the NFL Defensive Player of the Year in 1979 at just 25 years old. He is one of the NFL's most important pass-rushers

Lee Roy Selmon's official stats are incomplete, both on websites like Pro-Football-Reference and on his official Pro Football Hall of Fame page. That is a relevant fact because Selmon played a significant role in the NFL introducing sacks as an official stat in 1982.

Selmon bullied opposing offensive linemen and frequently racked up sacks in a time where those numbers weren't recorded or saved to time. The likes of Selmon and Giants star Lawrence Taylor were so dominant that the NFL needed to correctly identify how many sacks a player had.

Selmon had 23 sacks from 1982-84, his final three seasons. The Tampa Bay Buccaneers estimate Selmon unofficially had 78.5 sacks in his nine NFL seasons. What a record. He retired after the 1984 season because of a back injury. He was so good and so popular that the Buccaneers retired his No. 63 in 1986 and inducted him into their Ring of Honor in November 2009.

Selmon entered the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1995. He paved the way for others such as Defensive linemen Warren Sapp and linebacker Derrick Brooks who followed him to the Hall of Fame in the 2010s. Lee Roy Selmon tragically died way too young He tragically suffered a massive stroke on Sept. 2, 2011. Two days later, Selmon died at only 56 years old.

### **1980 John McKay, Coach #1**

The 1980 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their fifth season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. They were led by John McKay in his fifth season of nine as head coach. This Buccaneers team finished with a record of 5-10-1, just one year after winning in double digits for the first time.

It was their 5th season playing their home games at Tampa Stadium. After their best season ever, this season began with an air of great confidence that had never been seen since the franchise began. Heck they had won the right to play in the NFC championship game just the year before in season 4. After scoring a playoff win in only their fourth year, Tampa Bay became the model franchise upon which the NBA expansion Dallas Mavericks adopted their building plan.

Even their preseason in 1980 was positive with the team going 3-1 and they topped that off with victories in their first two regular-season games, including an NFC championship rematch against the LA Rams in the Buccaneers first Monday Night Football game. . The beginning belied what would immediately happen by giving an

early impression that the Bucs had become a force that had truly arrived and were ready to engage.

The confidence quickly dissipated as the offense began to consistently underachieve, while opponents appeared to have figured out the Buccaneers' once stalwart 3–4 defense. Then, came the injuries. It seemed to begin with the Rams game, which required playing many inexperienced players who proved not to be as ready as management had thought. Losses mounted as opponents kept taking advantage of the Buccaneers' "bend but don't break" defensive strategy. They supposedly prevented big plays while allowing small gains.

By the time week 6 came about, they recorded their first, and as of 2020, only tie in their history. It was a 14–14 contest v the Green Bay Packers. There were some bright spots such as Doug Williams setting numerous Buccaneer passing records while leading the NFC in combined yardage. They also had a strong draft class.[4] The season quickly became like what had been their usual struggle. Teams began to unload their passing games in response to various league rule changes, while the Bucs defense was exposed as a superior run defense that had difficulty against better passing attacks. It was disabling.

It was so bad that a number of league quarterbacks who were not the best had career-best days against Tampa Bay during the season. Additionally, Tampa Bay had trouble maintaining consistency in the face of injuries and too many personnel turnovers. This phenomenon actually began in the preseason when the team traded Jeris White and it became the norm through the injury-plagued regular season. The most serious injury was to Randy Crowder. Who dislocated his knee in week 2 and it actually ended his career when his leg nearly required amputation.

The offense slowly improved through the season. Doug Williams kept getting better and more mature as a QB and rookie receiver Kevin House became a reliable target. But, as the season wore on, the team began to show the worst parts of John McKay's volatile personality. McKay who was otherwise affable frequently found himself in situations in which he loudly argued with officials and

criticized them incessantly. Tampa Bay picked up a reputation as a bunch of complainers according to qualified reporters.

The team lacked enthusiasm and Coach McKay eventually noticed that it was not playing in the same way they had the previous year. Of course after heading to the Super Bowl one year and failing as they did this year, eventually even the fan frustration showed.

Signs such as "Throw McKay in the Bay" began to reappear at home games. Only because no other team was dominant in the division despite their poor performance, they were still alive in the division race until a "then" happened. The "then" was a second-half collapse against the Minnesota Vikings with just three games left in the season. Until then, the Bucs were still in the mix.

Week 14 then guaranteed that they would finish the season with a losing record. McKay himself a positive figure was disgusted, and he described the season as feeling "cursed". I had a friend who would have described it better than McKay, but it meant the same. My buddy, the late George Mohanco would say, "Sometimes you eat the bear and sometimes the bear eats you. Knowing that in 2021, TBB won a second Super Bowl, it has become an unsafe place for bears on the west coast of Florida.

### **Games of the 1980 Season**

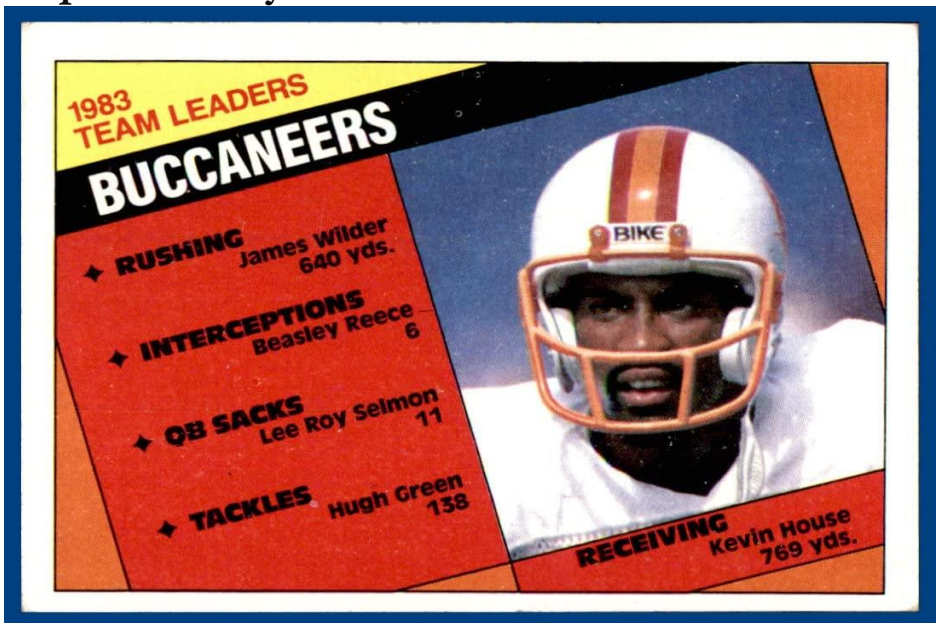
The Bucs opened the season with two wins beginning on September 1, 1980 against the Cincinnati Bengals W (17-12) at Riverfront Stadium before 35,551, and then a W (10-9) revenge victory over the LA Rams at home on Sept 11 Monday Night Football at home in Tampa Stadium before 66,576.

Then the season collapsed. On Sep 21, the Dallas Cowboys whipped the Bucs at L (17-28) in Texas Stadium before 62,750. In Tampa Stadium on Sep 28, the Cleveland Browns picked off the Bucs L (27-34) before 65,540. On Oct 6 at Chicago, the Bears pounded the Bucs in a shutout L (0-23) at Soldier Field before 61,350. Then, on Oct 12, the Bucs played in their first tie v the Green Bay Packers T (14-14) in OT 2-3-1 Tampa Stadium 64,854. On Oct 19 at Houston, the Oilers beat the Bucs L (14-20) in the Houston Astrodome before 48,167.

On Oct 26, the Bucs nosed out the 49ers in Candlestick Park W (24–23) before 51,925. On Nov 2, Tampa Bay beat W (30–13) in Tampa Stadium before 68,256. At home on Nov 9, at home, the Pittsburgh Steelers defeated Tampa Bay L (21–24) before 71,636. On Nov 16, at Minnesota, the Vikings beat the Bucs L(30–3) at Metropolitan Stadium before 46,032. On Nov 23 at home, the Detroit Lions beat the Bucs L (10–24) before 64,976.

On Nov 30 at Green Bay, the Bucs beat the Packers W (20–17) at Milwaukee County Stadium before 54,225. On Dec 7 at home, the Minnesota Vikings prevailed L (10–21) before 65,649. On Dec 14, at Detroit, the Lions beat Tampa Bay L (14–27) at the Pontiac Silverdome before 77,098. Then, in the season finale at home, on Dec 20, the Chicago Bears nosed out the Bucs L (13–14) before 55,298. The Buccaneers record was 5–10–1. They were a better team than their record.

## Top Bucs Players Kevin House WR 1980-1986



Another old school Buccaneer who was pivotal in establishing the franchise in the NFL comes in at No. 21. Kevin House began his career in Tampa Bay after the team drafted him in the second round

of the 1980 NFL Draft. Not necessarily a household name coming out of Southern Illinois, House surely made a name for himself after nine seasons in the league, seven of which with the Buccaneers.

With guys like Doug Williams and Steve DeBerg throwing him the ball, House had his work cut out for him. Williams is considered one of the best quarterbacks in Tampa Bay lore, but that is more indicative of a lack of talent at the position. William's career 47.2 percent completion rate is laughably bad, but he is not the focus here (there's a reason he didn't make this list). Regardless, House performed well on some pretty bad teams led by some lackluster quarterbacking.

Over the course of his seven seasons with the Buccaneers, House accumulated nearly 5,000 receiving yards. His 4,928 yards actually ranks second all-time in franchise history, only behind Mark Carrier, who will appear later in these rankings.

House may have ended his career with the Rams in Los Angeles, but he will always be remembered for his efforts in Florida. House was a speedster that possessed good height standing at 6-foot-1. Regarded as the first great receiver in team history, House's name is everywhere in the franchise record books.

### **1981 John McKay, Coach #1**

The 1981 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their sixth season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. They were led by John McKay in his sixth season of nine as head coach. This Buccaneers team finished with a winning record of 9-7, just two years after winning in double digits for the first time.

This Tampa Bay Team was solid. In fact the pundits suggest that it was superior to the 1979 team that almost was in the Super Bowl—one game from the big ring. The Bucs this year did not have much of a running game and special teams were also ineffective. So what is left. The Bucs depended heavily on the pass, and particularly on the big play. Jimmy Giles was healthy and he came back strong this year. He set numerous team receiving records.



Doug Williams at QB was born again as a great player along with Jim Zorn, the second active quarterback to need only four seasons to reach the 10,000 career passing yards mark. Williams was on the mark most of the year and made the fans proud. The defense held its own literally and were not the pushovers of the prior year. This was a change that McKay attributed to less reliance on blitzes, and an overall improvement in speed with a better secondary along with Hugh Green joining the team from the draft.

This version of the Bucs defense allowed the fewest touchdowns of any NFL team, and even opponents described their "D" opponents as "outstanding" and "almost awesome". Despite such bright spots, the Bucs were dogged by inconsistent play throughout the season. Players and coaches believed the Buccaneers were a playoff-worthy team. However, like the pundits say about certain politicians, the team had a tendency to self-destruct. This kept them on the edge of the playoff race, thanks in part to a failure of any other team to take control in either the NFC Central division or the NFC wild-card chase. The team came in first place in the Central Division.

Opposing coach expressed surprise about how good the Bucs really could be. For example, Dick Vermeil, a long-time Philadelphia favorite and an honest broker of ideas said, "I'm not sure they know how good they are." Vermeil's Eagles beat the Buccaneers despite having been admittedly outplayed. Nevertheless, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers eventually developed a maturity through the season. This permitted the Bucs to remain competitive instead of collapsing when behind or when being outplayed. Can you imagine where the Bucs would have been without mature, intelligent coach such as John McKay.

Late-season coaching adjustments did improve the TBB effectiveness of the offense and it also cut down on the other teams' ability to control the ball against the defense. This gave the Bucs a real reason to play with more confidence, and less predictability. They executed much better than in the past which resulted in a three-game winning streak that ultimately put them in charge of their own destiny and in control of the division race.

The regular season culminated in a final game matchup between the Buccaneers and the once hapless Detroit Lions. This pegged two 8–7 teams, each looking for the division lead at the Pontiac Silverdome. This was great for the Lions who had gone undefeated at home all season long. The Buccaneers won the encounter and were able to enter the playoffs as the number three seed in the NFC.

They had not generated enough moxie in their own division to eclipse the Dallas Cowboys who pounded them in a 38–0 rout. It was an embarrassment that ended another Cinderella System even before Midnight. It tied an NFL record for largest margin of victory in a playoff game.

### **Games of the 1981 Season**

The Bucs opened the season with a home win on September 5, 1981 against the Minnesota Vikings W (21-13) before 66,287. Then, on Sep 13, at Kansas City's Arrowhead Stadium, the Chiefs prevailed L (19–10) before 50,555. On Sep 20, at Chicago, the Bears whooped the Bucs L (28–17) at Soldier Field before 60,130. On Sep 27, the Bucs beat the St. Louis Cardinals W (20–10) at home before 65,850. On Oct 4, a home game at Tampa Stadium on my 6<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, the Bucs were able to beat the Detroit Lions W (28–10) before 71,733.

On Oct 11, at Green Bay, the TBB beat the Packers W (21–10) at Lambeau Field before 52,264. On Oct 18, at Oakland, the Bucs lost to the Raiders L 16–18 at Alameda County Coliseum before 42,28. Then, on Oct 25, at Philadelphia, the Bucs lost to the Eagles L (10–20) at Veterans Stadium before 70,174. On Nov 1, the Bucs beat the Chicago Bears at home W (20–10) before 68,688. Then, on Nov 8, 1981 at Minnesota, the Vikings defeated the Bucs L (10–25) at Metropolitan Stadium before 47,038. On Nov 15, at home, the Bucs were defeated by the Denver Broncos L (7-24) before 64,518.

On Nov 22, the Bucs resurrected their season by walloping the Green Bay Packers W (37–3) at home before 63,251. On Nov 29, at New Orleans, the Bucs beat the Saints W (31–14) at the Louisiana Superdome before 62,2097. On Dec 6, the Bucs nosed out the Atlanta Falcons W (24–23) at home before 69,221. In the second-last game of the year, the Dec 13, the San Diego Chargers nosed out

the Bucs L (23–24) at home in Tampa Stadium before 67,388. Then to wrap up an OK season on Dec 20, at Detroit, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers beat the Lions W (20–17) at the Pontiac Silverdome before a ton of fans 80,444. The Bucs finished at 9–7 with a number of close games. McKay almost brought in another two-digit win year.

The Bucs made the playoffs.

### **The NFC Divisional Playoff**

On January 2, 1982, the Dallas Cowboys were able to pound the Tampa Bay Buccaneers L (0–38). The game was played at Texas Stadium before 64,840.

### **Top Bucs Players James Wilder RB 1981-1989**



Like Jimmie Giles was the franchise's best tight end, James Wilder is the team's best ever running back by a wide margin. From 1981 to 1989, Wilder held down the Buccaneers running game, carrying essentially the entire load by himself. Need some proof?

Wilder led the team in rushing in six consecutive seasons, SIX!

Wilder could do it all, rush, catch and help out in pass protection. Running through the stats, several key figures stand out to me. First off, Wilder tops the franchise's list of rushing leaders by nearly 900 yards. Wilder's total as a Buccaneer rounded out at 5,957, adding 51 more yards in Detroit to bring his career total to 6,008.

The next closest in franchise history? Fullback Mike Alstott with 5,088 yards. That difference is quite significant, and should be enough proof to label Wilder as the best running back in team history, and rank him 10th overall on this all-time list.

But for those who still doubt it, here's some more. Wilder holds two of the top four single-season rushing marks in franchise history, one of which being the highest total. In 1984, which somehow was his only Pro-Bowl season, Wilder set the single-season record with 1,544 yards. He also tossed in 13 touchdowns for good measure. That kind of production is hard to find, and even harder to sustain over the course of multiple seasons.

Although Wilder only had two seasons with 1,000 plus rushing yards, he also never really had a true 'bust' season. The best running back in team history sneaks in to the top-10, but he sets the bar really high for those who finish ahead of him.

## **1982 John McKay, Coach #1**

The 1982 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their seventh season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. They were led by John McKay in his seventh season of nine as head coach. This Buccaneers team finished with a winning record of 5-4, in this strike shortened season just two years after winning in double digits for the first time.

This Tampa Bay Team was solid. In fact the pundits suggest that it was superior to the 1979 team that almost was in the Super Bowl—one game from the big ring. The Bucs this year did not have much of a running game and special teams were also ineffective. So what is left. The Bucs depended heavily on the pass, and particularly on the

big play. Jimmy Giles was healthy, and he came back strong this year. he set numerous team receiving records.

The seventh season for the Bucs in the NFL had the 7th team playing their home games at Tampa Stadium and. As noted, it was the 7th season under head coach McKay as already discussed. After some success, the Bucs were regarded for the first time as a regular playoff contender. They were considered by some pundits as the best Buccaneer team yet, despite a mediocre offensive line and the lack of a feature running back. Nobody is blessed with everything.

This Bucs team was not responsible for this poor season. They had played just two games before the players' union called a strike, Fans did not like strikes and were unsympathetic to the labor strike, which resulted in a nine-game season. The Bucs began with a three-game losing streak, though they outplayed opponent statistically in each game, they showed a tendency for mental errors at crucial moments.

The first game in which they were outgained by their opponent was their first win, a franchise-first victory over the Miami Dolphins in a Monday Night Football game. Strange season. The team went on to make a playoff run against a difficult schedule in that they faced only two opponents with losing records.

They played all four eventual Conference Championship participants. Tough games. They overcame double-digit deficits to win on last-minute field goals in their final two games. Their kicker goa lot of work during the season—so much so that Bill Capece was the NFC's second leading scorer. The Bucs had to survive their opponents' last-minute rallies in all five of their victories.

The playoff format because of the strike was much different. The top eight conference teams automatically were in the playoffs. Thus, the Buccaneers' seventh-place finish gave them a first-round matchup with the Dallas Cowboys. They did well compared to their last outing v the Cowboys. In fact, even though the offense performed poorly, the Buccaneers carried a 17-16 lead into the fourth quarter, but they could not hold the lead unfortunately.

The Cowboys rallied for a 30–17 victory following a controversial penalty call. This would be the last playoff appearance of the John McKay era, and was followed by fourteen consecutive losing seasons. Hindsight is 20-20. The Bucs had one poor coach after another through the period post McKay. It helped the fans know just how good McKay was to get the most out of the “poor” talent provided by Hugh Culverhouse Sr.

The year began with an exodus. McKay’s longtime defensive coordinator Tom Bass took several players with him when he left for San Diego. Something was up Pundits wondered out loud why the defensive coordinator who had enjoyed success at Tampa after building the defenses that always ranked at or near the top, would leave in such a hurry. They also were concerned as to why a number of top players and even former MVPs had been traded away.

One thing that was quickly learned is that the team installed a new Wayne Fontes-designed defensive philosophy. Fontes had been the secondary defensive coach under McKay. The new scheme featured tighter coverage to reduce the number of small gains, and increased blitzing to thwart opponents' practice of double-teaming star LB Lee Roy Selmon. Even with the changes, the team was still regarded as having one of the quickest, hardest-hitting defenses in the NFL. It was aa defense which ranked first in the NFC.

In the later part of the season, the offense began to jell, taking a part in the victories in much the same way as the “D.” In particular, the O-line allowed the fewest sacks in the league, while the running game improved. Despite improvements there was still a lot of sniping at the O-line’s ability to get in gear when it got behind. .

Too bad as this was a major issue in the playoff loss to Dallas. QB Williams just could not recover from a bad start. After the season, the Bucs got three pro-bowl nominations and with the greats-- Jimmie Giles, Hugh Green, and Lee Roy Selmon playing in the Pro Bowl.

### **The Games of the 1982 Season**

The Bucs opened up their season with loss on September 12, 1982at Minnesota’s Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome. The Vikings

prevailed L (10-17) before 58,440. On Sep 19, Washington defeated the Bucs L (13—21) at Tampa Stadium before 66,187. After the Player's strike, the third loss in a row occurred on November 21, at Dallas. The Cowboys won again v the Bucs L (9—14) at Texas Stadium before 49,578. The players had sat for two months waiting for the league to restart. It was not a definite, but the sides eventually settled. On Nov 29, the Bucs picked up win #1 for 1982 at home and their first victory over the in-state favorite Miami Dolphins W (23—17) before 65,854. On Dec 5, 1982 at New Orleans, the Bucs beat the Saints W (13—10) in the Louisiana Superdome before 61,709.

On Dec 12, at New York, the Jets defeated the Bucs L (17—32) at Shea Stadium before 28,147. Then, on Dec 19, 1982, Tampa Bay nosed out the Buffalo Bill W (24—23) at home in Tampa Stadium before 62,510. On the day after Christmas, Dec 26, the Bucs edged out the Detroit Lions at home W (23—21) before 65,997. Then, in the season finale, Tampa Bay picked up another win to cap off a good season on Jan 2, as they edged out the Chicago Bears at home W (26—23) in OT before 68,112. The Bucs therefore finished the regular season in this nine game strike shortened year at 5-4.

### **NFC First Round Playoff Game**

On January 9, 1983 at Dallas, after being ahead of the Cowboys for most of the game, the Bucs faltered, and the Cowboys beat them L (17—30) at 4:00 in Texas Stadium before 65,042. With the playoff loss, the Bucs finished at 5—5

### **1983 John McKay, Coach #1**

The 1983 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their eighth season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. They were led by John McKay in his eighth season of nine as head coach. This Buccaneers team finished with a very poor record of 2-14. In 1983, the team came apart at the seams again. John McKay was preparing for his last year which would be 1984..

This Tampa Bay Team was anything but solid. It was reminiscent of the first two years. This eighth season was also the 8th playing their home games at Tampa Stadium. They more than failed to improve on their 5-4 record from 1982 and finished with a league-worst 2-14 record. They went into their excuse bag and found it easy to blame the poor results on personnel changes and a rash of injuries. They missed the playoffs for the first time since 1980. There were few highlights to the season.

The ownership was unable to agree on a contract with quarterback Doug Williams, so he left the organization for the USFL. Losing a franchise long-term QB is tough for any team to endure. Consequently, the loss of Doug Williams was believed to be a major distraction to the team. Expecting negotiations not to go well with Williams, the team acquired Jack Thompson from the Cincinnati Bengals as a just-in-case move. They gave up a draft choice that would turn out to be the top pick in the. Amazingly incompetent.

After the Buccaneers' first-ever undefeated preseason, there were high expectations. Nonetheless, they lost their first game and kept on losing. To say they missed Doug Williams' strong arm would be an understatement. They had sealed their fate with poor personnel management. Running back James Wilder, Sr. became Thompson's primary target for short passes. The team was neither successful at running or completing long passes. They did lose a number of close games, but they plum failed to execute at the worst of times.

McKay was frustrated and said: "I think the other teams looking at us respect us. I don't think anyone is volunteering to play us." So what John? Bud Grant, a long-time Minnesota Vikings coach offered his comment on the subject: "they were losing games they should've won.". The Bucs made it to overtime several times during the season—in fact they scored a record number of overtime games league-wide. The problem seems to be that they had lost the notion of how to win.

Nine of their losses were by a touchdown or less, and six were by a field goal or less. That's either bad luck, bad playing, or bad coaching or all three. They even had problems with their kicking game, which led to McKay's famous pronouncement that his kicker



was “kaput.” Bill Capece had lost the confidence of his coach this year.

Unfortunately, this was not the last of bad things for the Bucs for a lot of years. The next few chapters are going to be as interesting as I can make them, but the team was off the rails in a big way. I hope it is not hard to read, I regret as our team began in 1983 an NFL-record streak of fourteen consecutive losing seasons. Thirteen of these saw our team lose at least ten games. That is simply poor play folks. Many pundits blame the problem with positive results on the team ownership and their aversion to spending what was necessary to win.

This year, admittedly, Injuries plagued the team. In one of the only bright spots, James Wilder emerged as one of the NFL's best running backs. Yet, even he could not finish the season after he was injured. Being among the injured might have been the safest place for any player. Eighteen different players spent time on the injured reserve list over the course of this one season. Worse than that, only three players were consistently healthy enough to start all sixteen games.

Every member of the offensive line for example, suffered an early-season injury. That is not the end of it. The linebackers and the defensive backfield were also hit hard. McKay blamed the team's problems on a total lack of effort and threatened personnel changes, while admitting that replacements would not be readily found.

As typically happens with poor results, the fans complain rather than throw support in the team's direction. Attendance as would be expected declined. The fans who really cared called for McKay's retirement. Owner Hugh Culverhouse, who had never acknowledged a relationship between a great record and a great investment, was happy to announce that he expected a loss of \$1.25 million due to declining ticket sales. T-shirts and programs and other memorabilia are not in demand with a team and a poor record.. So, it was expected by all but Culverhouse that merchants would report a drop in merchandise sales.

The team's final 2–14 record for this season made all the mocking real. The Bucs had tied them with the lowliest of them all – the Houston Oilers for the league's worst mark. Somehow, nonetheless, the Buccaneers were awarded last place over the Oilers by virtue of their opponents' worse combined winning percentage. They stunk the place out and the fans did not like breathing the air even in Tampa Stadium. Poo Tink would be an appropriate summation by my three year old children. !

### **Games of the 1983 Season**

The Bucs opened up their season at home with a loss against the Detroit Lions L (0-11) on September 4, 1982, in Tampa Stadium before 62,154. Then, a week later on Sep 11, at Chicago, the Bears prevailed L 10–17) at Soldier Field before 58,156. On Sep 18, 1983, the Minnesota Vikings edged out the Bucs L (16–19) in OT at home. Before 57,567. Then, on Sep 25, the Cincinnati Bengals minimally outscored the Bucs L (17–23) at home before 56,023.

On Oct 2, at Green Bay, the Packers pounded the Bucs L (55–14) at Lambeau Field before 54,272. At Dallas on Oct 9, the Cowboys edged out the Bucs L (24–27) in OT at Texas Stadium before 63,308. At home on Oct 16, the St. Louis Cardinals edged out the Bucs L (27–34) at home in Tampa Stadium before 48,224. The record was now 0-7. Whew! Then, on Oct 23 at home, the New Orleans Saints edged out the Bucs L (21–24) at home in Tampa Stadium before 48,242.

On Oct 30, at Pittsburgh, the Steelers squeaked out a victory over the Bucs L (12–17) at Three Rivers Stadium before 57,648. Then, on Nov 6, at Minnesota, the Bucs finally won a game v the Vikings W (17–12) at Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome before 59,239. Then, on Nov 13, at Cleveland, the Browns shut out the Bucs L (0–20) at Cleveland Stadium before 56,091. On Nov 20, at home, the Chicago Bears pounded the Bucs L (0–27) at home in Tampa Stadium before 36,816.

On Nov 27, the Bucs finally put together enough moxie to beat another NFL team—the Houston Oilers W (33–24) at home in Tampa Stadium before 38,625. The record was now at 2–11, but the pain was not over. On Dec 4, at San Francisco, the 49ers prevailed L

21–35) at Candlestick Park before 49,773. On Dec 12, at home, the Green Bay Packers defeated the Bucs L (12–9) in OT at Tampa Stadium before 50,763. On Dec 18, in the season finale or a poor season, the Detroit Lions edged out the Tampa Bay Buccaneers L (20–23) at the Pontiac Silverdome before a nice crowd of 78,392.

### **1984 John McKay, Coach #1**

The 1984 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their ninth season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. They were led by John McKay in his ninth and last of nine seasons as head Bucs coach. This Buccaneers team finished with a very poor record of 6-10 but the record was 200% better than the prior season's 2-14. In 1984, the team appeared better than in 1983 but things were not right. John McKay had decided this was his last year at the helm, but he tried to win anyway.

This ninth season was also the 9th for the Bucs to be playing their home games at Tampa Stadium. They did improve somewhat on their 2-14 record from 1983 but not enough to matter. They improved on their 2–14 season and finished 6-10, but again they missed the playoffs for the second straight season.

The team had a lot of problems left over from 1983 and they tried in 1984 to address those that they could. To say the least, 1983 was a disappointing 1983 season. For the first time, the team started a policy to renegotiate the contracts of players in their option years, which kept discontent over salaries this year to a minimum. Another assistant coach was added to perform the functions of an offensive coordinator. A strength coach was also added to the mix. This helped improved the players' physical conditioning in hopes of avoiding the constant injuries that occurred all the time in 1983.

One major improvement was that they were able to develop a stable offensive lineup with the maturity to sustain long drives in pressure situations. Moreover, head coach John McKay began to move away from his long-criticized conservative play-calling and he opened up the offense. 1984 was the first time that the team's offense finished the season ranked higher than their defense.

Their offensive output this year still ranks as the third-highest in team history, as of 2010). It was not matched by another Buccaneer team until 2003. Yet despite all the pluses their record was still not respectable.

James Wilder Sr., who Lawrence Taylor praised by calling him "the best running back I've ever played against in my life", set team and NFL records. Understandably, Wilder became the focal point of the team's offense. Steve DeBerg at QB came of age and became a stable, confidence-inspiring on-field leader. Kevin House did a fine job by continuing to perform as one of the league's best wide receivers, and Gerald Carter came into his own as a solid complement.

Hugh Green was described by Mike Ditka as "one of the best two linebackers in the game along with Lawrence Taylor). Green maintained his usual field dominance until as Bucs luck would have it, the was hurt in a midseason automobile accident. On the "D" line, Dave Logan became the youngest of only four defensive linemen in NFL history to score four touchdowns. He impressed the pundits so much that he began to be spoken of as a potential All-Pro. That of course for the luck of the Bucs was until a case of sore knees limited his movement later in the season.

Lee Roy Selmon again made the Pro Bowl in 1984. This would be his final season. As expected, as the team's best defensive players began to fall to injuries, they team became prone to late-game collapses making victories even more difficult to achieve.

Additionally, the team was fraught with the same type of mental errors that had characterized them from the beginning. This too contributed to a number of close losses. McKay had his own health issues during the season. He had been a winner in his coaching career, and he found the constant losing too much to bear. On November 5, the only coach in Buccaneer history at that point, announced that he would resign at the end of the season. He kept his word but the news to the team was unsettling. It took thirteen more years after McKay to have a winning season as the Bucs simply could not find a coach who could bring them success.

## Games of the 1984 Season

The Bucs opened up this season at Chicago's Soldier Field on September 2, 1984. The Chicago Bears pounded the Bucs L (14–34) before 58,789. On Sep 9, at New Orleans, the Saints edged out the Bucs L (13–17) at the Louisiana Superdome before 54,686. Then, on Sep 16, the Bucs got their first win against the Detroit Lions W (21–17) at home in Tampa Stadium before 44,560. Note that attendance was declining as the team's record faltered. On Sep 23, at New York Giants Stadium, the Giants edged out the Bucs L (14–17) before 72,650.

At home on Sep 30, the Bucs edged out the Green Bay Packers W (30–27) in OT before 44,487. It was two in a row for the Bucs on Oct 7, at home as the Bucs beat the Minnesota Vikings in another close game before 47,405. At Detroit's Pontiac Silverdome on Oct 14, the Lions prevailed L (7–13) in OT before 44,308. Then, on Oct 21, at home, the Bucs were pounded by the Chicago Bears L (9–44) before 60,003. At the halfway mark in the season the record was 3–5.

At Kansas City's Arrowhead Stadium, on Oct 28, the Chiefs edged out the Bucs before 41,710. At Minnesota on Nov 4, the Vikings edged out the Bucs L (24–27) in the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome before 54,949. On Nov 11, at home, the Bucs edged out the New York Giants W (20–17) before 46,534. Then, on Nov 18, at San Francisco, the 49ers defeated the Bucs L (17–24) in Candlestick Park before 57,704.

On Nov 25, in a nail biter, at home, the LA Rams nosed out the Bucs L (33–34) before 42,242. Then, at Green Bay on Dec 2, the packers defeated the Bucs at Lambeau Field L (14–27) before 46,800. After this game the Bucs record was 4–10. A brief wakeup call occurred, and they won their last two games. On Dec 9, at home the Bucs beat the Atlanta Falcons W (23–6) before a low crowd level of 33,808. Then, in the season finale, on Dec 16, the Bucs took their second game in a row—this one was from the New York Jets W (41–21) at home in Tampa Stadium before 43,817. The season record was a poor 6–10. It would only get worse.



# Chapter 14 Coaches Bennett, Perkins & Williamson; 1985 to 1991

- Coach #2 Leeman Bennett
- Coach #3 Ray Perkins
- Coach #4 Richard Williamson



Leeman Bennett 2<sup>nd</sup> Buccaneers Coach

<u>Year</u>	<u>Record</u>	<u>Place Conf/ Div</u>	<u>Playoffs</u>	<u>Coaches.</u>
1991	3-13-0	5th -- NFC Central--		Richard Williamson
1990	6-10-0	T2nd NFC Central--		Ray Perkins & R.Williamson
1989	5-11-0	5th -- NFC Central--		Ray Perkins
1988	5-11-0	3rd -- NFC Central--		Ray Perkins
1987	4-11-0	T4th -NFC Central--		Ray Perkins
1986	2-14-0	5th -- NFC Central--		Leeman Bennett
1985	2-14-0	5th -- NFC Central--		Leeman Bennett

## 1985 Leeman Bennett, Coach #2

Even with a great coach such as John McKay at the helm of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers for nine years, there was something unexplainably wrong with the team. Nobody really talked about it, but it seemed to be endemic and systemic and not something that could be shaken by changing a few players or some strategies. The

Bucs were consistently bad and when they seemed to improve it seemed that a hex was placed on them and like a witch's spell, they could not shake it.

By all factors, McKay was a fine coach and should have been able to get the Bucs onto a consistently winning program. But he failed and it affected him. Now the Bucs were ready to bring in a new coach who again should have been able to affect their record positively.

On a Wednesday in January 1985, after being introduced as the new coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Leeman Bennett said the right thing in the minds of his listeners. He said he was "a people guy." He said he liked to be close to his players.

Bennett, 46 was not a slouch. He was a good pick. He had been the head coach of the Atlanta Falcons from 1977 to 1982. Atlanta had joined the NFL in 1966 as an Expansion Team and his 47-44 record was the best of any Falcons coach to that point. Before Bennett, the 1966 Expansion team had a very poor 5-107 record and just a few winning seasons.

Under Bennett, Atlanta made the playoffs three times and they had a 1-3 record in postseason games. Atlanta had never been a Super Bowl team before Bennett, but they improved substantially under his mentorship. He set the stage for Atlanta as a winning team. That's just what the Bucs needed in 1985

Since Bennett, The Falcons have appeared in two Super Bowls, but it took a while. Their first Super Bowl was during the 1998 season in game # XXXIII. They lost this outing to the Denver Broncos 34-19. Their second chance was 18 years later, and the second was 18 years later in a 34-28 overtime loss to the New England Patriots in Super Bowl LI. I remember that game.

Bennett replaced a legendary coach who had a tough time moving his team to consistent victories. John McKay was the only coach Tampa Bay ever had in its nine-year NFL history. Eye problems forced McKay to resign after the last season, when the Bucs went 6-10. He moved up to president of the organization.



Bennett was introduced to the press by team owner Hugh Culverhouse and McKay, who told his successor, "I thought I'd just let you know that you'll be working for one of the best presidents of all time." I suspect McKay felt that way for real but his enthusiasm for the owner was not shared by all.

Many observers felt the Bucs would have difficulty finding a coach of Bennett's caliber as long as McKay was still involved in the organization. The suspicion was that McKay, who had the favor of Culverhouse, would continue to run the team.

"I'd rather have a guy here who knows football watching me than a guy who doesn't," Bennett said.

Bennett added that he had the assurance of Culverhouse and McKay that he would have complete control of the football team.

No details of Bennett's contract were announced. Even though he had not coached since 1982, he did continue to draw a salary from the Falcons on his previous contract.

Wayne Fontes, the Bucs defensive coordinator, was disappointed. He was the current Bucs assistant head coach and defensive coordinator. He was considered Bennett's chief opposition for the job. Bennett said Fontes would not stay with the team, but he did not anticipate any problems from players who had supported the Bucs' assistant.

Bennett said he had no idea if he would keep any of the other coaches or if he would hire any of his previous assistants at Atlanta.

He said he hoped to have his staff named by mid-February.

Culverhouse announced that "Leeman is a proven winner...he brought about the greatest days of the Atlanta Falcons. He comes highly recommended and I have been highly impressed with him in a series of interviews. He is highly organized and motivated."

In private, Culverhouse said that choosing someone other than Fontes had caused him "great anguish." He said the difference was

that Bennett "had won in the NFL as a head coach. That was his edge."

The 1985 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their tenth season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. They were led by Leeman Bennett in his first of two seasons as head Bucs coach. This Buccaneers team finished with the same poor record of 2-14 as in McKay's second-last season. John McKay had assumed a front office position of team president. He had decided 1984 would be his last year at the helm but he tried to win anyway.

This tenth season was also the 10<sup>th</sup> for the Bucs to be playing their home games at Tampa Stadium. They regressed on their 6-10 record from 1984 and it was not at all a positive first year for Coach Bennett. They missed the playoffs for the third straight season. They finished in last place in their division

It was bad news after bad news the whole season long. For example, in week 1, Tampa Bay held a 28-17 halftime lead over the eventual Super Bowl winners the Chicago Bears. As a matter of fact, both games vs Chicago's Bears had Tampa Bay leading at halftime.

Steve Young came from the USFL with major contract issues. Eventually, he signed a series of six one-year contracts with the Buccaneers. He won his first start against the Detroit Lions before the Bucs losses began to pile up. One game he actually had to play in a foot of snow in Green Bay.

As noted, The Buccaneers finished 2-14, which was a familiar spot as the worst in the NFL. The team lost its first 9 games before shutting out the Cardinals at home 16-0 to finally get in the win column. Their change in luck did not last, as just one week later, the team was humiliated, 62-28, in New York by the Jets.

This was a huge embarrassment and the nails in Bennet's coffin began to increase. It was the most points allowed by any team during the 1980s and surely the most allowed in franchise history. After a win in overtime against the Lions, the Buccaneers would play dead and they lost 3 straight games to end this ignominious season.

The Bucs opened up this season at Chicago's Soldier Field on September 8, 1985. The Chicago Bears defeated the Bucs L (28-38) before 57,828. On Sep 15, at home, the Minnesota Vikings beat the Bucs L (16-31) before 46,188. On Sep 22 at New Orleans, the Saints beat the Bucs L (13-20) at the Louisiana Superdome before 45,320. Then, on Sep 29, at Detroit, the Lions pounded the Bucs L 9-30) at the Pontiac Silverdome before 45,023.

On Oct 6, in the second meeting this year, Chicago's Bears again defeated the Bucs L (19-27) this time at Tampa Stadium before 51,795. Then, on Oct 13, at home, the LA Rams beat the Bucs L (27-31) before 39,607. At Miami on Oct 20, the Dolphins edged out the Bucs L (38-41) at the Orange Bowl before 62,335. Then, on Oct 27, the New England Patriots took apart the Bucs L (14-32) at home before 34,661.

On Nov 3, at New York, the Giants edged out the Bucs L (20-22) at Giants Stadium before 72,031. At this point after the midpoint in the season, the record was 0-9. Pretty sad performance. On Nov 10, the Bucs broke out of the funk temporarily by beating the St. Louis Cardinals W (16-0) at home in Tampa Stadium before a minimal crowd of 34,736. At New York's Meadowland Stadium on Nov 17, the Jets walloped the Bucs in a slaughter L 62-28 before 65,344. Then, the Tampa Bay squad took the shaming and came back with a win on Nov 24 when they edged out the Detroit Lions W (19-16) in OT at home before 43,471.

On Dec 1, at Green Bay, the Packers whooped the Bucs in a shutout at Lambeau Field L (0-21) before 19,856. Then, on Dec 8, at Minnesota, the Vikings ripped the Bucs L (7-26) at Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome before 51,593. On Dec 15, the Indianapolis Colts beat the Bucs (L 23-31) at home in Tampa Stadium before a small crowd at 25,577. Then, in the season finale, on Dec 22, the Green Bay Packers edged out the Bucs 17-20) at home before 33,992.

### **1986 Leeman Bennett, Coach #2**

The 1986 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their eleventh season of Professional National Football League (NFL)

football. They were led by Leeman Bennett in his second and last of two seasons as head Bucs coach. This Buccaneers team finished with an identically poor record of 2-14 as the prior year. In 1986, the team was as hapless as the 1985 squad. This eleventh was also the 11th for the Bucs to be playing their home games at Tampa Stadium. They missed the playoffs for the fourth straight season.

This year was one of the worst seasons in franchise history, and according to a statistics site called Football Outsiders, it was the Bucs were the sixth-worst team in the NFL since 1950. Some pundits had no problem slotting the 1986 team as even worse than the winless team of 1976. Moreover, the 473 points given up by the D was not beaten by any NFL team until 2001 by the Indianapolis Colts. They gave up 486 points. Not the kind of records Hugh Culverhouse was looking for.

The Buccaneers picked a big-name player, the famous Bo Jackson with the top pick in the draft. The Bucs reputation preceded them in trying to lasso Jackson into a players' contract. He refused to join the team. Three weeks after the draft, Jackson signed a three-year baseball contract with the KC Royals. The hapless Bucs held four of the first forty selections in the draft, and there should have been enough great talent to make a difference from the recently defunct USFL. Even in acquiring great available players, the Buccaneers failed. They could not find any notable impact player in either the draft or free agency. They entered the season with a roster nearly identical to the previous season's 2-14 team and they performed equally as poorly.

The Coach is always the biggest part of the problem and so coach Leeman Bennet is not given a pass but there seemed to be an acceptance for losing if not an acceptance for it. Coach Bennet said this was a building season, but he was not able to attract any raw materials with which to build.

Later the coach admitted that the talent pool that had signed to play was much worse than he had realized. His job was to whip the talent in shape, and he had clearly failed. Eventually Steve DeBerg became the starting quarterback job after he outplayed Steve Young in the preseason, but his fortune did not last as he was benched in favor of Young after struggling in the first two games. Additionally, Kevin

House and Jimmy Giles were released after a loss in October to the Saints. Additionally, ex-Cowboys fullback Ron Springs was abandoned.

At one point, Bennett showed up at a press conference held after the season by owner Hugh Culverhouse who was very disappointed at the season's results. Bennett did not know he was going to be fired.

Yet that was Culverhouse's big announcement. Nothing positive! Giles still had feelings for the players who were left behind. At the time, Giles was with the Detroit Lions. Nonetheless he was motivated by affinity to complain about the move suggesting that no coach could compensate for the Buccaneers' utter lack of talent.

Let me remind the reader that Mr. Culverhouse was not known for spending his money on football talent. Giles also suggested that administrator Phil Krueger affected team morale negatively by continually demeaning players during contract negotiations. He pointed out that guard Sean Farrell was a major example of poor treatment. It was a bad situation and at least ten more years had to be endured by Bucs fans before it would improve.

### **Games of the 1986 Season**

The Bucs opened up this season at home at Tampa Stadium on September 7, 1986. The San Francisco 49ers pounded the Bucs L (7-31) before 57,828. The word hapless keeps floating in my mind. What a difference from then to the Brady-led Buccaneers of 2021.

On Sep 14, the Minnesota Vikings beat the Bucs L (10-123) at home in Tampa Stadium before a half stadium of fans 34,579 0. On Sep 21, at Detroit, the Bucs got a rare win W (24-20) at the Pontiac Silverdome before 38,453. At home on Sep 28, in a very close match, the Atlanta Falcons edged out the Bucs L (20-23) in OT before 38,950. On Oct 5, at Los Angeles' Anaheim Coliseum, the Rams won in OT v the Bucs L (20-26) before 50,585

On Oct 12, the St. Louis Cardinals beat the Bucs L (19-30) at home in Tampa Stadium before 33,307. At New Orleans, on Oct 19, the Saints walloped the Bucs L (7-38) at the Louisiana Superdome

before 43,355. On Oct 26, at Kansas City, the Chiefs beat the Bucs L (20–27) at Arrowhead Stadium before 36,230. Then on Nov 2, the Bucs gained their second victory. This one was against the Buffalo Bills at home W (34–28) in Tampa Stadium before 32,806.

On Nov 9, the Chicago Bears had no problem defeating the Bucs L (3–23) at home in Tampa Stadium before 70,097. The record was then 2–8. Nobody can explain the explosion in attendance at Tampa Stadium. Maybe the people saw something. ??? On Nov 16, at Green Bay, the Packers took the opportunity to pound the Bucs L (7–31) at Lambeau Field before 48,271. On Nov 23, the Detroit Lions overwhelmed the Bucs L (17–38) at home in Tampa Stadium before 30,029. On Nov 30, at Minnesota, the Vikings found it too easy to beat the Bucs L (13–45) at the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome before 56,235.

On Dec 7, at Chicago, the Bears took no prisoners at their home field of Soldier Field as they simply whooped the Bucs L (14–48) before 52,746. Then on Dec 14, v Green Bay, the Packers enjoyed beating the Bucs L (7–21) at home in Tampa Stadium before 30,099. When the season finale came on Dec 21, the St. Louis Cardinals enjoyed a victory v the Bucs L (17–21) at Busch Memorial Stadium before 23,957.

Leeman Bennett was fired after this season and the next season for the Bucs was with a new coach, Ray Perkins who every year after Leeman Bennett at least doubled his win production. But even that was not enough for frustrated Bucs fans of the 1980's.

### **1987 Ray Perkins #3**

#### **About the new Coach:**

On December 9, 2020 former Tampa Bay Buccaneers head coach Ray Perkins died three days after reaching the age of 79. He had been sick for a while. Ex-Giants coaches, Bill Parcells, and Bill Belichick praised Ray Perkins, who died less than a year ago on a Wednesday. He was 79. Both of these famous coaches owe their careers to Perkins, who hired them as assistants while he was head coach of the Giants from 1979 to 1982. He had an eye for great talent.



Ray Perkins at Tampa Bay

Perkins was announced as the head coach of Tampa Bay after the 1986 season. He led the Bucs from 1987 through 1990, tallying an unimpressive record of 19-41 across four seasons. He showed up at a time when Tampa Bay was at the beginning of a losing streak that lasted fourteen seasons.

He had a long coaching career which also included four seasons as the head coach of the New York Giants, as well as four seasons as the head coach of the Alabama Crimson Tide, where he also was a standout wide receiver. True Alabama fans loved Ray Perkins.

From 1964-66 Perkins played as a wide receiver at the University of Alabama. During this time, Alabama compiled a 30-2-1 record, including two national championships and three SEC titles. As a senior, he was team captain, SEC Player of the Year, and All-American.

Ray was a proud member of the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame. Perkins began his coaching career in 1973 as an assistant at Mississippi State, and also spent time at the high school and junior college levels.

He took over the coaching job at Alabama for four seasons from 1983-1986 and accumulated a record of 32-15-1 during that time, he

had an impressive 3-0 record in bowl games. Perkins eventually left Alabama following the 1986 season and signed a lucrative contract to take the head coaching job with the NFL's Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

The forever hex on the Buccaneers was so well-known that Craig Barnes, staff writer for the Sun Sentinel could not help telling the story of a woman who wished the best for Coach Perkins. She expressed well-wishes and sympathy. It was obvious to her that Ray was heading into the frying pan from her perspective. Here goes:

The scenario was in Tuscaloosa Alabama, home of the Crimson Tide where Perkins had just spent his last four years after taking over for the legendary "Bear" Bryant. By the way, the title of the piece by Barnes is PERKINS OUT TO BUILD BUCS INTO WINNER

"The woman stood quietly in the lobby of the athletic offices at the University of Alabama holding a sign that read: "We Love You Coach Perkins. Say No to Tampa Bay."

Is it that subtle? It's debatable how many Alabama fans really loved Ray Perkins, but it doesn't matter anymore. At a packed press conference Wednesday of that week, Perkins announced he was leaving Alabama to become vice president, general manager and coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. It could be a great job if you can hold it by winning.

Ray Perkins is best-known as the coach who both succeeded Paul "Bear" Bryant in Tuscaloosa and who hired Bill Parcells in New York, and for his legendary intensity on the football field.

After his announcement, Perkins hopped a plane and headed for his announcement in Tampa Bay. Bucs owner Hugh Culverhouse in describing their meeting said: "We got along famously, I had no idea the tremendous amount of work he was willing to put into this job. He knows one way and that's the truth. He's dedicated to the principle of winning. We now have the man to take us all the way; he has full control of everything." Would that not have been nice.

Perkins reportedly received a five-year contract valued at \$5 million, which includes a percentage of ownership still being negotiated.



Perkins will have complete authority over the Tampa Bay football operation Perkins stated : "It was the best decision for my family and myself...it's a great challenge and opportunity, and I appreciate it. I approach it with anticipation of building a winner and I leave with tears and great memories."

Perkins met with his Alabama staff prior to the press conference. Word from that is "He said he couldn't wait until his feet hit the ground in Tampa," Alabama Assistant Coach Fuller said. "He wants to get started. That's the way Ray is. He wouldn't tell you how he felt, and you couldn't sense it."

Perkins noted that he regretted the timing of the announcement because "I would like to have looked my players in the eye," he said. "I love them, and I owe them, the administration and the fans of Alabama my gratitude. Alabama is bigger than any one, two or three people.

"This was the toughest decision I've ever had to make. It wasn't a negotiation. Money was a factor but not the biggest factor. Certain opportunities arise in life that can't be ignored."

Perkins said he hadn't met Culverhouse before Monday night when they talked at a Birmingham, Ala., hotel. Culverhouse fired Leeman Bennett Monday. "I'm not going down there just to be 8-8 and make the playoffs," said Perkins, who was 24-35 with the NFL's New York Giants during 1979-82. "I'm confident I know how to win, and Mr. Culverhouse is making a commitment to winning. He convinced me he wants to win."

### **The 1987 Season**

The 1987 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their twelfth season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. They were led by Ray Perkins his first of four seasons as head Bucs coach. This Buccaneers team finished with a substantially better record of 4-11 compared with the prior year's 2-14. For the fifth year in a row. They finished in fourth place in the NFC Central and for the fifth year in a row, they did not make the playoffs

In 1987, the team was almost as bad as the 1986 squad. This twelfth season was also the 12th for the Bucs to be playing their home games at Tampa Stadium. The Buccaneers were granted the first overall pick in the NFL Draft, and used it to select University of Miami quarterback Vinny Testaverde. The Buccaneers appeared to be a different team and won four games early in the season, but they picked up their normal malady and notably lost large leads in later games. They fell from playoff contention after midseason. The season was marked by a 1987 players' strike in which regular play was interrupted for a month, while NFL owners fielded teams of replacement players.

### **Games of the 1987 Season**

In the season opener at home in Tampa Bay Florida, on September 13, 1987 v the Atlanta Falcons, Ray Perkins could not have begun his Bucs' career any better. The Bucs pounded the Falcons W 48–10 before 51,250. Then, on Sep 20, at Chicago, the Bears did not permit a win streak defeating The Perkins Bucs in his second game at the helm L (20–3) at Soldier Field before 63,551.

The September 27, 1987 game against the Green Bay Packer to be held at Tampa Stadium was canceled because of the Players' Strike. The canceled games of Week 3 were not made up, and the league counted the three weeks of game results featuring the replacement players as regular season games toward each team's final standings. By Week 7, the teams had all players back in action, with all teams completing a 15-game schedule. Also unlike 1982, there was no change to the playoff format that season.

On Oct 4, at Detroit, the Bucs beat the Lions W (31–27) at the Pontiac Silverdome before 4,919 . On Oct 11, at home, the San Diego Chargers edged out the Bucs L (13–17) before 23,873. On Oct 18 at home in Tampa Bay, the Bucs beat the Minnesota Vikings W (20–10) before 20,850. Then, on Oct 25, at home, the Chicago Bears nosed out the Bucs L (26–27 before 70,747. On Nov 1, at Green Bay, the Bucs beat the Packers W (23–17) at Milwaukee County Stadium before 50,348.

On Nov 8, at St. Louis, the Cardinals edged out the Bucs L (28–31) at Busch Memorial Stadium before 22,449. Then, on Nov 15, at

Minnesota, the Vikings beat the Bucs L (17–23) at the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome before 48,605. At home on Nov 22, the San Francisco 49ers beat the Bucs L (10–24) in Tampa Stadium before 63,211. At Los Angeles on Nov 29, the Rams gave the Bucs a big pounding L 3–35) in Anaheim Stadium before 45,188.

At New Orleans on Dec 6, the Saints beat the Bucs L (34–44) in the Louisiana Superdome before 66,471. Then, at home on Dec 13, the Detroit Lions beat the Bucs L (10–20) before 41,699. On Dec 20, at home, the St. Louis Cardinals pounded the Bucs L (14–31) before 32,046. At Indianapolis on Dec 27, in the final game of the 1987 season, the Colts beat the Bucs L (6–24) in the Hoosierdome before 60,468 CBS

## Top Bucs Players Vinnie Testaverde QB 1987-1992



Vincent is his true first name, but Testaverde was more affectionately known as “Vinny” throughout his NFL career. Reminds me of something out of *The Godfather* or another Italian mafia movie. Unfortunately, Vinny did not strike fear in his opposition quite like Al Pacino did.

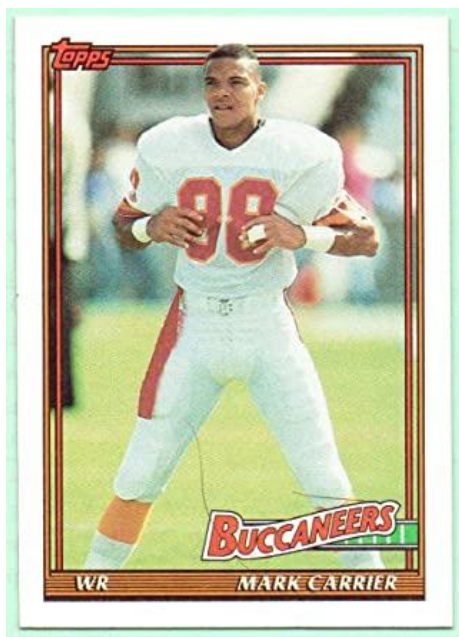
When looking at Testaverde’s stats throughout his career, I am astonished by the sheer length of his tenure. He spent a total of 21

seasons in the NFL quarterbacking various teams, but the focus here is the six he spent in Tampa Bay from 1987 to 1992.

Incredibly, Testaverde never led the team to a winning record, and consequently, finished his time with the Buccaneers having a losing record (although wins are not and should not be a quarterback stat). Tampa Bay wasn't the only stop in which Testaverde had a losing record. Actually, his 21 seasons produced an overall record of 90-123-1, including a mark of 24-48 with Tampa Bay.

Despite how it looks, Testaverde is the franchise's all-time leading passer with 14,820 yards so it is almost impossible to not include him in a top Gun list. .

In 1988, Testaverde threw for 3,240 yards, which included a whopping 35 interceptions, which is the second highest single-season mark behind George Blanda's 42 with the 1962 Houston Oilers. While it is easy to poke fun at Testaverde and rip his stats apart, he was a good quarterback for the team. He lasted a miraculous six seasons with the team, despite never having a winning season. Testaverde is the franchise's leading passer for a reason, and he deserves recognition for his time with the Buccaneers.



## Top Bucs Players Mark Carrier WR 1987-1992

Mark Carrier tops even Kevin House. Carrier's record is soon to be broken by Mike Evans, but for now, he leads the franchise with 5,018 receiving yards. He is also second all-time in receptions with 321, only trailing the great James Wilder.

Carrier spent a total of six seasons with the Bucs during his remarkable 12-year NFL career. In those six seasons, Carrier tore up opposing defenses with his

electric speed, which he relied upon as he was barely 6-feet tall. Regardless of how he did it, Carrier is arguably the best receiver in franchise history, despite being on some atrocious teams that struggled to score points.

A third-round draft pick out of Nicholls State, Carrier wasn't a huge recruit out of college, instead more of a high-upside pick in the middle rounds. As it turns out, the Buccaneers struck gold. Let's take a look at some of the stats Carrier compiled.

In 1989, Carrier set a single-season receiving yards record with a whopping 1,422 yards on 86 receptions. Those 86 receptions are the third-highest mark for a single season as well, only behind Keyshawn Johnson and Mike Evans. Carrier also holds the single-season record for most yards per game with 88.9, also in that 1989 season. I think it's pretty clear, but Carrier sure was excellent at catching the football.

### **1988 Ray Perkins, Coach #3**

The 1988 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their thirteenth season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. They were led by Ray Perkins in his second of four seasons as head Bucs coach. This Buccaneers team finished with a hair better record of 5-11 compared with the prior year's 4-11. For the fifth year in a row. They finished in third place in the NFC Central and for the sixth year in a row, they did not make the playoffs

By now, coach Perkins had rebuilt the Buccaneers as the NFL's youngest team. He replaced so many veterans that team leadership became an issue. He had a strong draft which produced a number of starters. Some became standout players such as offensive tackle Paul Gruber. The team was mostly competitive and but consistently showed an ability to outplay opponents in the second half of games. Despite this advantage over prior years, the Bucs still had this tendency toward mental errors, thus finishing 5-11 in 1988.

In his second-year, the QB, Vinnie Testaverde was at best, inconsistent. He would surprise the fans one game and then be a bust in the next. He was an effective leader at times, such as in their

late-season upset of the AFC-leading Buffalo Bills. Unfortunately he was also mistake-prone.

His big record is not one in which he or the team was proud. Those 35 interceptions were a team record. His costly errors were the cause of the coaching staff losing confidence in his play. At one point, they decided to replace him with backup Joe Ferguson. The team finished the season on a strong note with wins in two of their final three games, including respectable performances against two

In the ninth game against Miami, 38-year old Joe Ferguson got his big chance. After a scoreless first half, Marino and the Dolphins scored 17 third-quarter points. In the fourth quarter, Joe got hot, led two drives that ended with him throwing touchdown passes. The Bucs had a chance.

They got the ball in their own territory late in the game. Again Joe led a nice drive, but he faced fourth-and-1 at about the Miami 40. Instead of trying to get the first down with about two minutes left, Joe -- after faking a running play to draw in the defense the Bucs decided to throw deep toward a Bucs receiver who was well-covered. Incomplete, game over. TBB lost by three points.

Ferguson who was 26 of 36 in the game explained to the media that the team wanted to take a shot, so he went for it. Sometimes you eat the bear and sometimes the bear eats you.

### **Games of the 1988 Season**

In the home opener on Sep 4, 1988, the Philadelphia Eagles pounded the Tampa Bay Buccaneers L (14–41) at Tampa Stadium before 43,502. The Bucs licked their wounds and came back the following week on Sep 11, at Green Bay where they beat the Packers W (13–10) in Lambeau Field before 52,584.

Then, on Sep 18, the Phoenix Cardinals beat the Bucs L (24–30) at home in Tampa Stadium before 35,034. At New Orleans on Sep 25, the Saints got the best of the Bucs in a close match at the Louisiana Superdome, L (9–13) before 66,714. On Oct 2, at home the Bucs edged out the Green Bay Packers W (27–24) before 40,003. On Oct

9, in a nail-biter, the Minnesota Vikings nosed out the Bucs L (13–14) at the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome before 55,274.

On Oct 16, at Indianapolis, the Colts edged out the Bucs L (31–35) in the Hoosier Dome before 53,135. Then, on Oct 23, the Minnesota Vikings pounded the Bucs L (20–49) at Tampa Stadium before 48,020. At home on Oct 30, the Miami Dolphins edged out the Bucs L (14–17) before 67,352. At Chicago on Nov 6, 1988 at Soldier Field, the Bears beat the Bucs L (10–28) before 56,892. Then, on Nov 13, at Detroit, the Bucs beat the Lions W (23–20) in the Pontiac Silverdome before 25,956.

On Nov 20, the Chicago Bears beat the Bucs L (15–27) at home in Tampa Stadium before 67,070. On Nov 27, at the Atlanta Fulton County Stadium, the Falcons beat the Bucs L (10–17) before 14,020. Then, on Dec 4, the Bucs beat the Buffalo Bills W (10–5) at Tampa Stadium before 49,498. At New England, on Dec 11, the Patriots squeaked out a victory over the Bucs L (7–10) in OT at Sullivan Stadium before 39,889. In the season finale at home, on Dec 18, the Bucs defeated the Detroit Lions W (21–10) before 37,778.

## Top Bucs Players Paul Gruber T 1988-1999





One of the best offensive linemen who would be in anybody's top ten is none other than stalwart Paul Gruber. He held down the Buccaneers left side for over a decade. As previously mentioned, the left tackle is the most important position on the offensive line, as he protect the quarterback's blind side. Donald Penn was great for the team, but no offensive linemen matched what Gruber did for 12 seasons in Tampa Bay.

In 12 seasons, Gruber played in 183 games. That is a mark of 183 out of a total 192 total games, meaning Gruber only missed nine games. Actually, Gruber only missed time in two seasons, one six-game skid in 1993 and a three-game absence in 1996.

Not quite the level of consistency that we saw from longtime center Tony Mayberry but playing in 95 percent of all possible games is a quite impressive feat. Also, before I forget, all 183 of Gruber's appearances were starts. Talk about being irreplaceable.

There aren't too many stats to quantify the play of a non-skill position like a left tackle, which makes it difficult to explain to someone who didn't get to see Gruber play. However, there are still some details that defend Gruber's ninth place ranking. Drafted fourth overall in the 1988 NFL Draft, Gruber more than paid off the team's investment.

In addition, Gruber holds the record for the second most starts in franchise history, only surpassed by the legendary Derrick Brooks. Gruber is also one of only 12 members in the team's 'Ring of Honor' alongside guys like Derrick Brooks and Lee Roy Selmon, who will be mentioned soon.

Although hard to see on paper, Gruber's 12-year tenure with the Buccaneers was truly incredible, and it is surprising that he was never elected to the Pro Bowl.

### **1989 Ray Perkins, Coach #3**

The 1989 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their fourteenth season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. It was the fourteenth year in a row for games to be played at Tampa Stadium. They were led by Ray Perkins in his third of



four seasons as head Bucs coach. This Buccaneers team finished with an identically poor record of 5-11 compared with the prior year's 5-11. They finished in fifth (last place) in the NFC Central and for the seventh year in a row, they did not make the playoffs

This sluggish season began with a road win against the improved Green Bay Packers, and game two brought the Super Bowl champion San Francisco 49ers and Joe Montana to Tampa Stadium. With Joe trying to direct a 4th quarter comeback, cornerback Ricky Reynolds dropped what would have been a game ending interception on second down in the end zone. On third down, Montana rolled out, took the ball and ran untouched into the endzone for a winning TD that left a rare sellout crowd stunned and silent in defeat. The Bucs extended their positive record to 3-2 by beating the rival Chicago Bears finally in Tampa Stadium. They held off the Bears to a 42-35 victory. It was an impressive win in an unimpressive season.

But the Bucs came right back to familiar chorus and lost to the Detroit Lions in the last minute and entered into an overall five-game losing-streak tailspin to close out the season. This time they picked up a win against Chicago to end the streak. Unfortunately, the impact of the win v Chicago was diluted by the Bears having their worst season in several years. The Bucs finished with a very disappointing 5-11 record. Coach Perkins had not found the promised magic and Hugh Culverhouse was mentally prepared to replace him if the losing continued..

It was star player James Wilder Sr.'s swan song season and he had some fine moments such as a 100-yard receiving game in week 9. Despite their record there were still many fans who felt the Bucs were far better than their final 1989 record suggested. Offseason acquisitions were expected to help the Bucs win the following year.

In the season opener on September 10, 1989 at Green Bay's Lambeau Field, the Bucs won this nail-biter by nosing out the Packers W (23-21) before 55,650. On Sep 17, the San Francisco 49ers defeated the Bucs L (16-20) before 64,087. Then, at home on Sep 24, the Bucs beat the New Orleans Saints W (20-10) before

44,053. On Oct 1, at Minnesota , the Vikings beat the Bucs L (3–17) in the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome before 54,817.

At home in Tampa Stadium on Oct 8, the Bucs edged out the Chicago Bears W (42–35) before a packed house of 72,077. Then, on Oct 15, the Detroit Lions nosed out the Bucs L (16–17) before 46,225. At Washington on Oct 22, the Redskins edged out the Bucs at the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium before 52,862. On Oct 29, at Cincinnati the Bengals pounded the Bucs L (56–23) before 57,225 in the Riverfront Stadium.

At Nov 5, the Cleveland Browns beat the Bucs L (31–42) at home in Tampa Stadium before 69,162. On Nov 12, the Minnesota Vikings beat the Bucs L (10–24) at home in Tampa Stadium before 56,271. At this point the record was 3–7. On Nov 19, at Chicago, the Bucs nosed out the Bears W (32–31) in Soldier Field before 63,826. On Nov 26, at Phoenix, the Bucs nosed out the Cardinals W (14–13) in Sun Devil Stadium before 33,297.

At home on Dec 3, the Green Bay Packers nosed out the Bucs in a nail biter L (16–17) at home in Tampa Stadium before 58,120. On Dec 10, at Houston, the Oilers beat the Bucs, L (17–20) in the Astrodome before 54,532. At Detroit on Dec 17, the Lions really pounded the Bucs L (7–33) in the Pontiac Silverdome in front of 40,362. To wrap another unproductive season. The Bucs came back but lost their finale on Dec 24, 1989 against the Pittsburgh Steelers L (22–23) in Tampa Stadium before 29,690.

### **1990 Ray Perkins, Coach #3; Richard Williamson Coach #4**

The 1990 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their fifteenth season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. It was the fifteenth year in a row for games to be played at Tampa Stadium. The team was led by Ray Perkins in his fourth (last) of four seasons as head Bucs coach. This Buccaneers team finished with Perkins best record at 6-10. It was a bit better than the prior two years of 5-11. The Bucs were in the thick of it, finishing in second place in the NFC Central for their best in a while. They did not make the playoffs for the eighth year in a row, Coach Williamson took over in the fourteenth game of the season..

## The Bucs players

Head coach Ray Perkins players were taking it on the chin by fans with his 3-a-day training camp practices. Many players complained of fatigue later in the year, and they presented injuries that never really healed themselves throughout the end of the season. This was the best start in Perkins' four year hitch with the team. After starting 4-2 via four wins against divisional opponents, the Buccaneers unexplainably dropped two out of three games to a weak Dallas Cowboys team.

As the season wore on, WR Vinny Testaverde and receiver Willie Drewery began to click. They combined on an 89-yard touchdown pass in week 13 for the longest play in franchise history. But one good game a season doth not make, Hugh Culverhouse had reached the limits of his patience and he fired Coach Perkins after that game and the team fell short of a possible break even season with two losses to end the season. Ironically, their 6-10 record was Tampa Bay's best since 1984. Which was John McKay's last season as coach.

Offensive coordinator Richard Williamson was made head coach for the 1991 season based on his 1-2 record from game 14 on as he was mopping up the season after Perkins was fired. Tax records showed the Buccaneers were one of the most profitable teams during this time, even though owner Hugh Culverhouse was always talking poor and had announced the Bucs were losing money and needed to play games in Orlando FL to gain additional income.

The Buccaneers officially finished second in the NFC Central thanks to their 5-3 divisional record. The other three teams in the division who went 6-10, namely the Lions, Packers and Vikings all went 3-5 in division games. The second place finish was their highest since winning the division in 1981, and it would remain as their highest until 1997

## How can this be?

The Bucs were the talk of the Tampa Bay towns with their consistently poor record. The fans kept asking: “What’s wrong with Bucs?: Rick Stroud asked, “You got an hour to listen?”

Stroud, writing for the Tampa Bay Times on Oct 14, 2005 used some hindsight to answer the question that had been lurking in the Bay area for some time. He started his piece in a way that pulled the reader right into the controversy:

“The Tampa Bay Buccaneers always seem to be knocking on the door. Too bad the pounding is coming from inside the league basement, where they have been locked away in last place for nearly all of their 16 seasons. Each year begins with scores of Bucs fans who can't wait to see where their team stands. But in the end, they can't stand to see a team that doesn't score. The Bucs have produced more bad records than K-Tel. Since their inception, they are 69-167-1.

So disappointing are the Bucs at 1-8 under coach Richard Williamson, so blunderous have front-office decisions appeared, that fans have suggested the team slogan be "Bo Knew." But how do the Bucs continue to be the laughingstock of the NFL, when other teams that find themselves in the Bucs' predicament and nonetheless eventually wind up well-stocked for the future? According to coaches who have worked in the organization or have studied it, there are several primary theories.

Stroud then answers his own question and then some: He said that the Bucs finish last because owner Hugh Culverhouse does not put winning first. His, they say, is a system designed to produced higher profits, sometimes at the expense of victories.

A series of poor front-office decisions and doomed trades \_ like the one that cost the Bucs their No.1 draft pick in 1992 for Chris Chandler \_ has robbed the franchise's future. But the bank account continuously increases.

Culverhouse may say he does not pay attention to the details, but he is non supportive of his coaches and players and he is quick to fire

people who get in his way or who make it seem like he is the problem. He has a quick-fix mentality, which might force the Bucs to hire their third coach in as many years, making the franchise harder to turn around than a freight train.

"You've got to have good people around you that winning means a lot to," former Bucs coach Ray Perkins said. "I repeat that winning means a lot to. Everybody wants to win, but what level commitment do you make?" Let me just say that this year, Perkins' last, the Bucs rank 26th in the league in player salaries. Their payroll totals about \$18.5-million, or roughly \$4-million less than the league average and nearly \$10-million less than the Minnesota Vikings, the league's most generous employers. Perkins said Culverhouse's habit of stretching a buck can make winning difficult.

I think we got the picture. Does that mean that with Hugh Culverhouse at the top, the Bucs could never win. Well you said that, not me. But, looking ahead, with hindsight as a guide, it sorta happened that way.

### **Games of the 1990 Season**

In the season opener on September 9, 1990 at Detroit, the Perkins-led Bucs whooped the Lions W (38–21) at the Pontiac Silverdome before 56,692. Then, on Sep 16, 1990, in Los Angeles, the Rams powdered the Bucs L (14–35) at home in Tampa Stadium before 59,705. At home on Sep 23, the Bucs edged out the Detroit Lions W (23–20) at Tampa Stadium before 55,075. Then, on Sep 30, 1990 at Minnesota, the Bucs edged out the Vikings W (23–20) in OT in the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome before 54,462.

On Oct 7, at Dallas, the Cowboys prevailed v the Bucs L (10–14) before at Texas Stadium before 60,076. On Oct 14, at home, the Bucs beat the Green Bay Packers W (26–14) at home in Tampa Stadium before 67,472. Then, at home on Oct 21, the Cowboys beat the Bucs again L (13–17) before 68,315. On Oct 28, at San Diego, the Chargers pounded the Bucs L (10–41) at Jack Murphy Stadium before 40,653 .

On Nov 4, the Chicago Bears burst into Tampa Stadium and unfortunately, they creamed the Bucs L (6–26) before 68,555. At New Orleans on Nov 11, the saints murdered the Bucs by a 5-1 margin L (7–35) at the Louisiana Superdome before 67,865. On Nov 18, at San Francisco, the 49ers laid hurt on the Bucs L (7–31) at Candlestick Park before 62,221. Then, on Nov 25, at Green Bay, the Packers defeated the Bucs L (10–20) in Milwaukee’s County Stadium before 53,677.

At home on Dec 2, the Bucs defeated the Atlanta Falcons W (23–17) at Tampa Stadium before 42,839. On December 9 the team drew a bye. During the interim, Owner Hugh Culversone decided to replace coach Perkins with coach Williamson. Then, on Dec 16, at home, the Bucs defeated the Minnesota Vikings W (26–13) in Tampa Stadium before 47,272. At this point the Bucs needed two more wins to make it to .500 but they failed.

On Dec 23, in the heart of the 1990 Christmas season, 1990 at Chicago, the Bears go the best of the Bucs L (14–27) in Soldier Field before 46,456. Then, wrapping up 1990 in the Season Finale, on Dec 30, the New York Jets edged out the Bucs at home in Tampa Stadium L (14-16) before 46,543..

## **Top Bucs Players Tony Mayberry C 1990-1999**



Aside from the left tackle, the center is arguably the most vital player on any offensive line. They are responsible for identifying and calling out defensive alignments (along with the quarterbacks). Obviously, they also have to properly snap the ball on every play. Nobody played center better for the Buccaneers than Tony Mayberry, and by a wide margin at that.

Mayberry's NFL career was spent only in Tampa Bay, all 10 glorious years of it. Oh, by the way, Mayberry didn't miss a single game in his career. Following his rookie season in 1990, Mayberry started every game at center for the team until he retired after the 1999 season. Go find a dictionary and search for the word "consistency". If a picture of Mayberry isn't shown, go get a refund for your book of words.

Born in Germany, the tall German national played his college ball at Wake Forest University. He was selected in the fourth-round of the 1990 NFL Draft, Mayberry will go down as one of the franchise's best draft-day finds. Few players in franchise history, let alone league history, were able to play at such a high level for such a long time, while avoiding injury.

Mayberry earned Pro Bowl honors in the final three seasons of his career from 1997 to 1999. Coincidentally, the Buccaneers made the playoffs in both 1997 and 1999. Mayberry's contribution to the team's success in the late '90s was immense.

Without a doubt, Mayberry was part of the group that laid the foundation for the team that went on to win the 2002 Super Bowl. A terrific player and stalwart for the team during his tenure, Mayberry is very deserving of a 13th overall finish.

#### **1991 Richard Williamson Coach #4**

The 1991 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their sixteenth season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. It was the sixteenth year in a row for games to be played at Tampa Stadium. The team was led by Richard Williamson in his second of two seasons as head Bucs coach. This Buccaneers team finished with a record of 3-13 which is worse than any of his predecessor Ray Perkins seasons. I figured Hugh Culverhouse would

be making a change and he did immediately after the only full season Richard Williamson was given to prove himself—1991. Perkins' worst record was 4-16 and the 3-13 Richardson record was not endearing and would not make it as a record that would keep a coach another year. The team did not make the playoffs for the ninth year in a row, Coach Williamson was destined to be hide off to the island of forgotten Bucs coaches. It is as it happened in 1991.

One of the major disappointments for Richardson was the poor performance of QB Vinny Testaverde, who was replaced by Chris Chandler early in the season. Chandler did not rescue the season for anybody, but he played better than Vinnie. He passed for 1,994 yards and eight touchdown passes to 15 interceptions. As expected, following the season Coach Williamson would be fired and replaced by Sam Wyche.

The Bucs could have been buying their way to better records but had decided to keep the money. Tax records would later show that the Buccaneers were one of the most profitable teams during this time, even though owner Hugh Culverhouse was always quick to announce that the Bucs were losing money. He just was a tightwad as my dad would say. Such records revealed Culverhouse ran the Bucs as a profit first business, often releasing better players who would deserve big contracts and cost the club big dollars.

I can't wait to get to the part in Bucs football history where they stop being managed by an uncaring selfish tightwad and begin to bring home the bacon to the fans, who had been awaiting the turnaround. There are two Super Bowls on the horizon but there is a lot of negative history to climb through before we get there. My lamentations reflect the feelings of the typical Bucs fan who was waiting for the Bucs to become a good team. The wait unfortunately would continue for a few more years.

In the season opener with a new coach Richard Williamson on September 1, 1991 at New York, the Jets, not the best team in the NFL over the years beat the Bucs L (13-16) in the Meadowlands before 61,204. On Sep 8, 1991 at home, the Chicago Bears nosed out the Bucs in a very close encounter L (20-21) at Tampa Stadium before 65,625. Then, on Sep 15, at Green Bay, the Packers edged out the Bucs L (13-15) in Lambeau Field before 58,114. Already the



Bucs were doing poorly with a new season and a new coach. Hapless! On Sep 22, at home, the Buffalo Bills dominated the Bucs and won the game L (10–17) at home in Tampa Stadium before 57,323.

At Detroit on Sep 29, the lions walloped the Bucs L (3–31) at the Pontiac Silverdome before 44,479. At home again the Bucs on Oct 6, nosed out the Philadelphia Eagles W (14–13) in Tampa Stadium before 41,219. The next week on Oct 13 drew a bye. Then, on Oct 20, 1991 at New Orleans, the Saints prevailed v the Bucs L (7–23) at the Louisiana Superdome before 68,591. Then, on Oct 27, the Green Bay Packers shut out the Bucs in a runaway game at home L (27–0) in Tampa Stadium before 40,275. The record was poor so far for Williamson's Bucs at 1–7

On Nov 3, at Minnesota, the Vikings pounded the Bucs L (13–28) at the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome before 35,737. Then, on Nov 10, the Bucs defeated the Detroit Lions W (30–21) at home in Tampa Stadium before 37,742. Then, on Nov 17 at Atlanta, the Falcons ripped the Bucs a new one L (7–43) at Atlanta–Fulton County Stadium before 41,274.

At home on Nov 24, the New York Giants defeated the Bucs at home L (14–21) in Tampa Stadium before 63,698. On Dec 1, at Miami, the Dolphins took no prisoners beating the Bucs L (14–33) at Joe Robbie Stadium before 51,036. On Dec 8, in a close game, like a nail-biter, the Minnesota Vikings escaped with a win L (24–26) at home in Tampa Stadium before 41,091. Then, in the second-last game in a lousy season, on December 14, 1991 at Chicago, the Bears prevailed in a shutout L (0–27) at Soldier Field before 54,719. In the final game of the 1991 season, aka the season finale, on Dec 22, the Bucs surprisingly got the best of the Indianapolis Colts W 17–3 at home in Tampa Stadium before 28,043.



## Chapter 15 Tampa Bay Bucs Coach Sam Wyche; 1992 to 1995

Coach # 5 Sam Wyche

<u>Year</u>	<u>Record</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Conf/ Div</u>	<u>Playoffs</u>	<u>Coaches.</u>
1995	7-9-0	5th	-- NFC Central--		Sam Wyche
1994	6-10-0	5th	-- NFC Central--		Sam Wyche
1993	5-11-0	5th	-- NFC Central--		Sam Wyche
1992	5-11-0	T3rd	NFC Central--		Sam Wyche



Sam Wyche

Former Buccaneers Head Coach Sam Wyche passed away at 74. Like most of the many coaches who came in the front door to coach the Bucs, Sam Wyche was another good one. He was actually a great coach and a fine person. He was known as an offensive innovator and he always pushed the boundaries. He challenged the typical NFL protocols along the way. When he passed away at just 74 years of age on a Thursday in January, it was after a tough but reasonably short battle with metastatic melanoma. RIP Sam Wyche.

He was a fine coach and a good man. He coached the Buccaneers from 1992-95. Tampa Bay had a 23-41 record in Wyche's four

seasons. He was recognized by other teams as a fine coach also . For example, he led the Cincinnati Bengals to Super Bowl XXIII, where they lost to the San Francisco 49ers. He had a history of blood clots in his lungs and he had a heart transplant in 2016 in Charlotte, North Carolina. God bless him for his life's struggles and accomplishments.

He was a very likable guy. "Sam was a wonderful guy. We got to know him as both a player and a coach," Bengals president Mike Brown said. "As our coach, he had great success and took us to the Super Bowl. He was friends with everyone here, both during his tenure as head coach and afterwards. We not only liked him, we admired him as a man. He had a great generosity of spirit and lived his life trying to help others. We express our condolences to Jane and his children Zak and Kerry."

One of the Bengals' original quarterbacks, Wyche was known for his offensive innovations as a coach. He led the Bengals to their second Super Bowl during the 1988 season by using a no-huddle offense that forced the league to change its substitution rules.

And that wasn't the only way he made waves throughout the NFL. A nonconformist in a button-down league, Wyche refused to comply with the NFL's locker room policy for media, ran up the score to settle a personal grudge, and belittled the city of rival Cleveland during his eight seasons in Cincinnati. He later coached Tampa Bay for four seasons.

Wyche was signed by the Bengals for their inaugural season. He got No. 14 — later worn by Ken Anderson and Andy Dalton — and played three seasons with Cincinnati, throwing for 12 touchdowns with eight interceptions. He later spent two years in Washington as a backup and a year each in Detroit and St. Louis.

It's as a coach that he made his mark on offense. The Bengals hired him as head coach in 1984, and he soon showed a knack for going against the grain. During a game against San Francisco in 1987, he chose to try to run out the clock on fourth down rather than punt or take a safety — the safe choices. When the play failed, Joe Montana got a chance to throw a winning touchdown pass to Jerry Rice, an

ending that's still remembered among the league's most improbable finishes.

He put his fingerprints on NFL offense with Boomer Esiason as his quarterback. He developed what he called a "sugar huddle" that had his team group near the line after a substitution. If the defense tried to match the substitution, he'd have the offense snap the ball and catch it with too many players on the field. The NFL eventually adopted a rule allowing defenses to match an offense's substitution before the ball is snapped.

Cincinnati reached the Super Bowl in the 1988 season and lost to the 49ers again on Montana's touchdown pass with 34 seconds to go.

Wyche loved to push the envelope on offense and loved to go against standard wisdom. A Steelers assistant coach dubbed him "Wicky Wacky" for his go-against-the-grain mentality.

As noted, The Buccaneers hired him for the 1992 season and finished 5-11 in his first year. Tampa Bay went 23-41 in his four seasons.

Wyche later served as quarterbacks coach in Buffalo and later became a volunteer offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach for a high school in South Carolina.

#### STATEMENT FROM BUCCANEERS OWNER/CO-CHAIRMAN BRYAN GLAZER REGARDING THE PASSING OF FORMER BUCCANEERS HEAD COACH SAM WYCHE

"We are saddened to hear of the passing of Sam Wyche earlier today. Sam's innovative approach to offense left a lasting mark on the game of football. As our head coach in the early 1990s, Sam was instrumental in drafting cornerstone players such as John Lynch, Derrick Brooks and Warren Sapp, who were all key foundational parts of our eventual Super Bowl championship. The Buccaneers organization sends its heartfelt condolences to his wife, Jane, and the entire Wyche family."

#### 1992 Sam Wyche Coach #5

The 1992 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their seventeenth season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. It was the seventeenth year in a row for games to be played at Tampa Stadium. The team was led by Sam Wyche his first of four seasons as head Bucs coach. This Buccaneers team finished with a record of 5-11, third in the NFC Central. This is about the average finish for his recent predecessors. The team did not make the playoffs for the tenth year in a row. Wyche said before the season that he believed he could turn Vinny Testaverde into a great player.



Tampa Bay began Wyche's tenure with lop-sided wins in his first two weeks. It actually looked like they would prove good the coach's words. They started the season 3-1 but then got infected by the Bucs hex/curse and lost ten of the next eleven. It all began with a ten-point loss to Indianapolis. It was kinda sad to see them fall apart. The Bucs closest loss of the year was a four-point Week Thirteen loss to the LA Rams. The team had amassed a first half 27-3 lead, but the Rams scored 28 unanswered points to finish the game while shutting out the Bucs. They stole the win.

Special teams had no luck either. They had bad luck with their kickers such as Ken Willis who made just eight of fourteen field goals. Reggie Cobb did a fine job as the third player in the team's history to rush for 1,000 yards in a season. Santana Dobson made

the all-rookie team. They should have done better. They won their last game over the Phoenix Cardinals after a long drought

Football Outsiders is a statistics site that makes all kinds of calculations from game facts, they calculated that the 1992 Bucs had the worst special teams squad of the year, and fourth-worst of all-time. They say special teams count and this year proved it. With poor special teams play, Tampa Bay came up with a poor season win/loss record.

The team gave their punter a lot of work. This is one area in which special teams excelled. They got a solid year from Dan Stryzubski, their punter. However on the other side of the punts, their return men were poor, the kickers were horrific, and the kick coverage was putrid. Taking Ken Willis and Eddie Murray combined, they were 12-for-22 on field goals, and on top of that, the sidelines were a magnet as they could not stop kicking the ball out of bounds. Willis for example kicked the first nine games of the season and he hit it out of bounds five times.

Hapless has been a word I used a number of times to describe the Bucs early seasons. It fits the special teams for sure. When kicker Murray took over the duties in the last seven games, he could not manage a single touchback, while he found the out of bounds marker three times. His low-powered foot averaged only 55.5 yards per kickoff. There were few shining spots in 1992 for Tampa Bay.

### **Games of the 1992 Season**

Sam Wyche's Bucs got off to a fine start with two wins in a row. For a few brief weeks even the fans thought things had changed. In the season and home opener for example, on September 6, 1992,, the Bucs whooped the Phoenix Cardinals W (23-7) before 41,315. Then, on Sep 13, Tampa Bay out-muscled the Green Bay Packers W (31-3) in Tampa Stadium before 50,051. The unexpected streak ended right there. Their first away game the following week changed the tide for their season.

At Minnesota, on Sep 20, the Vikings delivered the Bucs' first loss in a reasonably close game L (20-26) at the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome before 48,113. At Detroit on Sep 27, the Bucs came

back and edged out the Bucs W (27–23) at the Pontiac Silverdome before 51,374.

With a 3-1 record, b Back home on Oct 4, the Bucs forgot how to win Indianapolis Colts prevailed L (14–24) in Tampa Stadium before 56,585. On Oct 11, the team drew a bye. Then, on Oct 18, at Chicago, the Bears took no prisoners winning the game v the Bucs L (14–31) at Soldier Field before 61,412. This was the last time the Bucs would see .500 this season at 3–3.

On Oct 25, the Detroit Lions pounded the Bucs L (7–38) at home before 53,995. At New Orleans on Nov 1, the Saints edged out the Bucs L (21–23) at the Louisiana Superdome before 68,591. At home on Nov 8, the Minnesota Vikings pounded the Bucs L (7–35) before 49,095. On Nov 15, at home, the Bucs edged out the Chicago Bears W (20–17) before 69,102. Then, on Nov 22, at San Diego, the Chargers got the best of the Bucs L (14–29) at Jack Murphy Stadium before 43,197.

On Nov 29, 1992 at Green Bay, the Packers beat the Bucs L (14–19) at Milwaukee County Stadium before 52,347. Then, on Dec 6, at home, the LA Rams edged out the Bucs L (27–31) at home in Tampa Stadium before 38,387. At home on Dec 13, the Atlanta Falcons walloped the Bucs L (7–35) before 39,056. On Dec 19, at San Francisco, the 49ers defeated the Bucs L (14–21) at Candlestick Park before 60,519. Then, in the season finale, on Dec 27, the Bucs edged out the Phoenix Cardinals at Sun Devil Stadium before 29,645 W (7–3) to finish with five wins Sam Wyche's inaugural year.

### **1993 Sam Wyche Coach #5**

The 1993 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their eighteenth season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. It was the eighteenth year in a row for games to be played at Tampa Stadium. The team was led by Sam Wyche his second of four seasons as head Bucs coach. This Buccaneers team finished with a record of 5-11, in fifth place (last) in the NFC Central. The team did not make the playoffs for the eleventh year in a row.



This year was seen as a rebuilding year for the team and for coach Sam Wyche who had decided to continue without his star QB, Vinny Testaverde. Wyche gave up on making Vinnie the best he could be. Instead Sam Wyche chose young quarterback, Craig Erickson, who was also a Miami alumnus and he had also won a National Championship as their QB. He produced with a solid 3054 passing yards. The Bucs, however, took a long while to get started in 1993 and lost five of their first six games on the way to a 5-11 season.

To say it was a tough year would be an understatement. The facts speak for themselves, however as this year's Bucs had the distinction of being the only team in NFL history to have played eleven games against teams that would go on to make the playoffs; the Bucs were 3-8 in these games. The brightest part of the season came from a new defensive pick. In his first season with the team, Hardy Nickerson made Bucs history by setting a Buccaneer record with 214 tackles. Quite a year.

The cynical part of me is saying though I have no proof, that Hugh Culverhouse Sr. was already looking for a new coach.

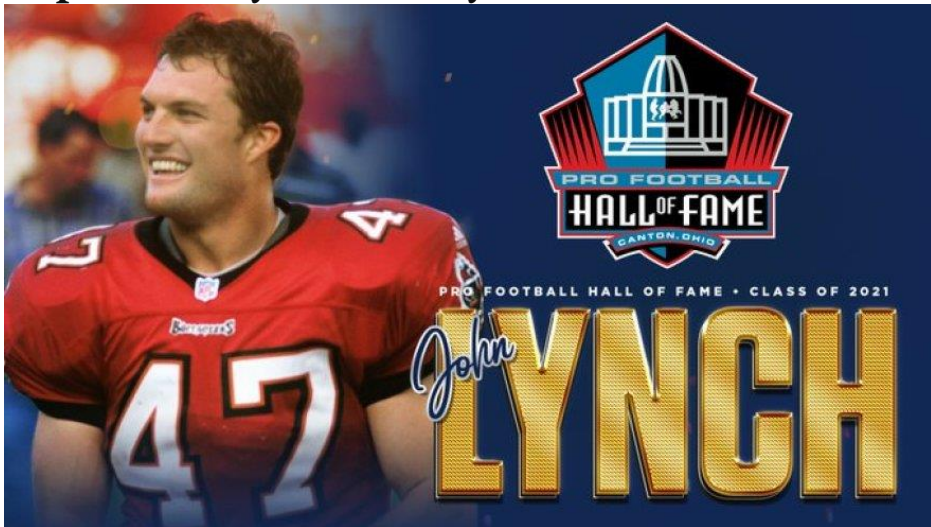
In the season and home opener played on September 5, 1993, the Kansas City Chiefs pounded the Tampa Bay Buccaneers L (3-27) in Tampa Stadium before 63,378. At NY on Sep 12, the Giants whooped the Bucs L (7-23) in Giants Stadium before 75,891. On Sep 19, the team drew its first bye. On Sep 26, at Chicago, the Bears overwhelmed the Bucs L (17-47) in Soldier Field before 58,329. Then, on Oct 3, the Bucs won its first season game against the Detroit Lions W (27-10) at home before 40,794.

On Oct 10, at Minnesota, the Vikings shut out the Bucs L (0-15) at the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome before 54,215. Then, on Oct 17, the team drew its second bye. At home in Tampa Stadium on Oct 24, the Green Bay Packers pounded the Bucs L (14-37) before 47,354. At Atlanta on Oct 31, the Bucs beat edged out the Falcons W (31-24) at the Georgia Dome before 50,647. On Nov 7, 1993 at Detroit's Pontiac Silverdome, the Lions shut out the Bucs before 65,295.

At home on Nov 14, 1the San Francisco 49ers walloped the Bucs before L (21–45) before 43,835. At home again on Nov 21, the Bucs beat the Minnesota Vikings W (23–10) before 40,848. Then, on Nov 28, at Green Bay, the Packers edged out the Bucs L (10–13) at Lambeau Field before 56,995. Then at home on Dec, the Washington Redskins edged out the Bucs before 49, 035 L (17–23).

On Dec 12, the Bucs beat the Chicago Bears W (13–10) at home before 56,667. On Dec 19, at Los Angeles, the Raiders edged out the Bucs L (20–27) at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum before 40,532. On Dec 26, at Denver, the Bucs defeated the Broncos W (17–10) before 73,434 at Mile High Stadium. In the season finale on Jan 2, 1the San Diego Chargers defeated the Bucs L (17–32) at home before 35,587.

## Top Bucs Players John Lynch S 1993-2003



Overall football intelligence is one of the most important player traits for defensive backs. As such, it is no coincidence that John Lynch had an incredible NFL career, and is now the general manager for the San Francisco 49ers. A Stanford alum, Lynch is incredibly bright and has a terrific grasp of football. This led to a stellar 12-season stint in Tampa Bay in which he was an unquestioned starting safety.

Selected in the third round of the 1993 NFL Draft, Lynch developed into one of the league's best safeties. It took two seasons for Lynch

to catch on, but from 1995 forward, Lynch was almost always a lock to make the Pro-Bowl.

In fact, Lynch earned a whopping nine Pro-Bowl nominations in 15 NFL seasons split between Tampa Bay and the Denver Broncos. Over half of the seasons he played in, Lynch was considered an elite safety. That should speak for itself.

Add three First-Team All-Pro selections and one Second-Team, Lynch is one of the most decorated players in franchise history. He was a pivotal member of several playoff teams during his career, including the 2002 team that went on to win the Super Bowl. Lynch did it all and was one of the greatest leaders the franchise has seen, which is something that is impossible to quantify.

To further prove how incredible Lynch was, he is now an NFL general manager. This is something that very few individuals ever get to say. Keep in mind that he did this after NFL games in the booth for FOX. Who can be this good at three different things in football?

I know this ranking is about what players did on the field, but Lynch's storied career is not fully described without mentioning that. Still, even if his new job isn't considered, Lynch is a lock for a top-five place in terms of the all-time greats from Tampa Bay. We have to believe he'll be a Pro Football Hall of Fame inductee in the not-so distant future either.

## **Top Bucs Players Hardy Nickerson LB 1993-1999**

The second-best linebacker in Buccaneers history is Hardy Nickerson, but on a lot of other teams, he may have been the best. I will explain why in a little bit, but most people probably already know who No. 1 is. Nonetheless, Nickerson is one of the best linebackers to play the game and was a huge piece of the 1990s Tampa Bay teams, and that may be putting it lightly.

Nickerson might have begun his NFL career with the Pittsburgh Steelers coming out of California. However, he is best remembered

for his seven seasons in Tampa Bay, in which he dominated the middle of the team's defense. A force capable of laying the wood while also capable of tracking running backs and tight ends, Nickerson held down the middle linebacker position from 1993 to 1999.



After joining the Buccaneers prior to the 1993 season, expectations were high for Nickerson. He turned around and blew them out of the water. In 1993, Nickerson played in every game for the team, recording an interception and a sack in the process.

He was rewarded for his stellar season with Pro Bowl and All-Pro honors. Not too shabby right? He did the same in 1997, and added three other Pro-Bowl seasons in 1996, 1998 and 1999.

Seven seasons, five Pro Bowls, two All-Pros, and although not an official stat, 680 career tackles with the Buccaneers. That is the mark of a Hall of Famer, but Nickerson has yet to be inducted.

Following his playing career, Nickerson bounced around coaching roles and is currently the defensive coordinator at the University of Illinois for former Buccaneers head coach Lovie Smith. Nickerson is a team and league legend, and as such, he comes in at No. 8 all-time in Tampa Bay franchise history.

## 1994 Sam Wyche Coach #5

The 1994 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their nineteenth season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. The year began with the death of owner Hugh Culverhouse. Ownership was transferred to a three-man board of trustees. Season ticket sales dwindled, and rumors of the team's location were a persistent distraction all year.

It was the nineteenth year in a row for games to be played at Tampa Stadium. The team was led by Sam Wyche his third of four seasons as head Bucs coach. This Buccaneers team finished with a record of 6-10, in fifth place (last) in the NFC Central. The team did not make the playoffs for the twelfth year in a row.

Things were to say the least “messed up” with the team’s management structure after Hugh Culverhouse’s death. At mid-season, the three man board removed all personnel responsibilities from coach Sam Wyche, and gave them to Vice President Rich McKay, who they named team general manager. They also put the team up for sale.

The team continued to play football and on the football field, Errict Rhett became the first rookie in the team's history to rush for 1,000 yards, even though he did not get his first start until the ninth game of the season.

The Buccaneers had one of the weakest offenses in the league, even while led by a coach who had consistently produced top offenses in past jobs he held such as when Mr. Wyche was with the Cincinnati Bengals. It was as if nothing could make the Bucs a winner. When the Bucs were 2-9, most people in the Bay area were ready to hang Wyche and pack his bags for him, but then the defensive line improved.

Eric Curry began to play better in the second half of the season, and the Bucs began their first 4-game winning streak in 15 years. It was actually amazing, and it is why Wyche got his fourth year.

It began with an overtime win in Minnesota. Then came two wins over the Washington Redskins and one over the LA Rams. This set

up what was to be a big game with Tampa against the Green Bay Packers.

The Pack was trying to grab a playoff spot. "We've arrived", Wyche announced a bit prematurely. The final game was actually dubbed "Orange Pride day," and had good attendance though many were for the opposition. The crowd expected this to be the last game played in Tampa. The Packers beat the Bucs 34–19. They say Pride comes before the Fall.

### **Games of the 1994 season**

In the season opener on September 4, 1994 at Chicago, the Bears stung the Bucs L (9–21) at Soldier Field before 61,844. At home on Sep 11, the Bucs beat the Indianapolis Colts W (24–10) before 36,631. Then, on Sep 18, the New Orleans Saints beat the Bucs L (7–9) at home before 45,522. At Green Bay's Lambeau Field on Sep 25, 1994, the Packers walloped the Bucs L (3–30) before 58,551.

On Oct 2, the Bucs defeated the Detroit Lions at home W (24–14) before 38,012. At Atlanta on Oct 9, the Falcons got the best of the Bucs L (13–34) at the Georgia Dome before 52,633. On Oct 16, the team drew a bye. At San Francisco on Oct 23, the 49ers pounded the Bucs L (16–41) before 62,741 at Candlestick Park before 62,741. On Oct 30, the Minnesota Vikings pounded the Bucs L (13–36) at home before 42,110.

At home on Nov 6, the Chicago Bears beat the Bucs before 60,821. At Detroit, on Nov 13, the Lions edged out the Bucs L (9–14) in the Pontiac Silverdome before 50,814. Then, on Nov 20, at Seattle, the Seahawks nosed out the Bucs L 21–22 at the Kingdome before 37,466. At Minnesota on Nov 27, the Bucs beat the Vikings W (20–17) in OT at the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome before 47,259.

On Dec 4, at home, the Washington Redskins edged out the Bucs W (26–21) in Tampa Stadium before 45,121. Then, at home again on Dec 11, the Bucs defeated the Los Angeles Rams W (24–14) before 34,150. At Washington on Dec 18, the Bucs beat the Redskins W (17–14) at RFK Stadium before 47,315. In an unexpected loss after four wins in a row, on Dec 24, the Green Bay

Packers defeated the Bucs L (34–19) at home in Tampa Stadium before 65,076.

### **1995 Sam Wyche Coach #5**

The 1995 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their twentieth season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. It was the twentieth year in a row for games to be played at Tampa Stadium. The team was led by Sam Wyche in his fourth (last) of four seasons as head Bucs coach. This Buccaneers team finished with a record of 7-9, in fifth place (last) in the NFC Central. The team did not make the playoffs for the thirteenth year in a row. It was Sam Wyche's final season as the team's head coach.

This was also the final year the Buccaneers team wore screen printed name and numbers on the jerseys

Prior to the season the new owner, Malcolm Glazer assumed the ownership role of the team. Then the Bucs drafted defensive lineman Warren Sapp and linebacker Derrick Brooks, both of whom are recognized as two of the team's greatest ever players. The Buccaneers' first-ever draft pick, Lee Roy Selmon, was honored with his induction into the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

### **Games of the 1995 Season**

In the season opener on September 3, 1995 at Philadelphia, the Bucs whipped the Eagles W (21–6) in Veterans Stadium before 66,266. At Cleveland on Sep 10, the Browns defeated the Bucs L (22–6) at Cleveland Stadium before 61,083. Then, on Sep 17, at home the Chicago Bears defeated the Buccaneers L (6–25) at home before 71,507. On Sep 24, Tampa Bay defeated the Washington Redskins W (14–6) at home in Tampa Stadium before 49,234. At Carolina on Oct 1, the Bucs beat the Panthers W (20–13) at the Clemson Memorial Stadium before 50,076

On Oct 8, the Buccaneers edged out the Cincinnati Bengals W (19–16) at home in Tampa Stadium before 41,732. On Oct 15, the Bucs edged out the Minnesota Vikings W (20–17) in OT at home in Tampa Stadium before 55,703. Then, at home again, on Oct 22, the Atlanta Falcons edged out the Bucs L (21–24) at home in Tampa



Stadium before 66,135. On Oct 29, at Houston, the Oilers defeated the Buccaneers L (7–19) at the Houston Astrodome before 31,489.

On Nov 5, the team drew a bye

On Nov 12, at Detroit the Lions edged out the Bucs L (24–27) at the Pontiac Silverdome before 60,644. On Nov 19, 1995, the Bucs nosed out the Jacksonville Jaguars W (17–16) at home in Tampa Stadium before 71,629. At Green Bay on Nov 26, the Packers pounded the Bucs L (13–35) at Lambeau Field before 59,218. Then, on Dec 3, at Minnesota, the Vikings beat the Bucs L (17–31) at Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome before 52,879.

On Dec 10, 1995, the Bucs edged out the Green Bay Packers W (13–10) in OT at home in Tampa Stadium before 67,557. Then, in the game preceding the season finale on December 17, 1995 at Chicago, the Bears pounded the Bucs L (10–31) at Soldier Field before 49,475. Then, at home on Dec 23, the Detroit Lions whipped the Bucs L (10–37) at home in Tampa Stadium before 50,049.

## Top Bucs Players Warren Sapp DT 1995-2003





One of the biggest characters, and frankly, men to play in the NFL, Warren Sapp is definitely ranked among the top 3 Bucs players on anybody's list. He is one of the best players of all-time in Buccaneers history.

If we were looking for Top Bucs players who had the best personality, Sapp would definitely come in at No. 1. His personality was larger than life, but that is beside the point. As a player, Sapp is one of the greatest defensive tackles ever, solidified by his enshrinement into the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

Sapp began his career with Tampa Bay after they drafted him 12th overall in 1995 out of the University of Miami. A standout defensive player, Sapp was a surefire pick, and it clearly worked out well for the Buccaneers.

From 1995 to 2003, Sapp demolished opposing offensive lines with his brutish force. I mean, look at him, he is 6-foot-2 and over 300 pounds. Would you like to try your shot at keeping him away from the quarterback? Thought so.

In his nine seasons with Tampa Bay, Sapp recorded 77 sacks.

Appearing in 140 games, that is slightly more than a sack every other game, quite a clip. Keep in mind that he did this playing more of a space-eater role of defensive tackle and not the prototypical pass rusher coming off the edge.

From 1997 until 2003, Sapp made the Pro Bowl every season, including six various seasons earning All-Pro honors. That is domination in every sense of the word.

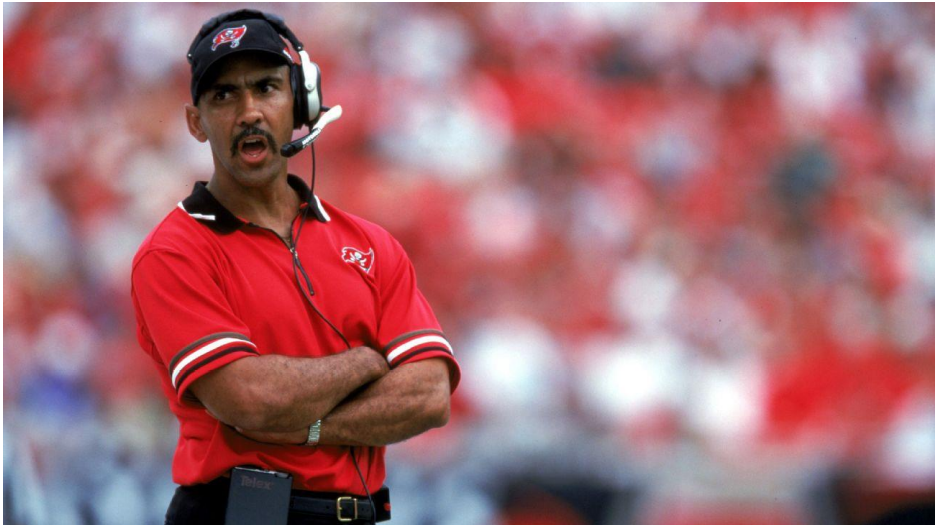
In 1999, Sapp was named the NFL Defensive Player of the Year after notching 12.5 sacks. Sapp then went on to win the Super Bowl with the Buccaneers in 2002, and actually sacked Rich Gannon during that game. The Pro Football Hall of Famer's No. 99 jersey is also retired by the team, further proving how incredible he was.



# Chapter 16 Coach Tony Dungy 1996-2001

## Coach # 6 Tony Dungy

<u>Year</u>	<u>Record</u>	<u>Place Conf/ Div</u>	<u>Playoffs</u>	<u>Coaches.</u>	<u>Notes</u>
2001	9-7-0	3rd -- NFC Central	0-1	Tony Dungy	Lost Wild Card
2000	10-6-0	2nd --NFC Central	0-1 -	Tony Dungy	Lost Wild Card
1999	11-5-0	1st -- NFC Central	1-1 -	Tony Dungy	Lost Conf-Champ
1998	8-8-0	3rd -- NFC Central--		Tony Dungy	
1997	10-6-0	2nd --NFC Central	1-1	Tony Dungy	Lost Div. Playoffs
1996	6-10-0	4th -- NFC Central--		Tony Dungy	



**Tony Dungy, new Buccaneers Coach**

Tony Dungy, as the Viking's Assistant Coach was known across the NFL as being a nice guy. He was just named coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers for 1996. He will prove whether a nice guy can make a winner out of Tampa Bay. Dungy replaced the fired Sam Wyche. Dungy offered his opinion that victory, not the fate of the team after the ownership change, is his major concern

Pundits agree however, that nice guy Tony Dungy will be trying to prove that nice guys don't always finish last-- even with Tampa Bay. The former management team of the Bucs were like town owners in the old west that always killed the old sheriff so they could bring in a new one. Then of course it was the new management team, not the

old, that fired Sam Wyche so we will all find out what that means? Too soon to tell I am afraid.

Tony Dungy had been an assistant coach with Pittsburgh, Kansas City and Minnesota. He spent fifteen years in the second seat. This time, he is the top dog. He signed a six-year deal to become head coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers a "hapless" team that has not had a winning record since 1982. Tony Dungy is ready to change that situation in a hurry. He is such a good coach; he is very likely to pull it off.

"We feel like we're going to make a run at the playoffs; that's our goal," he said in a conference call with reporters at the Super Bowl after being named the Bucs' coach.

Dungy, most recently defensive coordinator for the Vikings becomes the fourth-youngest coach in the NFL and the league's fourth black in the modern era. Art Shell, who was fired by the Oakland Raiders last year, Minnesota's Dennis Green and Philadelphia's Ray Rhodes were the first three.

"The bottom line is how we produce and how we play, and I'm very confident that my team will play really well," Dungy said.

Dungy said he thinks Trent Dilfer, who has been a bust his first two years, can be an effective quarterback. He said he believes Dilfer has been going through the typical growing pains of a young quarterbacks.

Dungy replaces Sam Wyche, who was fired Dec. 27 after compiling a 23-41 record in four seasons. The Bucs were 7-9 last season, their best record since 1982, but lost seven of their last nine games.

The only drawback to the Tampa Bay job is the uncertain future of the franchise. It has been reported that Bucs new owner Malcolm Glazer has been actively looking for a new home because Tampa has been unable to come up with the new stadium funding. Since I have hindsight, at this point, I can tell you all right now that problem will be resolved. Tampa Bay will get its new stadium and it will be a beauty.

Tony Dungy was a quarterback at the University of Minnesota. He wasn't drafted in 1977, but he signed with the Pittsburgh Steelers as a D-back and played two years there before being traded to San Francisco in 1979. He was then cut by the Giants in training camp in 1980 and he began his coaching career at his alma mater that fall. The following year, he joined the Steelers' coaching staff and spent eight years there before going to the Chiefs and the Vikings. The Bucs are lucky to have him as their coach.

### **1996 Tony Dungy Coach #6**

The 1996 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their twenty-first season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. It was the twenty-first year in a row for games to be played at Tampa Stadium. The team was led by Tony Dungy in his first of six seasons as head Bucs coach. This Buccaneers team finished with a record of 6-10, in fourth place in the NFC Central. The team did not make the playoffs for the fourteenth year in a row. It was Tony Dungy's first year as a head coach

The Bucs hoped to improve on their 7-9 season but did not. The 1996 Buccaneers season would be a turning point for the franchise, as under new ownership and management the team began to acquire the personnel that would lead it into its most successful era.

The 1996 season also marked the debut year the team wore stitched up authentic name and numbers on jerseys and it was the final year the Buccaneers wore their trademark orange and white uniforms. After all, it had not brought them any luck.

### **Games of the 1996 Season**

In the season opener on Sep 1, in Tony Dungy's first game as the Buccaneers coach, and the first game in the new stadium, the Green Bay Packers whooped the Bucs L (3-34) at home in the new Houlihan's Stadium before 54,102. At Detroit on Sep 8, the Lions defeated the Bucs L (6-21) at the Pontiac Silverdome before 54,229. On Sep 15, at Denver, the Broncos edged out the Bucs L (23-27) at Mile High Stadium before 71,53. Then, on Sep 22, the Seattle

Seahawks edged out the Bucs L (13–17) at Houlihan's Stadium before 30,212.

On Sep 29, the Detroit Lions shut out the Bucs L (0–27) at Houlihan's Stadium before 34,961. On Oct 6, the team drew a bye. On Oct 13, the Bucs defeated the Minnesota Vikings W (24–13) at home in Houlihan's Stadium before 32,175. At Arizona on Oct 20, the Cardinals edged out the Bucs L (9–13) at Sun Devil Stadium before 27,738. At Green Bay on Oct 27, the Packers edged out the Bucs L (7–13) at Lambeau Field before 60,627. Then, on November 3, at Chicago, the Bears edged out a victory against the Bucs, L (10–13) at Soldier Field before 58,727.

On Nov 10, the Bucs edged out the Oakland Raiders W (20–17) in OT at home in Houlihan's Stadium. On Nov 17, 1996 at San Diego, the Bucs beat the Chargers W (25–17) in Jack Murphy Stadium before 57,526. At home on Nov 24, the Bucs edged out the New Orleans Saints W (13–7) in Houlihan's Stadium before 40,203.

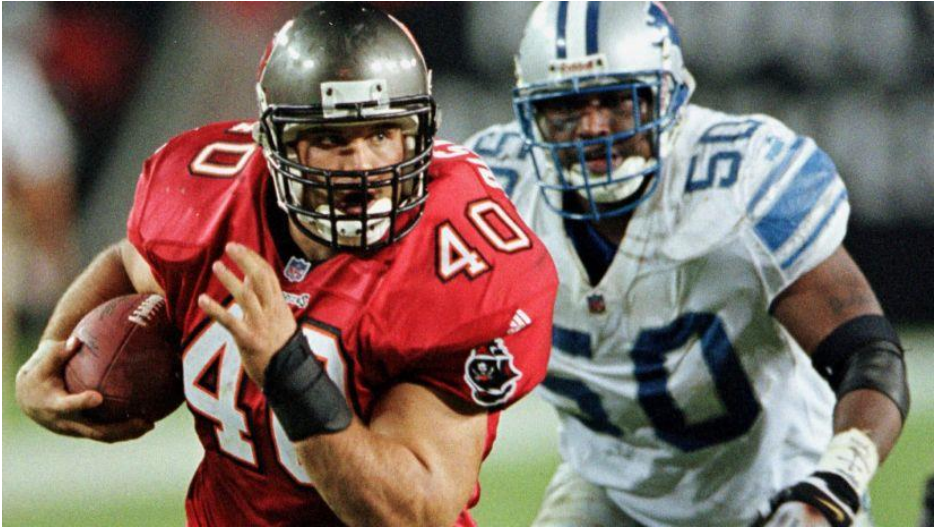
On Dec 1, at Carolina, the Panthers whipped the Bucs L (0–24) in Ericsson Stadium before 57,623. At home on Dec 8, the Buccaneers defeated the Washington Redskins W (10–24) in Houlihan's Stadium before 44,723. At Minnesota, on Dec 15, 1996 at Minnesota the Vikings beat the Bucs L (10–21) at the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome before 49,302. Then, in the season finale the Bucs on Dec 22, defeated the Chicago Bears at home W (34–19) in Houlihan's Stadium before 51,572.

## **Top Bucs Players Mike Alstott, FB 1996-2006**

You hardly ever hear of anybody playing fullback. In my day, it was a big bruiser who could double as a line-backer or a tackle and carry would-be tacklers several additional yards before going down. The forgotten position in football today is the fullback, but how can anyone forget the legendary Mike Alstott and how great he was in Tampa Bay?

Fullbacks, by nature of the position, have to be dual-threats. They need to be able to block for the running back, but they also need to be capable of running/catching the ball, especially when the offense

is close to the goal line. Frankly, there was seemingly nothing that Alstott couldn't do, he was a jack of all trades.



Mike Alstott, the consummate fullback

At 6-foot-1 and nearly 250 pounds, Alstott was a tank and loved laying defenders out. Although, Alstott was used primarily as a rushing threat during his career. Shown by his second-place rank on the Buccaneers all-time rushing leaders, Alstott was more than capable of running with the ball in his hands. His 5,088 yards is only shadowed by his ridiculous mark of 58 touchdowns.

Actually, Alstott is fourth all-time in scoring for the Buccaneers, totaling 732 points. He is also the only non-kicker in the top-six of that category. In an incredible 11 seasons, Alstott tore opposing defenses apart with his unmatched tenacity and ability to always fall forward, earning the extra yard or two.

If you need more reason to believe Alstott is the seventh best player in team history, chew on this. Alstott earned Pro-Bowl nominations in six of his 11 seasons. In addition, he was a First Team All-Pro nominee in three seasons, and a Second Team All-Pro in one.

A career-ending neck injury forced him to retire a bit early, but not before Alstott cemented himself as one of the best to ever jog on to the field wearing a Buccaneers jersey. How sure are we that he won't



get his due in Canton someday either? He was the best offensive player on the best period in franchise history.

## Top Bucs Players Karl Williams WR/PR 1996-2003



One of my favorite stories in football occurs when teams take a chance on an undrafted free agent and he turns out to be a star for the team. Such was the case with Karl Williams when the Buccaneers brought him in prior to the 1996 season. For eight seasons, Williams served as a wide receiver and punt returner in Tampa Bay, setting franchise records in the process.

Williams, known as “The Truth” by the fans, perhaps because Carl the Truth Williams was a well-known boxer for years. This Karl holds two Bucs franchise records. He owns the record for most career punt return yards with 2,565 and career punt return touchdowns with five. His 2,565 yards also rank 24th all-time in NFL history. Not bad for an undrafted player out of Texas A&M-Kingsville.



Although not really known for his receiving ability, Williams provided value to the offense, scoring seven touchdowns during his time with the team. When he left Tampa Bay before the 2004 season, Williams had 1,700 receiving yards to his name. He went on to play one season with the Arizona Cardinals, but only managed 197 yards during the 2004 season.

One of the most underrated aspects of Williams game was his ability to stay on the field. Every season of his career, including the 2004 season in Arizona, Williams played in a minimum of 13 games.

In a league where injuries are such a commonplace, it is impressive that Williams was able to keep himself positioned to help the team instead of on the bench. A fan favorite and somewhat forgotten member of the late '90s early 2000s Buccaneers teams, Williams is more than deserving of this recognition. Amen “the Truth”

### **1997 Tony Dungy Coach #6**

The 1997 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their twenty-second season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. It was the second year in a row for games to be played at Houlihan’s Stadium. The team was led by Tony Dungy in his second of six seasons as head Bucs coach. This Buccaneers team finished with a record of 10-16, in second place in the NFC Central. The team made the playoffs for the first time in fifteen years—since the strike shortened 1982 season. It was Tony Dungy’s second year as a head coach

Besides a winning record, the 1997 season was notable for several other reasons. The team managers decided to retire the traditional orange and white "Bucco Bruce" color scheme and logo, replacing it with a new more marketable and intimidating image. The brand new pewter and red uniforms were much different, featuring a new "skulls and swords" logo, new fonts, and prominent end zone markings.

Besides this major change, the 1997 season would also be their final season playing in what was briefly named “Houlihan's Stadium”. Next door, the much-anticipated brand spanking new Raymond

James Stadium was under construction. Another notable is that it was also Ronde Barber's first season with the team.

When play began during the regular season, the Buccaneers surprised many experts by starting off with a perfect 5–0 record. It was all that Hugh Culverhouse could have ever wanted but for which he would never pay the price.

By end of the season, they had amassed a fine record of 10–6 and they went to the playoffs for the first time in 15 years. They not only made the playoffs, they beat the Detroit Lions (20–10) in the Wild Card Game. They played well. Dungy brought them through the Culverhouse funk to become a respectable team in the NFL. They finished the season by losing to the eventual NFC champions, the Green Bay Packers, 21–7 in the Divisional Playoff Game. They were not overwhelmed. It was a tough game. Head Coach Tony Dungy got his just congratulations by being named NFL Coach of the Year. Nice Job Tony. Good guys do not have to finish last.

### **Games of the 1997 Season**

In the home and season opener on August 31, 1997, the Bucs defeated (edged out) the San Francisco 49ers W (13–6) in Houlihan Stadium before 62,554. At Detroit on Sep 7, the Bucs edged out the Detroit Lions W 24–17 at the Pontiac Silverdome before 58,234. At Minnesota on Sep 14, the Bucs defeated the Vikings W (28–14) at Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome before 63,697. At home in Houlihan Stadium on Sep 21, the Bucs defeated the Miami Dolphins W 31–21 before 73,314.

At home on Sep 28, the Bucs nosed out the Arizona Cardinals W (19–18) in Houlihan Stadium before 53,804. This gave the Bucs an unprecedented 5-0 record The team played hard for Tony Dungy. At Green Bay on Oct 5, the Packers broke the winning streak and edged out the Bucs L (16–21) in Lambeau Field before 60,100. At home, on Oct 12, the Detroit Lions overpowered the Bucs L (9–27) in Houlihan Stadium before 72,095. On Oct 19, the team drew a bye.

At home, on Oct 26, the Minnesota Vikings edged out the Bucs L (6–10) in Houlihan Stadium before 66,815. Then, on Nov 2, the

Bucs edged out the Indianapolis Colts W (31–28) at the RCA Dome before 58,512. At Atlanta, on Nov 9, the Bucs pounded the Falcons W (31–10) at the Georgia Dome before 46,018. At home in Houlihan Stadium, on Nov 16, the Bucs pounded gleefully the New England Patriots W (27–7) before 70,479. Tony Dungy brought the fans back to the stadium. On Nov 23, at Chicago, the Bears squeaked by with a victory over the Bucs L (7–13) at Soldier Field before 43,955.

At New York, on Nov 30, the Bucs whooped the Giants W (20–8) at Giants Stadium before 68,678. On Dec 7, the Green Bay Packers edged out the Bucs L (6–17) in Houlihan Stadium before 73,523. At New York’s Meadowlands, on Dec 14, the Jets unloaded on the Bucs L (0–31) before 60,122. Then, on Dec 21, the Bucs overwhelmed the Chicago Bears W (31–15) at home in Houlihan Stadium before 70,930.

The Buccaneers were won their way. We know that by February 2021, they already had two Super Bowls. Too bad Tony Dungy did not get to grab a few of those rings for the Bucs.

## **Top Bucs Players Ronde Barber CB 1997-2012**

Every team has had a true shutdown cornerback that transformed the defense. For the Buccaneers, that cornerback was Ronde Barber. Without him, one could argue that the team would not have reached the playoffs seven times in 11 years.

From 1997 to 2012, Barber held down the Buccaneers secondary, and led the team to great success. Truthfully, no conversation regarding the best cornerbacks of all-time is complete without mentioning Barber. That is a testament to how good he was as a player.

Barber is the interception leader in Tampa Bay history by a large margin, recording 47 interceptions in 16 seasons. The next closest? Donnie Abraham with 31 picks. Saying Barber was the best cornerback in team history is putting it lightly. Incredibly, Barber returned eight of those 47 to the house for a touchdown, which ranks eighth all-time in league history.



< **Ronde Barber**

Like several other players on this list, Barber was a pivotal member of the 2002 team that won the Super Bowl. Barber was huge in the team's 2002 playoff push, recording two interceptions in three games, including one for a touchdown.

A team and league legend in his own right, Barber lands at No. 4 here, only behind the three undisputed best players in franchise history.

His record for career interceptions, as well as his single-season record of 10 in 2001 with both likely never be broken.

Great cornerbacks only come around once so often, luckily, the Buccaneers capitalized on having Barber roaming in their secondary for the better part of two decades.

**Top Bucs Players Warrick Dunn RB 1997-2001, 2008**

Although Tampa Bay has lacked talent at the quarterback position throughout their history, they have produced some very good running backs over the years. One of the best to run in Tampa Bay was Warrick Dunn. A 12th overall draft selection out of Florida State University, Dunn stayed close to home and tore it up in the NFL.



Warrick Dunn doing his thing

Dunn had two separate stints in Tampa Bay, totaling six seasons. He also spent six seasons with the NFC South rival Atlanta Falcons, bringing his NFL career to 12 seasons. This is quite impressive for a running back.

Playing past the age of 30 is rare unless you are George Blanda or Tom Brady but being productive after that mark is mostly unheard of. Dunn played until the age of 33 and recorded 1,116 all-purpose yards in 2008, the final season of his career with the Buccaneers in 2008.

In Tampa Bay history, Dunn is third overall with 4,986 rushing yards. He only trails Mike Alstott and James Wilder, who will both appear later on this list. In NFL history, Dunn is top-25 in all-purpose yards with 15,665, higher than guys like Randy Moss and Larry Fitzgerald.

Add in that Dunn is one of a select few to have rushed for 10,000-plus yards and record 500-plus receptions in his career, he should find himself in the Pro Football Hall of Fame some day. Although he holds more records for the Falcons, Dunn was incredible for the Buccaneers as well.

Perhaps if Dunn hadn't left one season prior to the 2002 Super Bowl championship, he would have looked better in a Bucs evaluation.

### **1998 Tony Dungy Coach #6**

The 1998 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their twenty-third season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. Raymond James Stadium was now completed and became the home field for the Buccaneers. It was the first year in a row for games to be played at Raymond James Stadium. The team was led by Tony Dungy in his third of six seasons as head Bucs coach. This Buccaneers team finished with a record of 8-8, in third place in the NFC Central. The team missed the playoffs after making them the prior year. It was Tony Dungy's third year as a head coach for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and people in Tampa Bay were thinking differently than in the Culverhouse years.

This was the next season after the Bucs break-out 1997 season, where they finished 10-6. They had two less wins this year, finishing at 8-8 just missing the postseason. Nonetheless they did show their new football strength by beating the Minnesota Vikings during the regular season. Additionally, in the last week of the season, they recorded the biggest road win in their history against the Cincinnati Bengals. Some say the Bucs had an even better season than their record. They cite the fact that the season was marked by at least one lost game in which at least one touchdown had been called back due to referee error. Tampa Bay Fans had a right to believe their team had already turned the corner.

In the season opener, on September 6, 1998 at Minnesota, the Vikings beat the Bucs L (7-31) before 62,538. At Green Bay on Sep 13, the Packers beat the Bucs L (15-23) before 60,124. Then, in the first win for the Bucs, on Sep 20, they whooped the Chicago Bears W 27-15 at home before 64,328. At Detroit on Sep 28, the Lions pounded the Bucs L (6-27) before a ton at 74,724.

At home on Oct 4, the Bucs got the best of the New York Giants W (20-3) before 64,989. On Oct 11, the team drew a bye. On Oct 18, the Bucs defeated the Carolina Panthers W (16-13) before 63,600. At New Orleans, on Oct 25, the Saints beat the Bucs L (3-9) before 52,695. At Raymond James on Nov 1, the Bucs edged out the

Minnesota Vikings W (27–24) before 64,979. On Nov 8, the Tennessee Oilers beat the Bucs L (22–31) before 65,054

At Jacksonville, on Nov 15, the Jaguars edged out the Bucs L (24–29) before 72,974. At Raymond James, on Nov 22, the Detroit Lions beat the Bucs L (25–28) before 64,265. At Chicago, on Nov 29, the Bucs beat the Chicago Bears W (31–17) before 51,938. At home in Raymond James, on Dec 7, the Bucs nosed out the Green Bay Packers W (24–22) before 65,497.

In an 8-8 year, the Bucs won and lost half their games. For example, on Dec 13, they beat the Pittsburgh Steelers W (16–3) before 65,335. Then, at Washington on Dec 19, the Redskins defeated the Bucs L(16–20) before 66,309. In the season finale, on Dec 27, the Bucs put it all together and pounded the Cincinnati Bengals in a shutout W (35–0) before 49,826. Tony Dungy led his team to win.

## Top Bucs Players Brian Kelly CB 1998-2007



I hardly ever find another human being with my same exact name. So, I have a deep affinity for Brian Kelly, one of the original Super Bowl Buccaneers. He was drafted in 1998. Brian Kelly the cornerback became one of the focal points of the Super Bowl champion Buccaneers team in 2002.



Coming out of the University of Southern California, Kelly was a second-round draft pick that spring. The Buccaneers did not have a first-round pick in 1998, but did have two picks in the second round, spent on Jacquez Green and Kelly. While Green turned out to be a bust, Kelly performed well in a Buccaneers jersey.

His best season was by far and away his 2002 season, in which he brought in eight interceptions and totaled 57 tackles, both career highs. Obviously, the Buccaneers went on to win the Super Bowl in that season, defeating the Oakland Raiders. Although he did not record an interception in the 2002 playoffs, Kelly started in every game and was a force on one of the all-time great defenses in NFL history.

Over the course of his 11 -year career, Kelly spent 10 seasons with Tampa Bay. He might have finished his career as a member of the Detroit Lions, but Kelly's best years obviously came as a member of the Buccaneers.

His 22 interceptions during his 10 seasons with the team ranks him seventh all-time behind six other team legends. Kelly's influence on the Super Bowl winning team, as well as his extended stay with the franchise earns him a spot on the list. Although not the flashiest of players, Kelly deserves recognition for his impact on the history of the Buccaneers franchise.

### **1999 Tony Dungy Coach #6**

The 1999 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their twenty-fourth season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. Raymond James Stadium was now completed and became the home field for the Buccaneers for the second year. It was the second year in a row for games to be played at Raymond James Stadium. The Bucs team was led by Tony Dungy in his fourth of six seasons as head Bucs coach.

This Buccaneers team finished with a record of 11-5, not too shabby, in first place in the NFC Central. They won the Divisional Playoffs v the Redskins. However, the Bucs lost the NFC Championships v



the Rams 6-11. Buccaneers and people in Tampa Bay were thinking differently than in the Culverhouse years.

The season began with the team attempting to improve on its 1998 8-8 season. This year found the Bucs enjoying another great season with mostly wins. Rookie Shaun King replaced the injured and mostly inconsistent Trent Dilfer later in the season. King added the zip needed to take the team to their first NFC Central title in 18 years.

The team was so on-target in 1989 that at one point they won 10 out of 12 games. They even had a franchise-record six-game winning streak. As usual for the Bucs, the defensive side dominated the team. They took pride in their record in which nine separate time they held opponents to 10 or fewer points. However, though the D made up for it sometimes, the offensive output while sometimes adequate, was often unspectacular. A case in point, as an example is the 6-3 win over Chicago in October. Baseball anyone?

Results speak for themselves even though the team could have performed better. The Bucs won their first divisional playoff game since 1979, twenty years prior. This enabled them to advance to the conference championship. They should have won the game but when they were leading 6-5 late in the NFC Championship game against the Rams, the Buccaneers lost the lead after a late in the game Ricky Proehl touchdown.

There was a little less than a minute left when a controversial instant replay reversal of a catch by Bert Emanuel stopped their hopes of an upset victory dead in its tracks.

And so, they barely missed their trip to Super Bowl XXXIV. This happened in Tony Dungy's fourth year. In four years, the team went from a 7-9 losing season, just one of fourteen losing seasons in a row, to an 11-5 season, a division championship, and a close shot at the Super Bowl. Tampa fans had to love Tony Dungy. He almost got them there.

## Games of the 1999 Season

In the season and home opener at Raymond James Stadium on September 12, 1999, the New York Giants bested the Bucs L (13–17) before 65,026. At Philadelphia on Sep 19, 1999, the Bucs beat the Eagles W (19–5) before 64,285. Then, on Sep 26, the Bucs edged out the Denver Broncos at home W 13–10 before 65,297 at Raymond James Stadium. At Minnesota on Oct 3, the Vikings beat the Bucs L (14–21) before 64,106.

At Green Bay on Oct 10, the Packers edged out the Bucs L (23–26) before 59,868. On Oct 17, the team drew a bye. Then, in a limited scoring contest on Oct 24, the Bucs edged out the Chicago Bears W (6–3) before at Raymond James Stadium. 65,283. At Detroit on Oct 31, the Lions defeated the Bucs before 63,135. At New Orleans on Nov 7, the Saints beat the Bucs W (31–16) before 47,129. The Bucs then went on a six week tear, overwhelming opponents for the W

At home, on Nov 14, The Bucs beat the Kansas City Chiefs W (17–10) before 64,927. In another home match, on Nov 21, the Bucs defeated the Falcons W (19–10) before 65,158. Then, at Seattle on Nov 28, the Bucs beat the Seahawks W (16–3) before 66,314. At home on Dec 6, 1999, the Bucs beat the Minnesota Vikings W (24–17) before 65,741.

Then, at home on Dec 12, the Bucs beat the Detroit Lions W (23–16) before 65,536. At Oakland on Dec 19, the Raiders stopped the win streak cold with an impressive shutout victory over the Bucs L (0–45) before 46,395. The Bucs regained composure and came back at home to pound the Green Bay Packers on Dec 26, W (29–10) before 65,273. The Bucs then capped off a great season – its best ever on January 2, 2000 at Chicago, beating the Bears at Soldier Field W (20–6) before 66,944.

## Top Bucs Players Martin Gramatica K (1999-2004)



Great family man and veterans supporter Gramatica and his family after retirement

Martin Gramatica was a kicker. Some say he was arguably the best kicker in Buccaneers history. No team has success, especially playoff success and a Super Bowl victory, without a clutch kicker. Gramatica was that and more for the Buccaneers teams of the early 2000s.

To understand how great Gramatica was, you cannot simply look at his stats. Although, his stats do paint a fairly accurate picture of how talented he was. During his first season, the Argentine kicker set a career best with his 84.4 percent conversion rate. If you look at the fine print, he had two seasons with 100 percent marks, but they were seasons in which he only attempted one and five field goals, respectively.

His best season overall however came in 2002, conveniently when the team went on to win the Super Bowl. Gramatica made 32 of his 39 field goals and nailed all 32 of his extra points attempts. Talk about clutch.

To cap it all off, Gramatica proved he could do it on the biggest stage, as he had two field goals in the Super Bowl.

Kickers are oftentimes underappreciated for their efforts, and typically receive a lot of blame for missing field goals. During his six seasons, Gramatica established himself as one of the best kickers in team history. He may have fallen off towards the end of his stay, but fans will always remember him for his efforts in the 2002 season. Also, he still is the franchise's all-time leading scorer. Needless to say, he was pretty good. Say Amen!

## NFC Divisional Playoffs: Victory (14-13)

v

### Washington Redskins

	1	2	3	4	Total
Redskins	0	3	10	0	13
Buccaneers	0	0	7	7	14

The 4:00 EST P.M. game was played on a clear day at Raymond James Stadium in Tampa, Florida in 68 degree weather. The game was broadcast by TV announcers (FOX): Dick Stockton (play-by-play) and Matt Millen (color commentator). The referee was Dick Hantak in a game with an attendance of 65,835. The Bucs prevailed.

The Buccaneers forced two key turnovers in the second half as the team was down 13-0 and rallied for two TDs while their staunch defense held Washington to just 157 yards, with only 32 in the crucial second half.

The first quarter was scoreless. Then, the Bucs punted a short one of 35-yards from Mark Royals and the Bucs made the most of it scoring from the Tampa Bay 43-yard line. Brett Conway chipped in a 28-yard field goal with 5:37 remaining in the second quarter.

In the second half, the Redskins' Brian Mitchell brought the kickoff back the whole 100 yards for a TD and a playoff record. Later in the third quarter, Darrell Green picked off a Shaun King pass and took

it to the Buccaneers 36-yard line. Conway bagged his second field goal to give the Skins a 13–0 lead.

The Bucs then got fired up after a Bucs punt, Tampa Bay safety John Lynch intercepted a pass from Johnson on the Tampa Bay 27-yard line. With the help of a 31-yard pass interference penalty on Lemont Evans, the Bucs drove 73 yards in 6 plays and scored on Mike Alstott's 2-yard TD run.

The Bucs scored again in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter when D tackle Steve White forced a fumble Brad Johnson while sacking him, big Warren Sapp fell on the ball at Redskins 32-yard line. King quickly went to work, engineering a drive consisting of a 17-yard pass to Bert Emanuel and a 13-yard pass to Warrick Dunn.

When fourth down came and the Bucs had yet to score with 1 yard left for the 1<sup>st</sup> down, things happened. Alstott ran 5-yards to the Washington 3-yard line, and King finished the game off with a 1-yard touchdown pass to John Davis.

The Redskins had a chance to win the game with a 52-yard field goal attempt in the final seconds of the game, but the snap from center Dan Turk to Brad Johnson, the holder, was off and the Bucs won.

On a sad note, this was Dan Turk's last game in the NFL, as he died later that year due to cancer. Meanwhile, King became the first rookie to lead his team to a playoff win since Pat Haden accomplished the feat in 1976.

## **NFC Championship: Loss (6-11)**

v

**St. Louis Rams**

	1	2	3	4	Total

Buccaneers	3	0	3	0	<b>6</b>
<b>Rams</b>	3	2	0	6	<b>11</b>

The weather did not matter as the 4:00 EST P.M. game was played indoors at the Trans World Dome in St. Louis Missouri. The game was broadcast by TV announcers (FOX): Pat Summerall (play-by-play) and John Madden (color commentator). The referee was Bill Carollo in a game with an attendance of 66,396. The Rams prevailed.

It was a tough game to play in and a tough game to watch. Nothing seemed to be happening. The Bucs and the Rams slugged it out for most of the game. The Bucs D held the Rams highly-potent offense. The Buccaneers notable weak on offense, could muster only two field goals, and they gave safety in the second quarter which in many ways nullified one of their field goals. It was a bad snap from center that went over the head of rookie quarterback Shaun King and it flew out of the endzone.

The Bucs were nursing a one-point lead well into the 4th Quarter. It was a dull game for fans. Rams fans did not like it when the game was enlivened by the Rams broke out with a Kurt Warner TD pass to Ricky Proehl with just 4:44 left in the game. The new Bucs never quit on Coach Dungy and at the end of the game they had a drive going that could have meant pay dirt. Bad luck prevailed. A replay overturned what appeared to the world to be a reception by Buccaneers wide receiver, but they did not get it and that's all she wrote. The Bucs never recovered. Rams 11; Bucs 6.

Proehl was the sole offensive star of the game, finishing with 6 catches for 100 yards and one touchdown.

The ensuing controversy prompted the NFL to clarify the rule regarding what constitutes a valid pass reception. This would come to be known as "The Bert Emanuel Rule."<sup>[4]</sup>

## 2000 Tony Dungy Coach #6

The 2000 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their twenty-fifth season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. Raymond James Stadium was the venue for all games with the new Bucs—their third season in a row.

The Bucs were led by Tony Dungy in his fifth of six seasons as head Bucs coach. This Buccaneers team finished with a fine record of 10-6, not too shabby, in second place in the NFC Central. They made the playoffs again but lost in the Wild Card game to Philadelphia's Eagles L (3-21)

How do you improve on a great season. You try your best. So it was with the Bucs, trying to improve on an 11-5 season from 1999. Shaun King, who took over the quarterback position as a rookie midway through the 1999 season, became the full-time starter for 2000. In April, the Buccaneers got a new guy to help, Keyshawn Johnson via a trade from the Jets. Johnson became the most highly - paid wide receiver in the NFL. Hugh Culverhouse would not have paid the money but then again the Bucs did not win with him as the owner. One thing it did do this year, it increased expectations for the club.

The Bucs were 3-0 this year before the rest of the league knew they meant business Unfortunately, after that they stumbled and quickly they were at 3-4. They busted loose again after week 9, when Tampa Bay beat then-undefeated Minnesota with a super game that turned the season in the right direction. They won seven out of their next eight games, and they were ready for a return to the playoffs for the third time in four seasons.

They caught a Monday night game against the St. Louis Rams. It was a rematch of the prior year's NFC Championship Game. However, instead of the defensive struggle that was tough to watch like 1989, was a real shootout at 38-35 shootout. For their efforts, the Bucs won the contest and a n open wild card spot.

In the final week of the regular season, the Buccaneers had a chance at winning the NFC Central title. They played Green Bay knowing

that a victory at Lambeau Field, would give them the division, and secure a first round bye for the playoffs. It was not to be.

After a rally to tie the game in the fourth quarter, kicker Martin Gramatica missed what would have been a game-winning field goal right at the end of regulation. The Buccaneers lost the game in OT and thus failed to win the division. They were as close as they could be. They were dejected. The Bucs then fell to the #5 seed and played in the Wild Card Game. They were routed by the Philadelphia Eagles in the Wild Card Game, 21–3. Tough season but overall well played—especially for a Bucs team that was in a Culverhouse recovery.

### **Games of the 2000 season**

In the season opener at New England's Foxboro Stadium on September 3, 2000, the Bucs beat the Patriots W (21–16) before 60,292. At home on Sep 10, 1999, the Bucs trounced the Chicago Bears in a big shutout W(41-0) before 65, 569. At Detroit on Sep 24, the Bucs pounded the Lions W (31–10) before 76,928. In a close match at home on Sep 24, the Bucs lost for the first time this season against the New York Jets L (17–21) before 65,619.

At Washington on Oct 1, the Redskins edged out the Bucs L (17–20) in OT before 83,53. At Minnesota on Oct 9, the Vikings edged out the Bucs L (23–30) before 64,162. On Oct 14, the team drew a bye. At home in Raymond James Stadium, on Oct 19, the Detroit Lions defeated the Bucs L (14–28) before 65,557. At home on Oct 29, the Bucs pounded the Minnesota Vikings W (41–13) before 65,589 in the first of three wins in a row.

On Nov 5, at Atlanta, the Bucs beat the Falcons W (27–14) before 70,097. Then, at home on Nov 12, the Bucs beat the Green Bay Packers W (20–15) before 65,621. At Chicago on Nov 19, the Bears edged out the Bucs L (10–13) before 66,944. At home on Nov 26, the Bucs beat the Buffalo Bills W (31–17) at Raymond James Stadium before 65,546. Then, at home again on Dec 3, the Bucs beat the Dallas Cowboys W (27–7) before 65,621.

At Miami on Dec 10, the Bucs edged out the Dolphins W (16–13) before 74,307. At home on Dec 18, the Bucs edged out the St. Louis



Rams W (38–35) before 65,653. Then, on Dec 24, 2000 at Green Bay, the Packers edged out the Bucs L (14–17) in (OT) before 59,692.

## **2001 Tony Dungy Coach #6**

The 2001 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their twenty-sixth season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. They played in Raymond James Stadium for the fourth season in a row. The Bucs were led by Tony Dungy in his sixth and last of six seasons as head Bucs coach. This Buccaneers team finished with a winning record of 9-7 to wrap up third place in the NFC Central. They made the playoffs again but lost again in the Wild Card game at the Eagles L (9-31)

Quarterback Shaun King was benched, and Brad Johnson was brought in from free agency. It was a good move. Johnson broke Tampa Bay team records for passing yards (3,406), completions (340), and attempts (540). However, the team could not get going out of the gate and started the season with a 3–4 record. The team rallied in the second half of the season, however, improving to finish 9–7 and clinched a playoff spot playing in a Wild Card Game.

In the Wild Card playoffs, however, the Buccaneers were outplayed by Andy Reid's Eagles for the second year in a row. Two days later, head coach Tony Dungy was fired by the management. Tampa Bay's intolerance for a lack of winning even in a winning season was showing.

### **Games of the 2001 Season**

In the season opener at Dallas Texas Stadium, the Bucs beat the Cowboys W (10-6) on September 9, 2001, before 61,521. The Team had a bye week on Sept 16. At Minnesota on Sep 30, the Vikings edged out the Bucs before 64,105. Then, at home on Oct 7, the Bucs beat the Green Bay Packers W (14–10) before 65,510. On Oct 14, at Tennessee, the Titans edged out the Bucs in OT L (28-31) before 68,798

At home on Oct 21, 2001, the Pittsburgh Steelers knocked off the Tampa Bay Buccaneers L (10–17) before 65,588. At home on Oct

28, the Bucs beat the Minnesota Vikings W (41–14) before 65,558. On Nov 4, at Green Bay, the Packers nosed out the Bucs in a nail-biter L (20–21) before 59,861. Then, at Detroit on Nov 11, the Bucs edged out the Lions W (20–17) before 74,268.

At home on Nov 18, the Chicago Bears edged out the Bucs L (24–27) before 65,612. At St. Louis, on Nov 26, the Bucs beat the Rams, W (24–17) before 66,198. At Cincinnati, on Dec 2, the Bucs edged out the Bengals W (16–13) in OT before 52,135. Then, on Dec 9, the Bucs edged out the Detroit Lions W (15–12) before 65,514. At Chicago on Dec 16, the Bers pounded the Bucs L (3–27) before 66,944.

At home on Dec 23, the Bucs smothered the New Orleans Saints W (48–21) before 65,526. At home on Dec 29, 2001, the Bucs defeated the Baltimore Ravens W (22–10) before 65,619. Then, in the season finale, on Jan 6, the Philadelphia Eagles edged out the Bucs before 65,541

## Top Bucs Players Brad Johnson. QB, 2001-2004,



Coming in as the highest-ranked quarterback on a lot of lists, Brad Johnson was a great QB. He earns s high spot in any Bucs QB

evaluation primarily based on his Super Bowl victory. Truthfully, Johnson is the best quarterback in franchise history in terms of talent, although Jameis Winston could surpass him if Tom Brady does not eclipse him. Prior to Josh Freeman's 2012 season, Johnson held numerous records for the team including single-season yards and touchdowns marks.

His 3,811 yards in 2003 was a franchise record until 2012 when Josh Freeman broke it with 4,065 yards. In addition, Johnson's mark of 26 touchdowns held until that same 2012 season when Freeman threw for 27. Regardless, Johnson has something no other quarterback in Tampa Bay history has besides Tom Brady: *a Super Bowl ring*.

Johnson joined the Buccaneers in 2001 to reunite with Tony Dungy, as they had both been with the Minnesota Vikings prior to arriving in Tampa. However, it was Jon Gruden who he worked with in the final three seasons of his stint in Tampa Bay.

Johnson's four seasons in Tampa Bay were supremely productive, as he threw for 10,940 yards and 64 touchdowns. Unlike most quarterbacks in Tampa history, Johnson finished with his tenure with a winning record at 26-23. Obviously the pinnacle was the 12-4 2002 season that culminated in the Super Bowl victory, but Johnson put in three solid seasons before being injured and replaced in 2004.

Despite Johnson admitting to altering the footballs in that 2002 Super Bowl, his time in Tampa Bay was widely regarded as positive. Quite frankly, that is more than enough to earn the highest ranking of any quarterback in franchise history.

## Top Bucs Players Simeon Rice DE 2001-2006



When discussing the best defensive linemen in Tampa Bay lore, Simeon Rice has to be near or at the peak of that discussion. Few people in league history were as disruptive as Rice, but he doesn't get the same amount of respect as others. Well, I am here to change that narrative and give Rice some respect for the incredible NFL career he curated.

Unlike many other players on this list, Rice did not begin his career in Tampa Bay. He first made a name for himself in the NFL with the Arizona Cardinals. It all began when Rice fell to the Cardinals as the third overall pick in the 1996 NFL Draft out of Illinois. For those younger fans, a good comparison for him coming out of college is Bradley Chubb from this year. He was very, very highly touted. He performed up to snuff in Arizona, despite being on losing teams. After the 2000 season, he was ready to move on from the Cardinals.

Enter the Buccaneers, who provided the best home and well, the rest is history. Rice was a proven commodity, recording three double-digit sack seasons while in Arizona. However, when he joined forces with Derrick Brooks and the loaded Buccaneers defense, he took it to another level. In his six seasons with Tampa Bay, Rice only failed to reach double-digit sacks once, and that was an injury riddled 2006 season.

Excluding the two sacks he recorded in 2006, Rice tallied 67.5 sacks in five seasons with Tampa Bay. That is absurd. Here are his sack totals from 2001 to 2005 in order: 11, 15.5, 15, 12, 14. His highest total came in 2002, and by this point, everyone knows that was when the team won the Super Bowl.

Oh and by the way, he went to three Pro-Bowls and earned All-Pro honors once. Rice checks every box for this ranking. Longevity of career in Tampa, overall talent, and influence on team success; he did it all. Rice was incredible for Tampa Bay and is a lock for a high spot on any list of the best Buccaneers of all-time.

## NFC Wild Card: Loss (9-31)

v

### Philadelphia Eagles

	1	2	3	4	Total
Buccaneers	3	6	0	0	9
<b>Eagles</b>	3	14	7	7	<b>31</b>

The 4:30 EST P.M. game was played on a clear day at Veterans Stadium in Philadelphia in 46 degree weather. The game was broadcast by TV announcers (FOX): Mike Stockton (play-by-play) and Joe Theismann & Paul Maguire (color commentators). The referee was Larry Nemmers in a game with an attendance of 65,846. The Eagles prevailed.

Donavan McNabb was not hot, but he was very effective in bringing down the Bucs Defense. He did throw for 194 yards and 2 touchdowns, while also rushing for 54 yards. Philadelphia dominated the Buccaneers from start to finish. The Bucs signal caller, Brad Johnson had a bad game with four interceptions.—twice by Damon Moore. It was the second consecutive year that

Philadelphia dominated Tampa Bay in Wild Card play. Bucs management were not about to sign up for a threepeat. Two days later, Buccaneers coach, Mr. Nice Guy Tony Dungy was fired at Tampa Bay.

The Bucs scored after on the Eagles first drive, Buccaneers safety Dexter Jackson picked off a McNabb pass and returned it 9 yards to the Eagles 36-yard line. This set up a 36-yard field goal from Martin Gramatica. McNabb fought back from the mistake with a 39-yard run on third down and 5 on Philadelphia's ensuing possession. Akers got the call for a field goal tying the game 3–3.

In the second period, McNabb was four for four for 70 yds on a 73-yard drive which included a 41-yard completion to Todd Pinkston. The drive ended with a 16-yard TD pass to tight end Chad Lewis. Tampa came back with a 10-play, 65-yard drive, but no TD. They again settled for a Gramatica field goal. The score was then 10–6.

Later in the quarter, Eagles punter Sean Landeta kicked a beauty and pinned the Bucs back at their own five. The Bucs could not move the ball. McNabb then threw a 23-yard touchdown pass to Duce Staley with 35 seconds left in the half. But Tampa Bay squeezed in a third Gramatica field goal before halftime. It had been set up by a 46-yard reception from Keyshawn Johnson. The Philadelphia lead was then 17–9.

Tampa Bay seemed to quit in the second half as they were overwhelmed by all aspects of the Eagles onslaught. For example, the Eagles drove 60 yards in six plays and scored on a 25-yard touchdown run from rookie Correll Buckhalter. Johnson tried to rally the Bucs back with a pair of drives deep into Eagles territory, but both of them ended poorly with interceptions.

First, DB Troy Vincent picked off a Johnson pass in the end zone with 4:09 left in the third quarter. Then near the end of the game, in the fourth quarter, safety Brian Dawkins intercepted Johnson on Philadelphia's 3-yard line. Enough to blow the wind out of your sails. Following a punt, Moore put the game away by recording his second interception and returned it 59 yards for a touchdown. Bad game for the Bucs. Good game for the Eagles.



# Chapter 17 Coach Jon Gruden 2002-2008

Coach #7 Jon Gruden



Jon Gruden, New 2002 Buccaneers Coach

Year	Record	Place Conf/ Div	Playoff	Coach	Notes
2008	9-7-0	3rd -- NFC South--		Jon Gruden	
2007	9-7-0	1st -- NFC South	0-1	Jon Gruden	Lost Wild Card
2006	4-12-0	4th -- NFC South--		Jon Gruden	
2005	11-5-0	1st -- NFC South	0-1	Jon Gruden	Lost Wild Card
2004	5-11-0	4th -- NFC South--		Jon Gruden	
2003	7-9-0	3rd -- NFC South--		Jon Gruden	
2002	12-4-0	1st -- NFC South	3-0 -	Jon Gruden	Won Superbowl

Tony Dungy, Viking's Assistant Coach is known across the NFL as being Mr. Nice Guy and also a great coach. He is out as are a few draft picks and cash and Jon Gruden is in. He became the new coach of the Bucs for 2002.

But, even if Gruden wins a Super Bowl, which we know he is about to do in 2002, can he overcome the Tampa Bay mystique that

nobody gets to reach ten years as a Tampa Bay Coach without facing the FIRING squad. I hope I live that long.

Jon Gruden left the Raiders to go to the Buccaneers. We're not going to say how good this was for Gruden, but it is a great exercise worth our time to look at the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and the Oakland Raiders and see who if anybody really benefitted from the deal.

The pundits say that Jon Gruden is a headline maker. For example, he made headlines in 2020 for his inability like many to keep a mask on his face regardless of the science. You may recall that back in early 2020, the mask concept could have confused everyone and anyone because even the esteemed Dr. Fauci at the time was in his off-again phase.

Jon Gruden just doesn't give a crap about wearing a mask, even though the league warned of suspensions and losing draft picks for repeated offenses. In the fall, one week, Gruden showed up on the sideline with a pair of panties on his face. The next week, he's wearing a proper mask, but the protective covering didn't cover his face much during the game against the Buffalo Bills.

Gruden was not in the news for his masking decisions in 2002, however, but for a different reason. There was a rumored head-coaching trade from the Oakland Raiders to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Fans know that head-coaching trades aren't too common now, but two decades ago, there were some big name coaches such as Gruden, Bill Belichick, and Bill Parcells, who at the time and still, are big names in NFL coaching.

In 2002, when Gruden and the trade and the Raiders were first subjects, the consequences were nearly immediate. Ironically after the trade of 2002, the parties of this well-known trade became well-known opponents in the Super Bowl at the end of that season. For scribes and pundits, it was a conundrum at best and a puzzlement at least for how this could possibly happen.

Folks, I do hope it is OK again to use Cat in the Hat language (conundrum and puzzlement and maybe I can throw in the term eliminatus and calculatus in a few more chapters.). I chose to



describe things this way as you are reviewing this introductory piece to the Gruden Era at Tampa Bay.

Nonetheless in the Super Bowl, we had the Raiders and Buccaneers, with Jon Gruden coaching against his old team. Nobody ever thought he would be there or at least not with the Bucs. Tony Dungy had just gotten fired and Gruden had enough moxie to believe he would not face the same medicine in seven years with the Bucs. Yet, he did

So, how did this trade for talent actually occur? Gruden had another Bucs matchup as they say in Week 7 of the 2020 season. This involved two of the NFL's highest paid coaches in 2020. I know we're not there yet in the book, but we all know what happened in Super Bowl LV in February, 2020.

Tell me the details of the trade we will look at first. Here are the Jon Gruden trade details: First, the Raiders were to receive two first-round picks; two second-round picks; and \$8 million. For their trouble, the Buccaneers were to receive Head coach Jon Gruden as their head coach. See how current we are now.

Calculatus eliminatus. We had to get here as calculating the worth of the picks in 2002, we have a 21st and 53rd overall pick, and a 32nd overall in 2003 and a 33rd overall in 2004. While the Raiders didn't keep all the picks, the players selected at those spots were TE Daniel Graham, OT Langston Walker, DE Tyler Brayton and RB Tony Hollings who in the 2004 supplemental was drafted by Houston). Gruden was the big item on the block as it turns out.

The players who actually played for Oakland, thanks to those draft picks were Walker, Brayton, CB Phillip Buchanon, LB Sam Williams and WR Ryan Hoag. Not too shabby but not names to remember. Gruden was a great coach and still is. Now, if I told you the Buccaneers were guaranteed a Super Bowl in Gruden's first season with the Bucs, if that were something that could honestly be brokered, only a fool would turn it down. The Glazers may not have been the best negotiators, but they got their dream—a Super Bowl.

I do have some trouble with the deal as Tony Dungy had already turned the team around. He had some issues, but nothing changes in

the NFL or anywhere overnight. TD had done a fine job. In fact JD used TD's work to win his first Super Bowl. Of course.

Why pay so much and potentially cripple the team for a few years to get a coach who might not be much better than the coach the Bucs already had—Mr. Dungy I presume. I attribute it to the fact that the Bucs fired every coach they had ever “owned.” Except for John McKay and he was hide off to the front office, never to appear in public again.

But, why would the Raiders trade Jon Gruden to the Buccaneers? We just read about how the Buccaneers fired Tony Dungy early in 2002 (following the 2001 season) after they had reached the playoffs for the fourth time in six years, but they still couldn't seem to break through to reach the Super Bowl. Five days after Dungy was fired, the Raiders lost to Tom Brady and the Patriots in the "Tuck Rule" game. Some say that both teams were mentally set up for a change. It was the perfect time.

ESPN has a perspective. They suggest that a lot of Tampa Bay's first coaching choices didn't work. Bill Parcells stayed retired, and they didn't hire anyone on an impressive interview list. In other words, the guys who did not fly to Tampa to play *Meet the Glazers* included Marvin Lewis, Nick Saban, Mike Mularkey and Norv Turner.

ESPN suggested that the Glazer ownership family in Tampa Bay wanted an offensive-minded head coach to pair with Monte Kiffin. The initial asking price for Gruden, once that idea was raised, was the four picks that eventually moved along with Warren Sapp, according to ESPN.

It seems as though another Gruden contract was not in the bag for Oakland. He was almost done with his current pact. So he was perhaps as ready to move as they were to move him. Early in the morning on Feb. 18, 2002, the deal was complete.

There were a number of Tampa Bay connections for Gruden, so the move made sense from his perspective. Gruden had some family in the Tampa Bay area. His father, Jim, had been an assistant coach for the Bucs in the '80s. And Gruden's brother, Jay, went to high school

in the Tampa area. Tampa was not new to Gruden and the weather was just as nice as California's.

Everybody has an opinion on all matters. For example Wide Receiver Tim Brown whispered to ESPN that he thought Gruden had given the Raiders a deadline to move on from him, which may have accelerated the move. Trading head coaches wasn't uncommon at the time — Bill Belichick was involved in a coaching trade from the Jets to the Patriots in 2000, and Parcells had been traded in 1997.

You can bet it was some overall combination of reasons, Gruden ended up filling the coaching void in Tampa Bay. The Raiders promoted offensive coordinator Bill Callahan to head coach. Gruden and Callahan would meet up again soon enough in the next Super Bowl. Gruden was immediately successful at Tampa Bay and Callahan likewise was successful at Oakland

Who do the pundits say won the Gruden trade? Did anybody win. Did anybody lose?

There is almost twenty-years of hindsight and a lot of interviews to check out to make that determination. Maybe there was no loser. Maybe there was no winner. But two Super Bowls emanating from just one trade has *winner*s written all over it. Nothing is forever; but there were a lot of winners in this trade.

The fact is that none of the four picks given up by Tampa Bay turned into a big star, and TB didn't just get Gruden in return, as it turns out.

Following the 2002 season, Gruden's first year at the helm in Tampa, the Buccaneers won the Super Bowl. They put a beating on none other than the one-year-ago Oakland Raiders in a 48-21 victory in Super Bowl 37. If Gruden was with Oakland would he have done as well as Callahan? Gruden's ego would say yes but his assistant orchestrated a Super Bowl. How about them apples?

I say we could or should have expected Gruden to be fired regardless of his success at Tampa Bay. It is the Buccaneers MO. Tampa Bay ended up firing Gruden after the 2008 season, and ironically he has

now made his way back to the Raiders franchise in Las Vegas after a detour in the "Monday Night Football" broadcast booth.

But trading for Gruden in the middle of the night likely brought sweet dreams of hoisting the Lombardi Trophy to the Glazer family, and less than a year after the deal, that's exactly what happened. That's the biggest win the Glazers could've gotten in any trade. So I would say the Glazers were extra big winners, but Oakland was not a big loser.

Soon, you and I, dear reader, will be able to see how the Glazers are at picking head coaches. We know that they had two of the best ever in Tony Dungy and Jon Gruden. Yet, they decided to fire each of them.

I would have thought they might have had some thoughts like a Bear Bryant Dynasty or a Joe Paterno Dynasty or a Bill Belichick dynasty. I was thinking of a Tony Dungy dynasty or later, a Jon Gruden dynasty. Dynasties are not about championships every year.

I suspect the Glazers are OK people but what do I know. They do not speak to me regularly, so I do not know what motivates them. They have done a fine job with the franchise so far compared with the predecessor owner, but it might not have been what I would have done. I congratulate the Glazers for doing what they did and for being in the right place at the right time. We might call that good luck.

I had a lot of management courses in my academic years and in my many years with IBM. I had enough stories in BUS Ad 1010 such as Intro to Management that talk about replacing a great manager and replacing a poor manager. It is much easier to replace a poor manager. They problem of course is if you replace a poor manager you don't want to become a poor manager. If you replace a good manager and have a tendency to fire people or not give second chances, you may never gain acceptance as a good boss. There are a lot of theories.

The Glazers replaced an owner who had a hard time creating success. Yet, like him they seem to quickly fire people without trying to create a dynasty for the good work they have done. We already

know that seven season years from this chapter now when they will dispose of Jon Gruden by firing? Hopefully, they have some lessons to be learned. I guess we'll have to ask Bruce Arians if by chance in the future, he ever has a bad year. I sure hope he doesn't. I like the Bucs winning with a good coach and a good management team. Don't you?

## **2002 Jon Gruden Coach #7**

The 2002 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their twenty-seventh season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. They played in Raymond James Stadium for the fifth season in a row. The Bucs were led by Jon Gruden in his first of seven seasons as head Bucs coach. This Buccaneers team finished with all the marbles that could be had. They sported a winning record of 12-4, the best ever for the Bucs and they wrapped up first place in the NFC South. This season the Tampa Bay division was changed from the NFC Central to the NFC South.

They made the playoffs again and then some. They skipped the Wild Cards with a bye. They won the Divisional Playoffs (vs. 49ers) 31-6. They won the NFC Championship (at Eagles) 27-10. Then, they went ahead and they won Super Bowl XXXVII (vs. Raiders) 48-21. Last year in Tony Dungy's last time out, they made the Wild Card playoffs but lost again in the game at the Eagles L (9-31). What an improvement! What a difference a coach makes?

The 2002 season began with the team making its attempt to improve on five winning or break-even seasons in a row and a last year 9-7 finish. They more than achieved their goal season and did so with a franchise-best 12-4 record in Jon Gruden's first season as the Buccaneers head coach.

Their Super Bowl was a first in the team's history, pounding Gruden's old team the Oakland Raiders 48-21. This would be Tampa Bay's only Super Bowl appearance and win until 2020, the big Cinderella win in February 2021. The Buccaneers were always good on defense. The 2002 Buccaneers defense is often cited as one of the best ever, as well as one of the most potent pass defenses in league history.

Tampa became the City of Champions. A year after the Super Bowl, the NHL's Tampa Bay Lightning took the Stanley Cup, bringing another championship to the city of Tampa. The Lightning would eventually win their second Stanley Cup four months prior to the Buccaneers winning their second Super Bowl. Now, that's quite a record.

### **Games of the 2002 season**

In the season and home opener at Raymond James Stadium, Jon Gruden's Bucs started off poorly with a loss in their first game L (20-26) v the New Orleans Saints in OT. Close but no cigar. At Baltimore, the Bucs began to show mid-season form by in a major shutout W (25--0) on Sept 15 against a tough Ravens squad at PSINet Stadium. This was the first of five wins in a row. The Bucs had arrived. On Sep 23, the Bucs beat the St. Louis Rams W 26-14 at home in Raymond James Stadium. Then, on Sep 29 at Paul Brown Stadium in Cincinnati, the Bucs pounded the Bengals W (35-7)

At Atlanta on Oct 6, the Bucs beat the Falcons W (20-6) at the Georgia Dome. Then, on Oct 13, the Bucs prevailed again v the Cleveland Browns W (17-3) at home. On Oct 20 at Philadelphia Eagles, the Bucs cracked a bit and lost the match at Veterans Stadium L (10-20). At this point, they sported a 5-2 record. On Oct 27 at Carolina, the Bucs edged out the Panthers at Bank of America Stadium. At home on Nov 3, the Bucs beat the Minnesota Vikings—W (38-24) at Raymond James Stadium. On Nov 10, the team drew a bye.

On Nov 17, the Bucs beat the Carolina Panthers at home, W (23-10) bringing their record to 8-2. On Nov 24, they beat the Green Bay Packers W (21-7) at home in Raymond James Stadium. Then, on Dec 1 at New Orleans, the Saints edged out the Bucs L (20-23) at the Louisiana Superdome. On Dec 8, the Bucs pounded the Atlanta Falcons W (34-10) at home.

At Detroit, on Dec 15, the Bucs edged out the Lions W (23-20) at the Ford Field. At home on Dec 23, the Pittsburgh Steelers outplayed the Bucs L (7-17) in Raymond James Stadium. In the season finale, at Chicago, on Dec 29, the Bucs tamed the Bears in a

shutout W (15–0) at Memorial Stadium. They finished the regular season at 12-4; 1<sup>st</sup> in the NFC Central Division. They then entered the playoffs.

This was the best year in Buccaneers history ,and we are going to tell you how they won their first Super Bowl.

### **NFL Standings NFC South**

	W	L	T	PCT	DIV	CONF	PF	PA	STK
(2) Tampa Bay Buccaneers	12	4	0	.750	4–2	9–3	346	196	W1
(6) Atlanta Falcons	9	6	1	.594	4–2	7–5	402	314	L1
New Orleans Saints	9	7	0	.563	3–3	7–5	432	388	L3
Carolina Panthers	7	9	0	.438	1–5	4–8	258	302	W2

I was wondering what STK (headings) meant as were a lot of people. It is not an official term that I learned via research. Here is what I think. It Probably stands for "streak." So if it says W2 it means the team has won their last 2 games. If it said L3, it means the team has lost their last 3. Since Tampa Bay lost to Pittsburgh in their second last game, it stands to reason their streak would be 1 win.

## *Postseason*

### **Game sum**

#### **Postseason Schedule / Results**

<u>Week</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Opponent</u>	<u>Result</u>	<u>Record</u>	<u>Venue</u>
Wild Card		Bye			
Divisional	Jan 12, 2003	San Fran49	W 31–6	1–0	Raymond James
Conference	Jan 19, 2003	Phil Eagles	W 27–10	2–0	Veterans Stadium
Super Bowl	Jan 26, 2003	Oak Raiders	W 48–21	3–0	Qualcomm Stadium

## NFC Divisional Playoffs:

### (#4) San Francisco 49ers at (#2) Tampa Bay Buccaneers

#### – Game summary

	1	2	3	4	Total
49ers	3	3	0	0	6
Buccaneers	7	21	3	0	31

The 1:00 EST P.M. game was played on a partly cloudy day at Raymond James Stadium in Tampa in 54 degree weather. The game was broadcast by TV announcers (FOX): Joe Buck, Troy Aikman, and Chris Collinsworth. The referee was Gerald Austin in a game with an attendance of 65,999. The Buccaneers prevailed.

The Buccaneers had such a great record they got to host the 49ers, who had just executed one of the biggest comeback games in their history. It was a 39–38 wildcard round win over the Giants. The 49ers were pumped but so were the Bucs who were enjoying prime time fame for the first time in a long time.

The Bucs had a lot going for them with the league's top-ranked defense during the 2002 regular season. In the game, they forced five turnovers and they picked off QB Jeff Garcia three times and sacked him four times. Gruden's Bucs were a pinnacle of perfection. They limited the 49ers to only two field goals.

Tampa Bay QB Brad Johnson, who had been down for a month, made a great comeback and he returned to throw for 196 yards and two touchdowns. Fullback Mike Alstott chipped in another two TDs, while the Bucs held onto the ball for 36:46 and kept the 49ers to a season-low 228 yards. This was San Francisco's first playoff game without a touchdown since 1986 and the 49ers' last playoff. For many, it was tough to believe it was our Bucs who were doing all this damage to San Francisco. But, it was for real.



# NFC Championship:

## (#2) Tampa Bay Buccaneers at (#1) Philadelphia Eagles

### – Game summary

	1	2	3	4	Total
Buccaneers	10	7	3	7	27
Eagles	7	3	0	0	10

The 3:00 EST P.M. game was played on a mostly cloudy day at Veterans Stadium in Philadelphia in 26 degree weather. The game was broadcast by TV announcers (FOX): Joe Buck, Troy Aikman, and Chris Collinsworth. The referee was Terry McAulay in a game with an attendance of 66,713. The Buccaneers prevailed.

Tampa Bay had been waiting for this moment since 1976. Why? They had not won a road playoff game ever in their history. But, they did on this day in 2002. It was the first time in franchise history, and to boot, it was not favorable weather for a southern team with temperatures below 32 °F or 0 °C. History was made in Philadelphia also on this day, as the remarkable Veterans Stadium would host no more games after this one. Yes, this was the last football game ever played at Veterans Stadium.

The Bucs were not known for being in the playoffs so the pundits all got their work wrong on this one. After all, Philadelphia had scobbed the Bucs two years in a row and the scribes were looking for another blowout. This made the Birds the heavy favorites at home going into the game. The Eagles had beaten the Buccaneers four consecutive times, in the wild card round the two previous seasons, and also during regular-season games in 2001 and 2002. During the two playoff losses, both at Veterans Stadium, Tampa Bay had failed to score even a single touchdown.

The game started as expected. Brian Mitchell, s star Eagles RB returned the opening kickoff 70 yards, setting up a 20-yard touchdown run by Duce Staley. It was shock and awe with less than a minute played in the game. Tampa Bay was not shocked, and

Gruden's crew was not in awe. Instead, they responded with a Martín Gramática's 48-yard field goal on their ensuing drive. Then, they stopped the Eagles.

At the end of Philadelphia's next possession, Lee Johnson let go of a booming punt which pinned the Buccaneers back at their own 4-yard line. But Tampa Bay effortlessly stormed 96 yards and scored with Mike Alstott's 1-yard TD run to take the lead. The key play on the drive was a 71-yard completion from Brad Johnson to former PSU great Joe Jurevicius on third down and two from their own 24-yard line.

David Akers did his trick to tie the score, 10–10, with a 30-yard field goal midway through the second quarter, but the Bucs responded again. This time they engineered an 80-yard, 12-play drive that ended with a 9-yard touchdown pass from Brad Johnson to Keyshawn Johnson. With time running out in the half, Donovan McNabb took the Birds all the way to the Tampa Bay 24-yard line, only to lose a fumble when he was sacked by his high school teammate Simeon Rice. Rice stripped the ball away and made the recovery himself.

On the Eagles' first drive in Q3, McNabb lost another fumble. This was due to a hard tackle from defensive back Ronde Barber, and Bucs lineman Ellis Wyms fell on the ball for the recovery. Later, with 1:02 left in the period, Gramatica kicked another FG. This was a 27-yarder which increased the Buccaneers lead to 20–10.

In 4Q, the Eagles threatened again after a 73 yard drive to the Tampa Bay 10-yard line, but this ended poorly for the Eagles as Barber picked off a McNabb's pass with 3:12 left in the game and he took it to the house 92 yards for a touchdown. The Bucs celebrated because this TD clinched a trip to the Super Bowl for the first time in franchise history.

As noted, in this writeup there would be no more Eagles games to be played at Veterans Stadium. It was demolished shortly thereafter.

# Super Bowl XXXVII

**Oakland Raiders (21) vs. Tampa Bay Buccaneers (48) –**

## Game summary

	1	2	3	4	Total
Raiders	3	0	6	12	21
Buccaneers	3	17	14	14	48

The 6:18 EST P.M. game was played on a January 26, 2003, a sunny day at Qualcomm Stadium in San Diego with 81 degree weather. The game was broadcast by TV announcers (ABC): Al Michaels, and John Madden. The referee was Bill Carollo in a game with an attendance of 67,603. The Buccaneers prevailed and became Super Bowl Champions..

Hard as it was for the pro football community to absorb, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers beat all odds and won their first Super Bowl. They routed Jon Gruden's old team the Oakland Raiders by a ton W (48–21.)

The Bucs defense made super bowl history by intercepting Rich Gannon a Super Bowl record five times, and to make matters even worse for Oakland, they returned three of the interceptions for touchdowns.

Safety Dexter Jackson played a great game and was named the game's MVP.

As many sports fans and writers predicted, Gruden's prior knowledge of the Raiders was a major factor in the Buccaneers' knowing how to win and then going ahead and winning in Super Bowl XXXVII. Pundits say the most damaging piece of evidence was NFL Films footage of Tampa Bay defensive back John Lynch telling his teammates during the game that almost all of the plays ran by Oakland's offense were plays that Gruden (who that week even played the part of "Rich Gannon" by playing QB with the scout-team offense) specifically told them what to look out for.

Even better for the Bucs was that Oakland hadn't changed their audible-calling signals that Gruden himself had installed, thus tipping off plays repeatedly as to what was coming next. What a management mistake that was.

As a result, Tampa Bay dominated Oakland, outgaining them in total yards (365 to 269), rushing yards (150 to 19), first downs (24 to 11), offensive plays (76 to 60), and forced turnovers (5 to 1).

The Raiders had their chances but often flubbed them. For example, they had a great chance to score a touchdown early in the game after cornerback Charles Woodson picked off Buccaneers QB Brad Johnson's pass on the third play of the game and returned it 12 yards to the Tampa Bay 36-yard line. It was not to be. Just 6 plays later, Tampa Bay DE Simeon Rice sacked Raiders QB Rich Gannon on third down, forcing the Raiders to settle for a Sebastian Janikowski 40-yard field goal to give them a brief 3–0 lead.

On the next kickoff, Bucs returner Aaron Stecker took the ball 27 yards to the 29-yard line, then he appeared to fumble the ball. Though officials at first thought that the ball was recovered by Oakland's Eric Johnson, upon review the fumble was overturned, and the TBB retained possession.

When the Tampa drive got underway, on the first play, Brad Johnson completed an 11-yard pass to receiver Joe Jurevicius. After two incompletions, Johnson then connected on a 23-yard pass to Jurevicius on third down taking the ball to the Oakland 37-yard line. The Bucs were hot. Running back Michael Pittman then rushed for a 23-yard gain to the 13-yard line. However, on the next three plays, the Raiders defense cooled their jets forcing the Buccaneers to a pair of incompletions and a 1-yard run. Kicker Martin Gramatica came in and made a 31-yard field goal to tie the game, 3–3.

Later in the period, a 17-yard punt return by Raiders defensive back Darrien Gordon gave the Raiders possession at their own 49-yard line. Gannon threw an 8-yard pass to running back Charlie Garner setting the ball up on the Tampa Bay 43-yard line. But on third down, Bucs safety Dexter Jackson picked off Gannon's pass at the 40-yard line and returned it 9-yards to about midfield. The Bucs took

nine plays and did not get a TD but Gramatica kicked his second field goal from 43 yards to give the Bucs a 6–3 lead.

Jackson picked off another Raiders pass on the next drive and returned it 25 yards to Oakland's 45-yard line,. Records were made to be broken. This interception made Jackson the first player ever to record 2 interceptions in the first half of the Super Bowl. However, the Buccaneers still were unable to take advantage of the opportunity and were forced to punt. Punter Tom Tupa let go of a beauty and pinned Oakland way back at their own 11-yard line.

The Raiders went no-place fast. They lost a yard on 3 plays. TBB's punt returner Karl Williams then ran back the Shane Lechler's punt for 25 yards, giving the Buccaneers great field position at Oakland's 27-yard line. Aided with Pittman's gains of 6 and 19 yards, the Bucs finally scored their first touchdown on a 2-yard run from fullback Mike Alstott, giving them a 13–3 lead.

With 3:45 left in the half, Tampa Bay scored another TD. The drive was assisted by a pair of catches by Alstott for 28 total yards. Johnson got the TD on a 5-yard pass to wide receiver Keenan McCardell giving Tampa Bay a nice 20–3 halftime lead. There would be a lot more to come.

The Bucs continued to dominate the game for most of the third quarter. TBB forced the Raiders to punt on their opening drive of the second half. Next, the Bucs plowed 89 yards on a 14-plays drive that stole 7:52 off the clock and ended with Johnson's 8-yard touchdown pass to McCardell. The game was now at 27–3 favor of TBB.

Then on the second play of Oakland's next drive, the Bucs defensive back Dwight Smith picked off another Gannon pass and he finished the Pick-6 by returning it 44 yards for the TD, driving the score up to 34–3.

Finally, after having given up 34 unanswered points, Oakland managed to drive 82 yards down the field and they scored on a 39-yard TD pass from Gannon to receiver Jerry Porter. Although Porter was first ruled as being out of bounds, it was determined that he actually had one foot in the end zone and used it to drag the other

foot out. The Raiders tried a two-point conversion which failed, so they were still down 34–9.

This Raiders' TD seemed to fire up their defense, who forced the Bucs to a fourth down on their ensuing possession. Oakland lineman Tim Johnson then blocked Tupa's punt, and Raiders defender Eric Johnson returned the ball 13 yards for another touchdown. It was like back to back TD's and the Bucs needed that to wake them up. After all, this was the Super Bowl.

After Oakland's two-point conversion failed, the Tampa Bay lead was cut to 34–15.

The Buccaneers responded by moving the ball to the Oakland 9-yard line on their next drive. It featured a 24-yard run by Pittman, but they came up empty after Tupa fumbled the snap on a field goal attempt. Things were not going right for TBB all of a sudden. Then, just a few plays later, Gannon threw a 48-yard touchdown pass to wide receiver Jerry Rice with 6:06 left in the game, cutting the Raiders deficit to 34–21. Now things were getting too close. Rice became the first player to catch a touchdown pass in 4 different Super Bowls, and third overall to have TDs in 4 Super Bowls (Thurman Thomas and John Elway). The two-point conversion failed again when Jerry Porter caught the ball and was forced out of bounds.

In an attempt to prevent a Raiders comeback, the Buccaneers managed to run the clock down to 2:44 on their next drive before being forced to punt. Then on third and 18 from the Oakland 29-yard line, Tampa Bay linebacker Derrick Brooks intercepted a pass from Gannon and he make it a pick-6 by taking it to the house for a 44-yard TD, giving the Bucs a 41–21 lead with only 1:18 left putting the game out of reach.

A few plays later as the Raiders were playing just for pride, Smith intercepted a tipped pass and took it back 50 yards for another touchdown. This turned out to be the 200th touchdown in Super Bowl history). this would be the Tampa Bay Buccaneers last playoff (and Super Bowl) win until the 2020 season when the record books again were opened.

## 2003 Jon Gruden Coach #7

The 2003 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their twenty-eighth season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. They played in Raymond James Stadium for the sixth season in a row. The Bucs were led by Jon Gruden in his second of seven seasons as head Bucs coach. This Buccaneers team had a letdown after their Super Bowl victory and finished 7-9 in third place in the NFC Central. They did not make the playoffs.

The major objective for the team in 2003 was to defend the Super Bowl XXVII title.. Unfortunately, the best laid plans of mice and men gang oft aglay (often go astray) That sorta happened to the Bucs after a “nothing could go wrong season” in 2002. It is tough to handle a ton of success and it is tough to consistently repeat success.

Despite the expectations, there were a number of disappointing losses that created locker room tension that had previously been non-existent. It was almost a year of that type of negative action that caused the team to finish their first losing season (7-9) after six years of winning.

After beginning the season on a positive note, they defeated a team that had become a bitter rival from three previous post-seasons. I am talking about the Philadelphia Eagles. It was the Eagles first game in their new stadium which replaced the Vet. It was called Lincoln Financial Field. With their 17-0 shutout victory, the Bucs expected more of the same. It did not come easy.

When they came home in week 2, v Carolina, it was a big disappointment that things seem to have changed. Special teams did not match the rest of the team at first and this thwarted what should have been a game winning touchdown as time expired. Believe it or not, the go-ahead extra point was blocked. The game wound up tied and TBB lost in OT.

Unfortunately, that was not the worst of it. That came in week 5. The team was relishing a 35-14 lead in the final four minutes and nonetheless they lost to the Indianapolis Colts on Monday Night Football. This happened to be the night that former coach Tony Dungy returned to Tampa. The team began to unravel, both on the

field and off the field, with injuries piling up, and locker room tensions mounting.

The prior year's super bowl opponents were licking their own wounds. It was like the game had infected both teams. Combined with the Raider's dismal 4–12 performance, neither team reached the playoffs. As of 2019, this is the most recent season that the Super Bowl champion had a losing record following the Super Bowl. Check out the game summations for the whole story of the Bucs year that did not come true.

### **Games of the 2003 season**

In the season opener on Sep 8 at Philadelphia, the Bucs shut-out the Eagles W (17–0) at Lincoln Financial Field. At home in the home opener. At Raymond James Stadium, the Bucs were edged out after a missed extra point put the game into OT and the Bucs did not score. It was on Sep 14 that the Carolina Panthers defeated the Bucs L (9–12) in OT at Raymond James Stadium. At Atlanta. On Sep 21, the Bucs pounded the Falcons W (31–10) at the Georgia Dome. On Sep 28, the team drew a bye. On Oct 6, the Indianapolis Colts edged out the Bucs L (35–38) in OT) at home in Raymond James Stadium

At Washington on Oct 12m the Bucs beat the Redskins W (35–13) at FedExField. At San Francisco on Oct 19, the 49ers beat the Bucs L (7–24) at 3Com Park. On Oct 26, the Bucs beat the Dallas Cowboys W (16–0) at home in Raymond James Stadium. On Nov 2, the New Orleans Saints edged out the Bucs at L (14–17) at home in Raymond James Stadium. At Carolina on Nov 9 the Panthers edged out the Bucs L (24–27) at Ericsson Stadium.

On Nov 16, the Green Bay Packers beat the Bucs L (13–20) at home in Raymond James Stadium. At home in New York on Nov 24, the Bucs beat the Giants W (19–13) in Raymond James Stadium. At Jacksonville, on Nov 30 the Jaguars beat the Bucs L (10–17) at Alltel Stadium. On Dec 7, at New Orleans, the Bucs beat the Saints W (14–7) at the Louisiana Superdome.

On Dec 14, the Bucs beat the Houston Texans at home W (16–3) in Raymond James Stadium. On Dec 20 the Atlanta Falcons edged out the Bucs at home in Raymond James Stadium. At Tennessee on Dec



28, the Titans pounded the Bucs L (13–33) in the season finale at The Coliseum. The Bucs finished the season at 7-9. What happened?

### **2004 Jon Gruden Coach #7**

The 2004 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their twenty-ninth season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. They played in Raymond James Stadium for the seventh season in a row. The Bucs were led by Jon Gruden in his third of seven seasons as head Bucs coach. This Buccaneers team had a second letdown year worse than the first and they finished 5-11 in fourth place in the NFC Central. They did not make the playoffs.

Tring to make it right after a 7-9 season, the Bucs fell even further to a 5-11 record and missed the playoffs for the second straight season. Brian Griese became a star of sorts by setting a number of franchise records for passing. Michael Clayton set a rookie record for receiving.

The Bucs picked up Hall of Fame wide receiver Tim Brown, who was well known for his tenure with the Raiders. After spending his only season in Tampa Bay, Brown decided to retire after 17 seasons. The Bucs also picked up former Seattle Seahawks and Dallas Cowboys wide receiver Joey Galloway in a trade for Keyshawn Johnson. None of it seemed to help as the Bucs floundered again this year.

### **Games of the 2004 Season**

In the season opener on Sep 12, at Washington, the Redskins beat the Bucs L (10–16) at FedExField. At Sep 19 at home, the Seattle Seahawks beat the Bucs L (6–10) in Raymond James Stadium. At Oakland, on Sep 26 the Raiders beat the Bucs L (20–30) at the Alameda County Coliseum. On Oct 3, at home, the Denver Broncos edged out the Tampa Bay Buccaneers (TBB) L (13–16) in Raymond James Stadium.

At New Orleans on October 10, the Bucs picked up their first win this season v the Saints W (20–17) at the Louisiana Superdome. At St. Louis, on Oct 18, the Rams beat the Bucs L (21–28) in the

Edward Jones Dome. On Oct 24, the TBB beat the Chicago Bears at home W (19–7) in Raymond James Stadium. On October 31, the team drew a bye. Then, on Nov 7, the Bucs edged out the Kansas City Chiefs W (34–31) at home in Raymond James Stadium.

At Atlanta on Nov 14, the Falcons beat the Bucs L (14–24) at the Georgia Dome At home, on Nov 21, the Bucs pounded the San Francisco 49ers W (35–3) in Raymond James Stadium. At Carolina on Nov 28 the Panthers beat the Bucs L (14–21) in the Bank of America Stadium. At home on Dec 5, the Bucs pounded the Atlanta Falcons W (27–0) in Raymond James Stadium.

At San Diego, on Dec 12, the Chargers edged out the Bucs L (24–31) in Qualcomm Stadium. At home on Dec 19, the New Orleans Saints edged out the Bucs L (17–21) in Raymond James Stadium. At home on Dec 26, the Panthers pounded the Bucs L (20–37) in Raymond James Stadium. At Arizona, in the season finale, on Jan 2, the Cardinals edged put the Bucs L (7–12) in Sun Devil Stadium. The Bucs finished with a terrible record of 5-11. The team seemingly had become hapless again.

### **What happened to the Buccaneers after the 2002 Super Bowl?**

The Buccaneers finally brought the Lombardi Trophy to Tampa, Florida. It was coincidental with the team playing in the NFC South instead of the NFC Central Division. When Jon Gruden pulled that off, it seemed like they had left their hexes, bad luck and demons in the past--way behind them. But then came 2003 and 2004, and it seemed like Gruden's time was not as it should have been, the next six seasons TBB fans would learn that it would be the exact opposite.

The struggles of the Jon Gruden era would continue in 2004 as the Bucs got off to a 0-4 start, but in week 13, the Buccaneers would mysteriously shutout an Atlanta Falcons team 27-0, and they would lose their next four games to wipe out the season.

Then it was a new team in 2005 with a significant comeback for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. They changed the QB to Chris Simms, a second-year QB out of Texas, The Buccaneers got off to a great start with wins over the Vikings, Bills, Packers, and Lions. They were reinigorated. The ghosts of the past seemed to be gone. They won

the NFC South with an 11-5 season but would suffer a wildcard loss to the Washington Redskins to end the season. The Bucs team MVP would be another rookie for the second straight season in Cadillac Williams, and they had three Pro Bowlers in Ronde Barber, Derrick Brooks, and Josh Bidwell.

The luck that came with Chris Simms ended when Chris got hurt in 2006. It would be the worst season of the Jon Gruden era in Tampa Bay. Simms suffered a season-ending injury in week three against Carolina due to a ruptured spleen and would be replaced by Bruce Gradkowski who was not Chris Simms. The Bucs started at 0-3 and would finish the season 4-12, at the end of the season Gruden almost lost his job but instead was used during free agency and the NFL draft to build back the team. The team blamed poor depth on their 4-12 record.

In 2007 new QB Jeff Garcia helped as did offensive lineman Arron Sears and Sabby Piscitelli from the draft second round. The season started with the old hex back and soon came season ending injuries to Cadillac Williams, and Mike Alstott. The Bucs nonetheless won the NFC South with a 9-7 record but were beaten in the NFC Wildcard by the eventual Super Bowl Champion New York Giants.

The 2008 season the Bucs got off to 9-3 start and were looking really good when all of a sudden they lost to NFC South rival Carolina Panthers 38-23, and they lost momentum for the season. They dropped the last four games of the 2008 season and would miss a chance at the NFC South Championship and the playoffs. Gruden was fired by the Buccaneers on January 16th, 2009, but if you think about it they were the hottest team going into week 14, and they lose their last four games so at the time I did not think it made sense after bringing their only Lombardi Trophy home.

After Jon Gruden was fired things got worse for the Buccaneers organization with only two winning seasons and no playoff appearances, but a lot of people felt a lot better when they finally brought in a coach like Bruce Arians. How about that for fate when all seems lost – A Super Bowl

## 2005 Jon Gruden Coach #7

The 2005 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their thirtieth season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. They played in Raymond James Stadium for the seventh season in a row. The Bucs were led by Jon Gruden in his fourth of seven seasons as head Bucs coach. This Buccaneers team had their best season since the Super Bowl, and they finished 11-5 in first place in the NFC South. They lost in the Wildcard game against the Redskins L (7-10) .

In the 2005 season, the Bucs broke out of their funk and as they say, “returned to their winning ways.” They picked Carnell "Cadillac" Williams in the first round of the 2005 draft, and the rookie would provide a running game, which is something that had been missing for some time from the Bucs arsenal,

Williams set the NFL record for most yards rushing in his first three games with 474 and was named as the AP's 2005 Offensive Rookie of the Year. He was so impressive that his football shoes and gloves from the third game of the season are now on display in the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

The team won their first four games before entering a midseason slump after a season-ending injury to starting QB Brian Griese during a win over the Miami Dolphins. Replacement starter Chris Simms had a tough time early-on but Simms came into his own when he led the team to a last-minute win over the Washington Redskins in a 36–35 thriller. This broke the slump.

It was a gutsy move for Gruden to go for the win with a two-point conversion plunge by fullback Mike Alstott. A booth review of that play was inconclusive, and Redskins coach Joe Gibbs stated after the game his belief that Alstott had not scored. Too late, it counted.

The Bucs got some other important wins over their NFC South division rivals, sweeping both the New Orleans Saints and Atlanta Falcons, as well as defeating the Panthers in a rare victory at Carolina. Even with a tough loss against the Chicago Bears and a humiliating shutout against New England, the Bucs had a fine season at 11–5 and won the NFC South title.

The Buccaneers had some real impact players this year sending three of their veterans to the 2006 Pro Bowl game, including cornerback Ronde Barber and punter Josh Bidwell. There was more with outside linebacker Derrick Brooks being named the Pro Bowl MVP, with a 59-yard interception return for a touchdown.

### **Games of the 2005 season**

In the season opener at Minnesota, on September 11, 2005, the Bucs beat the Vikings W (24–13) at the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome. At home on Sep 18, the Bucs beat the Buffalo Bills W (19–3) in Raymond James Stadium. At Green Bay on Sep 25, TBB nosed out the Packers W (17–16) at Lambeau Field. Great start the Bucs were 3-0 at this point in the season. At home on Oct 2, the Bucs edged out the Detroit Lions W (17–13) in Raymond James Stadium.

At New York, on Oct. 9, the Jets nosed out the Jets L (12–14) in the Meadowlands. At home, on Oct 16, the Bucs beat the Miami Dolphins W (27–13) in Raymond James Stadium. On Oct 23, the team drew a bye. Then, on Oct 30 at San Francisco, the 49ers beat the TBB L (10–15) in Monster Park. At home on Nov 6, the Carolina Panthers pounded the Bucs L (14–34) in Raymond James Stadium.

At home on Nov 13, the Bucs nosed out the Washington Redskins W (36–35) in Raymond James Stadium. At Atlanta, on Nov 20, the Bucs edged out the Falcons W (30–27) in the Georgia Dome. At home on Nov 27, the Chicago Bears edged out the TBB L (10–13) in Raymond James Stadium. At New Orleans, on Dec 4, the TBB beat the Saints W (10–3) in Tiger Stadium.

On Dec 11 at Carolina, the Bucs beat the Panthers W (20–10) in the Bank of America Stadium. At New England on Dec 17 the Patriots embarrassed the Bucs L (0–28) in Gillette Stadium. At home in Dec 24, the Bucs beat the Atlanta Falcons W (27–24) (OT) in Raymond James Stadium. At home, on Jan 1, the Bucs beat the New Orleans Saints W (27–13) in the season finale in Raymond James Stadium. The Bucs had a nice regular season but lost in the Wild Card game which ended their season abruptly.

## Top Bucs Players Cadillac Williams RB ( 2005-2010)



Davin Joseph another unheralded great, blocked for one of the best running backs in Buccaneers history. The name Cadillac Williams is one of the most memorable in NFL history, but boy, was he an electric player.

Coming out of Auburn, Williams was the fifth overall selection in the 2005 NFL Draft. Then head coach Jon Gruden has a very public affection for the running back. When he was there at No. 5, Gruden must have thought he hit the lottery.

Initially, the investment paid off heavily with Williams procuring an incredibly strong rookie season that culminated with him being named the NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year. In the 2005 season, Williams ran for 1,178 yards and six touchdowns. Not hard to tell why he earned Rookie of the Year honors. Although Williams never truly replicated that type of production, Williams still played well over the next five seasons.

As is par for the course, injuries derailed two of Williams' seasons and hampered others. Part of that could be attributed to a lackluster offensive line but being a running back in the NFL is also simply a tough job. His career was over before the dreaded mark of 30 years old, the typical drop-off for running backs.

During his six seasons with Tampa Bay (finished his career with one season with the then St. Louis Rams) Williams amassed 3,677 yards, ranking fifth all-time for the Buccaneers. Unfortunately, fans will never know what could have been had Williams avoided the injury bug. Regardless, he did more than enough during his stint to earn a 24th place finish in this ranking of the best Buccaneers of all-time.

## NFC Wild Card Playoff

### Washington Redskins v Tampa Bay Buccaneers

#### Wild Card Playoffs

	1	2	3	4	Total
<b>Redskins</b>	14	3	0	0	<b>17</b>
Buccaneers	0	3	7	0	<b>10</b>

The 3:00 EST P.M. game on January 7, 2006 was played on a clear, cool, and breezy day at Raymond James Stadium in Tampa Bay in 52 degree F weather. The game was broadcast by TV announcers (FOX): Mike Patrick, (play by play) Joe Theismann, and Paul Maguire (color commentators) & Suzy Kolber, (field reporter). The referee was Mike Kerry in a game with an attendance of 65, 514. The Redskins prevailed.

Redskins prevailed after gaining just 120 yards on offense, The Bucs got a bad break as to how the ball bounces. It was the lowest total in NFL playoff history for a winning team. The skins converted two turnovers into touchdowns. The breaks went in the other direction from the Bucs.

In the first quarter, LaVar Arrington, a top Washington linebacker intercepted with a nice 21-yard return. This set up running back Clinton Portis' six-yard touchdown run. Bing bam boom. The next thing was Redskins linebacker Marcus Washington who recovered a fumble from TBB running back Carnell Williams and he returned it seven yards before losing it himself – into the arms of Safety Sean Taylor, who as bad Bucs luck would have it, then ran 51 yards for the Redskins' second touchdown.

Early in Q2. TBB drove 38 yards to the Redskins 24-yard line where Matt Bryant kicked a 43-yard field goal. Now the deficit was 14–3. The Redskins immediately with a 10-play, 40-yard drive and scored with 40-yard field goal from John Hall.

In 3Q, Mark Jones returned a punt 24 yards to give the Buccaneers good field position at the 49-yard line. Tampa Bay's offense was ready and took advantage of the return, marching on a seven-play, 51-yard drive that ended with QB Chris Simms making a two-yard TD.

In 4Q, TBB drove to the Redskins 19-yard line, but skins made a huge stand. Here's what happened. First, linebacker Lemar Marshall stopped fullback Mike Alstott for no gain on third and 1. Then, Simms threw an incomplete pass on fourth down.. However, Buccaneers defensive back Brian Kelly (my name but it was not me) gave his team another chance to drive for the tying touchdown by intercepting a pass from Mark Brunell he returned the ball to the Redskins 35.

Now, with just 3 minutes left in the game, Tampa Bay wide receiver Edell Shepherd caught what everyone thought was a 35-yard TD reception, but he lost control of the ball as he was coming down in the end zone. The Bucs still got one more chance to tie the game. They received a punt at their own 46-yard line with 1:05 left in regulation, but Simms threw a pass that was tipped at the line of scrimmage and guess what? It went directly into the waiting arms of a Washington player for a game ending interception.

The pundits did not like the smell of this game. It was widely regarded by them as an "ugly" performance by both teams' offenses, rendering it a largely defensive game. I think they were talking about the overall stinky nature of this game. Anybody holding their nose



all game might have emerged as the victor. TBB for many years has just been unlucky.

## **2006 Jon Gruden Coach #7**

The 2006 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their thirty-first season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. They played in Raymond James Stadium for the eighth season in a row. The Bucs were led by Jon Gruden in his fifth of seven seasons as head Bucs coach. This Buccaneers team had a terrible that was worse than any so far they finished 4-12 in fourth place in the NFC South. They did not make the playoffs. Tumbling to a 4-12 record, they missed the official playoffs for the third time in four seasons—not counting Wild-Cards.

### **Games of the 2006 Season**

At home in the season and home opener on Sep 10, the Baltimore Ravens beat the TBB L (0-27) in Raymond James Stadium. At Atlanta, on Sep 17, the Falcons beat the TBB L (3-14) at the Georgia Dome. At home on Sep 24, the Carolina Panthers edged out the TBB L (24-26) in Raymond James Stadium. On Oct 1, the team drew a bye. On Oct 8, at New Orleans, the Saints nosed out the TBB L (21-24) in the Louisiana Superdome.

On Oct 15, at home, the Bucs nosed out the Cincinnati Bengals W (14-13) in Raymond James Stadium. Then, on Oct 22, the Bucs nosed out their nemesis Philadelphia Eagles W (23-21) in Raymond James Stadium. At New York, on Oct 29 the TBB was beaten by the Giants L (3-17) in Giants Stadium. Then on Nov 5, at home, the New Orleans Saints pounded the TBB L (14-31) in Raymond James Stadium. The Bucs were on track to achieve their 4 wins for 2006. Yes, that's all.

At Carolina, on Nov 13, the Panthers beat the Bucs L (10-24) in Bank of America Stadium. On Nov 19, the TBB edged out the Washington Redskins W (20-17) for a 3-7 record. The game was played in Raymond James Stadium. At Dallas, on Nov 23, the Cowboys smothered the TBB L (10-38) in Texas Stadium. At Pittsburgh, on Dec 3, the Steelers defeated the Bucs L (3-20) at Heinz Field.

At home on Dec 10, the Atlanta Falcons beat the TBB L (6–17) in Raymond James Stadium. At Chicago, on Dec 17, the Bears edged out the TBB L (31–34) in (OT) in Soldier Field. At Cleveland, on Dec 24, the TBB won its last game of the year #4. V the Browns W (22–7) in Cleveland Browns Stadium. In the season finale, on Dec 31, the Seattle Seahawks beat the TBB L (7–23) in Raymond James Stadium. The TBB season ended poorly at 4-12.

## Top Bucs Players Davin Joseph, Guard, 2006-2013



In everybody's honest opinion, offensive linemen do not get nearly enough credit for how much they do for the team. Without a good line in front of them, offensive players tend to struggle.

When you look at offensive juggernauts in the NFL, one of the common denominators across all of those teams? A stacked offensive line. With that being said, Davin Joseph is one of the more underrated players in Buccaneers franchise history.

To the casual fan it makes sense. Linemen don't make the flashy plays that get shown on SportsCenter every night. They are not

always household names, and that is tragic. Good offensive linemen make the skill position players look better, especially running backs and quarterbacks. Without their pass protection and run blocking, nothing would happen on offense.

Such was the case with Joseph. He blocked for some talented running backs like Warrick Dunn, Cadillac Williams and LeGarrette Blount, while also protecting guys like Jeff Garcia and Josh Freeman under center. Joseph was a staple for the Buccaneers from 2006 up until 2013, earning Pro Bowl honors in 2008 and 2011.

What drops Joseph a little lower is his relative lack of success (only one playoff berth during his tenure) and that he didn't play a flashy, skill position on offense. His contribution to the team was immense and for a while he was irreplaceable. However, there are just too many better players in franchise history to have Joseph being the best. But, he sure was good.

### **2007 Jon Gruden Coach #7**

The 2007 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their thirty-second season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. They played in Raymond James Stadium for the tenth season in a row. The Bucs were led by Jon Gruden in his sixth of seven seasons as head Bucs coach. This Buccaneers team had a winning season though not as good as expected. They finished 9-7 in first place in the NFC South. They made the Wild Card Playoffs, but they lost. They could not make it past the Giants who beat them L (14-24)

If I had not ballyhooed this enough the fact is that the TBB (the Bucs) clinched the NFC South division title, and they technically returned to the playoffs after missing it in 2006. However, as noted but worthy of repeating, the TBB was defeated 24-14 in the Wildcard Round by the eventual Super Bowl champion NY Giants.

The Wildcard game was Jon Gruden's final playoff appearance as head coach of the Buccaneers before being dismissed at the conclusion of the next season. Bucs Management played coaches like chess pieces. Gruden was not as good with TBB as he was as a

coach This Gruden season would be the last season in which the Buccaneers qualified for the playoffs.

The team did not suck but some pundits might say that notion is arguable. For example, on December 16, in a game against the Atlanta Falcons, Michael Spurlock scored the first kickoff return touchdown in franchise history, snapping a streak of 32 seasons, 497 games (at 53 stadiums in 38 cities), 139 individuals, and 1,864 unsuccessful attempts. The team was looking for positives so much that the play earned Spurlock the NFC Special Teams Player of the Week award. Amen!

### **Games of the 2007 season**

In the season opener on September 9 at Seattle, the Seahawks beat the TBB L (6–20) in Qwest Field. In the home opener on Sep 16, the Bucs defeated the New Orleans Saints W (31–14) in Raymond James Stadium. At home on Sep 23, the Bucs beat the St. Louis Rams W (24–3) in Raymond James Stadium. On Sep 30 at Carolina, the TBB beat the Panthers W (20–7) in Bank of America Stadium.

AT Indianapolis, on Oct 7, the Colts pounded the TBB L (14–33) at the RCA Dome. At home on Oct 14, the Bucs beat the Tennessee Titans W 13–10 at Raymond James Stadium. At Detroit on Oct 21, the Lions beat the TBB L (16–23) in Ford Field. On Oct 28, the Jacksonville Jaguars nosed out the Bucs L (23–24) in Raymond James Stadium

At home on Nov 4, the TBB beat the Arizona Cardinals W (17–10) in Raymond James Stadium. On Nov 11, the team drew a bye. Then, on Nov 18 at Atlanta, the Bucs pounded the Falcons W (31–7) in the Georgia Dome. On Nov 25, at home, the TBB edged out the Washington Redskins W (19–13) in Raymond James Stadium. At New Orleans on Dec 2, the TBB edged out the Saints W (27–23) at the Louisiana Superdome.

At Houston on Dec 9, the Texans beat Tampa Bay L (14–28) at Reliant Stadium. At home, on Dec 16, the TBB walloped the Atlanta Falcons W (37–3) in Raymond James Stadium. Then, on Dec 23 at San Francisco, the 49ers edged out the Bucs L (19–21) in

Monster Park. In the season finale, on Dec 30, the Carolina Panthers beat the TBB L (23–31) in Raymond James Stadium. The team finished OK at 9-7 but nobody was applauding five years after the Super Bowl victory.

The pundits were talking about management considering ending Jon Gruden's stay but gave him another year to work the league including free-agency, trades, and draft picks to come up with better players. Was it the coach? How long could Gruden produce mediocre results before he met the eventual plight of all past TBB coaches not including John McKay..

## Top Bucs Players Donald Penn LT (2007-2013)



When it comes to offensive linemen in Tampa Bay history, the legendary Donald Penn would find himself as the second highest-ranked left tackle, and for good reason. Amazing! After going undrafted in the 2006 NFL Draft, which was a surprise given he didn't allow a sack in college, Penn bounced from the Minnesota

Vikings to the Buccaneers, where he would spend the next seven

seasons. From 2007-2013, Penn held down the left side of the offensive line for a bevy of different quarterbacks.

Penn earned Pro-Bowl honors in 2011 and earned two more after he moved on to Oakland to play with the Raiders. Few players in the league are seen as being as loyal as Penn, who will, without question, do anything to keep the quarterback on his feet. And yes, that most definitely includes holding. Most of the time, quarterbacks would rather deal with a 10-yard setback than to take a lick from a charging defender.

Penn is a fighter by every definition of the word. Even now at the age of 35, he continues to do just that. Unfortunately, Penn has only appeared in one playoff game during his first season in Tampa Bay. Ultimately, this small fact is made worse considering that he went nine full seasons without missing a start. That is an incredible feat in the NFL, and it is a shame he has yet to be rewarded with a legitimate playoff run.

By all accounts, Penn is a fan-favorite wherever he goes. Buccaneers fans, and now Raiders fans, love the passion Penn brings to every game, regardless of the opponent. Finishing in the top-25 is indicative of how good he was at what he did, despite not being one of the flashiest players to don the Buccaneer Red.

## Wild Card Playoffs

### New York Giants 24, Tampa Bay Buccaneers 14

	1	2	3	4	Total
Giants	0	14	3	7	24
Buccaneers	7	0	0	7	14

The 1:00 EST P.M. game on January 6, 2008 was played on a sunny day at Raymond James Stadium in Tampa Bay in 70 degree F weather. The game was broadcast by TV announcers (FOX): Joe Buck (play by play). Troy Aikman, (color commentators) & Pam Oliver & Chris Myers (field reporters). The referee was Walt Anderson in a game with an attendance of 65, 621. The Giants prevailed.

Though the Buccaneers scored first, they did not score often enough to overcome an aggressive Giants squad that was ready to win. The Giants moved to 8-1 in away games from the home stadium with a major league domination in a 24-14 NFC-wild-card playoff victory over the Buccaneers.

The Giants were ready and their roll continued. They won every away game since falling in their season opener against Dallas. They are ready to win next Sunday again with the winner going to the NFC conference title game. Meanwhile the Bucs get to go home from their own home stadium wishing they were still in the hunt for the Super Bowl.

The first quarter was so lopsided the Giants never picked up a first down. Meanwhile, Garcia, who beat the Giants in two previous playoff starts against them, led the Bucs on a 54-yard, 10-play march. It was highlighted by Graham, who capped it with a 1-yard TD run. Graham gained 41 yards on the drive.

But when the second quarter arrived, the Giants woke up and the Bucs went to sleep. Manning found Toomer for 17-, 10- and 13-yard gains before Jacobs avoided Derrick Brooks to tie the game with his 5-yard TD reception.

Six minutes later, New York pulled ahead as Jacobs scored on an 8-yard run. Manning completed all four passes on the 65-yard drive, including a 21-yarder to Steve Smith on third down. By halftime, the once proud flag-waving Bucs fans had been silenced by the power running and precise passing of the Giants, who were up 14-7.

It got worse immediately for the Bucs when fumbled his runback to open the second half. The Giants' Webster recovered at the Tampa

30 and the Giants got to the 4 before Tynes bagged the three-pointer. Webster contributed again moments later to spoil a good Tampa Bay drive. He watched Joey Galloway like a hawk to the end zone and had good eyes on the ball. Then he simply picked off the Jeff Garcia pass and it was a coffin nail that finished the Bucs for good.

The Bucs, who led the NFC with a plus-15 turnover margin, were minus-2 in a span of 8:50 of the third period and they simply never recovered.

Garcia threw for 23-of-39 for 207 yards and two interceptions. Galloway, the Bucs' 1,000-yard receiver, had one catch for 9 yards and aggravated a sore shoulder. The Bucs lost their horses and the Giants were all horsepower never faltering from the second quarter to the whistle.

### **2008 Jon Gruden Coach #7**

The 2008 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their thirty-third season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. They played in Raymond James Stadium for the eleventh season in a row. The Bucs were led by Jon Gruden in his seventh (last) of seven seasons as head Bucs coach. This Buccaneers team had a winning season; but it was identical to the mediocre season of 2007. They finished 9-7 in third place in the NFC South. They did not make the playoffs.

Though the team finished with a winning record (9-7), they failed to defend their 2007 NFC South championship and as noted, they did not qualify for the playoffs for the first time since 2006, even after finishing the year on a four-game losing streak.

Just weeks after the conclusion of the regular season, the fireworks started as many predicted. Head coach Jon Gruden was fired. The move as noted did not surprise some but for some reason it came as a big surprise both to sports writers and Gruden himself. General manager Bruce Allen was also fired. The TBB management team was on a roll trying to bring the team back into the win column consistently.



Surprising to many, this season would also be Gruden's last time coaching until 10 years later, when he returned to coach the Oakland Raiders, whom he previously coached from 1998–2001.

Bucs management may have learned something in their experience with two fine coaches—Jon Gruden and Tony Dungy, who arguably before Bruce Arians was the best coach for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. They learned that you can't just keep firing coaches and expect better the next time. When they fired Dungy, they got a Super Bowl the next year.

Maybe that's what was expected when they fired Gruden. They did not get it. Their luck changed for the next thirteen years. The 2008 season marked a turning point in Tampa's history. From 2008 to 2020, Tampa Bay would not reach the postseason. 2020 with Bruce Arians was quite a year. We'll be there before you know it.



# Chapter 18 Coaches Raheem Morris & Greg Schiano 2009 to 2013

**Coach #8 Raheem Morris**

**Coach #9 Greg Schiano**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Record</u>	<u>Pl</u>	<u>Conf / Div</u>	<u>Coach</u>	<u>Notes</u>
2013	4-12-0	4th	-- NFC South--	Greg Schiano	
2012	7-9-0	4th	-- NFC South--	Greg Schiano	
2011	4-12-0	4th	-- NFC South--	Raheem Morris	
2010	10-6-0	3rd	-- NFC South--	Raheem Morris	
2009	3-13-0	4th	-- NFC South--	Raheem Morris	



Raheem Morris ready for new job

## Raheem Morris Takes Over as Bucs Head Coach

As noted in the 2008 writeup. It was a shocking offseason move when the Tampa Bay Buccaneers owners, the Glazer family, announced the dismissals of both head coach Jon Gruden and general manager Bruce Allen. The owners were not, however, expected to scour the NFL for some high priced coaching talent. They had done that with Tony Dungy and Jon Gruden and clearly

from their perspective though the change turned the team around and brought them a Super Bowl, the good feeling of winning consistently was apparently missing and some might say, they were a bit impatient.

So, rather than go on a shopping spree for coaching talent, they looked right in their own backyard and found their current defensive coordinator, 32-year-old Raheem Morris and they did not waste much time in announcing him as their new head coach, along with former pro personnel director Mark Domenik being appointed to the general manager position.

Tampa Bay had a 9-3 record before they finished with a winless December. The Bucs thus missed out on a play-off berth for the fourth time in six seasons. Whilst many have speculated that former defensive coordinator Monte Kiffin's announcement to leave the team at the end of the season contributed hugely to the defensive collapse, the Glazer family have gone for a full retooling of their ailing franchise.

Management was unhappy with the roller-coaster ride of results in the years following Gruden's big game win. Moreover, despite trying, the Bucs could not establish a true franchise quarterback. Gruden had some good ones but something always happened. And, so, he was always looking for a new QB. Brad Johnson, Brian Griese, Chris Simms, Luke McCown, and Jeff Garcia all saw major action in Gruden's tenure. Sometimes they even did quite well but...

There are those who see the Hugh Culverhouse tightwad mentality as partially to blame with the team. For example GM Bruce Allen had always been perceived as a salary cap manager rather than a talent evaluator. If you look at what he brought into the talent mix, the Bucs drafts under his tenure would support that.

Why a team hurting for wins takes a shot at unknown talent is a conundrum, but he probably did not cost a lot. Nonetheless new coach Morris had never been a head coach at any level. The Glazer family seem to have been taking an option that much of the league has, in finding a young coach to revitalize a stagnant team. Last time they did it, the Bucs won a Super Bowl. But the world was looking to sign Jon Gruden at the time

Morris is still known as a motivator and a high-energy type of character. The players like him and the D performed well under his tutelage. He has already begun filling defensive vacancies with the return of 2001-2006 linebackers coach Joe Barry to the fold.

New G.M. Mark Domenik has spent 14 years with the Bucs, joining the team in 1995 as a pro personnel assistant under then general manager Rich McKay. With this move, the Glazer family who run the team shocked fans and players alike. With nearly \$50 million under the cap, the Buccaneers perhaps should have watched their talent more wisely and spent appropriately. Just saying.

On the positive side, the money in the bank can be used to attempt to affirm the direction of the team over the spring. The Buccaneers have a strong, young core in place, with a sprinkling of veteran leadership on the roster.

Morris will need to address the talent shortage at wide receiver, along with some pass-rush from the defensive line. He must also now select a quarterback, whether veteran Jeff Garcia or unproven Luke McCown or another choice. Brian Griese is still under contract but is not the answer. Josh Johnson is raw and still very much a project. A first-day draft pick may prove to be the answer for long-term stability. We'll all know soon and since this is written with 20-20 hindsight, we actually know right now.

### **2009 Raheem Morris Coach #8**

The 2009 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their thirty-fourth season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. They played in Raymond James Stadium for the twelfth season in a row. The Bucs were led by Raheem Morris in his first of three seasons as head Bucs coach. This Buccaneers team had a losing record at 3-13 finishing in fourth place in the NFC South. They did not make the playoffs for the second straight year. As a point to consider, John Gruden never had such a bad season.

The Bucs decided to play one of their home games at Wembley Stadium, as part of the International Series. In this game, they lost to the New England Patriots L (7-25) The Buccaneers played their other seven games at Raymond James Stadium.

The Buccaneers unveiled a Ring of Honor to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the 1979 franchise. Lee Roy Selmon became the first inductee. For the celebration, the Bucs wore throwback uniforms on November 8 in a game against Green Bay that they won W (38–28).

In the season and home opener on September 13, 2009, the Dallas Cowboys pounded the Bucs L (21–34) at Raymond James Stadium. At Buffalo, on Sep 20, the Bills beat the TBB L (20–33) at Ralph Wilson Stadium. At home, on Sep 27, the New York Giants shut out the Bucs L (0–24) in Raymond James Stadium. On Oct 4 at Washington, the Redskins edged out the TBB L (13–16) at FedExField.

At Philadelphia on Oct 11, the Eagles pounded the Bucs L (14–33) at Lincoln Financial Field. On Oct 18, the Carolina Panthers beat the TBB L (21–28) at home in Raymond James Stadium. On Oct 25, the New England Patriots walloped the TBB L (7–35) in Wembley Stadium (London). The Bucs at this point in the season had lost seven games in a row. Coaches make a difference. On Nov 1, the team drew a bye. On Nov 8, the Bucs beat the Green Bay Packers W (38–28) in Raymond James Stadium

At Miami on Nov 15, the Dolphins edged out the Bucs L (23–25) in Land Shark Stadium. At home on Nov 22, the New Orleans Saints walloped the TBB L (7–38) in Raymond James Stadium. At Atlanta on Nov 29, the Falcons edged out the Bucs L (17–20) in the Georgia Dome. On Dec 6 at Carolina, the Panthers beat the TBB L (6–16) in Bank of America Stadium.

At home on Dec 13, the New York Jets pounded the Bucs L (3–26) in Raymond James Stadium. At Seattle, on Dec 20, the TBB defeated the Seahawks W (24–7) in Qwest Field. At New Orleans on Dec 27, the Bucs edged out the Saints W (20–17) in (OT) in the Louisiana Superdome. In the season finale at home on Jan 3, the Atlanta Falcons defeated the Bucs L (10–20) in Raymond James Stadium

## **2010 Raheem Morris Coach #8**

The 2010 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their thirty-fifth season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. They played in Raymond James Stadium for the thirteenth season in a row. The Bucs were led by Raheem Morris in his second of three seasons as head Bucs coach. This Buccaneers team had a nice winning record finishing at 10-6 in third place in the NFC South. They did not make the playoffs for the third straight year.

In 2010, the Buccaneers achieved the best turnaround in franchise history and became the first team since the NFL merger in 1970 to start 10 rookies and achieve a winning season. Raheem Morris was an unexpected hero in his second season as head coach. The Buccaneers had the third overall pick in the 2010 NFL Draft. They elected Gerald McCoy.

This year, John McKay, the team's first head coach, became the second inductee into the Ring of Honor on December 5 during a game against Atlanta. McKay's son Rich, a former Buccaneers general manager, and current president of the Falcons, accepted the award for his late father. The Buccaneers wore throwback uniforms for the Falcons game.

Despite such a fine season, a seven game improvement over 2009 with a 10-6 record, the team could not convince its fans they were for real and they failed to sell out any of their home games. This was the team's last winning season until the 2016 season.

### **Games of the 2010 Season**

In the season and home opener on Sep 12, the TBB edged out the Cleveland Browns W (17-14) in Raymond James Stadium. At Carolina on Sep 19 the Bucs defeated the Panthers W (20-7) in Bank of America Stadium. At home on Sep 26, the Pittsburgh Steelers pounded the Bucs L (13-3) in Raymond James Stadium. On Oct 3, the team drew a bye, Then, on Oct 10, at Cincinnati, the Bucs edged out the Bengals W (24-21) in Paul Brown Stadium.

At home on Oct 17, the New Orleans Saints pounded the Bucs L (6–31) in Raymond James Stadium. At home again on Oct 24 the Bucs nosed out the St. Louis Rams W (18–17) in Raymond James Stadium. At Arizona on Oct 31, the Bucs edged out the Cardinals W (38–35) in University of Phoenix Stadium. At Atlanta on Nov 7, the Falcons beat the Bucs L (21–27) in the Georgia Dome.

At home on Nov 14, the Bucs beat the Carolina Panthers W (31–16) in Raymond James Stadium. At San Francisco, on Nov 21, the Bucs shut out the 49ers W (21–0) in Candlestick Park. On Nov 28, at Baltimore, the Ravens beat the Bucs L (10–17) in M&T Bank Stadium. Then, at home on Dec 5, the Atlanta Falcons edged out the TBB L (24–28) in Raymond James Stadium

At Washington, on Dec 12, the TBB nosed out the Redskins W (17–16) at FedExField. At home on Dec 19, the Detroit Lions edged out the Bucs (L 20–23) in (OT) in Raymond James Stadium. At home on Dec 26, the Seattle Seahawks were pounded by the Bucs W (38–15) in Raymond James Stadium. In the season finale, on Jan 2 at New Orleans, the TBB beat the Saints W 23–13 in the Louisiana Superdome.

## Top Bucs Players Gerald McCoy DT 2010-present





Gerald McCoy is currently one of the best defensive tackles in the NFL. The best part is that McCoy still has a couple of years to improve his standing on this list. But for now, McCoy comes in at No. 6, just behind five of the franchise's best players. Regardless, here's why McCoy finds himself in the same great league as guys like Mike Alstott and Hardy Nickerson.

Out of the storied University of Oklahoma, the Buccaneers selected McCoy with the third overall pick in the 2010 NFL Draft and have reaped the benefits since.

McCoy only trails Aaron Donald in terms of active defensive tackles, and that is an impressive feat in itself as Donald is the reigning NFL Defensive Player of the Year.

In eight seasons thus far, McCoy has earned Pro Bowl honors in six, only failing to earn nominations in his rookie season in 2010, as well as his second year in the league in 2011. That is six-consecutive Pro Bowl level seasons from McCoy. See why he is one of the best in the league?

He is a machine, capable of rushing the passer from the tackle position, while also being a premier run-stuffer. There really isn't anything McCoy can't do, as he is athletic enough to jump at the line of scrimmage to deflect passes as well.

In the 2018 ESPN Top 100, McCoy was the highest ranking Buccaneer coming in at No. 46, just ahead of teammate Mike Evans who rounded out at No. 49. To solidify his rank, McCoy is ranked third all-time for the Buccaneers in sacks with 48.5, and still going.

He only trails Simeon Rice and Warren Sapp, who is coming up (spoiler alert). McCoy is a generational talent who has, unfortunately, yet to see a playoff game in his career. But without a shadow of a doubt, McCoy is one of the best players in Tampa Bay history.

## 2011 Raheem Morris Coach #8

The 2011 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their thirty-sixth season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. They played in Raymond James Stadium for the fourteenth season in a row. The Bucs were led by Raheem Morris in his third (last) of three seasons as head Bucs coach. This Buccaneers team had a lousy losing record at 4-12 in fourth place in the NFC South. They did not make the playoffs for the fourth straight year.

No rhyme or reason, incompetence, bad luck, circumstances, who knows? Sure, Tampa Bay had high hopes for 2011 but that has happened many times before. They failed again after a great season. How do you go from 13-3, to 11-5 and then back to 4-12. It is so strange; one would think that they were three different teams. What do you think?

The team had not qualified for the playoffs since 2007, and they attempted to build upon their success from the previous season but what happened? In 2010, Tampa Bay had finished with a 10-6 record but lost out on tiebreakers and failed to make the playoffs. With the youngest head coach, and the youngest roster in terms of average age, in the league, and with anxious optimism, head coach Raheem Morris had nicknamed the team *youngry*.

There was a close loss to Detroit on opening day that was followed by a three-game winning streak and it turned out to be a fairly respectable 4-2 start with wins against division opponents--Atlanta and New Orleans. Tampa Bay was in a tie for first place in the NFC South in mid-October. However, so called self-inflicted troubles started affecting the season, leading to an unbelievable ten-game losing streak to finish the season. How did that happen

After the 4-2 start, the team did not win another game. Turnovers, penalties, and poor defense began taking its toll. Quarterback Josh Freeman's threw 22 interceptions (second-worst in the league), more than triple his total from 2010. The once dominating Tampa Bay defense ranked 30th in the league in total yards. What did the coach say. Whatever he said, it was not enough to convince management that he should be given another season.

Out of nowhere, the familiar plight of the TBB took over. Retreat to the familiar happened when things go tough and losing was the familiar pattern. The defensive coach from Jon Gruden was the head coach and the defense still let the Buccaneers down. Statistically, the Bucs defense was almost the worst in the league.

The Bucs allowed the most points in the league (494), the most yards per play (tied at 6.3), most yards per pass attempt (tied at 7.6), the most rushing yards (2,497) and the most rushing touchdowns (26). They also allowed the second most yards per attempt (5.0), the second most rushing first downs (135), the third most total yards (6,311) and fourth most total first downs (356) of all teams in 2011. Why?

BucsNation offers this analysis: “the Bucs came out flat and never recovered, getting beat in every phase of the game ten times over. Each play on both sides of the ball seemed to bring a new sense of frustration as assignments were missed, players took plays off, and we got our butts whooped going in both directions. The problem lies with the players as they aren't executing, the schedule as its easily more difficult than the JV schedule we had last year, but the problem also lies with the coaching and structure of the team...”

We have to blame the coaching staff but there is seemingly something more. Here is a little more from the same source: BucsNation in frustration: “

Morris wants to talk about accountability, but every week we trot out the same guys who fail to make the simplest of plays, the wrap up tackle. I won't get into individual performances, but guys like Quincy Black (thanks for stealing our money) have to figure out how to do what 10 year old players are learning, tackle the dude with the ball.”

I guess that does it.

Management acted again. They fired the head coach

The Tampa Bay Buccaneers dumped coach Raheem Morris, although not necessarily their determination to win with one of the NFL's youngest teams. “Morris was fired Monday after three

seasons that raised questions about ownership's commitment to winning because the club has resisted spending large amounts of money in free agency. A 45-24 loss to the Atlanta Falcons in Sunday's season finale was the 10th straight following a 4-2 start. The skid was the franchise's longest within one season since 1977, when the Bucs lost 12 in a row to extend the longest losing streak in league history to 26 consecutive games over two years.

See ya next season folks with a new coach

### **Games of the 2011 season**

In the season and home opener on Sep 11, the Detroit Lions beat the Bucs L (20–27) in Raymond James Stadium. At Minnesota on Sep 18 the Bucs edged out the Vikings W (24–20) in the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome. At home on Sep 25, the Bucs beat the Atlanta Falcons W (16–13) in Raymond James Stadium. The Bucs won their third game on Oct 3 v the Indianapolis Colts W (24–17) in Raymond James Stadium.

At San Francisco on October 9, the 49ers absolutely walloped the TBB L (3–48) in Candlestick Park. At home on Oct 16, the Bucs beat the New Orleans Saints W (26–20) in Raymond James Stadium. At the United Kingdom Wembley Stadium (London, England) on Oct 23, the Chicago Bears defeated the Buccaneers L (18–24). On Oct 30, the team drew a bye. At New Orleans on Nov 6 the Saints defeated the TBB L (16–27) in the Mercedes-Benz Superdome.

At home on Nov 13, the Houston Texans shellacked the TBB L (9–37) in Raymond James Stadium. At Green Bay on Nov 20, the Packers beat the Bucs L (26–35) in Lambeau Field. At Tennessee on Nov 27, the Titans beat the Bucs L (17–23) in LP Field. At home, on Dec 4, the Carolina Panthers pounded the Bucs L (19–38) in Raymond James Stadium.

At Jacksonville, on Dec 11, the Jaguars walloped the Bucs L (14–41) in EverBank Field. At home on Dec 17, the Dallas Cowboys clobbered the TBB L (15–31) in Raymond James Stadium. At Carolina on Dec 24, the Panthers blasted the Buccaneers L (16–48) in Bank of America Stadium. In the season finale on January 1,

2012, at Atlanta, the Falcons pounded the Buccaneers L (24–45) in the Georgia Dome.

### **Coach Morris was fired soon after the season ended.**

After releasing Reheem Morris, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers have hired Rutgers' Greg Schiano to become the team's next head coach. Schiano signed a five year deal after having had a successful 11-year career with Rutgers.

Schiano has a lot of other opportunities and Rutgers was one of them as was Penn State. At 45 years old, Schiano had taken the Scarlet Knights from a college football laughingstock to a program that has had winning records in six of the last seven years. He was also an assistant coach in the NFL with Chicago from 1996-98.

Rumor has it that Greg Schiano was also a favorite of Patriots head coach Bill Belichick. Since we are dealing with hindsight in this history part of the book, it is OK to talk about how this all shook out. Well, TBB gave Schiano two years before they relieved him of his duties. Pundits offered that Greg Schiano's latest statement to remain employed with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers wasn't the strongest in what turned out to be a poor showing in a 42-17 loss to the New Orleans Saints in the team's season finale. So, the Bucs issued their own statement Monday: "Results over past two years have not lived up to our standards. We believe time has come to find a new direction."

And. So, Schiano, the former Rutgers coach, was fired, along with general manager Mark Dominik. He had a poor record with the Bucs for sure. In the eight seasons since Greg Schiano departed, the Scarlet Knights for the TBB, Rutgers has gone from a respectable contender in the Big East to a bottom feeder in the Big Ten. Rutgers' football program needs a spark, and it may have received one on December 3, 2019, with its re-hiring of Greg Schiano.

Schiano did well in the COVID-19 shortened Big Ten Season in 2020. All games were against tough Big Ten Opponents. All his games were close and he won three big ones—Michigan State, Purdue, and Maryland. Rutgers is tickled pink now to have him

back after having floundered in his absence. The Bucs made a good choice. Something else at the Bucs was missing.

## **2012 Greg Schiano Coach #9**

The 2012 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their thirty-seventh season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. They played in Raymond James Stadium for the fifteenth season in a row. The Bucs were led by Greg Schiano in his first of two seasons as head Bucs coach. This Buccaneers team had a losing record of 7-9 in fourth place in the NFC South. They did not make the playoffs for the fifth straight year.

This was Ronde Barber's last season with the Bucs before retiring in the 2013 off-season. Though the Bucs did not make the postseason, the team improved to 7-9 from 4-12, and they finished the regular season with team records in several statistical categories. The team set a franchise record with 5,820 yards of total offense and 389 total points scored.

The came back strong and was ranked #1 in the league against the rush (82.5 yard/game)— a franchise record. There were a number of individual team records achieved including the most touchdown passes (27) and most passing yards (4,065) by Josh Freeman.

Additionally, Doug Martin set a team rookie rushing record of 1,454 yards. Martin finished with five games of 100+ yards rushing, including a breakout game against Oakland in week 9 rushing for 251 yards and four touchdowns. That explains the seven wins. They also finished with the league's worst passing defense, allowing 4,758 yards (297 yard/game). That explains the nine losses

## **Games of the 2012 season**

At home on Sep 9, in Greg Schiano's first game, the Bucs beat the Carolina Panthers W (16-10) in Raymond James Stadium. At New York, on Sep 16 the Giants beat the TBB L (34-41) in MetLife Stadium. At Dallas, on Sep 23, the Cowboys beat the Bucs L (10-16) in Cowboys Stadium. Then, at home on Sep 30, the Washington Redskins squeaked out a win v the Bucs L (22-24) in Raymond James Stadium. On Oct 7, the team drew a bye

On Oct 14, the Bucs pounded the Kansas City Chiefs W (38–10) in Raymond James Stadium. At home on Oct 21, the New Orleans Saints edged out the Bucs L (28–35) in Raymond James Stadium. At Minnesota, on Oct 25, the Bucs pounded the Vikings W (36–17) in the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome. At Oakland, on Nov 4, the Bucs defeated the Raiders W (42–32) in the Coliseum.

At home on Nov 11, the Bucs defeated the San Diego Chargers W (34–24) in Raymond James Stadium. At Carolina, on Nov 18 the Bucs beat the Panthers W (27–21) in (OT) in Bank of America Stadium. Then, at home on Nov 25, the Atlanta Falcons nosed out the TBB L (23–24) in Raymond James Stadium. On Dec 2, the Denver Broncos beat the Bucs L (23–31) in Sports Authority Field at Mile High Stadium.

At home on Dec 9, the Philadelphia Eagles nosed out the TBB L (21–23) in Raymond James Stadium. Then, on Dec 16 at New Orleans, the Saints powdered the TBB in a major shutout L (0–4) in Mercedes-Benz Superdome. At home on Dec 23, the St. Louis Rams pounded the Bucs L (13–28) in Raymond James Stadium.

At Atlanta in the 2003 season finale, on December 30 the Bucs beat the Falcons W (22–17) in the Georgia Dome. This year was not that bad with Greg Schiano achieving a 7-9 record. Let's see how he does next year. Will Schiano get three years like other non-winning coaches or will he be summarily fired after next season?

## Top Bucs Players Doug Martin RB (2012-2017)



Pro Bowl running back Doug Martin takes a spill

Where do they get those nicknames? This guy was known n affectionately as “The Muscle Hamster. Doug Martin was a runner. He had a very successful six-season stint with Tampa Bay. During his rookie season, Martin nearly reached 1,500 rushing yards, finishing with 1,454 yards and 11 touchdowns.

In addition to what he did on the ground, Martin also proved he was a weapon in the passing game, as he brought in 49 receptions for 472 yards. Overall, that was 1,926 all-purpose yards. Needless to say, he impressed.

However, things weren’t all sunshine and roses during the rest of his time in Florida. In his next two seasons, Martin only played in 17 games and rushed for a total of 950 yards. He bounced back in the 2015 NFL season with another stellar campaign, accumulating 1,402 yards after appearing in all 16 contests.

Unfortunately, that would be the last time the Boise State product did anything of note for the Buccaneers. Injuries and a suspension robbed Martin of his 2016 and 2017 NFL seasons. After last season,



the Buccaneers decided to head in a new direction with Peyton Barber, Jaquizz Rodgers and draft pick Ronald Jones.

Martin landed on his feet in Oakland with the new look Raiders under Gruden, but he will always be remembered as a Buccaneer. He finished his tenure with Tampa Bay in fourth place on the franchise's all-time rushing list. Because of that, "The Muscle Hamster" squeaks into the final place on this list.

## Top Bucs Players Lavonte David LB 2012-present



Only the second player to currently be a member of the Buccaneers, Lavonte David is one of the focal points on a strong defensive unit in Tampa Bay. Active since 2012, David has spent all six of his seasons roaming from sideline to sideline with the Buccaneers.

His impressive play has earned him both All-Pro and Pro-Bowl honors, and of course, a spot on this list of the best players in Buccaneers franchise history.

A Nebraska alum, David holds the record for most tackles in a single season with 152. Coming out of college, there was some talk regarding David being undersized, but he quickly silenced that chatter. The Buccaneers traded up into the second round of the 2012 NFL Draft to get him, a decision I am sure they do not regret.

Outside linebackers must be adept in coverage to succeed in the NFL, as they are oftentimes responsible for marking tight ends or running backs on passing downs. David has shown his prowess in coverage in his six seasons, recording 10 interceptions, including the five he managed in 2013 en route to his All-Pro nomination. Needless to say, David is one of the best off-ball linebackers in the league.

In a few years, David may be higher on this list, significantly higher. He has only played six seasons and looks as though he could play for another six more at the least. For a guy that has drawn some Derrick Brooks comparisons in the past, David had very high expectations to meet.

Thus far, he has done just that. The Buccaneers found a gem in David at outside linebacker. Hopefully they are able to find some success and reach the playoffs, so fans can watch him perform in meaningful games late in the winter.

### **2013 Greg Schiano Coach #9**

The 2013 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their thirty-eighth season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. They played in Raymond James Stadium for the sixteenth season in a row. The Bucs were led by Greg Schiano in his second and last of two seasons as head Bucs coach. This Buccaneers team had a losing record of 4-12 in fourth (last) place in the NFC South. They did not make the playoffs for the sixth straight year.

Bucs' Owner Malcolm Glazer passed away on May 28, 2014. In this the 19th and final season under his ownership, the Buccaneers finished with a record of 4-12 and failed to improve their 7-9 record from last season. With this record, they eliminated themselves postseason contention in Week 13. For the first time since 1996, longtime cornerback Ronde Barber was not on the roster, as he retired in May 2013.

The team managed a +10 turnover margin which was so significant it was tied for the 3rd best in the NFL. Another bright side was that third round draft pick Mike Glennon did well and set some

rookie QB records. Despite all that the overall offensive production ranked near the bottom of the league in most categories.

For example the TBB ranked 32nd (last) in total yards, 32nd (last) in passing yards, and 30th in total points scored. The team also had the third-most penalties in the league (121 for 1,136 yards), and they ranked 31st in third down conversions. Injuries as usual plagued the Bucs. For example, RB Doug Martin was placed on injured reserve halfway through the season with a shoulder injury. Luckily but not lucky enough, his replacement, Bobby Rainey performed solidly in his stead.

He scored his first career touchdown and set a franchise record for the longest TD run (80 yards). Though overall the team did not perform well, on the defensive side, the next season news was highlighted by the acquisition of free agent Darrelle Revis, and 2012 acquisition Lavonte David put up some stellar numbers to give the Bucs hope for 2014. As an aside, David became a franchise player and was still knocking them dead for the Bucs in the 2021 Super Bowl. Coach Greg Schiano was fired in the first week of January 2014.

### **Games of the 2013 Season**

In the season opener at New York's Met Life Stadium, the Jets nosed out the Bucs on September 8, 2013 in a real squeaker. In the second loss of eight in a row for the TBB, in the home opener, on Sep 15, the New Orleans Saints nosed out the Bucs L (14–16) in Raymond James Stadium. At New England's Gillette Stadium, the Patriots crunched the Bucs on Sep 22 L (3–23). In the third game with a 3 point or less differential, out of four, on Sep 29, at home, the Arizona Cardinals beat the TBB L (10–13) in Raymond James Stadium. On Oct 6, the team drew a bye.

At home on Oct 13, the Philadelphia Eagles beat the Bucs L (20–31) in Raymond James Stadium. At Atlanta on Oct 20, the Falcons defeated the Bucs L (23–31) in the Georgia Dome. On Oct 24, the Carolina Panthers pounded the Bucs L (13–31) at home in Raymond James Stadium at Seattle on Nov 3, the Seahawks edged out the Bucs L 24–27 in (OT) in CenturyLink Field. At 0-8, the Bucs were finally ready to win a game.

On Nov 11, the Bucs won their first game of 2013 by edging out the Miami Dolphins W (22–19) at home in Raymond James Stadium. They brought their win streak to two in a row on Nov 17 by pounding the Atlanta Falcons W (41–28) at home in Raymond James Stadium. At Detroit on Nov 24, the Bucs won another three-point game against the Lions W (24–21) in Ford Field. The Panthers broke the Bucs 3-game win streak by taking them down on Dec 1 at Carolina L (6–27) in Bank of America Stadium

At home on Dec 8, the TBB beat the Buffalo Bills W 27–6 in Raymond James Stadium. This was the Bucs last win of the season. On Dec 15, the San Francisco 49ers walloped the Bucs at home L (14–33) in Raymond James Stadium. At St. Louis, on Dec 22, the Rams defeated the TBB L (13–2) in the Edward Jones Dome. In the season finale, on Dec 29 at New Orleans, the Saints unloaded on the Bucs L (17–42) in the Mercedes-Benz Superdome

# Chapter 19 Coaches Lovey Smith & Dirk Koetter 2014 - 2018

Coach #10 Lovie Smith

Coach #11 Dirk Koetter

<u>Year</u>	<u>Record</u>	<u>Pl</u>	<u>Conf / Div</u>	<u>Coach</u>	<u>Notes</u>
2018	5-11-0	4th --	NFC South--	Dirk Koetter	
2017	5-11-0	4th --	NFC South--	Dirk Koetter	
2016	9-7-0	2nd --	NFC South--	Dirk Koetter	
2015	6-10-0	4th - -	NFC South--	Lovie Smith	
2014	2-14-0	4th --	NFC South-	Lovie Smith	

## Malcolm Glazer, Bucs Owner Passed Away at 85



The Glazer family has quietly owned the Tampa Bay Buccaneers from 1995. Family patriarch Malcolm Glazer was the lead figure with the Buccaneers until his death in 2014 at the age of 85. He bought the team for a then league record \$192 million. Today it is worth between \$2 billion and \$3 billion. Not a bad investment

Malcolm's children – sons, Avram, Kevin, Bryan, Joel and Edward, and daughter, Darcie S. Glazer Kassewitz, were all born in Rochester and co-inherited his business holdings. Like their dad, they have dutifully followed suit by remaining largely out of the public eye.

After Hugh Culverhouse passed away and the Bucs changed hands to the Glazers, there were a lot of happy Bucs fans. But eventually there was criticism. Much of it levelled over the years by Bucs' supporters was at Glazer, and subsequently his three sons Bryan, Edward and Joel, the club's co-chairmen, who in 2014 took over and basically, but quietly run the Tampa Bay Buccaneers "business."

The problems fans had with the Bucs related to allegations of chronic under-investment. In the period in which we are now studying, after the Dungy/Gruden breath of fresh air seasons, the next four coaches did not do Tampa Bay proud.

For the 2014 season, the Bucs had just fired Greg Schiano and hired Lovey Smith to take over head coaching duties. Such changes are always looked upon with optimism. But over this period, the team has not gained stability from a constant every two to three year changing of the guard and so now here we go again.

## **Lovey Smith new coach for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers**



Lovey Smith, New Buccaneers Head Coach

After releasing Greg Schiano who had a five-year contract after just two years on the job, The Tampa Bay Buccaneers have hired former Chicago Bears coach Lovie Smith as their new head coach. The Buccaneers released a statement from Bryan Glazer, the team's Co-chairman:

"Today is an exciting day for the Buccaneer organization, and the entire Tampa Bay community, as we welcome back Lovie Smith. Lovie is an accomplished and very well respected head coach who has enjoyed success at every level of his 30-year career. We knew from the start of our search that he was the ideal man to lead this team into this new era of Buccaneer football."

Later in the same day, the team decided on their offensive coordinator. They reached a deal with Jeff Tedford as OC. The Smith Contract looks pretty good for the coach. It contains a clause giving the new coach final say over all personnel matters on the Buccaneers' final 53-man roster.

The word on the street was that Lovey Smith had been the leading candidate from the beginning of the Bucs' search. He had been the linebackers coach from 1996 to 2000 and was well liked. The NFL were looking forward to the old Tampa Bay group reuniting—including former Bears general manager Jerry Angelo, former Seahawks general manager Tim Ruskell and others. It was also reported that two other men formerly with the Bears -- Kansas City's Chris Ballard and Washington's Morocco Brown are names to watch.

Smith was always a fine coach having compiled an 81-63 record in nine seasons with the Bears. His forte was his solid defensive groups. His talents and leadership were expected to mesh well with the current defensive personnel.

It is not all peaches as there is still some concern such as the critique of his handling of the offensive side of the ball. To help him in this regard, it is expected that Cal head coach Jeff Tedford will be brought in as offensive coordinator. The details of that deal were still being worked out.

With the hiring of Smith, the Bucs will be a trendy pick to go from cellar dweller to playoff contender -- similar to the path the Kansas City Chiefs took this year after bringing on Andy Reid. We'll see. But, don't hold your breath.

## **2014 Lovie Smith, Coach #10**

The 2014 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their thirty-ninth season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. They played in Raymond James Stadium for the seventeenth season in a row. The Bucs were led by Lovie Smith in his first of two seasons as head Bucs coach. This Buccaneers team had their worst record in years at 2-12 in fourth (last) place in the NFC South. They did not make the playoffs for the seventh straight year. Bad luck continued for the team despite a new coach.

This was also the first season under new GM Jason Licht who followed Mark Dominik, after the disappointing 2013 season. It also marked the first season under new ownership since 1994, after longtime owner Malcolm Glazer died on May 28, 2014. Glazer's sons took over team operations.

The Buccaneers tried to improve their record of 4-12 of last season. Even though it should not have been a tough goal to achieve, the team simply failed to win game after game. The last place finish made nobody happy after finishing tied with the Titans for the worst record in the NFL for the 2014 season. Technically the statistics say that the tiebreaker gave the Bucs last place overall for the season. The only good news was that this earned them the right to the first overall pick in the 2015. Had the old "hapless" Bucs returned?

## **Games of the 2014 season**

In the home and season opener on Sep 7, the Carolina Panthers beat the Bucs L (14-20) in Raymond James Stadium. At home again on Sep 14, the St. Louis Rams edged out the Bucs L (17-19) in Raymond James Stadium. At Atlanta on Sep 18, the Falcons Clobbered the Bucs L (14-56) in the Georgia Dome. At Pittsburgh, on Sep 28, the TBB edged out the Steelers W (27-24) in Heinz Field



At New Orleans on Oct 5, the saints beat the TBB L (L 31–37) in (OT) in Mercedes-Benz Superdome. At home on Oct 12, the Baltimore Ravens shellacked the Bucs L (17–48) in Raymond James Stadium. On Oct 19, the team drew a bye. At home on Oct 26 the Minnesota Vikings beat the Bucs L (13–19) in (OT) in Raymond James Stadium. At Cleveland on Nov 2, the Browns beat the TBB L (17–22) in FirstEnergy Stadium

On Nov 9, the Atlanta Falcons defeated Tampa Bay L (17–27) in Raymond James Stadium. At Washington on Nov 16, the Bucs squashed the Redskins W (27–7) in FedExField. At Chicago on Nov 23, the Bears beat the TBB L (13–21) in Soldier Field. At home on Nov 30, the Cincinnati Bengals nosed out the Bucs L (13–14) in Raymond James Stadium.

At Detroit, on Dec 7, the Lions defeated the TBB L (17–34) in Ford Field. At Carolina on Dec 14, the Panthers nosed out the Bucs L (17–19) in Bank of America Stadium. Then, at home, on Dec 21, the Green Bay Packers beat the Bucs L (3–20) in Raymond James Stadium. In the season finale, on Dec 28, at home, the New Orleans Saints edged out the TBB L (20–23) in Raymond James Stadium

### **2015 Lovie Smith, Coach #10**

The 2015 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their fortieth season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. They played in Raymond James Stadium for the eighteenth season in a row. The Bucs were led by Lovey Smith in his second and last of two seasons as head Bucs coach.

This Buccaneers team had improved over the past year to 6-10 in fourth (last) place in the NFC South. They did not make the playoffs for the eighth straight year. Bad luck continued for the team despite a new coach. Lovey Smith would be fired after this season.

Florida State All-American QB Jameis Winston was taken first overall by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in the 2015 NFL Draft. The team celebrated its 40th anniversary by wore a commemorative patch.

By week 8 the TBB was already looking better than the prior year (2-14) by winning their third game against the Atlanta Falcons. They surprisingly found themselves in the beginning of December, mathematically in the hunt for a playoff berth with a 6-6 record. But they floundered and lost their last four games to finish 6-10, guaranteeing Love Smith's exodus after the season.

Despite missing the playoffs, Doug Martin came in second in the league in rushing yards. He was just 82 yards shy of league leader Adrian Peterson).

The offense was not bad in 2015, but the team could not win games. They had their first ever season finishing in the top five in total offense. Nothing could save Lovey after two bad seasons and he was let go on January 6 right after the end of the season. Despite his record with the TBB, he was a good coach. On January 6, 2016, head coach Lovie Smith was fired after just two seasons as head coach.

### **Games of the 2015 season**

In the season and home opener on September 13, 2015, the Tennessee Titans emaciated the Bucs L (14-42) in Raymond James Stadium. At New Orleans, the Bucs beat the Saints W (26-19) in the Mercedes-Benz Superdome. Then, at Houston, on Sep 27, the Texans beat the Bucs L (9-19) in NRG Stadium. At home on Oct 4, the Carolina Panthers beat the TBB L (23-37) in Raymond James Stadium

At home on Oct 11, the TBB beat the Jacksonville Jaguars W (38-31) in Raymond James Stadium. On Oct 18, the team drew a bye. Then, on Oct 25 at Washington, the Redskins nosed out the Bucs L (30-31) in FedExField. At Atlanta, on Nov 1, the Bucs edged out the Falcons W (23-20) in (OT) 3-4 in the Georgia Dome. At home, on Nov 8, the New York Giants beat the Bucs L (18-32) in Raymond James Stadium.

On Nov 15, the Bucs edged out the Dallas Cowboys W (10-6) in Raymond James Stadium. At Philadelphia, on Nov 22, the Bucs beat the Eagles W (45-17) in Lincoln Financial Field. At Indianapolis on Nov 29, the Colts beat the Bucs L (12-25) in Lucas

Oil Stadium. At home on Dec 6, the TBB beat the Atlanta Falcons W (23–19) in Raymond James Stadium

On Dec 13 at home, the New Orleans Saints beat the TBB L (17–24) in Raymond James Stadium. This was the first of a four game losing streak to close out the 2015 season and assure Lovey Smith of a new job in 2016.

On Dec 17 at St. Louis, the Rams beat the Bucs L (23–31) in Edward Jones Dome. At home on Dec 27, the Chicago Bears edged out the Bucs L (21–26) in Raymond James Stadium. At Carolina, in the season finale, on Jan 3, the Panthers shellacked the Bucs L (10–38) in Bank of America Stadium, finishing 2015 with a record of 6-10.

### **Top Bucs Players Jameis Winston QB (2015-2020)**



In the Bucs, there has for years been a lack of talent in the franchise at the QB position. Unless you can draft a great college QB, mature QBs in the NFL cost a hell of a lot of money to acquire. Thank God the TBB team and Tom Brady got together to agree to the deal to bring him in.

Oddly enough, Jameis Winston is one of the draft guys that may be successful. He was but the is no Tom Brady. Jameis Winston can be arguably described in the Pre-Brady years as the most talented QB the team has ever seen, but, even with Bruce Arians first year, that did not make the TBB a first class NFL team.

Drafted with the first overall pick in the 2015 NFL Draft, Winston has been the beacon of light for the Buccaneers' where hopes are dreams and dreams are hopes and both were part of the franchise trying to return to legitimacy. If Bruce Arians had brought in a Super Bowl without the talent in 2019, he would have been declared a miracle worker and the team would have had a losing season in 2021. As good as Bruce is he too needed players.

Jameis Winston has a few off-field issues that seemed to have followed him from Florida State into the NFL, but his potential before he was no longer needed was unquestionable. Winston, a two-sport athlete in college, has a cannon for an arm and the athleticism to extend plays with his feet.

Although he has only had one winning season in the three he has spent with the Buccaneers, fans and experts alike thought he had what it took to lead the franchise back to the playoffs.

In his first two seasons, Winston threw for 4,042 and 4,090 yards, respectively. This was before having a down year in 2017. In his rookie campaign, his efforts resulted in him earning Pro Bowl honors and being discussed for NFL Rookie of the Year.

Unfortunately he lost out to Rams running back Todd Gurley, but Winston did get named to the All-Rookie squad.

Winston has what it takes to be a successful quarterback in the NFL, he just needs to keep himself out of trouble. If the suspensions begin to add up (he is serving a three-game suspension starting at the beginning of the 2018 season), Winston's career could derail quickly.

Despite only being with the team for three seasons, Winston is already fifth all-time in passing. Before Brady, that was enough to say it all. Now that Brady is watching what happens to his new

favorite team, guys like Winston are not needed. They are for themselves and not for the team.

Those days are gone for TBB. If George Bland could offer the Bucs some advice, he would suggest they keep Brady as the starting QB as long as he can walk. Tom Brady will know when to declare his last season. He is a pro.

### **Dirk Koetter takes the reins at Tampa Bay**



Dirk Koetter has an impressive football resume. He was born February 5, 1959 some say with a football as a crib-mate. He was a football coach and a darn good one. It is in his blood.

Koetter became the head coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers of the National Football League in 2016 and he would be here a year longer than the last two coaches—Lovey Smith and Greg Schiano that's three years for Dirk if you please. This year is 2016. He will run the team to 2018 and he will achieve one winning season out of three which is something most Bucs coaches have not achieved.

He grew up in Pocatello, Idaho, his dad was Jim Koetter, a German American football coach. He was a QB by position as a player. He graduated from Highland High School in 1977 and stayed in town to play his college football at Idaho State University. He received his bachelor's degree in 1981 and his love of sports brought him to a master's in athletic administration in 1982.

As a football coach, the answer is yes. He coached at his HS alma Highland High School for two seasons (1983, 1984), then he became a full-time college assistant coach in 1985 as the offensive coordinator at San Francisco State University. After his time at San Francisco State, he coached at UTEP (1986–1988), Missouri (1989–1993), Boston College (1994–1995), and Oregon (1996–1997).

Koetter was the head coach at Boise State University from 1998 to 2000 and at Arizona State University from 2001 to 2006, compiling a career college football record of 66–44 (.600). Koetter also served as the offensive coordinator for the Jacksonville Jaguars, the Atlanta Falcons, and also the Buccaneers. In 2016, he arrived as the head coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

### **2016 Dirk Koetter, Coach #11**

The 2016 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their forty-first season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. They played in Raymond James Stadium for the nineteenth season in a row. The Bucs were led by Dirk Koetter in his first of three seasons as head Bucs coach. This Buccaneers team had improved over the past year to 9-7 in second place in the NFC South. They did not make the playoffs however for the ninth straight year. Bad luck was interrupted this season as team had a winning season, their first since 2010.

After winning on opening day, Tampa Bay was off and on through the rest of September. They had a problem with running back Doug Martin when he was sidelined for eight weeks with a hamstring injury. So, they used back-up running backs in his place in the lineup. Charles Sims and Antoine Smith, both subsequently ended up on injured reserve, along with wide receivers Vincent Jackson and Cecil Shorts. When the Bucs emerged victorious in a Monday night game against division rival Carolina, they began a positive

streak in which they won seven out of their next nine games. From week 10 to week 14, the Bucs garnered their first five-game winning streak since their Jon Gruden inspired Super Bowl championship season.

Something always went wrong in strong seasons and this was no different. The TBB suffered losses to both the Cowboys and the Saints late in the season. This ruined Tampa Bay's playoff hopes; heading into week 17. They were still mathematically alive for a wild card berth, but despite beating Carolina, the team missed the playoffs for the ninth consecutive time. This tied them with Jacksonville for the fourth-longest active streak in the NFL without a playoff berth.

The team finished the season tied with the Lions for the last NFC playoff spot, but they lost the tiebreaker based on respective records against the same opponents the Lions won and lost. Nevertheless, on the positive side the Buccaneers achieved their first winning season since the 2010 campaign. Dirk Koetter had his moment in the Florida Sun in the 2016 season. The sun would not shine again for him in Tampa Bay.

### **Games of the 2016 Season**

In the season opener at Atlanta on Sep 11, the Bucs defeated the Falcons W (31–24) in the Georgia Dome. At Arizona on Sep 18, the Cardinals whopped the Bucs L (7–40) in the University of Phoenix Stadium. In the home opener on Sep 25, the LA Rams beat the TBB L (32–37) in Raymond James Stadium. At home on Oct 2, the Denver Broncos defeated the TBB L (7–27) in Raymond James Stadium

At Carolina on Oct 10, the Bucs edged out the Panthers W (17–14) in Bank of America Stadium. On Oct 17, the team drew a bye. Then, on Oct 23 at San Francisco, the Bucs beat the 49ers W (34–17) in Levi's Stadium At home on Oct 30, the Oakland Raiders edged out the Bucs L (24–30) in (OT) in Raymond James Stadium. Then, on Nov 3, the Atlanta Falcons defeated the TBB L (28–43) at home in Raymond James Stadium

At home on Nov 13, the TBB pounded the Chicago Bears W (36–10) in Raymond James Stadium. At Kansas City, the Bucs edged out the Chiefs on Nov 20 W (19–17) in Arrowhead Stadium. On Nov 27, at home, the TBB beat the Seattle Seahawks W (14–5) in Raymond James Stadium. Then, on Dec 4 at San Diego, the Bucs beat the Chargers W 28–21 in Qualcomm Stadium

At home on Dec 11, the Bucs beat the New Orleans Saints W (16–11) in Raymond James Stadium. Then, at Dallas on Dec 18, the Cowboys beat the TBB L (20–26) in AT&T Stadium. At New Orleans, on Dec 24. The Saints beat the TBB L (24–31) in the Mercedes-Benz Superdome. In the season finale at home on Jan 1, the Bucs nosed out the Carolina Panthers W (17–16) in Raymond James Stadium.

### **2017 Dirk Koetter, Coach #11**

The 2017 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their forty-second season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. They played in Raymond James Stadium for the twentieth season in a row. The Bucs were led by Dirk Koetter in his second of three seasons as head Bucs coach. This Buccaneers team could not keep up with last year's win gains and fell below 500 in a losing season record of 5-11 in fourth (last) place in the NFC South. They did not make the playoffs however for the tenth straight year. Bad luck returned this season as the team regressed from 9-7 to 5-11.

Even though results were not good this year, the team was still arranging its structure to be successful. For example, on March 9, this year, the TBB signed former Eagles and Redskins wide receiver DeSean Jackson, defensive tackle Chris Baker, former Dallas Cowboys safety J. J. Wilcox (traded to Pittsburgh Steelers), former New York Jets kicker Nick Folk, and veteran quarterback Ryan Fitzpatrick.

It seemed like all the changes did not matter this year and results still did not improve in 2018 but it was a good sign that management wanted to put the best team possible on the field. Eventually, in this book, in the next chapter, we will see Tom Brady becoming a Buccaneer. We know from hindsight that will matter.



Hurricane Irma prevented Week 1's game from being played against the Dolphins. Because of the weather, Week 1 became the bye week and the Miami game was rescheduled to week 11. This was first time since the Arizona Cardinals in 2001 in which a team had a bye week in Week 1.

The TBB had a familiar problem in that they were hampered with poor performance and an early problem with their kicking game. So, they experienced a situation that prevented them from improving on or even matching their 9–7 record from the previous season.

Once they lost to the Detroit Lions on December 10, they were mathematically eliminated from the playoffs with a 4–9 record. As noted, the Bucs finished the season 5-11. This was their tenth consecutive season without a playoff appearance, with their last being in the 2007 season. Also, the Bucs finished last in the NFC South for the seventh time in nine seasons. As you will see, the following year, 2018 would bring more of the same poor results before Bruce Arians and Tom Brady would provide a rescue plan.

### **Games of the 2017 Season**

On September 10, the team drew a bye. In the season and home opener, on September 17, 2017, the Bucs pounded the Chicago Bears W (29–7) in Raymond James Stadium. At Minnesota on Sep 24 the Vikings beat the TBB L (17–34) in U.S. Bank Stadium. On Oct 1, at home, the Bucs beat the New York Giants W (25–23) in Raymond James Stadium. At home, on Oct 5 the New England Patriots edged out the TBB L (14–19) in Raymond James Stadium.

At Arizona on Oct 15, the Cardinals edged out the Bucs L (33–38) in University of Phoenix Stadium. At Buffalo on Oct 22, the Bills edged out the Bucs L (27–30) in New Era Field. Then, on Oct 29, at home the Carolina Panthers defeated the TBB L (3–17) in Raymond James Stadium. At New Orleans on Nov 5, the Saints pounded the Bucs L (10–30) in the Mercedes-Benz Superdome.

At home on Nov 12, the Bucs edged out the New York Jets W (15–10) in Raymond James Stadium. On Nov 19, at Miami, the Bucs beat the Dolphins W (30–20) in the Hard Rock Stadium. On Nov 26 at Atlanta, the Falcons pummeled the Buc L (20–34) in

Mercedes-Benz Stadium. On Dec 3 at Green Bay, the Packers edged out the TBB L (20–26) in (OT) in Lambeau Field

At home on Dec 10, the Detroit Lions edged out the TBB L (21–24) in Raymond James Stadium. At home on Dec 18, the Atlanta Falcons edged out the TBB L (21–24) in Raymond James Stadium. At Carolina, on Dec 24, the Panthers edged out the TBB L (19–22) in Bank of America Stadium. At home in the season finale on Dec 31, the Bucs edged out the New Orleans Saints W (31–24) in Raymond James Stadium.

### **2018 Dirk Koetter, Coach #11**

The 2018 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their forty-third season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. They played in Raymond James Stadium for the twenty-first season in a row. The Bucs were led by Dirk Koetter in his second of three seasons as head Bucs coach. This Buccaneers team matched exactly the record of last season's 5-11 record and finished in fourth (last) place in the NFC South. They did not make the playoffs for the eleventh straight year. Bad luck was in focus again as there was no improvement over the prior year's poor record.

While not performing at peak, the Bucs would surprise the fans and the opposition with unexpected dominant performances. For example in the season opener against the Saints, the Bucs powered its offense to score 48 points for the first time since its Super Bowl XXXVII victory. In this win, QB, Ryan Fitzpatrick could do no wrong. The following week against defending Super Bowl Champs, they would pound out another dominant performance. In week 3, they nearly beat the Pittsburgh Steelers all with Fitzpatrick as starting quarterback.

Unfortunately, despite their 2–0 start, this was the first time since 2010 that TBB began a three game skid with Fitzpatrick being benched for Jameis Winston in Week 4 against the Chicago Bears. Winston did not show consistency and after 3 games, he was sent back to the bench in favor for Fitzpatrick against the Cincinnati Bengals. Fitzpatrick went on to start three more games until being benched again for Winston against the New York Giants. Winston

would remain the starter for the rest of the season. None of the musical quarterbacking paid off dividends for the team.

They had a problem winning. It was not that they did not move the ball on offense. For example, the Buccaneers led the league in total passing yards, they just couldn't score enough to win. So they managed only to match their 5–11 record from the previous season and they thus finished last in the NFC South for the eighth time in ten seasons.

When they lost in Week 15 to the Baltimore Ravens, the suspense about whether they would make the playoffs was over. They were eliminated for the 11th straight season. Fitzpatrick posted a 2–5 record while starting while Winston posted a 3–6 recording while starting. The team however set a franchise record 396 points scored on the season. It was never enough. Tampa Bay has no trouble trying out a new coach when the old one has not performed “well.”

On December 30, 2018, head coach Dirk Koetter got the word that he was fired following a Week 17 loss to the Atlanta Falcons. When you pick up the next chapter, you will see that Bruce Arians became the 2019 coach and we all know he survived the Bucs and made it to the 2020 season where his team won all the marbles. Enjoy!]

### **Games of the 2018 season**

Here is a list of the games. Nothing exciting happened in this season so I put it in list form. The next chapter has all the recent sizzle.

- 1 Sep 9 at NO Saints W 48–40 1–0 Mercedes-Benz Superdome
- 2 Sep 16 Philadelphia Eagles W 27–21 2–0 Raymond James Stadium
- 3 Sep 24 Pittsburgh Steelers L 27–30 2–1 Raymond James Stadium
- 4 Sep 30 at Chicago Bears L 10–48 2–2 Soldier Field
- 5 Bye
- 6 Oct 14 at Atlanta Falcons L 29–34 2–3 Mercedes-Benz Stadium
- 7 Oct 21 Cleveland Browns (OT)W 26–23 3–3 Raymond James Stadium
- 8 Oct 28 at Cinc. Bengals L 34–37 3–4 Paul Brown Stadium
- 9 Nov 4 at Carolina Panthers L 28–42 3–5 Bank of America Stadium
- 10 Nov 11 Washington Redskins L 3–16 3–6 Raymond James Stadium
- 11 Nov 18 at New York Giants L 35–38 3–7 MetLife Stadium
- 12 Nov 25 San Francisco 49ers W 27–9 4–7 Raymond James Stadium

13 Dec 2 Carolina Panthers W 24-17 5-7 Raymond James Stadium  
14 Dec 9 New Orleans Saints L 14-28 5-8 Raymond James Stadium  
15 Dec 16 at Baltimore Ravens L 12-20 5-9 M&T Bank Stadium  
16 Dec 23 at Dallas Cowboys L 20-27 5-10 AT&T Stadium  
17 Dec 30 Atlanta Falcons L 32-34 5-11 Raymond James Stadium

Season record of 5-11. Hopefully brighter days ahead.

# Chapter 20 Coach Bruce Arians 2019—

## Coach #12 Bruce Arians



Bruce Arians clutching the Bucs Super Bowl Victory Symbol

## Coach #12 Bruce Arians

<u>Year</u>	<u>Record</u>	<u>Pl</u>	<u>Conf / Div</u>	<u>Coach</u>	<u>Notes</u>
2020	11-5-0	2nd --	NFC South 4-0	Bruce Arians	Won Superbowl
2019	7-9-0	3rd --	NFC South--	Bruce Arians	

## Bruce Arians—New Bucs Coach big difference maker

### Q: Who is Bruce Arians?

### A: One heck of a great football coach

Coaching football and having a great family life is what Bruce Arians is all about. At Tampa Bay, he found the perfect job and ultimately, he delivered the perfect season. Another guy might not have liked it.

In 2019 after firing its last six coaches, Tampa Bay had a hard time figuring out how to become a winning team. Nonetheless, they were looking for a head coach after the 2018 season. Some negative

pundits thought that after firing their last six coaches, the owners should have eased their pain and gotten out of football.

Post Super Bowl pundits found a good interview with Bruce Arians' wife Chris to learn about the man. They say she (Chris Arians) knew that her husband, Bruce, was talking to general manager Jason Licht. Let it be known folks that unlike those who eventually were losing their jobs because of COVID-19, Bruce Arians did not need a job and his wife knew he didn't need a job. Chris said she wasn't excited. She also said she was not surprised he was checking out another coaching job.

"I was certainly resigned to it," Chris told ESPN. "We'll be married 50 years in June, like, I do know the man." Bruce had taken the 2018 season off following five seasons as the head coach of the Arizona Cardinals. If he was going to return to coaching, Chris would have some say in it. I would say that meant that there would be no crap.

Ironically, a team that fires six coaches in a row if not more, is a major risk for a guy who might need a job. Bruce Arians did not need a job. He might enjoy one, however. His wife knew he would not take a job that did not fit his persona.

Knowing that her husband was a discussion point for the Buccaneers, she engaged in the dialogue. So, at the kitchen table at their home on Lake Oconee in Georgia during breakfast, she said that she laid out her list of requirements: They would rent a house, not buy; she would have an unlimited travel budget to see her grandchildren; and Bruce would work on improving his health. There was no argument.

So, Coach Arians used his life advisor, Chris, to come up with his stipulations for a good job that he would enjoy. That is a story unto itself and a good one.

His decision to return to coaching looks like the right one as after two seasons and some great transfer players to bolster the franchise, before the big game. He was prepared to lead the Buccaneers against the Chiefs on February 7 at (6:30 p.m. ET, CBS). His wife Chris would not be at his side because she is a supporter not a nag. But she would definitely be there!

Arians had been all smiles while answering questions during a Super Bowl media event. Why not? Nobody is going to fire him regardless. Nonetheless, the 68-year-old Arians had to find the right situation to return to football, and he figured Tampa Bay was it. *No expectations* could have been the reason. He had thought it out long before he had quarterback Tom Brady heading to the TBB.

The Bucs and the Tampa area had everything Arians wanted. To know what that was specifically, you might have to climb into Bruce's head but maybe it was *no expectations and fun*. Maybe it was because he would accept no life shortening or wife shortening pressure.

On the professional side, the Bucs had an infrastructure such as one that Arians believed was needed to create a winner—from ownership to the general manager to the roster. And on a personal level, it's a quick six-hour drive to Lake Oconee straight up I-75 -- where Bruce and Chris stay from right after the draft until returning to Tampa for training camp. It's also an hour flight from Birmingham, Alabama, where his grandchildren live. And so, who cares about football when all the poisonal (personal) things are in alignment.

Bruce Arians believed he had carte blanche to build the staff he wanted. He essentially got the band back together as he had expected. He hired 12 coaches who worked for him in Arizona, along with others he's known for years like quarterbacks' coach Clyde Christensen, who was on his staff at Temple in the 1980s, and special-teams coordinator Keith Armstrong, who played for Arians at Temple. It was old home week and a real good deal for Bruce.

Arians had to do the mental figuring about if he wanted to take the Bucs job. To him all the things kind of just added up. "The whole staff was available so it's like, why the hell not do this right," Arians told ESPN why he chose to make the move. It wasn't hard for him. He was not concerned about getting fired So what if he got fired. He'd at least have two years.

Besides having a tacit sign off from wife Chris, among all those reasons that Arians decided to return to coaching, there were two

that rose above the rest: Licht and Bucs offensive coordinator Byron Leftwich.

"I wouldn't have taken the job if it wasn't for Jason, and probably wouldn't have taken the job if Byron Leftwich wasn't available," Arians said.

In Licht, Arians had a good friend as his general manager who he knew, trusted and got along with seamlessly. It also helped that the Arians were friends with Licht's wife, Blair, who they befriended when Bruce and Jason worked together in Arizona in 2013.

"Having a head coach like Bruce and the relationship that I have with him -- I don't know if it will ever be repeated," Licht said. "He is just such a unique guy and we have such a unique, strong bond. We get along well and we even argue well to get the results that we want and make the decisions that we've made. It's been awesome."

However, it was Leftwich who made the biggest difference in Arians' return. When Arians started to consider coaching again, he knew he didn't want to call plays. But Arians would give up the playcalling duties only if Leftwich would take them over. Leftwich was fired by the Cardinals after the 2018 season, making the timing perfect.

Arians has long made it a priority to prepare his staff for the next step. This was his chance with Leftwich. Of course, Arians still clicks over on the headset a time or two, such as in the NFC Championship Game, when he called the play that resulted in a 39-yard touchdown pass at the end of the first half to put the Bucs up 21-10.

Giving Leftwich play-calling responsibilities has given Arians freedom from wearing two hats as head coach and offensive coordinator. He could fully embrace the CEO element of the job.

"It's an unbelievable difference," Arians said. "I spent a lot more time probably fooling around with special teams and defense and still have my hand in the offense but I'm just a head coach now. I'm not trying to do too many jobs. I watched more college film than I've ever watched in my life just to see what's up for the next draft."



Outside linebackers coach Larry Foote, who played for the Steelers when Arians was an assistant, and then played and coached under him in Arizona, quickly noticed Arians was on the defensive headset more and a "little more chatty."

Bruce Arians is not as "high-strung" as he used to be, according to Tampa Bay linebacker Kevin Minter, who also played for Arians in Arizona.

One benefit of having less on his plate is Arians has been home to eat dinner with Chris nearly every night in Tampa, a drastic difference from his time in Arizona.

It's also affected his health in a good way.

Arians is a three-time cancer survivor, with the last bout coming in 2016 when he was diagnosed with renal cell carcinoma and had a piece of his kidney removed in early 2017. He also was hospitalized with chest pains in November 2016 and went to the hospital before a preseason game in 2016 because of diverticulitis.

It got to the point that Chris thought Bruce was going to have a stroke during a game because of how worked up he'd get.

"I don't have that worry about him [anymore]," she said. "I'm sure his blood pressure still gets high, but I'm not worried about it as much for whatever reason."

Because Bruce is healthier and doesn't carry the responsibility of, essentially, two jobs, Chris feels like he could keep coaching "for a long time."

Arians has taken control of his health in the past three years. He lost 25 pounds in 2018 and then gained it back but was able to lose it again this season -- something coaches can typically do during the offseason.

Because Arians is healthier, eating better and feeling better overall, he's been able to start working out again, running a couple of miles on the underwater treadmill three to four days a week.

Chris also credited assistant strength and conditioning coach Maral Javadifar for helping get Bruce on track.

"Love that woman," Chris said. "I mean, she is amazing."

Bruce's son, Jake, said his father's health wasn't the reason Bruce retired after the 2017 season, but was the reason he thought he should retire.

"When you take the stress out of your life, the aches and pains go away," Bruce said. "I knew I could take some of the stress back but not all of it."

And he hasn't.

In many ways, Arians has remained the fiery, "coach-em-hard, love-em-later" coach in Tampa Bay he was in Arizona. He's just not as stressed.

"Being around him, I'm not gonna say he's mellowed out because he hasn't mellowed out, for sure," said Bucs tight ends coach Rick Christophel, who first coached with Arians at Mississippi State University in 1993 and 1994.

But, Christophel added, not having the added stress of playcalling has helped. A lot. Location, location, location. I bet Ron DeSantis even helped—a little at least.

There's one more reason coaching the Tampa Bay Buccaneers has been a good fit. And as they say in real estate: location, location, location.

Right off the bat, Tampa had two things going for it: it was close to the grandchildren and it was warm.

The Arians are an East Coast family. Bruce and Chris are each one of five siblings and all their in-laws, nieces and nephews are on the East Coast, along with one of their two children and most of their grandchildren. Jake moved to Arizona when Bruce got the Cardinals job in 2013 and has stayed, but the Arians' daughter, Kristi, lives in Birmingham with her family.

The grandchildren come in about once a month and stay for the weekend -- something Bruce said they couldn't have done if he was still coaching in Arizona. They play with "Pops," which is what they call Bruce, in an inflatable water slide in the front yard near two big oak trees.

Bruce is healthier than he's been in a while, winning more than he has won in a while and as happy as Jake has seen him in a long time.

Life has been good for Bruce Arians in Tampa Bay.

While Arians said this week that he has no intention of retiring after the Super Bowl, he's also made it clear that Tampa Bay will be his last NFL job.

In the interview he said that the only thing that would make it better would be a win Sunday (Super Bowl).

"Everybody has a great affection for him, for the person he is," his quarterback, Brady, said of Arians. "There's nobody that would ever say anything bad about BA. He's just so endearing to everybody. And I think everyone wants to win for him."

As my old Congressman Daniel J Flood D-PA (who I can imitate and sound better than him) would say of Tom Brady's summary comment: "And that's praise from Caesar!"

## **2019 Bruce Arians, Coach #12**

The 2019 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their forty-fourth season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. They played in Raymond James Stadium for the twenty-second season in a row. The Bucs were led by Bruce Arians in his first of ??? seasons as head Bucs coach. This Buccaneers team sported a 7-9 record and finished in third place in the NFC South. They did not make the playoffs for the twelfth straight year. Their luck was changing. Wait 'til next year!

Under Bruce Arians, despite improving on their 5–11 record from 2018 with a Week 14 victory over the Indianapolis Colts, the TBB missed the playoffs again—yes it was the twelfth consecutive season. This distinction meant the Bucs were just one of two teams that did not qualify for the postseason in the 2010s, with the other team was the hapless version of the Cleveland Browns.

This season, QB Jameis Winston improved. He became the first QB in NFL history to throw at least 30 TD passes along with 30 interceptions in a season. This was also his final season with the Buccaneers, as he was not re-signed by the team in free agency during the 2020 offseason. They were able to find a great QB in 2020 to replace him. Any guesses?

### **Games of the 2019 Season**

In the season and home opener in Bruce Arians' first game as the Bucs Head Coach, on Sep 18, the TBB faltered and lost to the San Francisco 49ers L (17–31) in Raymond James Stadium. On Sep 12 at Carolina, the Bucs beat the Panthers giving Coach Arians his first victory as Bucs Head Coach W (20–14) in Bank of America Stadium. At home on Sep 22, the New York Giants nosed out the TBB L (31–32) in Raymond James Stadium. At LA on Sep 29, the Bucs defeated the Rams in a shootout W (55–40) in Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum.

On Oct 6 at New Orleans, the Saints edged out the Bucs L (24–31) in the Mercedes-Benz Superdome. At the United Kingdom's Tottenham Hotspur Stadium (London), on Oct 13, the Carolina Panthers defeated the Bucs L (26–37). On Oct 20, the team drew a bye. Then, at Tennessee, on Oct 27, the Titans beat the Bucs L (23–27) in Nissan Stadium. At Seattle on Nov 3 in OT, the Seahawks edged out the TBB L (34–40) in CenturyLink Field.

At home on Nov 10, the Bucs edged out the Arizona Cardinals W (30–27) in Raymond James Stadium. At home again on Nov 17, the New Orleans Saints defeated the TBB L (17–34) in Raymond James Stadium. At Atlanta on Nov 24, the Bucs pounded the Falcons W (35–22) in Mercedes-Benz Stadium. Then, at Jacksonville, on Dec 1, the Bucs beat the Jaguars W (28–11) in the TIAA Bank Field.

On Dec 8, at home, the Indianapolis Colts edged out the TBB W (38–35) in Raymond James Stadium . At Detroit on Dec 15, the Bucs pounded the Lions W (38–17) in Ford Field. At home on Dec 21, the Houston Texans edged out the Bucs L (20–23) in Raymond James Stadium. Then, in the season finale at home on Dec 29, the Atlanta Falcons beat the Bucs in OT, L (22–28) in Raymond James Stadium. The team finished with a 7-9 record a two game improvement over the 2018 team. Wait ‘til next year for the explosives.

## **2020 Bruce Arians, Coach #12**

The 2020 Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team competed in their forty-fourth season of Professional National Football League (NFL) football. They played in Raymond James Stadium for the twenty-third season in a row. The Bucs were led by Bruce Arians in his second of ??? seasons as head Bucs coach. This Buccaneers team sported an 11-5 record and finished in 2<sup>nd</sup> in the NFC South. They made the playoffs this year in the Wild Card and broke a twelve year playoff drought. Their luck changed big time. They won the Super Bowl v the KC Chiefs.

Over the offseason they did not renew Jameis Winston and they hired Tom Brady from the NEW England Patriots. This was Tom Brady’s first year with the Bucs as their starting quarterback. The club improved on their 7–9 record from 2019 finishing 11–5. They advanced through the playoffs by winning each encounter to reach and then win Super Bowl LV v the Defending Champion Kansas City Chiefs.

This was the first wild card team and first team only having one Pro Bowler win the big game since the 2010 Packers and the 2007 Giants respectively. The 2020 Buccaneers became the first team in NFL history to play in and win the Super Bowl in their home stadium. Bruce Arians and the Bucs made a lot of people take notice. To accompany their new winning ways, the team unveiled new uniforms on April 7, 2020. This was their first uniform change since 2014. The new uniforms are similar in design to uniforms that the team wore from 1997 to 2013. The Bucs were a very happy team with a very happy starting QB and a very happy head coach this fine football year.

## Games of the 2020 Season

In the season opener at New Orleans on September 13, 2020, the Saints beat the Bucs L (23–34) in Mercedes-Benz Superdome. Then, in the home opener, on Sep 20, the TBB beat the Carolina Panthers W (31–17) in Raymond James Stadium. At Denver, on Sep 27, the Bucs beat the Broncos W (28–10) in Empower Field at Mile High. Then, at home on Oct 4, the Bucs beat the Los Angeles Chargers W (38–31) in Raymond James Stadium.

At Chicago, the Bears nosed out the Bucs L (19–20) in Soldier Field. At home, on Oct 18, the Bucs shellacked the Green Bay Packers W (38–10) in Raymond James Stadium. At Las Vegas, on Oct 25, the TBB pounded the Raiders W (45–20) in Allegiant Stadium. The, on Nov 2 at New York, the Bucs beat the Giants W (25–23) in MetLife Stadium.

At home on Nov 8, the New Orleans Saints overpowered the Bucs L (3–38) in Raymond James Stadium. At Carolina, on Nov 15, the Bucs pounded the Panthers W (46–23) in Bank of America Stadium. At home on Nov 23, the Los Angeles Rams beat the TBB L (24–27) in Raymond James Stadium. At home again on Nov 29, the Kansas City Chiefs edged out the Tampa Bay Buccaneers L (24–27) in Raymond James Stadium. On Dec 6, the team drew a bye.

At home on Dec 13, the TBB defeated the Minnesota Vikings W (26–14) in Raymond James Stadium. At Atlanta on Dec 20, the Bucs edged out the Falcons W (31–27) in Mercedes-Benz Stadium. At Detroit, on Dec 26, the Bucs pounded the Lions W (47–7) in Ford Field. At home in the season finale on Jan 3, the TBB defeated the Atlanta Falcons W (44–27) in Raymond James Stadium.

The Buccaneers finished with a nice 11-5 record and won their way out through Wild Card games, Division games, and Conference games before they met the defending World Champion Kansas City Chiefs and the Bucs with Tom Brady as QB gave the Chiefs a licking at Raymond James Stadium W (9-31)

# Chapter 21 2020 Season Top Bucs, Playoffs, & Super Bowl 55



Tampa Bay won Super Bowl LV (55), which was the championship game for all the marbles in the National Football League. It was their second win and it was about time for this now great team. The Buccaneers for most of their 45 years in the NFL have had the distinction, season after season of being the stinkiest team in the NFL.

I could have said that nicer but I think I said it the way the fans felt it for most of those years. Fans hate to lose. Facts are facts, Without Jon Gruden's 2002 miracle on the Bay, there would be little to prove that until 2020, professional football was actually ever played consistently well in Tampa Bay, Florida.

I love Florida and I am hoping to buy a spot in the Villages this year because I love Florida for a lot of reasons. The Villages is close to Tampa Bay and I stayed in Tampa one time when I visited this great retirement paradise. Allegiant Air had route to NEPA from Tampa and one cane go from Allentown PA to Sanford FL or Tampa Fl in almost less than two hours. I did it.

By the way, I was so impressed with Florida and the Villages that I wrote a book about the Villages and I put a picture of my wife on the

front cover over her deepest objections. She now likes looking at it as much as I and she is no longer fighting me on my plans to get us a nice spot in the Villages where we both can retire. Let me take a few paragraphs to show you below, please and then we'll finish up the Bucs great Super Bowl Season. OK?

Here is the cover:



## Why Is “Everybody” Moving to The Villages®?

“If your friends & relatives can afford  
a home in “The Florida Villages,”  
how about you?

By  
**Brian W. Kelly**

Start with just a week visit. There are many reasons why  
Come as a one week or a one month a year snowbird—  
you will definitely want to come back. This book tells you why!





So you know this is a for-real book, here is how Amazon sells it on the Internet



See all 2 images

## Why Is "Everybody" Moving to The Villages?: If your friends & relatives can afford a home in "The Florida Villages," how about you? Paperback – February 27, 2020

by Brian W. Kelly (Author)

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I am not hiding anything. You who are reading this Tampa Bay book know that at times, my writing is inspired and other times when the subject wanes or looks weak, in my role as independent journalist, I report the truth. As you can see I got 3 ratings and 3 stars in those few reviews but that is probably because I spent too much time on how to have fun at the Villages rather than why you should build your own home there.

I do not think you can make a bad decision from anywhere in the northern US like my state, PA, to buying a home anywhere in Florida. Hey, It is warm folks and very nice and the state treats its people nice—even visitors.

Besides taking my wife to the Las Palmos Inn in Orlando on vacation when we were in our early 30's and Pat was six months pregnant with Brian Patrick, our first son, I was called upon by IBM to visit the Florida plant in Boca Raton because I was learning the banking industry as practiced in small banks in PA.

My second trip to Florida was in 1981 when IBM had a great plant and customer center in Boca Raton Florida. The company was doing well consistently. I worked in an IBM Sales division in Scranton PA that sold small business computers to small businesses. It was a great job.

I was an IBM Senior Systems Engineer. I loved IBM and I loved solving problems for small businesses. One of the industries in which IBM wanted me to gain expertise was small banking systems for banks like those that existed in Northeastern PA and were serviced from the Scranton Brach Office.

One of my first banking accounts was the Penn Security Bank in Scranton, PA. The Bank President and I had a fine relationship. Otto P. Robinson was quite a guy. He loved IBM's AS/400 a platform in which I had become an expert. Robinson often spoke to IBM audiences across the world to discuss the AS/400 and its use in the banking industry for smaller banks.

Check out the Internet for August 1981. I was in an AS/400 banking school in Boca Raton Fl., at the time. The IBM banking industry used the Boca Raton Florida Plant's facility to train IBM Systems Engineers such as I in the technical aspects of the IBM solution set for small banks.

While I was in a banking school on August 12, 1981, on the third day of my class, the IBM company announced its very first Personal Computer known internally as the IBM 5150 but to everybody else, Charlie Chaplain announced it as the IBM PC. Yes, I met him, but I did not get on his lap. Hah! OK it was an actor that looked like Chaplain, who did all of IBM's PC commercials before Alan Alda.

There was a flurry in the cafeteria that day on Wednesday, August 12. There was a mystery guest (Charley Chaplain) who was to give out items and perhaps some gifts to those with the good fortune of having lunch in the IBM Boca Raton Cafeteria that day. Nobody expected it. Nobody announced it to us ahead of time. I went to the cafeteria for an inexpensive IBM-subsidized lunch.

I happened to be there by chance and brought home a lot of IBM PC memorabilia. The special guest as noted was IBM's version of

Charlie Chaplain and I met him. He was very affable and he gave me artifacts to remember the day. When I got back to Scranton, I was designated IBM Scranton's PC expert. That's all that it took.

One of the blurbs I got on that day from IBM was a lot like the following

*The IBM PC **was** introduced in August 1981, only a year after corporate executives gave the go-ahead to Bill Lowe, the lab director in the company's **Boca Raton, Fla.**, facilities. He set up a task force that developed the proposal for the first **IBM PC**.*

I was there folks and I have loved Florida as a state from the first time I saw it first hand. I still love Florida Even with a Lockdown Mayor in charge, who wanted to ticket those at the Super Bowl without Face Masks on 100% of the time, I even like Tampa.

### **What about now?**

Throughout the book we have stopped and highlighted the top Bucs Players during the 45 years, In the 45th year, at least three and probably much more talent came because of Tom Brady's desire to win a Super Bowl for Tampa Bay. There are a number of Bucs especially Leonard Fournette, Robb, Gronkowski, and Tom Brady himself.

In this section we look closely at these three new Bucs stars and then we go through the playoffs and the Superbowl and we highlight the great action these players gave the Bucs to achieve its great Super Bowl victory. We sure hope there is enough of the Bucs in the 22 great players just recently signed to 2021 contracts to give the Buccaneers another go at all those great rings.

For now, let's move forward first by looking at the players, and then the special games that resulted in a Bucs big win. Enjoy!

# Leonard Fournette

## Top Bucs Players Leonard Fournette RB, Jags 2017; Bucs 2020



If you thought the Tampa Bay Buccaneers were finished with NFL free agency, think again.

The Bucs continued its push to re-sign key members of the Super Bowl-winning squad Friday morning retaining running back Leonard Fournette to a one-year deal, according to multiple reports.

Fournette's deal is worth \$3.25 million with a chance to make up to \$4 million including incentives, according to Ian Rapoport of NFL Network. Go get 'em Lenny!

### Leonard Fournette Career Regular Season

Year	Team	Rush				Pass			
		Att	Yds	Avg	TD	REC	Yds	Avg	TD
2020	Bucs	97	367	3.8	6	36	233	6.5	0
2017	Jags	265	1152	4.3	3	76	522	6.9	

...

## Leonard Fournette Career Post Season

Year	Team	Rush				Pass			
		Att	Yds	Avg	TD	REC	Yds	Avg	TD
2020	Bucs	64	300	4.7	3	18	148	8.2	1
2017	Jags	270	242	3.5	4	7	44	6.3	0
...									

Before we continue with this Top Bucs Player tribute to Leonard Fournette, let's answer a question that fans have been asking since the Super Bowl and some even before.

“Here is the question as it often comes in: During the Super Bowl in the game thread I saw a lot of comments were talking about 'Playoff Lenny'. After the Bucs won people started with 'Super Bowl Lenny' or 'Lombardi Lenny.' Leonard Fournette even uses this in his tweets. Why is everyone calling him that? Is it just something for fun or does it have a deeper meaning towards the Jags maybe?”

Here is one reply:

I think it's simply that so far he's gone twice to the postseason (once with the Jags, and this year with the Bucs), and each time he's performed much better than in the regular season.

Here is a better reply:

Bucs fan here. During the regular season Leonard Fournette was a second string RB. He got his snaps, but honestly he wasn't all that special. I think his longest run was a 40 yard td early in the season, and he only averaged 3 or so yards compared to Ronald Jones 5. A little later on Ronald Jones who went down with an injury, and Fournette really stepped up. He showed a lot of improvement, and even he said that he realized what he had to do, and he did it.

He put all he had into it. When the playoffs came and Jones was still out, Leonard Fournette was truly impressive. You could see

he was much shiftier, and speedy. even as a pass catching back, compared to the regular season. He was actually making something off of check downs when in the regular season he had brick hands. Ever since then he's been an amazing running back, he's had some huge runs and some great catches. so he kind of took on the name "Playoff Lenny" since he's a whole new guy during the playoffs. He was a significant part of all of the Bucs playoff games, especially the Super Bowl.

Leonard Fournette became a mainstay in Tampa Bay's four-game playoff run. It was a team effort for sure but Fournette was there when called upon; and he contributed substantially to the Bucs finish and their Super Bowl win. He simply led the league in postseason carries (64), rushing yards (300) and rushing touchdowns (3). In 13 regular season games this year, he collected just over these totals with 367 yards and six touchdowns.

He was a major difference maker and the Tampa Bay fans love him for it. With this playoff run, Fournette became just the third player (Larry Fitzgerald, Terrell Davis) in NFL history to score a touchdown in all four postseason games (3 rushing, 1 receiving). Bravo! The bottom line is that the onetime Jaguars workhorse, Leonard Fournette has found his mojo after a mediocre regular season. He may not be a big shark, but He's baaaaaack!

Let's back up a bit before we plow ahead with this.

## **Who is Leonard Fournette?**

Fournette was a major star for the Buccaneers this year right after being dropped by Jacksonville. I can remember him in his college career as a great LSU RB and he was reliable for the Bucs this year and he provided something special in each of their four playoff games. He helped the team win it all.

He was born on 1 Jan 18, 1996 as Leonardo Joseph Fournette III. He is a football running back. In fact, he is the epitome of a great NFL running back. Anybody who studies Leonard Fournette has a competitive edge as an RB in the game of football.

He is studied first at St. Augustine high school. He believes that Hurricane Katrina started his football career. He competed in track and field in High School. He has what it takes physically to excel in sports.

He soon earned a scholarship to Louisiana State (LSU). One of his first major achievements as an athlete was that he scored a 36-yards touchdown in the Under Armour all America-Game. He came of age when he was ranked the #1 player in 2014 by ESPN. He is a great running back for sure.

At Louisiana State University. Les Miles and Ed Orgeron were his Coaches. He made his first start Aug 30, 2014 against the Wisconsin Badgers. He faced the Sam Houston State Bear Kats next. His final game of the freshmen season was against Notre dame in 2014. His first sophomore game was against Mississippi State.

He also faced Eastern Michigan and earned the reputation of being the first player to rush for 200 yards in the South Eastern Conference. After the 2 seasons, he missed several games due to an injury. He already had a fine record at LSU and was a pro hopeful. He chose not to play his senior year but instead entered into the 2017 NFL draft on 5 Dec 2016. Fournette was the #4 overall pick in the 2017 NFL Draft, He was selected by the Jacksonville Jaguars.

He signed a 4 year contract in 2017 worth \$27 Million. He made his debut against the Houston Texans on August 10, 2017. Fournette played great games for the Jaguars against many teams. Some think he had lost a bit of his mojo with the Jags but with the Bucs, it all returned. He was released by the Jaguars on 2 Sept 2020. Right afterwards, he was signed by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers for one year and he just signed up again with Tampa Bay. They were pleased with his work; they knew they wanted him back.

Fournette played a key role in the Bucs' win over the Kansas City Chiefs in Super Bowl LV, carrying the ball 16 times for 89 yards, including a 27-yard touchdown run. He added 46 yards through the air on four catches, recording over 100 yards from scrimmage. Throughout the season, Fournette stepped up in a big way, helping fill the gap left by Ronald Jones when the third-year running back dealt with a fractured finger.

Serving behind Jones, Fournette was mostly utilized in short-yardage situations. He came through repeatedly helping his team. He recorded 367 rushing yards on 97 carries in 13 games while scoring six touchdowns. Fournette caught 36 passes for 233 yards out of the backfield.

As previously outlines, Fournette thrived in the 2020/2021 postseason, showing off why his nickname is Playoff Lenny and all derivatives including Lombardi Lenny. In the playoff games. Fournette began his career with the Jacksonville Jaguars after being selected fourth overall in the 2017 NFL Draft. While he was highly productive with the Jags, it became clear he was not the right fit for the franchise and its ever-changing team culture.

Fournette signed a one-year deal as a free agent on September 8, 2020, with the Bucs. He arrived in Tampa Bay with hopes of being the team's starting running back but instead worked alongside Jones until his time came late in the season. And did he make the most of it. Fournette took full advantage of the situation starting the final seven games, including the postseason, recording 606 yards from scrimmage and seven touchdowns in that span.

### **Fournette:**

"I come here and had hopes of being a starter, it didn't work out," Fournette said leading up to Super Bowl LV. "It was a humbling year for me too, also – a lot of ups and downs. When things were not going my way, a lot of guys were talking to me – A.B. (Antonio Brown), 'Shady' (LeSean McCoy), even Tom [Brady] – and they kept saying, 'You know who you are. You know you're a great talent. It's going to come.'"

His journey has not been an easy one, but he now gets another season in Tampa Bay in hopes of defending their Super Bowl win. Bravo to Leonard Fournette. He counted when it counted.



## Top Bucs Players Rob Gronkowski TE 2020



This NFL great's full name is Robert Gronkowski. He was born May 14, 1989. He has his own unique nickname by which everybody seems to know him. ), nicknamed "Gronk", is an American football tight end for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers of the National Football League (NFL). He played football all his life but the notable part began as he played his college football at Arizona where he won several awards, including being named a Sporting News and Rivals.com freshman All-American.

After college, the New England Patriots drafted Gronkowski with their 42nd pick in the second round of the 2010 NFL Draft. He obviously showed talent in college to have such a high draft status. In 2011, Gronk set the single-season record for touchdowns by a tight end with 17 receiving touchdowns (and 18 overall), as well as the single-season record for receiving yards by a tight end, with 1,327.

That season, he became the first tight end in NFL history to lead the league in receiving touchdowns. In his first six seasons, he had 68 receiving touchdowns; only two tight ends in NFL history have had more in their entire careers. He has achieved four Pro Bowl selections

and four All-Pro selections, and was a starter in the Patriots' Super Bowl XLIX victory.

Patriots tight end Rob Gronkowski announced social media that he is retiring from football following the team's Super Bowl LIII win, on February 4, 2018, ending his historic nine-year NFL career. Here is his post. It says it all for the time being

1,422,742 likes

gronk

It all started at 20 years old on stage at the NFL draft when my dream came true, and now here I am about to turn 30 in a few months with a decision I feel is the biggest of my life so far. I will be retiring from the game of football today. I am so grateful for the opportunity that Mr. Kraft and Coach Belichick gave to me when drafting my silliness in 2010. My life experiences over the last 9 years have been amazing both on and off the field. The people I have met, the relationships I have built, the championships I have been apart of, I just want to thank the whole New England Patriots organization for every opportunity I have been giving and learning the great values of life that I can apply to mine. Thank you to all of Pats Nation around the world for the incredible support since I have been apart of this 1st class organization. Thank you for everyone accepting who I am and the dedication I have put into my work to be the best player I could be. But now its time to move forward and move forward with a big smile knowing that the New England Patriots Organization, Pats Nation, and all my fans will be truly a big part of my heart for rest of my life. It was truly an incredible honor to play for such a great established organization and able to come in to continue and contribute to keep building success. To all my current and past teammates, thank you for making each team every year special to be apart of. I will truly miss you guys. Cheers to all who have been part of this journey, cheers to the past for the incredible memories, and a HUGE cheers to the uncertain of whats next.

[view all 76,084 comments](#)

Can you imagine how well liked he is. His post on Instagram had 1,422,742 likes and 76.084 comments

Just like it was big news that Rob Gronkowski retired, it was again big news two years later when he decided to play NFL football again . We all know by now that Gronk came out of retirement to reunite with Tom Brady with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

Of course there still was the matter of his contractual relationship with New England. They worked out a deal in that the Patriots agreed to trade the tight end to Tampa Bay. Bucs fans were almost as happy as when they found Brady coming to town to play.

“We’ve agreed to trade for TE Rob Gronkowski,” the Buccaneers said in a tweet after the negotiations were concluded. “Welcome to Tampa Bay, Gronk!” the team said next to a photo of a smiling Gronkowski. What a neat deal for all parties involved.

So, what was the deal. Word came out that the Patriots agreed to trade Gronkowski and a seventh-round draft pick to the Buccaneers in exchange for a fourth-round pick in the 2020 draft that began on the next Thursday. Now the amenities have begun as the Gronk has already taken his and he noted through his payers agent “Rob has agreed to play for Tampa this season. He will honor his current contract at this time.”

We already told the story of Gronkowski announcing his retirement in March 2019, ending one of the NFL’s most dominant and colorful careers after nine seasons. He is no longer 30 years old, but he did make his debut with World Wrestling Entertainment. That’s it for that for now!

He has a lot of great stats and the 2021 season with the Bucs added to his personal record book. In his nine NFL seasons with the Pats, he caught 521 passes for 7,861 yards and 79 touchdowns in 115 regular season games. He added 81 catches for 1,163 yards and 12 touchdowns in 16 postseason contests.

Brady, who won a record six Super Bowl championships with the Patriots, signed with the Buccaneers as a free agent a month ahead of Gronk, and he literally along with others turned around a team that finished 7-9 last year and had not made the playoffs since the 2007 season. There’s more.

### **Gronk’s 2020 Season with the Bucs.**

In a nutshell, the 2020 season brought Rob Gronkowski another 4 receptions; another 623 yards with an average gain of 13.8 yards to go along with 7 touchdowns in his return to glory season.

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In Super Bowl 55, Gronk closed out a fine day totaling six catches for 67 yards and two touchdowns. Gronkowski closed out the post season with ten receptions and 110 yards and two touchdowns. As noted, the part of the postseason that was the Super Bowl saw Gronk snagging six catches for 67 receiving yards and he got his two touchdowns in the big game.

What a pair to come knocking on the Bucs door – Rob Gronkowski and Tom Brady. The words of Jackie Gleason come to mind: “How Sweet It IS!”

Brady received his due praise for his total impact on the Bucs from the locker room to the field. He gets a lot of credit for leading the Buccaneers to an 11-5 regular-season record, three straight playoff road wins and just their second Super Bowl appearance in history. Brady shares the stage well with other greats such as Gronk. After the game, when speaking the Bucs GM Licht also had high praise for Brady's former Patriots teammate -- tight end Rob Gronkowski.

The four-time All-Pro is the Pats' record holder with 80 career touchdowns and he is one of just five tight ends named to the NFL 100 All-Time Team.

"Gronk" played in all 19 games the Bucs have played this season. He has great stats as we have shown. Licht, however, says Gronkowski has made a tremendous impact off the field and is equally important to Brady in that regard.

“If you’re having a bad day, I suggest any of you go spend a little time with Gronk,” Licht said. “He just lifts you up just by being him. He’s funny. We have conversations every day and I look forward to it. I tell my wife, ‘I can’t wait to go talk to Gronk at practice today.’ He’s being himself. He’s very authentic. He loves the game, and when it’s time to be serious, he’s very serious.

“There’s a lot of talk of what Tom has done for this locker room, and it’s all warranted, but what Gronk has done for this locker room is equally as amazing. Just a great teammate and loves life.”

## **How Sweet It Is!**

## Top Bucs Players Tom Brady QB 2020



Tom Brady 2013. *Elsa—Getty Images Sport / Thinkstock*

One of my sources for this biography of Tom Brady is from the Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica. Britannica is known to oversee subject areas in which they have extensive knowledge such as this subject matter regarding the Greatest of All Time, the G.O.A.T., aka Thomas Edward Patrick Brady, Jr. Tom Brady became the G.O.A.T. (greatest of all time) in NFL history after winning his sixth Super Bowl two years ago. It came as a nickname quite naturally.

Now, two years have passes and as you might have heard, Brady has since won another Super Bowl. This time with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. How about that?

The oldest active player in the NFL was born on August 3, 1977 in San Mateo, California. U.S. He is an accomplished football quarterback who has led his teams to a record seven Super Bowl victories (2002, 2004, 2005, 2015, 2017, 2019, and 2021) and he personally was named the game's Most Valuable Player (MVP) five times (2002, 2004, 2015, 2017, and 2021). Not too shabby

Tom Brady is known for playing well in just about any football game in which he plays. But, Tom Brady takes it up a few notches when he plays in the big games that occur after what they call the regular season. Only the best teams and most often the best players are left by the time the post season arrives.

Mr. Brady has been dominant every year in post season games when the competition is the toughest. He has the most playoff wins by any player or head coach (33), has the most touchdown passes (80), most passing yards (12,248), most division titles (16) and many more records in the postseason.

Is Tom Brady the greatest of all time? Some say indisputably he is. Others point to Aaron Rodgers or Drew Brees but as strong as they are in football, they have not accomplished what Tom Brady has in his record. When it comes to the Super Bowl, Tom Brady easily trumps the likes of Rodgers and Brees, as he's had ten Super Bowl appearances, the most by any player.

He also holds several records within the finale, with the most wins (7), most touchdowns (21), most passing yards (3,000+). Besides all that he is the oldest QB to start and win a Super Bowl (age 43), and of course there is more.

Nonetheless, despite the preponderance of evidence supporting a Brady nomination as Goat, he has not formally had to carry that moniker for as long as he had actually been the NFL's G.O.A.T. But, once it happened, it was quickly learned that Tom Brady does not like G.O.A.T being part of any analysis about what is undeniably an incredible 21-year career.

Why? It is because Brady reportedly "hates" being called the goat. It is reportedly because I have not heard so myself. This little nugget comes from a Seth Wickersham's story that he did for ESPN on Brady's mentality before he was heading into Super Bowl LV. In other words it is a very recent tale. Wickersham told the story from the 2019 season. He credits QB Lamar Jackson with labeling Brady as the G.O.A.T. Yes, according to the tale, it was Baltimore Ravens QB Lamar Jackson who first publicly called Brady "The GOAT" after a Patriots loss.

Wickersham wrote: “Brady’s eyes seemed to narrow, his lips pursed...It was the last thing he wanted to hear, after a loss and in general. He hates it when people call him the greatest ever — maybe because it speaks to a kind of finality he’s not ready for yet, maybe because he simply doesn’t feel it. He has accomplished more than anyone else in his sport, yet he still feels like it isn’t enough.”

Each chance he gets, he cements his positive legacy further as the greatest quarterback of all time (sorry, Tom if the reports are correct). When his Tampa Bay Buccaneers played the Kansas City Chiefs in Super Bowl LV, his 10th Big Game appearance, he picked up his seventh Super Bowl Ring on February 7, 2021. And that’s praise from Caesar.

That is a long way from growing up in California. Nonetheless, Brady was a football fan growing up and he was fortunate enough to attend San Francisco 49ers games. As all of us, he loved to watch the legendary quarterback Joe Montana, who happened to be Tom Brady’s football idol and the man to whom he would eventually be compared—play the game during the 1980s. Brady was no slouch on any sports field in which he chose to compete—especially football and baseball.

He was well above average in both sports so much so that he tried out in the Major League Baseball draft in 1995 and he was picked by the Montreal Expos. He chose against it though when he decided instead to attend the University of Michigan to play football. He had to wait his turn and thus did not start until his junior year. Then, he was unstoppable leading Michigan to victory in the 1999 Orange Bowl while he gained a reputation as a determined and intelligent player but (I like this take) one who lacked any exceptional physical skills. He’s forty-three and still playing.

Despite that pundit’s analysis, in 2000 he was chosen in the sixth round of the NFL draft by the New England Patriots. He worked diligently during his first season to bulk up physically and improve his strength and his technique.

In the second game of the 2001 season, the Patriots’ #1 QB, Drew Bledsoe, was injured, and Brady got the call to fill the position. His



play was not spectacular, but he was consistent, making simple plays and minimizing mistakes.

With Brady as their starting quarterback, the Patriots went on to post an 11–3 record in the regular season and to upset the St. Louis Rams in Super Bowl XXXVI; Brady, the guy without the necessary attributes to go anywhere in the game, was named the Super Bowl MVP.

The Patriots became one of the NFL’s elite teams, posting an incredible 40–12 record during Brady’s first three seasons. In 2004 the team returned to the Super Bowl, defeating the Carolina Panthers and earning Brady another Super Bowl MVP award. The momentum carried through to the next season, as the Patriots extended their consecutive win streak to 21, breaking the record of 18 set by the Miami Dolphins in 1972–73. Brady and the Patriots capped off the season with their third Super Bowl in four years, this time against the Philadelphia Eagles.

One great season after another followed. In the 2007 season Brady threw an unprecedented 50 touchdown passes (the record was broken by Brady’s longtime rival Peyton Manning in 2013), and he led New England to the first 16–0 regular season in NFL history, earning NFL MVP honors in the process.

However, even the Patriots could not win every game and they lost to the underdog New York Giants in Super Bowl XLII. In the first game of the 2008 NFL schedule, Brady suffered a severe knee injury that required season-ending surgery. He came back the next season brand new earning a Pro Bowl selection after guiding the Patriots to another playoff berth.

Brady led the NFL that year with 36 touchdown passes in 2010 and helped the Patriots to a league-best 14–2 record. Despite the Patriots getting upset in their first playoff game the following postseason, he was named league MVP a second time, becoming the first player to capture the award unanimously. Don’t start saying G.O.A.T yet.

During the 2011 season Tom Brady passed for a whopping 5,235 yards to become—along with new record holder Drew Brees—one of two quarterbacks to surpass Dan Marino’s single-season passing

yardage record (which was also broken by Manning in 2013), and he led the Patriots to another Super Bowl loss to the nemesis Giants in February 2012.

Brady continued playing at a Pro-Bowl level in 2012 and 2013, guiding the Patriots to losses in the AFC championship game in each season. Following the 2014 regular season, he helped the team get over its recent hump as New England routed the Indianapolis Colts in the AFC championship game to earn Brady his record sixth Super Bowl start. In the Super Bowl, Brady led a fourth-quarter rally in a 28–24 win over the Seattle Seahawks. He passed for 328 yards and four touchdowns in the contest to earn his third Super Bowl MVP trophy.

The ending of the deflategate controversy the prior year seemed to motivate Brady, as he led the Patriots to a blistering 10–0 start to the 2015 season that ultimately ended with yet another division title for New England. He passed for 4,770 yards and an NFL-high 36 touchdowns that year, but his team's season ended in the AFC championship game with a loss to Manning and the Denver Broncos.

On December 4 of the following season, Brady set a new NFL record for wins as a starting quarterback when he led the Patriots to the 201st win of his tenure. His strong play (including a career-low two interceptions over the season) helped the Patriots win a league-best 14 games and capture another AFC title.

In the following Super Bowl, Brady tallied a then-record 466 passing yards as well as two touchdowns as he led the Patriots to the largest comeback ever in that game (overcoming a 25-point third-quarter deficit in overtime) to win an unprecedented fifth title as an NFL starting quarterback.

In 2017 Brady led the NFL again with 4,577 passing yards and he also threw 32 touchdown passes with just eight interceptions. This earned him a third league MVP award. The Patriots again had the best record in the AFC that season and advanced to the Super Bowl for the eighth time in Brady's career. There, despite Brady breaking his own Super Bowl record with 505 passing yards, the Patriots were upset by the Eagles. Whew!

What must a guy do to win? In 2018 Brady passed for 4,355 yards and 29 touchdowns while leading the Patriots to a 10th consecutive division title and a third straight Super Bowl appearance. In the championship game, the lowest-scoring in NFL history, Brady helped the Patriots defeat the Los Angeles Rams, 13–3. It was his sixth title, and he became, at age 41, the oldest quarterback to win the Super Bowl.

Tom Brady had one of his worst seasons in 2019, throwing just 24 TD passes. It was the team's and Brady's lowest full-season output since 2006. The Patriots still won an 11th straight division championship that year, but the Patriots did not have its full inertia for the playoffs, and they lost their opening postseason game. Literally, that was that.

In March 2020, even I was shocked along with the rest of the sporting world when the G.O.A.T. decided to leave the Pats for free agency. He then signed a two-year contract with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. After a long and productive chapter one with a great team, Mr. Brady was ready to begin Chapter two.

We all just lived through his major accomplishments from the 2020 season culminating on February 7th. It was his first season with the Buccaneers, and he had not lost his edge, leading the Buccaneers to a great Super Bowl season and a great win.

It did not just happen. "If you build it, they will come." Actually, since 2014 there has been a whole lot of building going on. Since Jason Licht became the team's general manager in 2014, the Bucs have been quietly stockpiling of talent, mainly through the draft and some through free agency. That's what set up the opportunity of "going all in" with the signing of Brady to make the overdue jump to an 11-5 record.

Here are the names of some players, and front office people who joined the just-in-time assemblage to help the Bucs win the title:

- Tom Brady, quarterback
- Rob Gronkowski, tight end
- Antonio Brown, wide receiver

- Kenjon Barner, running back
- Earl Watford, guard –
- Ted Larsen, guard
- Jack Cichy, linebacker –
- Jason Licht, general manager

Tampa Bay had been struggling for forty-four years with a few exceptional seasons. Could anybody make life better for Buccaneers fans. One thing we all know was that if anybody could, the lineup the Bucs put together was built to produce a championship.

With Bruce Arians the right coach and Tom Brady as the field general and “assistant coach” along with the greats from the Patriots- the Gronk, Antonio Brown, and others. Why as the playoffs were approaching, it seemed every day that another ex-Patriot was joining the team.

For example, in December, the Buccaneers signed veteran offensive lineman Ted Larsen to their practice squad. His job was to fill the spot vacated by another ex-Patriot, running back/kick returner Kenjon Barner, who had been elevated to the 53-man roster just that week. It was no accident that the players were coming from the Patriots. The “Assistant Coach” Brady was making sure the Bucs had every chance in the world to go all the way.

Besides this acquisition. the Bucs went way back to other Patriots who were no longer on the squad. Apparently there were a lot of Pats fans who are following Tom Brady’s exploits and a number of them apparently missed the Earl Watford era in New England. He was discovered in December and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers signed Watford a veteran offensive lineman, on a Friday late in the season. Watford was on the Patriots’ practice squad for two weeks this season from Dec. 15 to Dec. 29.

That may have been the last deal that Brady cooked up, but it was not the first or the second. Some went so far as to call it a scam. Others called it the American competitive way. In August around the time the new season was to begin, some actually thought that the six (yes that’s six) New England Patriots players who chose not to play Patriot football in the Fall 2020 football season had done so because they did not wasn’t to catch the coronavirus.

The truth is that de facto “Assistant Coach” Tom Brady was hard at work brokering what some call an under-the-table deal to get all six of the August players on the list to play for the Bucs so he could win yet another Super Bowl. That sounds about right. Brady already had Antonio Brown and the Gronk and he thought very highly of a number of Bucs stalwarts, but he wanted to make sure the team had every chance to win.

He picked up Dont’a Hightower to help in the linebacker area as well as safety Patrick Chung. They were two stars for the Patriots. In describing the other four players, a pundit remarked “The other four players don’t matter.” There was definitely a lot of money involved but Tom Brady makes a lot of money.

Hightower would have made picked up \$6 million had he played ball for the Pats this Fall. With the Bucs, he made twice as much — \$12 million – for the Buccaneers. The report is that Brady paid the entire \$12 million. Here is a quote from an article by Sammy Sportface at ngscsports:

“I don’t care what it costs, I will do anything to win another Super Bowl and prevent Bill Belch from winning one,” said Brady. “His team is falling apart before our eyes. I stole six of his players while convincing the league they just didn’t want to catch the coronavirus.

“The truth is Sammy Sportface is the only guy in the sports media out knows what’s really going on. He’s got it right: I stole these guys from “Belch,” and you can bet right now he feels like belching.”

“Coach Belch was reached on his boat off the Atlantic Coast near his beachfront mansion in Nantucket, New England. He offered this retort to ngscsports.”

“Knock it off, Sportface,” he said. “You’re always making up stuff about my team and this has been going on since the pandemic started. I’ve had enough of you reporting on my private life and dope-smoking with Ricky Williams. A man needs his privacy once in a while. I’m on my boat getting away from nuisances like you.”

Tom Brady gave the press and the pundits enough material to write a lot of books on the circumstances surrounding the Brady switch and his role in bringing others to Tampa Bay. Unlike most stories that concentrated on Tampa Bay, this author took a different angle about the Patriots resources lost and whether Tom Brady would have made a difference to Bill Belichick's team in the 2020 season. It sure fits in with this story about Tom Brady as one of the top Bucs players of all time.

Karen Guregian of the Boston Herald made this comment in an article: "Any time you have Tom Brady on your team, he's going to make a difference. Any time you have Brady, he's going to help you," Harrison said when reached Wednesday. "Would they be a playoff team with him? I think they would have been a bubble team, right around 9-7. Maybe, at best, 10 wins if he had an incredible year . . . but Tom can't play defense."

"In other words, he wouldn't have cured all that's wrong with the Patriots, and that's really the bottom line. The Patriots are too flawed and lacking at so many positions. As much as he's made the impossible happen throughout his storied career, a 43-year-old Brady would not have been a miracle worker with this group." But...

What a great year Tom Brady had in 2020/2021. There is no arguing that point. The Bucs won 11 regular season games and earned a playoff spot. (Brady also established a new NFL record for touchdown passes that year, finishing the season with 581 career touchdown passes.) In the postseason Brady led his team to three straight road victories to advance to the Super Bowl. There, the Buccaneers' standout defense and Brady's solid play led Tampa Bay to a decisive victory over the Kansas City Chiefs to capture the team's second (and Brady's seventh) world championship.

While not the strongest or quickest quarterback in the NFL, Brady established himself among the game's greats for his tenacity, his intelligent playmaking abilities, and the remarkable leadership he provided under pressure. He was also known for his approach to fitness, which he wrote about in *The TB12 Method: How to Achieve a Lifetime of Sustained Peak Performance* (2017). In 2009 he married fashion model Gisele Bündchen.

## **Brady preparing for 2021 season. He's ready today!**

He never stops. Tampa Bay Buccaneers quarterback Tom Brady is happy to celebrate whatever good happens to the Bucs. It's like he is still on his Bucs Honeymoon and nothing can go wrong. He looked at his team's signing of Leonard Fournette on Friday with the perfect GIF, a reference to the movie, "Old School."

Leonard Fournette signed on the dotted line and it was well noticed by Tom Brady. Fournette's signing was particularly notable to Bucs fans and Brady because it meant the Buccaneers would officially retain all 22 starters from their Super Bowl win in February. That's the first time any team has managed to keep their Super Bowl starters in the salary cap era which started in 1994. It's a wild effort from Tampa's front-office, which spent big (and manipulated the salary cap) to make sure it could retain superstars on both offense and defense.

So here's how Brady responded on Twitter.

**Too funny.**



Now, let's now look at the 2021 postseason results and the game summaries and the Super Bowl Recaps



# Postseason

Playoff Round	Date	Opponent/seed	Result	Record	Venue
Wild Card	January 9	A Washington Football Team (4)	W 31–23	1–0	FedExField
Divisional	January 17	At New Orleans Saints (2)	W 30–20	2–0	Mercedes-Benz Superdome
NFC Championship	January 24	At Green Bay Packers (1)	W 31–26	3–0	Lambeau Field
<a href="#">Super Bowl LV</a>	February 7	Vs Kansas City Chiefs (A1)	W 31–9	4–0	Raymond James Stadium

## Wild Card Game Tampa Bay 31; Washington 23

The 8:15 EST P.M. game on January 9, 2021 was played on a clear day at FedExField in Landover, Maryland. in 40 degree F weather. The game was broadcast by TV announcers (NBC): Mike Tirico; Tony Dungy; & Kathryn Tappen. The referee was Scott Novak in a game with an attendance of 0 (zero) due to Maryland's lockdown restrictions per COVID-19. The Buccaneers prevailed.

Tampa Bay finished the season on a tear and kept tearing up opponents throughout the playoffs. In this game, the Bucs and QB Tom Brady racked up 507 yards of offense. And the team garnered 3 sacks, and 2 interceptions as they earned their first postseason victory since Super Bowl XXXVII in the 2002 season.



TBB Kicker Ryan Succop bags a 3-pointer.

Here are some details. TBB QB Tom Brady completed a 30-yard pass to Mike Evans and a 17-yarder to Chris Godwin as he led the team to a 29-yard Ryan Succop field goal on the game's opening drive.

Then after a punt exchange, TBB defensive back Sean Bunting intercepted a pass from Taylor Heinicke on the Buccaneers 42-yard line. Tampa Bay then put a 58-yard drive together in six plays and they scored on a Brady 36-yard TD pass to Antonio Brown. This gave the Bucs a 9-0 lead after Succop's extra point was blocked by Jeremy Reaves.

Taylor Heinicke completed a number of passes before J. D. McKissic finished it off with a 2-yard touchdown run. At this point the score was 9-7 with lots of time (12:58) left in the second quarter. Dustin Hopkins flubbed the kickoff giving the Bucs a first down on their own 39-yard line.

Four plays later, Brady threw a 27-yard touchdown pass to Godwin. The Bucs then had a 15-7 lead after their two point conversion attempt failed. Then after receiving a KC punt, Tom Brady completed 3/5 passes for 65 yards on an 82-yard drive that ended with another Succop 23-yard field goal, giving Tampa Bay an 18-7 lead going into halftime.

Washington came back to make the deficit (18-10), converting a Heinicke 29-yard completion to Thomas into a 36-yard Hopkins field goal. Later, Washington “D” tackle Daron Payne forced a fumble from Key'Shawn Vaughn.

Jon Bostic recovered the fumble for Washington on their 39-yard line. Heinicke clicked on a 19-yard pass to Cam Sims and he was able to rush for a 13-yard gain before he took the ball 8 yards into the end zone himself. This cut the deficit to 18-16 after an unsuccessful 2-point try. Close call for a tie.

TBB responded with a 9-play, 55-yard drive. The longest play on the drive was a 23-yard catch by tight end Cameron Brate. Succop finished it off with a 38-yard field goal, giving a five-point 21-16 lead to the Bucs with 13:38 left in the fourth quarter.

Washington did not move the ball and punted. Brady then completed passes to Evans for gains of 20 and 19 yards, while Leonard Fournette got going and rushed three times for 22 yards. His last carry was for a 3-yard touchdown that put his team up 28-16. Fans were thinking “Would that be all the Bucs needed?”

Heinicke was ready and he was on target, completing 8 of 10 passes for 71 yards. He then finished the drive with an 11-yard touchdown completion to Steven Sims. At that time, the score was 28-23 and there were 4:57 left on the clock. Brady then engineered a drive to get an insurance score.

He completed a 35-yard strike to Evans and a 16-yarder to Godwin, setting up another Succop 37-yard field goal at 3:37. The Bucs were up by 8 points. Washington then drove across midfield, but after two incompletions and an 11-yard sack by Lavonte David, Heinicke's last gasp 4th down pass was incomplete. This enabled Tampa Bay to run out the rest of the game clock and take the game.

Brady had a good game but not his best. He completed 22/40 passes for 381 yards and two touchdowns. Leonard Fournette rushed for 93 yards and a touchdown, while also catching 4 passes for 39 yards. Evans caught 6 passes for 119 yards. Davis had 8 solo tackles and he garnered a sack. Heinicke got a lot of credit for keeping the game close. It was just his second NFL start. He did not outshine Brady,

but he had a nice game with 26/44 pass completions for 302 yards and a touchdown, with one interception. He was not afraid to carry the ball when needed and he was thus Washington's leading rusher with 6 carries for 46 yards and a score.

Sims had 7 receptions for 104 yards. Reaves blocked an extra point and had 9 solo tackles. The bottom line is that Washington was out, and Tampa Bay was heading to the Divisional Playoffs on January 17 v New Orleans in the Mercedes Benz Superdome.

## Divisional Game Tampa Bay 30; New Orleans 20

	1	2	3	4	Total
<b>Buccaneers</b>	0	13	7	10	<b>30</b>
Saints	6	7	7	0	<b>20</b>

The 6:40 EST P.M. game on January 17, 2021 was played on a clear day indoors at the Mercedes-Benz Superdome in New Orleans, Louisiana. The game was broadcast by TV announcers (NBC): Joe Buck, Troy Aikman, Erin Andrews & Tom Rinaldi. The referee was Shawn Huchuli in a game with an attendance of 3750 due to NO's lockdown restrictions per COVID-19. The Buccaneers prevailed.

Mistakes often decide a game. If you can force the other team to make mistakes, you increase your chance to win big games. And so it happened in the Divisional Playoffs as Tampa Bay forced four turnovers in their winning battle against a Saints team that beaten them twice during the regular season. Buccaneers linebacker Devin White led this super defensive effort with 10 tackles (1 for loss), 1 assist, a fumble recovery, and an interception. Life was good in this game for sure.

It did not happen from the gun as the TBB were forced to punt on their opening drive and there was a great return. After Deonte Harris' 43-yard return, New Orleans had a first down on the Tampa 21-yard line and they were fired up. That was it for that drive but the Saints' Will Lutz' scored three points with a 23-yard field goal to giving NO a 3-0 lead.

The punting game was not good for Tampa Bay. In fact the very next time that the Bucs punted, and Harris outdid his 43-yard effort by returning this punt for a touchdown. It would have been a 10-0 lead so soon. However, there was an illegal block penalty on the play which negated the score. Still, the team managed to drive 36 yards after the penalty to grab a 6-0 lead on Lutz' 44-yard field goal kick. That was a big four points. The Bucs responded by going 65 yards in 15 plays to score on Ryan Succop's 26-yard field goal with 13 minutes left in the second quarter. Score 6-3 in favor of NO.

Then, on the Saints next drive, Bucs DB Sean Murphy-Bunting Picked off a Drew Brees pass and brought it back 36 yards to the New Orleans 3-yard line. Ryan Succop was not needed as Tom Brady himself took over and engineered a play with a 3-yard TD pass to Mike Evans. This score gave Tampa Bay its first lead at 10-6.

New Orleans got the ball back and took off to their 44. On the next play, dependable running back Alvin Kamara took a snap out of wildcat formation and gave the ball to receiver Emmanuel Sanders, who then pitched the ball to backup quarterback Jameis Winston, who just the prior year was the starting QB for the Bucs. .

Winston then did what Winston does best. He threw the ball to Tre'Quan Smith for a 56-yard touchdown. The If the game were to continue to behave in a teeter totter fashion. That would mean soon the Bucs would score. For now, the Saints took back the lead at 13-10. Following a punt exchange, Tampa Bay started another drive that resulted in 68 yards and a tie in the score 13-13 after Succop's 37-yard field goal on the last play of the half. It would be a new game in the second half.

The Saints began the third quarter with a typical Drew Brees drive that stole 10-plays from the clock and amounted to 75-yard drives. In the effort, Kamara rushed 4 times for 32 yards and caught a pass for 7. Brees made sure of the score with an accurate 16-yard touchdown pass to Smith, giving the Saints a 20–13 lead. What would happen when the Bucs got on the teeter totter. Nothing, unfortunately!

The Saints defense forced a punt, but Harris did not run it back for a score. Instead they got the ball back and safety Antoine Winfield Jr. forced a fumble from Jared Cook that White recovered and returned it 18 yards to the Saints 40.

With 40 yards to go, Brady got going and hit on a 19-yard pass to tight end Cameron Brate, and he finished it with a 6-yard touchdown completion to running back Leonard Fournette, who was playing great football. This tied the game at 20.

After another Saints punt, Brady's completions to Tyler Johnson (15 yds) and Scotty Miller (29 yds) set up another Ryan Succop 37-yard field goal, giving Tampa Bay a 23–20 lead with 9:57 left in the game. The Bucs would keep this lead and add to it, but nothing is easy in tight football games.

White put an end to New Orleans' next drive, intercepting Brees and returning the ball 28 yards to the Saints 20-yard line. Three plays later, Brady punched in a 1-yard sneak that increased the Bucs lead to 30–20 with 4:57 left in the game. Brees and No were ready but not ready enough as the NO QB was picked off for a third time this game. It was by safety Mike Edwards, allowing Tampa Bay to run out the clock, which they gladly did.

The Saints were done and went home. TBB was now all-ready for the Conference Championship to determine who would be going to the Super Bowl.

In this game, Brady was mostly on the mark completing 18 of 33 passes for 199 yards and two touchdowns. The fleet footed QB also ran for a touchdown as he advanced to his 14th conference championship game in 21 seasons. Drew Brees did not have Brady's good fortune and was held to just 19/34 completions for 134 yards

and a touchdown. Worse than that. He was intercepted three times. Kamara was the top NO rusher of the game with 18 carries for 85 yards, while also catching 3 passes for 20.

## Conference Championship Game Tampa Bay 31; Green Bay Packers 26

	1	2	3	4	Total
<b>Buccaneers</b>	7	14	7	3	<b>31</b>
Packers	0	10	13	3	<b>26</b>

The 3:05 EST P.M. game on January 24, 2021 was played on a Sunny day and 29 degrees at Lambeau Field in Green Bay Wisconsin. The game was broadcast by TV announcers (NBC): Joe Buck, Troy Aikman, Erin Andrews & Tom Rinaldi. The referee was Clete Blakeman in a game with an attendance of 7.772 due to Green Bay's lockdown restrictions per COVID-19. The Buccaneers prevailed.

It seems like all the playoff games were tough for the Bucs. There had been no giveaways, but this was the closest game including the Super Bowl. It was not a given; but it came about because of preparation and hard work and great execution. Congratulations to Bruce Arians, Tom Brady and the rest of the Bucs.

TBB gave up more yards and lost more turnovers in this game than Green Bay. The Bucs still managed to win, and they earned their second Super Bowl appearance in franchise history. With the win, the Buccaneers became the first NFL team in history to play a Super Bowl in their home stadium. No matter how often I have seen a Super Bowl, even I don't remember that. When they picked stadiums, it was warm and inviting and the Bucs were doing poorly

and it was a safe bet the game would not include the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Life has interesting twists. Whoda thunk?

When the game began, it was anybody's to win. Tampa Bay took the opening kickoff 66 yards on a drive that featured three third down conversions. First, the maestro, Tom Brady converted a 3rd and 4 with a 27-yard pass to Mike Evans. He then threw a 14-yard completion on a 3rd and 9, to Chris Godwin. Finally, Brady closed out this possession with a 15-yard touchdown strike to Evans on 3rd and 7, giving the Buccaneers a 7–0 lead. Yes, that was a great start.

Following a punt exchange, Green Bay did its thing and came back to tie the score at 7–7 on a 90-yard drive in which never-say die Aaron Rodgers converted a 3rd and 15 with a 23-yard pass to Allen Lazard before throwing a 50-yard TD strike to Marquez Valdes-Scantling.

Tampa Bay got the ball back under the cloud of a tie game and began to roll. First then made another big 3rd down conversion with Brady's 52-yard pass to Godwin on 3rd and 9. Then, the seemingly playoff-invincible Leonard Fournette's 20-yard touchdown run on the very next play gave the TBB the lead at 14–7 with 12:30 left in the second quarter. The game was already exciting, and the second quarter was not yet half over.

The Packers came right back as expected with Green Bay responding in a 69 yards drive taking 15 plays to cut the score to 14–10 after Mason Crosby nailed his 24-yard field goal. Their “D” then forced a punt, but on the Packers next drive, Sean Murphy-Bunting picked off a Rodgers pass on the Bucs 49-yard line with 27 seconds left in the half. Tampa Bay tried hard but came up with a 4th and 4 on the Packers 45. Now what?

Well, they managed to get the 1st down with a 6-yard catch by Fournette. Now with the ball on the 39 with 8 seconds remaining, Tampa Bay decided against kicking a long field goal, a choice that paid off as Brady threw a 39-yard TD strike to Scotty Miller. The half ended with the Bucs ahead 21–10. That was just the first half folks. Brady completed 13 of 22 passes for 202 yards and two touchdowns. It would not be a far miss if somebody said that so far, Tom Brady was hot.



The third quarter had just begun when in the first two plays, safety Jordan Whitehead forced a fumble from Packers running back Aaron Jones. Devin White recovered it for Tampa Bay and returned it 21 yards to the Green Bay Packers 8-yard line. On the next play, Tampa Bay fooled the Packers defense with a play-action pass, with Brady faking a handoff in the backfield before throwing the ball to tight end Cameron Brate for a touchdown giving the Bucs a 28–10 lead.

Green Bay behaved unfazed. They ripped right back, with Rodgers completing 5 of 6 passes for 68 yards and he knows how to finish drives. He fired an 8-yard touchdown strike to tight end Robert Tonyan, making the score 28–17. The Packers were smiling.

Then safety Adrian Amos intercepted a pass from Brady on the Packers 32-yard line, sparking a 13-play, 68-yard drive that ended with Rodgers'; 2-yard touchdown completion to Davante Adams with 17 seconds left in the period. The Packers were still smiling.

The score was 28–23 after receiver Equanimeous St. Brown dropped Rodgers' pass on a 2-point conversion attempt. The Bucs then took off with a vengeance and drove to the Packs 28-yard line. Bad luck. They lost the ball again when Brady threw an interception to cornerback Jaire Alexander. Green Bay nullified the pick when they did not use it to get anything. They could not get a first down and had to punt after Shaquil Barrett sacked Rodgers for a 10-yard loss on 3rd and 5.

Then right when he was mounting a surge, Tom Brady was picked off for the third time, throwing another interception to Alexander. Green Bay did nothing with this latest opportunity as Rodgers again was sacked by Barrett and the team again suffered a three-and-out.

Tampa Bay took the ball back on their own 28 and went looking for pay dirt. They drove 44 yards in 8 plays. Their longest gain was a 29-yard screen pass from Brady to Rob Gronkowski. On the last play, Ryan Succop's 46-yard field goal gave the Bucs a 31–23 lead with 4:47 left in the game. Whew!

The Packers were not finished nor was Aaron Rodgers. Green Bay then drove to a first and goal from the Buccaneers 8-yard line. After two incompletions, Rodgers appeared to have room to run toward the end zone, but he chose to throw the ball to a well-covered Adams. This gave the Pack another incomplection.

Then in a choice that later earned him heavy criticism, Packer's coach Matt LaFleur chose not to go for a tying touchdown on 4th and goal from the 8 with 2:09 left on the clock. Instead, he thought he had enough time to elect to have Crosby kick a field goal. He made the three points and that did cut his team's deficit to 5 points, 31–26.

In hindsight, this did not pay off as Tampa Bay went on to run out the rest of the clock with three consecutive first downs. The Bucs started their next drive with a 9-yard pass from Brady to Evans as the clock ran down to the 2-minute warning. Then Green Bay decided to give the Bucs a first down rather than lose a timeout on a 2nd and 1 play. They deliberately committed an encroachment penalty.

Two plays later on 3rd and 4, defensive back Kevin King was flagged for pass interference while trying to cover Tyler Johnson, giving the Bucs another first down. Tampa Bay went on to clinch the game with Godwin's 6-yard run on a third and 5. Nothing in life worth having is easy. This was not an easy game but well worth the spoils. The Bucs were going to the Super Bowl. The Packers were already home.

In this great to watch game, Brady completed 20 of 36 passes for 280 yards and three touchdowns, with three interceptions, as he advanced to his 10th Super Bowl in 21 seasons. Godwin was his top target with 5 receptions for 110 yards. White had 9 tackles, 6 assists, and a fumble recovery.

Barrett had 3 sacks, while his fellow defensive lineman Jason Pierre-Paul had 2. Rodgers completed 33 of 48 passes for 346 yards and 3 touchdowns, with one interception, as he lost his second consecutive conference championship game and fell to 1-4 overall in Conference title games over his 16 seasons. Valdes-Scantling caught 4 passes for

115 yards and a score. Nose Tackle Kenny Clark had 6 tackles (1 for loss), 2 assists, and a sack.

[https://www.cbssports.com/nfl/gametracker/recap/NFL\\_20210207\\_KC@TB/](https://www.cbssports.com/nfl/gametracker/recap/NFL_20210207_KC@TB/)

## **Buccaneers with Tom Brady win Super Bowl Against the Chiefs—Brady’s #17.**

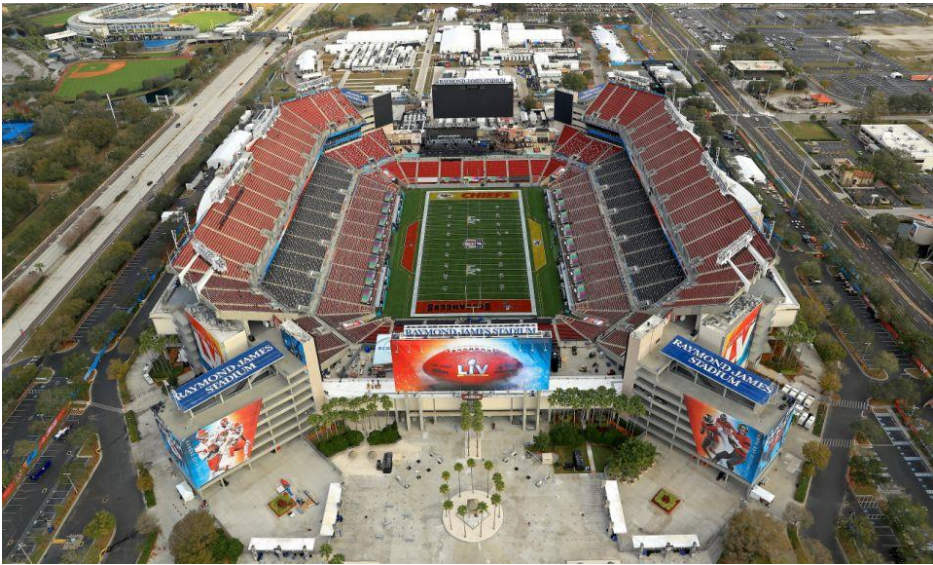
### **Super Bowl LXXV:**

#### **Tampa Bay Bucs 31 Kansas City Chiefs 9**

	1	2	3	4	Total
<b>Chiefs</b>	3	3	3	0	<b>9</b>
<b>Buccaneers</b>	7	14	10	0	<b>31</b>

Tampa Bay had all its lights on, and it was a simply great reason - the Super Bowl had come to town and it was being played on this particular night. A guy who had spent a full career in new England but had never quit, was ready to make his mark on another NFL team.

Tom Brady made the Buccaneers, their fans, and their entire city believe in him from the day he arrived in Tampa Bay. One game after another and then three playoff victories in a row set the stage. Now the time had come to cinch the deal. Tampa’s second Super Bowl was on the line. For Brady. It was his tenth and when victorious, it would be his seventh Super Bowl win.



He was not the only Tampa Bay Buccaneer responsible for the team's 2020 success. There was coach Bruce Arians and a cast of characters from Tampa Bay's recent football history. With help from a good old friend, Rob Gronkowski, some other guys from New England, and a ferocious defense, Brady and the Buccaneers pulled it off. They became the Super Bowl champions.

And so, for the Tampa Bay team, besides Tom Brady and the crew from the Patriots, provided a balanced offense. That was not enough. It was their strong defensive performance that enabled the Bucs to easily defeat the defending Super Bowl champion Kansas City Chiefs 31–9 in a rematch of Week 12 from the regular season. The Bucs D put the Chiefs offense in a position from which they could not escape. The Chief's offense try as they may could not do anything right for almost the whole game.

Tom Brady's 43-year old arm was like new as he threw two touchdown passes to Gronkowski and one to good Patriot pal Antonio Brown, and the Buccaneers took pride in routing a newcomer, Patrick Mahomes and the World Champion Kansas City 31-9 on their home field in Super Bowl 55 on Sunday. Tampa Bay Florida with its 25,000 fans could not be prouder of their Bucs.

On this particular evening, the Super Bowl LV matchup between Patrick Mahomes and the Chiefs and Tom Brady and the

Buccaneers would have attracted a lot more fans, but the game went on with the smallest attendance in Super Bowl history – 25,000 people. Pundits were tempted to count the 30,000 cutouts as fans to make the stadium seem more alive. Secretly, I think the cutouts were rooting for the home team. It sure seemed that way.

The 25,000 was an increase over the 22,500 the NFL previously stated would be permitted due to pandemic precautions. The Bucs played like there never was a pandemic and they won the game fair and square, one quarter at a time. Nobody left the game coughing.

"You get this far and you wanna get the job done and we did it," Brady said. "We just believed. I'm so proud of the guys." Despite moving south to a new team and conference during a pandemic, Brady didn't slow down at age 43. He still looks like a kid with a maturity however, that adults twice his age can't find ever in lifetime. The call him the GOAT and he deserves it. **Greatest of all time!**

Tom Brady was very pleased to take home his fifth hard earned Super Bowl MVP award and he extended his Super Bowl titles' record in his 10th appearance, nine of which were with the New England Patriots. Brady is accustomed to setting records, but they never came sweeter. Tonight he broke his own mark for oldest player to win a Super Bowl and he joined Hall of Famer Peyton Manning as the only quarterbacks to win the big one with multiple franchises.

"I think they're all special," Brady said. "I'm not making any comparisons. Experiencing it with this group of guys is amazing." Stuningly, it was easier than any of his previous Super Bowl victories, which came by an average margin of five points. Mahomes lost by double digits for the first time in his four-year career. Then again he had never faced Brady before in such an important encounter.

Tampa Bay (15-5) grabbed their second NFL title in their 45 years of existence. It was their first in 18 years and they made another mark—the first team to play the big game at home.

The Bucs have a history of playing the Chiefs. It was not their first rodeo together. Before the game, Tampa Bay had led the all-time series between the two clubs at 7–6, and they also hold the winning edge 3–1 in games played at Raymond James Stadium.

The Buccaneers were declared designated home team, not because the game was to be played in their stadium but due to being the NFC representative this season. Nonetheless, they opted to wear their road white uniforms rather than home red uniforms. No explanation was given about that decision other than fairness perhaps because nobody had ever played a Super Bowl at their home stadium before. Certain NFL rules were being written that had never been needed before. Let's take a quick break, please.

**\*\*\* Super Bowl Writeup Intermission-- George Blanda \*\*\***

### **Is 43 too old to play football**

Please permit me to tell you about the oldest active player in NFL history in case you are thinking Tom Brady may retire too soon. Brady has a lot of years left if we go by the legacy of George Blanda. I remember him playing in the old NFL. He was a Quarterback and place kicker. He led the league in scoring before he retired.

In 1970 when Blanda was 43, unlike Tom Brady, he was not on the active list during the season opener. He had been released by the AFL's raiders during the exhibition season. But just like Brady, who had never been asked to sit, Blanda bounced back to establish his 21st professional season.

For Brady, after 20 years with the Patriots, he got his 21st with the Bucs. Yes, that ties him with George Blanda in 1970. While this year, there was wild speculation that Brady would retire after his final year with the New England Patriots, the seasoned QB had too much fight left in him, so he decided to bring his winning spirit and skills to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Brady led the Florida-based team to an 11-5 regular-season record, three playoff victories, a chance to play in the Super Bowl and a Super Bowl victory. Not too shabby for a 43-year old.

For Blanda during his 21st season at age 43, he had a remarkable five-game run. Against the Steelers, Blanda as QB threw for three touchdowns. He was in relief of an injured Daryl Lamonica. A week later, as prime kicker for the Raiders, (not soccer style) his 48-yard field goal with three seconds remaining salvaged a 17–17 tie with the KC Chiefs. Then, on Nov 8, off the bench again he threw a TD pass to tie Cleveland with 1:34 remaining. He then kicked a 53-yard field goal with 0:03 left for the 23–20 win. Not Brady but sorta. Was his team thrilled. You bet.

Immediately after the ball went through the goal posts, Raiders radio announcer, Bill King excitedly declared, "George Blanda has just been elected King of the World!" How about that. Finally we found an honor Tom Brady has not yet received, Blanda was not finished.

In the team's next game, Blanda replaced Lamonica. This time it was in Q4. He hit the Raiders great wide receiver Fred Biletnikoff on a TD pass with 2:28 left in the game to defeat the Denver Broncos, 24–19.[9] The following week. Too good to be true—just like Tom Brady. The next week he took off his throwing glove and put on his kicking shoes and George , Blanda's 16-yard field goal in the closing seconds beat the San Diego Chargers, 20–17. No, same season, there is more.

Because of Blanda's last minute work in so many games, the Raiders were in the AFC title game – like the Super Bowl but the AFC was the what the AFL teams were called when they merged with the NFL in 1970.

This game was against the Baltimore Colts. Blanda found himself in the spotlight again relieving for an injured Lamonica. The aging signal caller completed 17 of 32 passes for 217 yards and 2 touchdowns while also kicking a 48-yard field goal and two extra points. George Blanda kept the Raiders in the game until the final quarter, when I hate to say it, he was intercepted twice.

At age 43, fifty-one years ago, he was the oldest quarterback ever to play in a championship game, and was one of the few remaining straight-ahead kickers in the NFL. Tom Brady can't

kick but he won the championship at 43-years of age and the book is not finished yet.

Although he never again played a major role at QB, Blanda stretched out his career until he was 48 years old, serving as the Raiders' kicker for five more seasons. Among his prestigious awards, George Blanda was named the Associated Press Male Athlete of the Year, being the first ever professional football player to earn the award.

George Blanda played in his last game at Pittsburgh's Three Rivers Stadium on January 4, 1976, at age 48. Again it was the AFC Championship game for the 1975 season just past. In the game, he saw action when he kicked a 41-yard field goal and made one extra point as the Raiders lost the game to the Steelers 16–10. The great Terry Bradshaw brought the Super Bowl to Pittsburgh that year. Blanda was released during training camp in late August 1976.

He was succeeded at kicker by rookie Fred Steinfort, but he rooted for his team as the Raiders went on to win the NFL title that season in Super Bowl XI. Not a Tom Brady career perhaps but a good one. Blanda still owns the oldest player crown and Tom Brady now knows something more about the outer limits of his playing days. Blanda was 48. According to the Pro Football Hall of Fame, Blanda died after a "short illness" on September 27, 2010. He was 83 years old

\*\*\* End of Super Bowl Intermission George Blanda \*\*\*

Coach Todd Bowles, the TBB defensive coordinator devised a masterful plan to frustrate Mahomes and shut down the Chiefs. His plan resulted in the complete opposite of Kansas City's 27-24 win in Tampa in Week 12. Remember that when the Chiefs jumped to a 17-0 lead in the first quarter. Tyreek Hill had 269 yards receiving and three TDs in that one. He was held to 73 yards on seven catches Sunday.



Bucs cornerback Sean Murphy-Bunting said what to some has become the obvious after the strong victory that seemed so easy: "Coach Bowles is a mastermind."

After the Chiefs took a 3-0 early lead, it was all Brady and the Bucs. When the Super Bowl began if the lights were not on, the field would have been almost dark. Tampa Bay was ready. They lined up under the lights after the coin toss to receive the opening kickoff. They brought it back to their own 23-yard line but did not gain a 1st down and were forced to punt. In frustration at game time, I called that a three and out.

Kansas City took the ball with authority and moved it near midfield but after a particular incompleteness, the Chiefs had to punt. So each team had the ball and the teams had already exchanged punts. Tampa Bay did not yet have on their game faces as they proceeded to stall on their second set of downs. This followed a sack by Frank Clark. They punted

On KC's next drive they got the ball into Tampa's territory. However, on a third and longs, Mahomes tossed an incompleteness intended for Tyreek Hill. The Chiefs thought they could score a field goal and Harrison Butker obliged with a 49-yarder. These were the first points of the game giving KC a 3-0 lead—their last lead of the game, I am pleased to say

When Tampa got the ball, they had been awakened by the score and the Buccaneers took the ball 70 yards on 8 plays. They scored on an 8-yard TD pass from Tom Brady to Rob Gronkowski. The PAT was good, and the Bucs were up 7-3 at the end of the first quarter.

Play continued into the second quarter after switching sides. Tampa Bay had the ball and in their 1st possession of the 2Q, they advanced the pigskin into Kansas City's red zone after a 31-yard pass completion from Brady to Mike Evans. It was then 1st and goal. The Chiefs thwarted their efforts 4 times and they gave up the ball to KC on downs.

KC stalled out in their next chance with the ball. When they punted bad luck followed as a holding penalty against Kansas City canceled out a 56-yard punt, which would have set up the Buccaneers to start

from their own 30-yard line. On the retry Tommy Townsend shanked the punt, and it went just 29 yards giving Tampa Bay the ball at the KC 38-yard line.

The Bucs got some good penalty breaks in this drive and it extended their possession time. There was a holding penalty on Charvarius Ward which would have been an interception by Tyrann Mathieu and there was an offside call during a field goal attempt which gave the Bucs a fresh set of downs.

After all that, fuss, when action restarted, Brady once again found Gronkowski in the end zone for a 17-yard TD strike. After the PAT the score was 14-3 lead. Kansas City seemed invigorated and on the next set of plays, Mahomes tossed several long completions from to Travis Kelce, helping bring the Chiefs into the TBB red zone for the first time in the game, but they were stymied and had to settle for a 34-yard field goal by Butker, making the score 14-6.

When Tampa Bay got their next chance, they ignored the KC troubles but the appreciated multiple penalties on the Kansas City's defense. They were able to move deep into the Chiefs' territory thanks mostly to a defensive pass interference penalty by Bashaud Breel.

This resulted in a whopping gain of 34 yards. Additionally, KC was called on a defensive pass interference on Mathieu in the end zone. This gave the Buccaneers a 1st and goal at the 1-yard line resulting in a Tampa Bay score.

Brady found Antonio Brown for a 1-yard touchdown pass, which after a successful point after gave the Tampa Bay Buccaneers a 21-6 lead at halftime.

Most of the scoring was already in the books but there was still a half game left. KC got the ball to begin the 3rd quarter. After long runs by Clyde Edwards-Helaire and a completion from Mahomes to Kelce the Chiefs were able to move into Tampa Bay's territory once again. However, they were forced to try a 52-yard field goal by Butker which upon a great kick brought the score to 21-9, closing out the scoring book for the day for Kansas City.

On the next drive, Tampa Bay's Buccaneers were able to bring the ball into Chiefs' territory following a 25-yard completion from Brady to Gronkowski. On the play the reenergized Leonard Fournette scored a 27-yard touchdown run, which was followed by successful PAT giving the Bucs a 28–9 lead.

The chiefs then threw an interception on a deflection by Mike Edwards. Antoine Winfield Jr. have the Buccaneers' offense a great starting field position at the Kansas City 45-yard line. As the Bucs were driving, a botched snap on 3rd down forced them to go for a 52-yard field goal by Ryan Succop. This brought the Bucs lead to 31–9. Kansas City's Mahomes had a number of long completions to Hill, Kelce, and Sammy Watkins, driving the team deep into Tampa Bay territory.

However, once again the Chiefs did not score as Mahomes threw an incomplection resulting in a turnover on downs. After a Bucs punt, the Chiefs' again got some long completions from Mahomes to Kelce and Hill.

They also benefited from a roughing the passer penalty on Ndamukong Suh . So again the chiefs were knocking on the door for a TD. However Tampa Bay's refused to answer the door and instead their defense was able to hold and force another ball turnover when the Chiefs did not make another 4th down attempt.

After a punt on a quickly stalled drive by the Buccaneers, the Chiefs mounted another drive into Tampa Bay territory following more long completions from Mahomes to Kelce, Edwards-Helaire, and Demarcus Robinson.

The script was very familiar and once again Tampa Bay's defense held firm and forced another takeaway. This time Devin White intercepted the ball at the goal line. Brady and the Buccaneers would then kneel the ball on the following drive to end the game and give Tampa their 2nd Super Bowl title in franchise history. Yeah Buccaneers.

Brady was at the top of his game with 21 of 29 completed passes for 201 yards and 3 touchdowns. The ageless QB extended his own record for Super Bowl victories with his 7th as well as his own

record for Super Bowl MVP awards with his 5th. Nice Job Tom Brady. Thank you for your great efforts and results.

Looking at some of this again, when the game began, it was not too long before Brady accomplished a career-first with an 8-yard TD pass to Gronkowski for a 7-3 lead with 37 seconds left in the first quarter.

Brady had been to this dance before, but he never danced so well. His nine Super Bowl teams in New England produced just three points in total in the first quarter. Gronkowski, who had a year of retirement to prepare for the 2020 season to play football with his buddy, caught his 13th and 14th postseason TDs from Brady.

They had been tied at 12 with Jerry Rice and Joe Montana. No more ties. And to the best of my knowledge, they'll both be back next year for TBB.

"To come here and be Super Bowl champs, it's surreal, man," said Gronkowski... "We have so many superstars on this team, but nobody's head was too big. Whoever got the ball got the ball. That's what was so great about being on this team. There was no one who was selfish on this team. No one selfish in the organization. It just happened to be me this time getting the touchdown passes." There were NFL restrictions and Tampa Bay COVID restrictions.

So, despite playing at home, the Bucs weren't permitted to fire the cannons from their famed pirate ship after touchdowns and big plays. Soon after the final whistle blew, however, they fired the cannons. The clock expired as red, white and black confetti fell onto the field.

Gronk loves the act of spiking the ball. The fans still enjoyed the thud of Gronk's thunderous spike after his first score. It was a Tampa Bay Area complete celebration.

It was Brady who convinced his new team to give Brown a chance after the troubled former All-Pro came off suspension. His TD toss to Brown was his 50th of the season, including 10 in the postseason.

Last year, Mahomes rallied the Chiefs from a 10-point deficit in the fourth quarter against San Francisco and earned MVP honors in leading Kansas City to its first NFL championship in a half-century. But Tampa's pass rush gave him no chance in this one.

"There was nothing that was gonna stop us from winning this game," Barrett said. "I knew we were going to keep the pressure up. Coach Bowles had a great game plan. We had the guys up there to make it work and we made it work, baby."

After 20 seasons in New England, Brady signed a \$50 million, two-year contract with Tampa in March. The Buccaneers hadn't reached the playoffs since 2007 and hadn't won a postseason game since the 2002 title season. Their payment was well worth it.

During the first half before the results became known as the Bucs rolled up one first down after another, there were plenty of red-clad Chiefs fans doing the tomahawk chop for part of the first half.

The chiefs still thought they had a chance until the Bucs made it into a rout. Then it was the hometown fans chanting "Let's Go Bucs."

22-year-old poet laureate Amanda Gorman recited a poem honoring three people chosen as honorary captains for the game and all teachers, military veterans and frontline healthcare workers. It was a nice touch.

Brady was happy to have his chance to avenge his loss against Chiefs defensive coordinator Steve Spagnuolo. Tough losses never fade away. He had held the same position for NY when they stifled the Patriots in the 2008 Super Bowl. Something that prevents your team from a perfect season is a thought to remember. .

The warmer climate fit Brady perfectly. He passed Michael Jordan in 3 of big championships and it doesn't seem he's ready to slow down. He already said he might play past age 45. Remember George Blanda.

"I'm coming back," Brady said with a smile.

With this great win Tom Brady would tie Otto Graham for the most championships by a player in the history of professional football with his 7th, as well as join Peyton Manning as the only quarterbacks to win a Super Bowl with 2 different franchises.

Brady also became the first professional athlete in any of the 4 major American sports to win a championship with 2 different teams after turning 40, as well as the first player in NFL history to defeat 3 former Super Bowl MVPs in the same postseason (Mahomes, Drew Brees, and Aaron Rodgers). He was also the first player in NFL history to win a championship in 3 different decades.

His buddy Rob Gronkowski would be his top target for the game, as he recorded 6 catches for 67 yards and 2 touchdowns. Fournette was there whenever needed. With Gronkowski's 2nd touchdown reception he and Brady broke the record for the most touchdowns from a QB to a pass catcher in postseason history with their 14th together.

This record had previously been held by Joe Montana and Jerry Rice with 13. That's great company. Leonard Fournette deserves major credit for being there whenever needed. He finished with 16 carries for 89 yards and a touchdown to go along with 4 receptions for 46 yards. Jones would add an additional 61 yards on 12 carries as well.

Fournette joined Terrell Davis and Larry Fitzgerald in the NFL history books by scoring at least one rushing TD in 4 games of a single postseason. White was outstanding on "D" finishing with a team leading 12 tackles as well as 1 pass deflection and 1 interception.

Winfield Jr. added an interception and 6 tackles and 2 pass deflections to his stats. Suh would finish with a team leading 1.5 sacks while Shaquil Barrett would also gain 1 sack and Cam Gill would record half of a sack. Ryan Succop kicked flawlessly banging through all 5 of his kicks in the game.

The Chiefs had some great plays but could not get past the goal line. Patrick Mahomes completed 26 of 49 passes for 270 yards, no touchdowns, and 2 interceptions. This was not good for the new

star. It would be the first time since becoming a starter that an offense led by Mahomes would not be able to score a touchdown in a game as well as the first time Mahomes has lost a game by double digit points since college.

Kelce, always dependable was that way in this game also. He would be Mahomes' top target with 10 receptions for 133 yards. Edwards-Helaire was the Chiefs' top rusher with 9 carries for 64 yards, plus he had 2 receptions for 23 yards. Damien Wilson was the Chief's top tackler with 10, and Clark had 4 tackles and 1 sack. Butker was perfect with all 3 of his kicks in the game. None of it mattered as the Bucs creamed the Chiefs.

## To sum it up

Tom Brady and his former Patriots contingents more than any one factor other than Bruce Arians, the right coach at the right time, were responsible for the season and the Super Bowl game and the Super Bowl win. Hands down!

It was a Bucs day but more than anything it was a great Tom Brady day. He was at his best and against the world champion Chiefs his best was needed. Brady and Gronk and Fournette let nobody down in this game. Tom Brady came through for the team. He knew what he was doing from whistle to whistle. Tom Brady finished off a dream season on Super Bowl Sunday night, leading the Tampa Bay Buccaneers to a 31-9 win over the Kansas City Chiefs in Super Bowl LV.

As noted, this marked the seventh Super Bowl win of Brady's illustrious career, and his first as a member of the Buccaneers.

Thirteen months after his 20-year career with the Patriots came to an end in an ugly wild-card playoff loss to the Titans, Brady guided Tampa Bay to four playoff wins, culminating with the Bucs being the first team to win a Super Bowl in their own stadium.

Tampa Bay used a nice blend of run and pass to decimate Kansas City. The QB finished 21-for-29 for 201 yards and three touchdowns. He was supported by Leonard Fournette (16 carries, 89 yards, one

touchdown) and Rob Gronkowski (six catches, 67 yards, two touchdowns). He had a lot of help and continually acknowledged it.

Tom Brady is a great athlete and a sports gentleman. God bless Tom Brady and God bless the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. As an aside, God bless the Tampa Bay Buccaneers fans, some who have waited all forty-five years for a team that could beat anybody, anytime. The fans stuck with the team through mostly thin. They had found a lot of thick with the thin over the years, yet they stayed the course. The respectful owners rewarded the City and the fans with a winning attitude and a team that can beat any team in the NFL—and they just did. Bravo Buccaneers!



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