



AN OLD TIMER LONGS FOR THE OLD TIMES

By Kerry Schmidt 01-18-2004

During the week, as I looked forward to the NFC and AFC championship games, my mind began to wander.

Once again, you have three teams that were nowhere near this position last season. Only Philadelphia is a returnee. Carolina and New England were pushovers last year and the Colts got killed in round one.

Dammit, bring back the good ole days!

Free agency and the salary cap have ruined the greatest game on earth.

Now for all you young folks, this is all you know. Players changing teams faster than Pete Rose can tell another lie. And even some great players, who long to stay with their beloved team and teammates are forced to move because of the salary cap. See Jerry Rice having to leave the Niners due to the salary cap.

“Even the playing field,” the NFL bosses call today’s system.

Mediocrity is the best I can call it.. Lousy, stinking C- rated teams abound. If that’s evening the playing field, I want no part. Your favorite player of today is your enemy tomorrow. Three years and it’s “All about me. I am playing for the big bucks. Hasta la vista, baby.”

Bring back the good ole days! I long for the times when there were dynasties. The dynasty days of the 49,ers, Dallas, Pittsburgh, the Vikings and a few others. The Niners/Dallas games were absolute must see for years. The country loved it.

Free agency enriches the individual only, and, along with the salary cap, they bury this year’s contenders into next season’s has-beens.

Steve Young said it all. “Free agency is killing this whole league,” and Howie Long and John Madden echoed similar thoughts.

Bill Walsh, the guru of today’s NFL as the inventor of the “West Coast Offense,” summed it up perfectly. “I’ve never seen anything like this. I much prefer the time when teams like the Giants, Washington, Dallas and the 49’ers were dynasties and the overall caliber of play in this league was much better. The problem now is that you can’t develop players for long and keep them. Once you develop a guy and he becomes a star, along with some of his teammates, they become to expensive to keep and they all are gone.”

It is the American way to start something from scratch and build it into a long-term success. Today’s NFL is the antithesis of this.

Let’s look back at a few of the great teams that you either loved or hated, but always wanted to watch.

The Minnesota Vikings of 1968-1977. Carl Eller, Alan Page, Ron Yary, Paul Krause, Mick Tinglehoff, Ed White and Fran Tarkenton. Eight Hall-of-Famers, together, constantly producing excellence.

How about dem Cowboys. 1966-1973. Bob Lilly, Mel Renfro, Cornell Green, Bob Hayes, Ralph Neely, Chuck Howley, John Niland, Walt Garrison, Jethro Pugh, Le Roy Jordan and for a good bit of that period, Roger Staubach. Now that’s the good ole days, even though I have always hated Dallas.



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

And who among us old timers can forget the Pittsburgh Steelers of the 70's. The "Steel Curtain." Four Super Bowl championships in six years. Terry Bradshaw, Franco Harris, Rocky Bleier, Lynn Swann, John Stallworth, Mike Webster, Mean Joe Green, Dwight White, Mel Blount, Jack Ham, Jack Lambert, just to name a few. All of them are among the greatest ever, and by staying together, they were one of the all-time bests.

And then you had my 49'ers. They had three great teams, dynasties all, beginning in 1981 and winning five Super Bowls up to 1995.

Trust me, you will never, ever, again see a situation where you have a Joe Montana as your starting QB and a Steve Young as his backup. Absolutely impossible under today's rules.

Space limits mention of many other great dynasties, the Raiders of the 60's and early 70's, the Niners back in the early 50's, the great Lombardi Packers from 1960-1966 and the Giants of the mid 50's to '63.

My God, those were the days. And they all came to an inglorious end with the advent of the cap and free agency in 1992. Goodbye greatness, hello haplessness.

So for me, the grand old game I have loved so long, is gone. Many a Sunday this season I turned to ESPN Classics, and watched the NFL Films presentations of those grand old days. Why watch players, many of who would not even make yesterday's teams, when you can watch the greatest to ever suit up.

Sure, there are great players today, but only one or two per team. Then even they depart. Never again will you see the days of having nine (future) Hall-of-Famers on the same team like the Niners or Pittsburgh.

Teamwork built this great country and it built the NFL into the greatest sport in America. Free agency and the cap have torn it down. Sad.