



The NFL offensives of today are due to one brilliant individual

By Kerry Schmidt 03-25-2007

First, let's get rid of the ridicules. Getting an audience with the Pope is about as hard as putting toothpaste back in the tube.

Many a great Catholic priest and countless other notables have not had that great privilege.

So who got anointed to receive such a rare opportunity?

None other than the high priest and holy man of murder, mayhem and crooked dealings. Mr. Spiked hair, Don King himself was granted such a rare moment.

He sat in the front row of the small gathering, and then afterwards he commented to anyone who gave a damn about listening to him that he was there to promote boxing in Italy and to further peace and gentleness throughout the world.

No I'm sorry, but I can think of about 6 billion people that would be more rightful to be graced by his Holiness than this street thug.

I am not privy to how God judges these things but I would guess that chief Straight Hair would be heading downstairs rather than upstairs when his judgment day comes.

I can just imagine St. Peter at the gate as Don King approaches. He stares at this creature and says, this is the penthouse, you need the outhouse, pushes a button and King goes straight to see his blood brother, the devil.

I will not yet get into March Madness, since it is not the Final Four yet.

Actually, you have the Tournament, basically, broken down into four segments. First, picking the teams. Second, seeding them. Third, you allow a week for the bitching from teams that did not get in. And fourth, you have to look up the names of some of the schools that did get in.

I can't stand this rule that the winner of most conferences automatically gets a birth.

Often you will get teams that are in who have a wonderful record of 14-20.

Teams like Fisher State, and South Buffalo.

Thus, this year, two teams with records of 23-7 and 22-8 were left out so the above powerhouses could make it.

But then you have to remember, these are the same brain dead old farts that decide the BCS system, so....

Note: One of the teams with a losing record actually did Ok in their game. They only lost 91-33.

Leading up to the builder of today's NFL offenses, the NFL received two complaints from this past Super Bowl about Prince's half-time show. One man said the show left him with erectile dysfunction and a mother complained it might turn her son gay! A little bit of Janet Jackson would cure both those problems in a hurry.

The NFL today rules the major professional sports world. And, as many as three generations are so accustomed to watching the offensives run by all the teams that some of them believe that is the way it has always been done.

NOT! Way back in 1978, two words changed the offensive game like no other. Bill Walsh.



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

Only Sid Gillman comes close, as he is credited with bringing the pass to modern day football.

But Walsh took it from there and forever changed the face of the NFL offensives as they are today.

For years, it was referred to as West Coast Offense, but in reality it was the Bill Walsh Offense.

Today, since virtually every team uses it in some format, it's just called the offense.

In short, it revolves around the short, slants over the middle or in crossing patterns, with first Joe Montana then Steve Young hitting his receivers with quick, precisely timed passes caught in stride, and the receiver often converts an 8-yard pass into a 30 yard gain. John Madden came up with the terminology of "YAC" for that, meaning yards after catch.

And Walsh was the master of details – he would spend over 45 minutes with his QB on footwork, moving each foot a couple of inches here or there, never missing a single possibility. He would always script the first 25 plays of every game, then adjust accordingly with the flow of the game.

Today, you will see just about every coach on the sideline with a plastic card in front of his face. On that card were the first and most prominent plays that would be used.

Many of today's most successful coaches credit Walsh with today's offensives. And, over half of today's coaches were either on Walsh' staff, and/or when they left, they would teach their assistants the same system, and then the third generation likewise, as so forth. Players who worked directly under Walsh on his staff included Brian Billick, Rod Dowhower, Dennis Green, Mike Holmgren, George Seifert and Mike White.

Those disciples then went on the mentor Walsh's system into their staffs, which included, Bill Callahan, Pete Carol, Brad Childress, Jack Del Rio, Herm Edwards, Jim Fassel, Jeff Fisher, Jon Gruden, Gary Kubiak, Rod Marineli, Steve Mariucci, Mike McCarthy, Marty Mornhinweg, Mike Mularkey, Andy Reid, Mike Shanahan, Mike Sherman, Lovie Smith, Mike Tice and Mike Tomlin.

Between that bunch they helped coach teams to 16 Super Bowl victories and made it to 11 other Super Bowl games, often losing to one of the above coaches who also was a Walsh student!

Toss in four players who did not form a branch of Walsh's tree, but played for him and credit Walsh with teaching them all about coaching, were Bruce Coslett, Tony Dungy, Ray Rhodes and San Wyche.

Thus in all, you have 30 coaches that form a select group of some of the greatest coaches in NFL history.

Walsh's "West Coast" system was responsible for revolutionizing the game. He hand picked the personnel he wanted to fit into his system, and the result was a meticulously crafted organization and cerebral practice regimens, adding in his daring personnel decisions and his visionary offensive schemes to unfold the ultimate, enduring model of success.

A few of his "daring personnel decisions" were a QB taken in the third round after 4 other QB's a QB who his staff told him would not make it. Joe Montana. He later insisted on trading up to draft Jerry Rice, after his staff said he was paying too much for him.



Last but not least, he traded 2nd and 3rd round draft choices before the '87 season, again, against the wishes of his bosses and staff. They said he was giving up way too much for him, to get a "wild, undisciplined, left-handed QB named Steve Young.

Young says today that for all the credit Walsh receives, his genius is nonetheless underrated.

"I get the sense that East Coasters don't see the impact (that West Coasters) do," said Young. "I don't know if these people grasp the innovations he has brought to the game on so many levels. For all his genius status, he is still underrated, if that's possible."

For all the people mentioned above that Walsh has mentored to greatness of his own, he credits that to the opposite treatment that he received way back in his beginning.

When Walsh was an assistant in Cincinnati under legendary Paul Brown, Brown did all he could to hinder Walsh's chances and aspirations to move up the ladder. When Brown stepped down and appointed Bill Johnson as head coach, Walsh angrily left to be an assistant with the Chargers and then moved to head coach at Stanford.

Walsh told The Los Angeles Times last year that Brown "worked against my candidacy" to become a head coach in the NFL.

"And then when I left him, he called whoever he thought was necessary to keep me out of the NFL."

"That's why I went out of my way to be a patriarch, to help qualified coaches advance to the best possible positions available to them. I did not want them to be held down like I was."

And as you can see from the long list above, a good number of the coaches he helped were minorities, and this was back in the 80's well before the league gave us the Rooney rule.

Jin Harbough, a 15-year NFL QB and later coach, said of Walsh. "All those coaches were able to be successful because of the blueprint he created. He created the modern-day practice, the modern-day weekly schedule, the mold which drives offenses today, and he taught all his protégés the way to run a meeting, to manage an organization. And when it comes to football expertise, he's the most respected man who's ever coached the game, period.

So, as the fans today, those that are under 40 enjoy the game, they have Bill Walsh to thank for making the NFL offense what it is today,

This is now coming out, since Walsh is dying from leukemia. It is in advanced stages, but he remains positive and still holds on to his beliefs.

He admitted that probably the only reason he allowed this story to be told is because of his condition.

So every time you watch a quick, short slant-pass over the middle and see it turned into a 35 yard TD, think of Bill Walsh and nod your appreciation.