

APBA's GREAT FOOTBALL TEAMS OF THE PAST - Vol. 3

1. DETROIT 1952

The Lions win their second NFL Championship. First one in seventeen seasons. Detroit tied Los Angeles for the Western Division title. After beating the Rams in a play-off game. Detroit beat Cleveland 17-7 in the championship game. Defensive end Jim Doran was team MVP. This is a squad with quarterback Bobby Lane and Cloyce Box, leading the league with 15 TDs. The Lions led the league in points scored and fewest points allowed.

2. SAN DIEGO 1963

San Diego's only championship team. The Charges beat the Boston Patriots 51-10 in the AFL championship game. Quarterback Tobin Rote led a high-powered offense that included AFL MVP Lance Alworth and running backs Paul Lowe and Keith Lincoln. The Bolt's defense was led by Big Cat Ladd and Earl Faison up front; line backers Chuck Allen and Paul McGuire. Dick Harris was the star of the secondary with 8 interceptions. This is one of the all-time great offensive teams.

3. NEW YORK (A) 1968

Broadway Joe Namath guaranteed the Super Bowl victory! Jets are first AFL team to win the Super Bowl beating the heavily favored Colts 16-7. This is the Jets only appearance in the Super Bowl. One of three teams to win their only appearance in the Super Bowl. The other two teams are also in this set. This was the year of the infamous "Heidi game". The Jets got their revenge beating Oakland in the Super Bowl.

4. KANSAS CITY 1969

Despite finishing second in the Western Division in the regular season, the Chiefs were the AFL Champions. The defensive led this team to a Super Bowl championship beating the Minnesota Vikings 23-7. The defense allowed 20 points in three play-off games. The defense led the league in fewest rushing yards, fewest passing yards and fewest total yards allowed. The defense was led by linebackers Bobby Bell and Willie Lanier. Other future Hall of Famers on the defense included "Buck" Buchanan, Curly Culp and Emmitt Thomas. This was the last Super Bowl before the merger of the AFL and NFL.

5. MINNESOTA 1973

The Vikings went 12-2 to win the Central Division on their way to an NFC title, losing to defending Super Bowl Champion, Miami Dolphins, 24-7. Minnesota won its first nine games. They were the last team to lose a game in 1973. Offensive rookie of the year, Chuck Foreman gave the Vikings a more balanced offense, which was led by quarterback, Fran Tarkenton. The Vikings league best defense held opponents to an NFL leading 168 points. The "Purple People Eaters" front four led this outstanding defense.

6. **HOUSTON 1979**

Despite an 11-5 regular season record, the Oilers finished second to the Steelers. These two teams would eventually meet in the AFC Championship game for the second year in a row. The eventual Super Bowl champs, Pittsburgh Steelers, won the championship game on its way to its second consecutive Super Bowl. The AFC championship game was marred by a controversial call nullifying a touchdown by wide receiver Mike Renfro. The Oilers offense was led by NFL MVP running back Earl Campbell and Dan Pastorini.

7. **CINCINNATI 1981**

After three straight last-place finishes, the Bengals surprised everyone by finishing with the AFC's best record. The Bengals purred behind the deadly accurate passing of quarterback Ken Anderson. Rookie Chris Collinsworth and veteran Isaac Curtis were both well suited to the short passing attack that Anderson loved. This helped soften the defenses for bruising fullback Pete Johnson. Cincinnati's young offensive line, with Anthony Munoz, Max Montoya and Blair Bush, was among the league's best. The Bengals beat the San Diego Chargers in the AFC championship game in the "Freezer Bowl". Game time temperature was nine below with a wind chill of minus 59. The Bengals lost to San Francisco in Super Bowl XVI.

8. **BUFFALO 1990**

This was the first of four consecutive AFC Championship teams. Adopting the No-Huddle offense disrupted highly specialized roleplaying defenses. The league leading offense was led by quarterback Jim Kelly, running back Thurman Thomas and wide receivers, James Lofton and Andre Reed. All future Hall of Famers. NFL Defensive Player of the Year, Bruce Smith led the defense with 19 sacks. The New York Giants beat the Bills in the Super Bowl 20-19. A last second missed 47-yard field goal was the difference.

9. **ATLANTA 1998**

The Falcons went 14-2 for only the second-best record in the NFC. Running back Jamal Anderson carried the ball more often, gained more yards and ran for more touchdowns than anyone else in the NFL. Kick returner Tim Dwight and linebacker Keith Brookings were key rookie contributors during the season. The highlight of the season was the Falcons overtime victory in the NFC championship game over the 15-win Minnesota Vikings. Quarterback Chris Chandler led the Falcons to a game-tying touchdown in the final minute. Morten Andersen kicked the game winning field goal. Denver prevailed in Super Bowl XXXIII 34-19. The Falcons were the first domed team to play in the Super Bowl

10. **JACKSONVILLE 1999**

Everything came together for the Jacksonville Jaguars in their fifth season of existence. Linebacker Kevin Hardy and defensive end Tony Brackens led the league' stingiest defense,

holding half of their opponents to a touchdown or less. The backfield combination of James Stewart and Fred Taylor combined for 1,663 rushing yards and 19 touchdowns. The Jag's record of 14-2 was the best in the NFL. This is also the franchise best record. The two regular season losses were to the Tennessee Titans, who they also lost to in the AFC Championship game.

11. TAMPA BAY 2002

Upon his arrival in Tampa Bay, new coach John Gruden immediately acquired WR Keenan McCardell, and RB Michael Pittman. The Buccaneers needed to improve their sluggish offense, as the league's sweeping realignment sent them to the new NFC South division, along with Atlanta, Carolina and New Orleans. The offense made slight improvements during the season, but the strength of the team was the defense. The 2002 Buccaneers became the first team to lead the league in total defense, points allowed, and interceptions since the 1985 Chicago Bears. They also held opposing quarterbacks to an unbelievable 48.4 passer rating for the season. With 40 interceptions – 31 in the regular season and an additional nine in the playoffs – the Buccaneers recorded the most interceptions of any Super Bowl winning team in history. Led by this dominating defense, the 2002 Buccaneers achieved their most successful season to date. They won the NFC South title with the team's best ever record, 12–4, and then defeated San Francisco. In a surprising upset, Tampa Bay won their first NFC Championship on the road against the Eagles in the last NFL game ever played at Veterans Stadium. The Buc routed Gruden's former team, the Raiders 48-21. This team is the second team to win the Super Bowl in its only appearance.

12. CAROLINA 2003

Julius Peppers and Kris Jenkins led a disruptive defense line that harassed opposing quarterbacks and stuffed the run. Two key free agent signings solidified the offense. Former Pro Bowler Stephen Davis gave Carolina a power running game. Quarterback Jake Delhomme, who had languished on the bench for four years with the Saints, emerged as an efficient passer and leader. Two years removed from a 1-15 season, the Panthers won the South Division with a 11-5 record on their way to an NFC Championship and a Super Bowl appointment with New England losing 32-29 on a last second field goal. The Panthers were involved in five road overtime games including a double overtime playoff win against the St. Louis Rams. They won four of these overtime games.

13. ARIZONA 2008

The Cardinals won the NFC West division with a 9-7 record. The Cards then won three consecutive playoff games advancing to a Super Bowl berth against Pittsburgh Steelers. The Steelers prevailed in one of the most exciting Super Bowls ever. Hall of Famer Kurt Warner and wide receivers Larry Fitzgerald and Anquan Boldin led a prolific passing attack. Running back Tim Hightower scored ten touchdowns despite the Cardinals having the worst rushing offense. This team was all about its passing offense. Despite scoring 427 points, its points differential was plus 1.

14. NEW ORLEANS 2009

The Saints started the season winning their first 13 games. The longest undefeated season opening streak. The Saints would finish with a 13-3. The Saints led the NFL in scoring with 510 points. Quarterback Drew Brees led an offense that finished in the top 6 in both passing and rushing offense. Darren Sharper led the defense with 3 “pick 6s”. The Saints met the Indianapolis Colts in Super Bowl XLIV winning 31-17. The key play was the Saints recovering the second half opening kickoff. This is the third team to win its one and only Super Bowl appearance.