

Colts recall favorite Super Bowls • Loyalty

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SO MANY MEMORIES

Indianapolis Colts players recall some of their most memorable Super Bowl moments.

INDIANAPOLIS
Keith O'Neal has already lost four Super Bowls.

The Indianapolis Colts backup linebacker has yet to play on football's greatest stage, but growing up a Buffalo Bills fan, he experienced the doldrums of defeat.

"Wide right," O'Neal answers when asked what he remembers of Super Bowls he watched while growing up.

The fourth-year special teams contributor is referring to Scott Norwood's missed field-goal attempt in the 1991 Super Bowl, which would've given the Bills a 22-20 win against the New York Giants. The ball sailed right.

Buffalo would go on to reach the next three Super Bowls, losing on each occasion.

"This is a chance for my family to root for a winner finally," he said. "Losing four Super Bowls is tough enough, but four in a row was just brutal."

Not everyone's Super Bowl moments are dreary.

Colts coach Tony Dungy won a Super Bowl as a player with Pittsburgh (Super Bowl XIII). His favorite Super Bowl moment is pretty easy.

Matt Giordano
Safety

Favorite moment: Joe Montana's TD pass to John Taylor to lift the 49ers past the Bengals in Super Bowl XXIII.

"I love that play. That was an awesome game," said Giordano, who grew up in northern California.



Freddy Keiaho
Linebacker

Favorite moment: The closing moments of Super Bowl XXXIV, when the Rams held on to beat the Titans.

"I looked at the score and was like, 'Damn, I just missed a great game. But I got to see the best part,'" said Keiaho, who had to work during the game.



Keith O'Neal
Linebacker

Least favorite moment: Scott Norwood's missed field goal which cost Buffalo a win against the Giants in Super Bowl XXV.

"This is a chance for my family to root for a winner finally," O'Neal said of being a fan of the Bills, who lost four straight Super Bowls.



"When it was 00:00 on the clock, and we had beaten Dallas. That was my favorite one," he said. "Super Bowls are all special."

Safety Matt Giordano grew up in northern California and naturally rooted for the San Francisco 49ers. For him, Joe Montana was an icon. Names like Roger Craig, Jerry Rice and Ronnie Lott evoke strong memories.

But one play sticks out in the University of California product's mind.

With the 49ers down 16-13 to Cincinnati in Super Bowl XXIII, Montana found John Taylor in the end zone for a 10-yard touchdown

pass to give the 49ers the win.

"I loved that play," he said. "That was an awesome game."

Rookie safety Antoine Bethea was also a 49ers fan. He remembers cheering on the team in 1989 and 1990 against Cincinnati and Denver, respectively.

Now, the stage is his.

"It feels great, because at one time I was sitting down on the couch wishing I could get there; and now that I'm here, it's just going to be great just being there knowing there are going to be little kids watching at home," Bethea said.

While most of the nation tunes

into the Super Bowl to watch the game from the comfort of the couch or at a Super Bowl party, others aren't as lucky.

Rookie linebacker Freddy Keiaho remembers having to miss most of the 2000 Super Bowl between St. Louis and Tennessee.

He was working the night shift as a busboy at a restaurant but got home in time for the final six minutes.

"I looked at the score and was like, 'Damn, I just missed a great game,'" he said. "But I got to see the best part."

Keiaho was talking about Titans receiver Kevin Dyson's last-gasp

reach for the end zone falling a yard short as time expired, giving the Rams the win.

Born in Philadelphia, Raheem Brock grew up an Eagles fan. But from 1970 to 2004, the Eagles reached only one Super Bowl (1981).

The Colts defensive tackle continued to root for the Eagles and remained loyal to the NFC when watching the Super Bowl, even if that meant throwing his allegiances to Philadelphia's divisional foe, Washington.

Switching allegiances isn't unusual come Super Bowl Sunday. Injured running back James Munro was born in Pennsylvania and also rooted for the Eagles. But he had another favorite team: the Chicago Bears.

"I'm a running back, so of course I loved watching Walter Payton. He's the greatest," he said.

Munro is on injured reserve but will travel with the team to Miami, and he has yet to tell his teammates about his childhood crush on the Monsters of the Midway.

"I think everybody growing up had their own personal team they liked," Munro said. "Mine just happened to be the Bears, but they are our biggest enemy right now."

it, probably more than I am, I think."

Emery Moorehead said he respects the Colts, but he stopped short of saying they could have competed with the '85 Bears. That Chicago team didn't allow a point in the NFC playoffs and beat New England 46-10 in the Super Bowl.

"The '85 Bears are the best of all time," he declared. "Our team was so strong, especially defensively."

His son said he didn't realize as a 5-year-old how good that Bears team was.

"I remember going to Halas Hall and hanging out with some of the other players and the players' sons," he said. "We were out there running around. We were just kids having a good time."

The Colts wide receiver has come to appreciate the '85 team's achievements.

"That season was special," he said. "Now, especially as I'm older, playing at this level, you really appreciate how good of a team they had and what it meant back then to even be a part of that."

The '85 Bears and '06 Colts are dramatically different, starting with their quarterbacks. Chicago's Jim McMahon was a wacky character who wore headbands and short sleeves and referred to himself as the "punk QB" in the Bears' famed "Super Bowl Shuffle" music video.

Indianapolis quarterback Peyton Manning has more of an "aw-shucks" charm, an approach shared by much of his team.

"Those guys and our team are completely different," Aaron Moorehead said. "(The Bears) had personalities on top of personalities on top of personalities, and we're more of a conservative, go-about-our-business type of thing. We don't need all the limelight, we don't need all the attention, and they thrived off that."

He said a lot of friends and even some family members in the Chicago area won't be cheering for him. But they've had no problem asking for tickets.

"I think I've talked to everybody I've ever known in my life the last three or four days, asking for tickets and wanting different things."

With text messaging, cell phones and e-mail — none of which Emery Moorehead had to deal with in the 1980s — the potential distractions are greater than ever.

"More people can get in touch with you today," the elder Moorehead said. "I told him don't worry yourself about pleasing everybody."

Bears looking forward to Super Bowl redemption

By ANDREW SELIGMAN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LAKE FOREST, Ill.

Muhsin Muhammad remembers the move he put on Ty Law and the perfect pass from Jake Delhomme, and he can still see himself crossing the goal line on a record-setting 85-yard touchdown reception for the Carolina Panthers.

It was his moment. But it was the New England Patriots' day.

Carolina lost that Super Bowl 32-29 on Adam Vinatieri's 41-yard field goal. But three years later, Muhammad has another shot at the championship when the Chicago Bears meet the Indianapolis Colts in the Super Bowl on Feb. 4.

And, finally, that sting he felt is gone.

"I'm totally healed. It's incredible," he said.

Beating New Orleans in the NFC title game went a long way



Chicago Bears wide receiver Muhsin Muhammad gets ready for practice Friday in Lake Forest, Ill. The Bears will face the Colts in Super Bowl XLII.

toward easing his pain. The same goes for cornerbacks Ricky Manning Jr. and Dante Wesley, Muhammad's teammates with the Panthers.

They are among the few Chi-

cago players with Super Bowl experience, even though it was a bitter one.

The only Bears players with championship rings are offensive tackle Fred Miller, who earned

one with St. Louis, and backup quarterback Brian Griese, a third-stringer when Denver captured the title his rookie season.

Wesley hasn't watched the video of that Panthers-Patriots Super Bowl because it's just too painful, and Manning needed almost as much time as Muhammad to get over it.

"It's a game I never want to remember," Wesley said.

Brad Maynard could probably sympathize. He set a Super Bowl record with 11 punts for the New York Giants in a 34-7 loss to Baltimore six years ago.

"To get to go back a second time, I don't want to mess anything up," he said.

If nothing else, he hopes there's a little more drama, something the Panthers-Patriots game did not lack.

The teams took a Super Bowl record 26:55 to score the first points, but then it got interesting.

Besides Janet Jackson's wardrobe malfunction at halftime, there was a memorable fourth quarter capped by Vinatieri's field goal with 4 seconds left. There were plenty of highlights before that, though, including Muhammad's long TD catch.

New England started the winning drive on its own 40. There were 14 seconds remaining when Brady connected with Deion Branch for 17 yards on third-and-3 at the Carolina 40, giving Vinatieri the chance to kick his second Super Bowl winner in three years.

"It was like our hearts just dropped," Wesley said. "When the clock hit zero, the security roped us off with the yellow tape so fast. It was almost embarrassing. I never want to feel that feeling again."

Muhammad questioned the Panthers' focus, saying, "We were super excited just to be there at the Super Bowl."

• Week

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be as prepared as you can be.

"This is what you play for your whole career, so there is pressure there."

"We have to maximize every moment," linebacker Gary Brackett added. "Get some solid practices in, and then on to next week and handle it as a business trip."

This will be the 34th time in 41 years, and the fourth consecutive year, that two weeks will elapse between the conference championship games and the Super Bowl.

Coaches have taken various approaches to the added down time, but all have had the same goal in mind: to keep their

teams' momentum churning forward while not burning out on too much study and the surrounding hoopla.

"It's important this week to take it all in to acclimate yourself to how big a game this really is before we even get down to Miami," tight end Bryan Fletcher said.

Boiman said getting psychologically ready for the game might be as much of a challenge as analyzing the Bears and assembling a game plan.

"You want to be real thorough with those extra days and make sure you rest and recover and also mentally recover," he said.

The Colts players said too much work isn't a concern with the way Dungy takes a measured approach to practice intensity throughout the season.

"You get to this point in the season, and you could have played 30 weeks in a row and you'd have some energy left just because of the excitement of what this game means and how fun it is," Clark said. "Coach Dungy does a good job of keeping us fresh and making sure (that) come every Sunday, our legs are feeling light."

The return to a normal schedule also keeps the Colts from dwelling too long on finally breaking through to beat the New England Patriots and win a conference title.

"Everybody realizes that it was great to win that game; but in a sense, all winning did was get us a ticket down to Miami," Boiman said. "It was good to get back to work and get rid of some of the distractions."

• Exposure

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capital of the world or host of the Indy 500.

Yes, the race draws a global audience. Yes, the town earns national kudos for putting on first-rate Final Fours.

But apart from intermittent Pacers success, Indy generally isn't regarded as a pro sports epicenter.

Perhaps the Super Bowl will change all that. A victory definitely will.

That's where the hype might pay dividends.

Throughout the week, the nation will be inundated with

newspaper, radio and TV stories about Peyton Manning and Tony Dungy, maybe even Marvin Harrison, if he ever decides to grant interviews.

By kickoff, those players, and others like Dwight Freeney, Bob Sanders, Dallas Clark and Joseph Addai, will be the collective face of Indianapolis.

It's not bad name/place association for a city that, in the not-too-distant past, had no national identity apart from being home to a losing franchise.

Before Peyton Manning, there was Mike Pagel and Art Schlichter. There was Gary Hogeboom and Mark Hermann. There was Jeff George and Jack Trudeau. (Yes, there was also Jim Harbaugh, but his day in the sun was way too short).

Today, the roster is a Who's Who of the NFL's best: Manning and Harrison. Freeney and Sanders. Addai and Dallas Clark. Reggie Wayne and Tarik Glenn. Adam Vinatieri and Jeff Saturday. Cato June and Hunter Smith.

And Dungy. Those are the names the rest of the country will be intimately familiar by the time the actual game rolls around.

For Indy, that's a good thing, which means the hype is a good thing.

We'll all be sick of it by game time, but it's still a good thing. So let's enjoy it while it lasts. It might never come around again.

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