

September 2022



"It's your New York!"

The Rondout Reader

BIRTH OF A NATION



1963-1977

AN INDELIBLE SCRAPBOOK

by Kevin Ahearn

1



A League of Their Own

The RONDOUT READER is legend.
All references to actual persons, alive
or dead, made for a good story.



"Lead me, follow me, or get out of my way."



"I would be willing, yes glad, to see a battle every day during my life."



"I have the strength to endure it all."



I've loved football all my life. To get to the top, I started at the bottom.

It is painful to remember and impossible to believe that at the end of the 1962 season, the 1-13 **Oakland Raiders** were the worst team in professional football. The year before they had lost their first two games by a combined score of 99-0!

Nine wins and thirty-three losses in their first three years of existence.

The organization was in even worse shape. Home field was a 20,000-seat dump named after a local funeral director. The ticket office was a shack and we practiced on a high school field.



How many games the **Raiders** would *play* in 1963 depended on whether or not the league survived.



An ambitious group of millionaires founded the **American Football League**. Soon they called themselves 'the foolish club' because they were losing so much money.

They weren't the first to challenge the NFL.



The **All-America Football Conference (AAFC)**, an eight-team league began playing in 1946, recruiting a number of **NFL** stars. But the **AAFC** never measured up and folded after the 1949 season. Only three of its franchises were allowed to join the **NFL**.



The 'foolish club' had the money, but not yet the players to compete. The **AFL** had three years to rise to the **NFL**'s level; that's when the TV money ran out.

Would any of the **AFL**'s eight originals ever make it to the **NFL**? If only one team survived, the initial investment would still pay huge dividends.

In this age of exploding media, a powerhouse team of relentless pressure in a 'GO! Go! Go!' style that's utterly demoralizing to opponents could generate a worldwide fan base and gross...in ticket sales, TV rights, and merchandizing: **billions!**

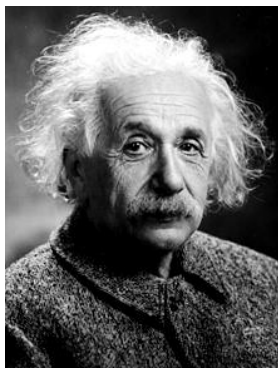
The **Raiders** needed an identity, an image, a *mystique*...



The **AFL** was made up of 7 Dr. Jekyll's. My **Raiders** would be Mr. Hyde.



I'd paid my dues, and did a few don'ts, coaching in college and in the military. I was 24 when I got my first pro job with Sid Gillman, the 'Einstein' of the vertical passing game.



"Attitude is the whole thing in football."

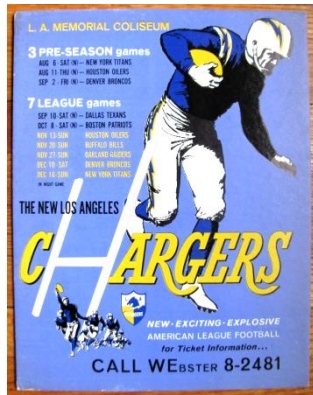
I'm married with a young son. But before I proposed to beautiful Carolee, I needed more important answers.

"I'm going to do football," I told her. "Do you want to come along? Are you sure you can handle it?"



"Yes!"

Till Death do us part!



Barron Hilton did not name his team after 'a string of *poloponies*'; he ran the new *Carte Blanche* credit card company and wanted every American to become a 'charger'.

Raiders' owners Wayne Valley and former MLB outfielder Ed McGah got permission to talk to me. I was thirty-three.



"Get the kid. That's what we want and that's what we need."

They offered me a one-year deal.



"Thanks, but no thanks!"

We agreed on a three-year contract. As coach and general manager, I'd get \$22,500 a year. Infinitely more important: I had total control.

These would be *my Raiders!*



"Al Davis is my model for running a football franchise."

I'm a New Yorker who grew up in awe of Yankee power and prestige, Dodger speed and guts. Combine those ingredients in one team...



Contract in hand, my life became a quest to build the greatest organization in all of sports.

Good thing I kept my quarterback. Cut by both the National and Canadian leagues, there was a fire in his gut. A born **Raider**, one day he'd have half my job.



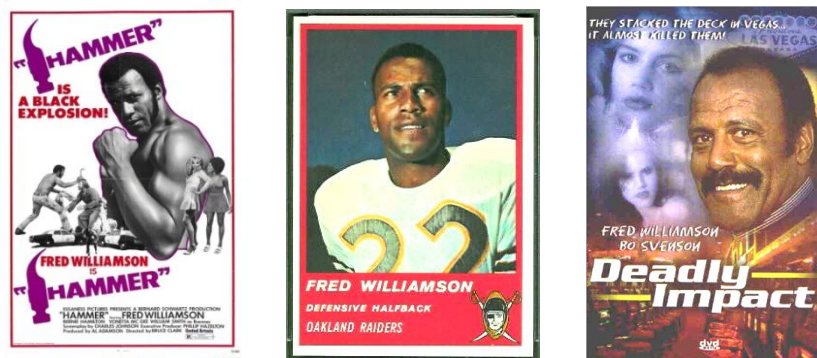
"It's always been a tradition of the Raiders to keep former players and coaches involved in the game."

My young center showed promise.



"It was terrible. We practiced on lots with rocks and broken glass. There was no organization, no leadership. Then Davis came in...and got it done, ...the whole shebang."

And a DB who wanted a different kind of fame.



"Television is a medium because anything well done is rare."

The rest of the western division came dressed in colors fit for a three-ring rodeo.



My **Raiders** would be *going to war!* And we would dress for it. Our uniforms, above all: *sinister*.. Not black-and-gold leftovers from the local high school.

I'm a Brooklyn Jew. Not practicing, but I'll give my son Mark a helluva *bar mitzvah*. I love history, but my passion was battlefield tactics.

Not about politics, "good guys vs. bad guys" – I studied *winners!* What gave them the edge? From the Roman short sword to the panzers' prime advantage – the *radio!*. The French were still using signal flags.



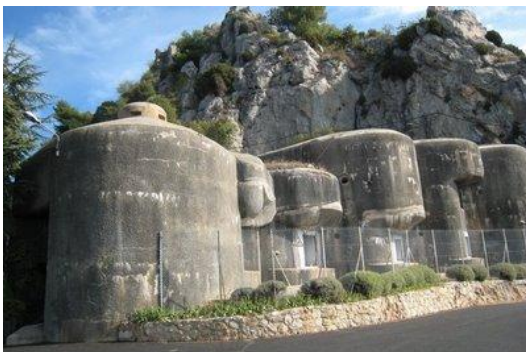
The state of Pro Football in 1963 was not unlike Europe in 1940.



The French had a huge army with thousands of cannons.



The heaviest tanks and a modern air force.



Defended by the Maginot Line, 'The Shield of France'.

May 10, 1940...



Blitzkrieg! Combining speed, power and teamwork, on the ground and in the air, the innovative Germans swept away the outdated French!

That's the battle my **Raiders** would be fighting.



But *not* in US Army colors. 'The Black Knights of the Hudson' were a three-time national champion. But since WW II, West Point was no longer a power. The worst a team can be: 'used to be great'.

Never my **Raiders!**

Besides, Black and Gold were **Steelers'** colors, a bunch of losers almost as bad as the **Raiders** 'used to be'.



"Once I had a steel job for half of a day. I never went back to collect my pay."

I chose **Raider** colors to be *sinister* and *intimidating!* And I didn't have to look far.

Mercilessly trained, superbly equipped, and ruthlessly led, the most intimidating force in history terrorized everything they touched.



*"I don't want to be the most respected team in the league.
I want to be the most feared.*

"Oh, I know what you're thinking!"



"I find your lack of faith disturbing."

In 1957, I saw business in the 'Borscht Belt' fly south - Jewish New Yorkers becoming American Jews in Florida! That same year, NY baseball flew west. Much has been written and filmed on both migrations. Truth be told, no one was going anywhere without the advent of the Boeing 707.



Jet engines, swept wings - One guess where they come from. If the US Government and private American industry can take full advantage of German technology, then I can appropriate their fashion sense!

The media would never get it; I gave them my 'Black Knights of the Hudson' spiel.

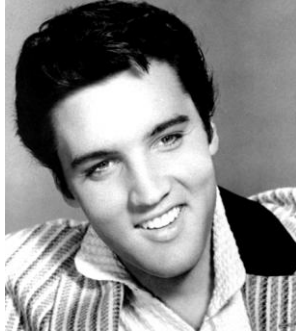


"The greatness of the Raiders is their future."

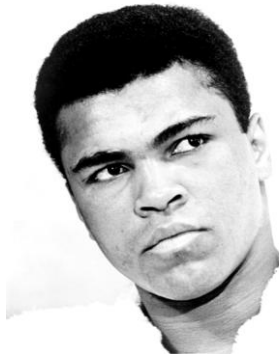
2



**COMMITMENT TO
EXCELLENCE**



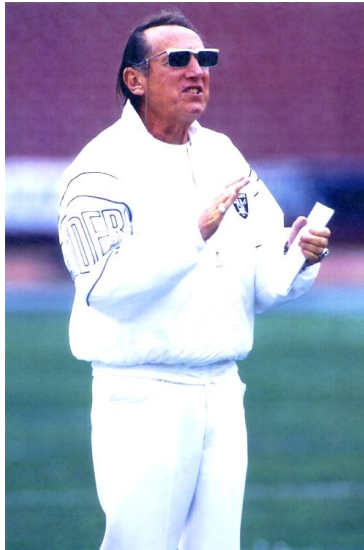
"Ambition is a dream with a V8 engine."



*"I know where I'm going and I know the truth,
and I don't have to be what you want me to be.
I'm free to be what I want."*

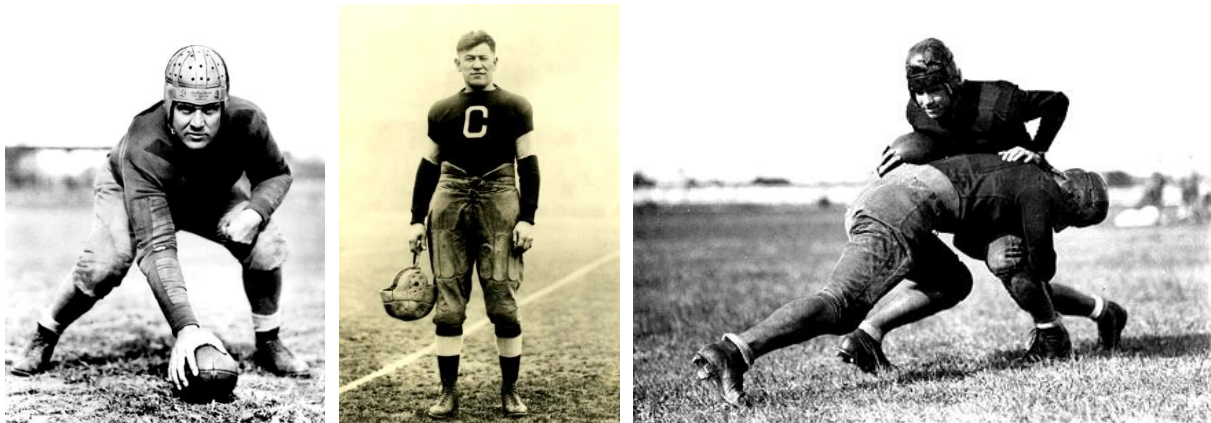


*"A man deserves a second chance,
but keep an eye on him."*



The **American Football League** would soon be history if it didn't make any.

The **National Football League** had plenty, starting in 1920 in Canton Ohio with the **American Professional Football Conference**, a collection of 18 teams in disarray with Jim Thorpe as president.



"How could anyone get hurt playing football?"

Two years later, the 22-team league became the **National Football League**. Because of the Depression, by 1932 only 8 were left.

Not until 1943 were helmets mandatory. Following WW II, the refs started using whistles, rather than *horns*.

In 1948, the **NFL** had been split into two divisions. Not all were here to stay; the Boston **Yanks** would soon disappear, the last **NFL** team to fail.



Television saved the sport. In 1951, the LA **Rams** were the first to televise all their games, home and away. The rest were soon to follow.

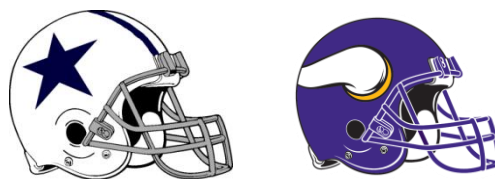
Finally, the **NFL** was financially secure, but what the league needed to make was *news*.

Before a nationwide audience, and a frantic Yankee Stadium crowd, the 1958 **NFL** Championship Game went into overtime. And mesmerized the country.



"The Greatest Game Ever Played"

Full of confidence, and backed by TV, the **NFL** added a new team in 1960, and another in 1961.



In 1963, the **American Football League** was barely surviving. The new **Cowboys** drove the **Texans** out of Dallas. They became the **Kansas City Chiefs**.



The **Titans** (*Bigger than **Giants***) under new management, were renamed after the planes landing at nearby LaGuardia Airport or that *West Side Story* streetgang.



*"When you're a **Jet**, you're a **Jet** all the way."*

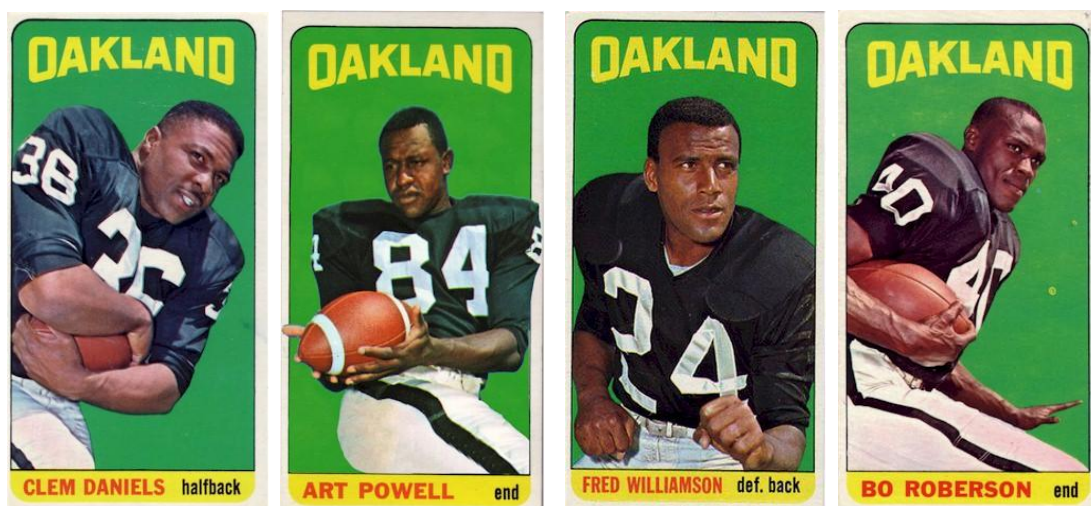
In 1963, the **AFL** had 8 teams: none wanted to be the next **Boston Yanks**.





The only history the **Raiders** had was a string of embarrassing routs. For the team to fully establish itself, we had to have a 'signature game.'

A couple of days before a pre-season game against the **Jets**, four of my best players came into my office and declared that they would *not* play.



The stakes were high. This was a crucial exhibition game. The **AFL** would be premiering in the Deep South, at Mobile, Alabama. Who are these **Raiders** to say they weren't playing?

This was my opportunity to show my team, the league and all of pro football, who the leader of the **Oakland Raiders** was.

Not the first time my players had threatened to strike.



In 1953, the Korean War raging, I was drafted. My football skills were highly valued and through connections, as a buck private I was assigned as the new coach at Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

I started from scratch, even choosing uniform designs as I put together a complete organization.

Most of the players were older and outranked me. A number complained that they hadn't practiced this hard in college.

Finally, a group confronted me.

"Ease up," they demanded. "Or we're going on strike!"

"You have a choice," I told them pointblank. "You can play or you can be shipped to Korea."

They played, and won and finished 8-2-1, the best **Engineers'** record in years.



"What's your beef with Mobile?" I asked the four **Raiders**.

"The stadium is segregated," said one.

"Whites sit here," added another. "Blacks over there."

This time around, the choice was mine.

I called the league commissioner immediately.

"The **Oakland Raiders** will never play in a segregated stadium," I told him.
"Never!"

The **AFL** switched the site; before I'd coached my first game, the **Raiders** had taken a stand, and made it stick.

September, 7th, 1963...



A grand opening in Canton, Ohio, more than a thousand miles away. Would a **Raider** ever get there?

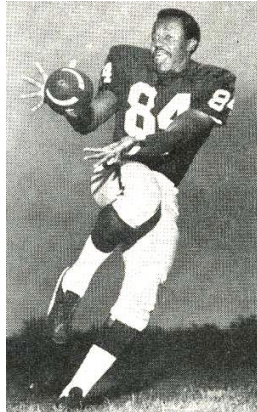
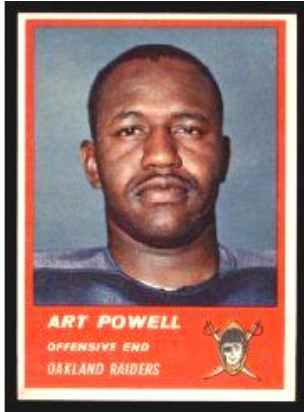
November 23rd, 1963...

The President is assassinated!



Like Kennedy, **AFL** Commissioner Joe Foss had been a WW II combat hero. I told him the **Raiders** would not play, *period*. Pete Rozelle, a lawyer and bean counter, ordered the **NFL** to play all games as scheduled. I never let him forget it.

For the first time in **Raiders'** history, we had a winning season, thanks to...



"Al Davis allowed me flexibility, to reach my peak."

And...

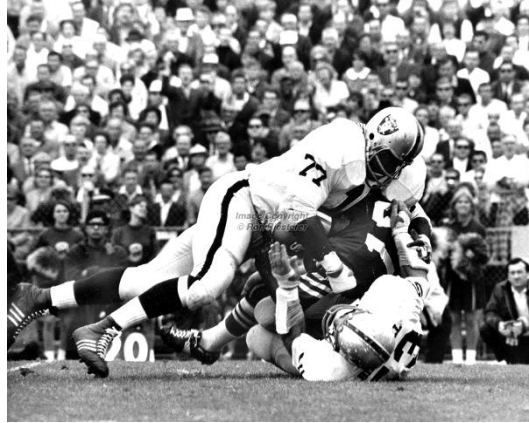


"There's a special mentality among Raiders in terms of a winning attitude."

'Think touchdown!' I stressed the 'vertical game'. *Intimidate* the defense, stretch the field, that on any play, the **Raiders** would go for it all.



And pushed the pass rush.



**THE QUARTERBACK MUST GO DOWN.
AND HE MUST GO DOWN HARD.**

From 1-13 to 10-4! The biggest turnaround in pro football history, one game short of the playoffs. I was named 'coach of the year'.



*"The fire that burns brightest in the **Raiders'** organization is the will to win."*



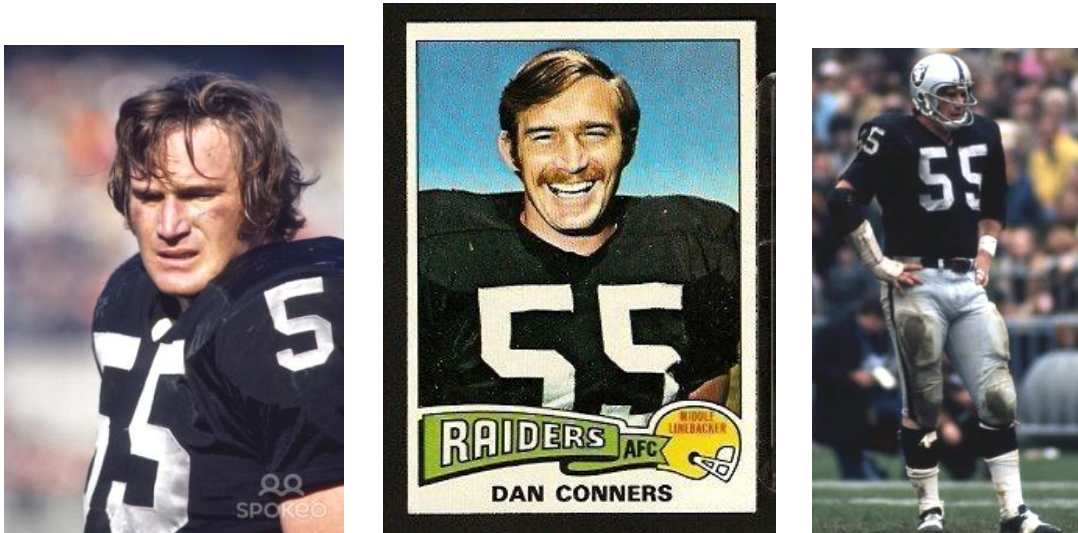
**Sports
Illustrated**

*"...Everything has been beautiful since Al Davis came to town...New coaches are an old story in Oakland--four in four years--this one seems different. He sometimes wins, or at least the players he coaches win, and winning is completely foreign to anything the **Oakland Raiders** have done before."*

We were just getting started.

Coaching is *teaching*, a mix of information and inspiration, treating men as they want to be treated. Only one kind of player on my team; you're a **Raider** or get the hell out of here!

The first draft choice I ever signed played ten years for us and made the **AFL** All-Star team three times.

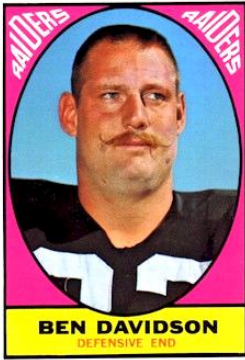


"Once a **Raider**, always a **Raider**."

The riskiest move in pro football is to trade for a veteran quarterback. And I always had a soft spot for Heisman Trophy winners. To get one, I had given my first round draft choice to the **Chiefs**; Ernie Ladd became a Hall of Famer.



Just because a player is cut by another team doesn't mean he can't be a **Raider**. After terrorizing every quarterback in the **AFL**, 'Gentle Ben' took on 'Conan the Barbarian'!



We started the 1964 season 1-7-1. Then things got worse.

My office was open to any **Raider** for any reason. 'You got a problem, you tell me first.'

A player came in to tell me that the night before, a white **Raider** had called out a black **Raider** for being with a *white woman*. There was almost a full-scale riot.

I'd run into this mindset recruiting at USC.

'How could you bring them here?' said an outraged booster. "A Jew and a black!"

Ron Mix and Willie Wood were *American* football players.



I called a team meeting.

"I will not have this bullshit in this organization. If you're doing shit like this, not only are you off the **Raiders**, I'll get your ass out of football!"

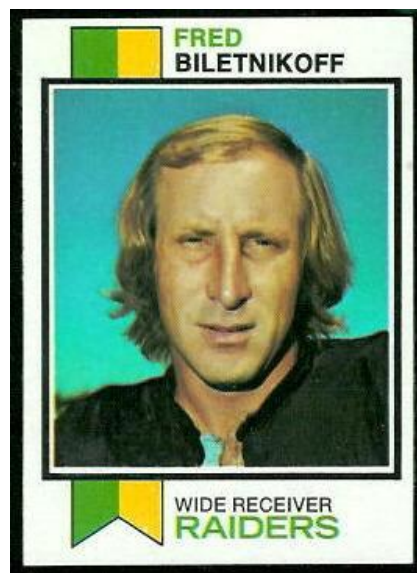
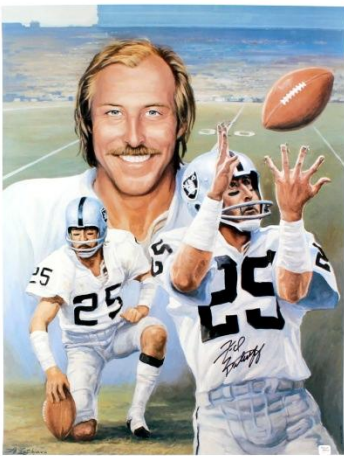


Congress had just passed the Civil Rights Act, but America had yet to catch up to the **American Football League**.

We finished the season going 4-1-1, but it was hardly enough. The **Raiders** had yet to make the playoffs.

Back in Brooklyn we played 'Sa-Lu-Gee', everywhere else called 'Keep Away' or 'Monkey in the Middle'. To sign college players coming out, the **AFL** had to play 'Sa-Lu-Gee' with the **NFL** scouts. And we were winning!

I signed one guy under the goalpost after a bowl game.



"If Al wanted to do it, he went and got it done."

In 1965, we had an 8-5-1 record. Still not good enough to get to the post season.



The **AFL** and the **NFL** added one new team each, both to begin play next season.

In three years, my coaching record was 23-16-3, not good enough for the **Raiders**, nowhere near good enough for *me*!

The **Raiders** were *my* team! Maybe I ought to hire a better coach?



The 'foolish club' had a plan of their own...

In 1950, my first coaching job at Adelphi on Long Island paid \$4,600 a year. Well, this 'Big Apple' boy has come home to sign a five-year \$250,000 contract.



The **American Football League** named me *commissioner*!

“Keep your eye on the eagle!”

3



COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF



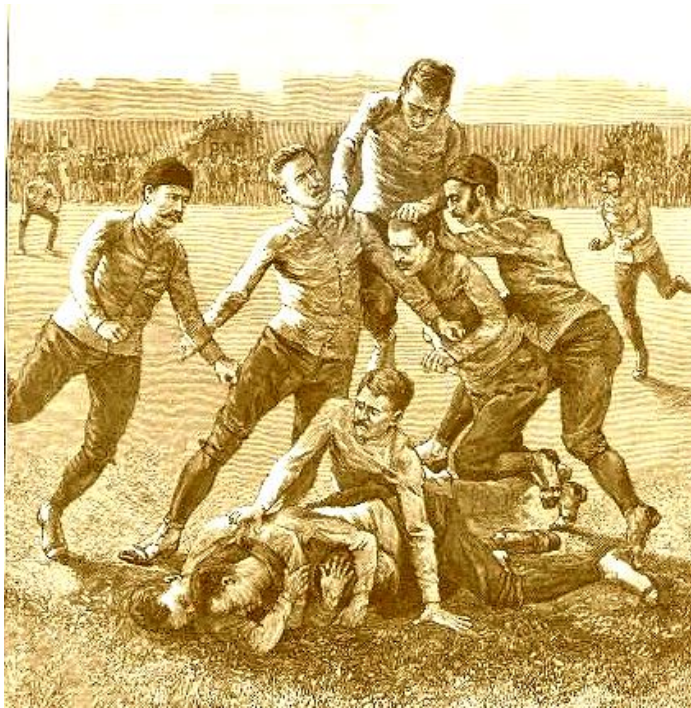
"We are going to have peace even if we have to fight for it."



"You must not fight too often with one enemy, or you will teach him all your art of war."



"When you can't make them see the light, make them feel the heat."



Football is organized combat. As hard as I lifted weights, as many miles as I ran, I was never strong enough or fast enough to be a 'soldier' at the front. But I could *organize*, I could *study* the game. My goal: to assemble and lead a *dominant* football team.

Right after I got out of the Army, Carolee and I got married. I'd built up a file on players I'd coached and played against, and used the info to land a job scouting for the **Baltimore Colts**. There I got to know Weeb Ewbank and hoped to connect with other coaches.



"Davis was one of forty."

I got hired by The Citadel in South Carolina as an assistant coach because they were desperate; last season the **Bulldogs** lost every game.



Coaching begins with recruiting and this fast-talking New Yorker would come on to these small-town stars and convince them that their glorious football future would begin at a regimental university.

My post during games was not on the sidelines. I called the plays from the press box. I felt like a second lieutenant. We had a winning season 5-4!

In 1965 the **Bulldogs** dropped to 3-5 and the head coach resigned. I thought my way was clear - head coach at a military academy! I'd be a leader, a field grade officer!

The Citadel wouldn't have me, citing 'allegations' of payments and 'other benefits to players and pressure on professors to change grades to keep student-athletes eligible to play football.'

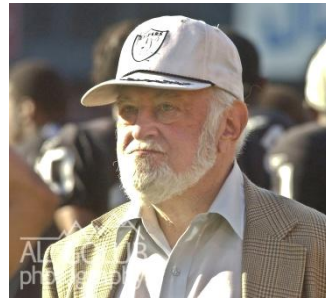
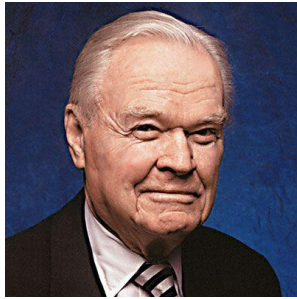
Anti-Semitism? I could have sued, but I had already set up my next job at USC.

In 1960, as an assistant coach, I got in on the ground floor of the **American Football League**. Half a dozen years later, I became the commissioner. I felt like MacArthur running the Korean War. My name was on the ball!



"We are not retreating - we are advancing in another direction."

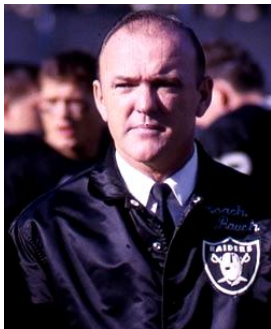
The **AFL** was whipping the **NFL** in recruiting players because we played a better, more exciting game of football and a sneakier style of 'Sa-Lu-Gee'. We'd hide players and the **NFL** wouldn't find them until *after* we had signed them.



"No Brooklyn hoodlum is going to tell me how to run the National Football League."

"The NFL fired a pistol shot. Davis responded with a machinegun."

I returned to Oakland briefly. I'd promoted my assistant, John Rauch, a former player and college coach, to head coach. Bill Walsh came on and learned a lot.



At last, the **Raiders** would be playing in a *stadium*, the brand new Oakland Coliseum. The only hassle: we'd be sharing the field with the newly arrived **A's** and have to play over the baseball diamond for half the season.

I hired veteran announcer Bill King because he looked and sounded like a pirate. And our beautiful **Raidettes** who always looked prettier when we were winning.



The **Oakland Raiders** as entertainment! Win, lose or tie, we're going to be the best *television* team in professional football.

A merger was in the air. But it would not be the **AFL** who blinked. We kicked the **NFL's** ass on all fronts!

And I thought I'd enjoy the power and prestige of being **AFL** Commissioner. A grandiose title and a fancy office-- a damn desk job. How would George Patton have felt, stuck in the Pentagon?

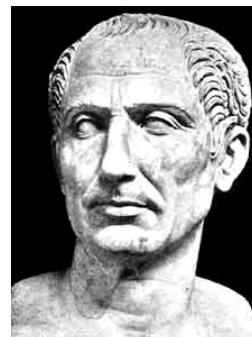
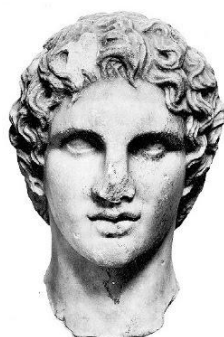
June 8, 1966...



The merger got done behind my back and I was pissed. We had to pay the **NFL** \$20 million in 'reparations' as if we had lost the war. We won and I wouldn't have given them a dime.

The commissioner of the combined leagues would be Pete Rozelle. I could have hung around, but I was never going to be somebody's 'assistant' ever again. The **Jets** and the **Colts** offered me general manager positions. I turned them down.

Truth was, I loved the **Raiders**. I went back to Oakland as a general manager and became part *owner*. 10% for \$18,000. The best American investment since Alaska! I was the general partner in charge of football operations.



"Just win, baby!"

Under Coach Rauch, we finished 8-5-1, the same record as my last coaching year. The **Raiders** still could not get to the playoffs.



First World Championship Game **AFL** vs **NFL**

LOS ANGELES MEMORIAL COLISEUM • JANUARY 15, 1967



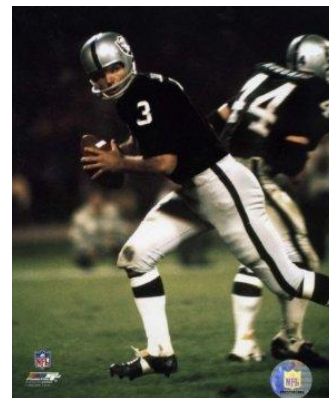
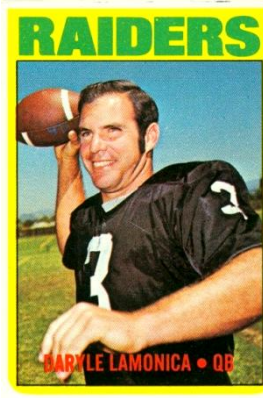
This was the battle the **AFL** had fought to fight, to prove to the country and to ourselves that we could compete with the **NFL**. And we got beat. The **Chiefs** kept it close for a half, but the **Packers** pulled away and coasted.

Rozelle and staff gloated; the **AFL** just wasn't good enough.

Not yet.

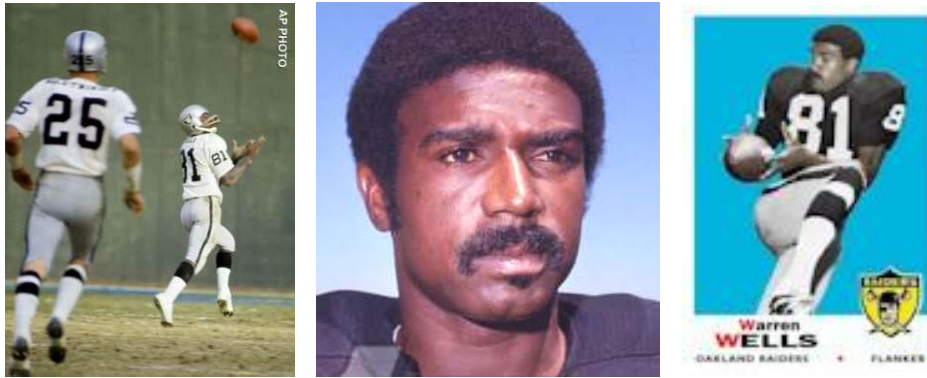
A coach can turn a team around, but only to a point. It's the general manager's and owner's job to get them to the top.

I traded two proven veterans for the Buffalo Bill's back-up quarterback, a Notre Dame grad. This time I got it right.



"Mr. Davis' knowledge of the game is shocking,"

The first great wide receiver to wear **81** was Warren Wells. A 'deep threat' on every down, he could beat every DB who ever played, but not alcoholism and Synanon which ruined his career and his life.



"Just throw the ball as far as you can and I'll run under it."

A trade with the **Broncos** helped us turn another corner.



"The Raiders against the world. That's how we took it."

My first round draft choice:



"The offensive line was like Paul Revere's horse, whose name we never knew. If not for that horse, we'd have never heard of Paul Revere either."

Any time you can get a player that can do *two* players' jobs, you grab him. A back-up quarterback and fieldgoal kicker, 'The Grand Old Man' had led the **Houston Oilers** to two **AFL** championships.

Thirty-nine years of age - Got him on waivers for \$100.

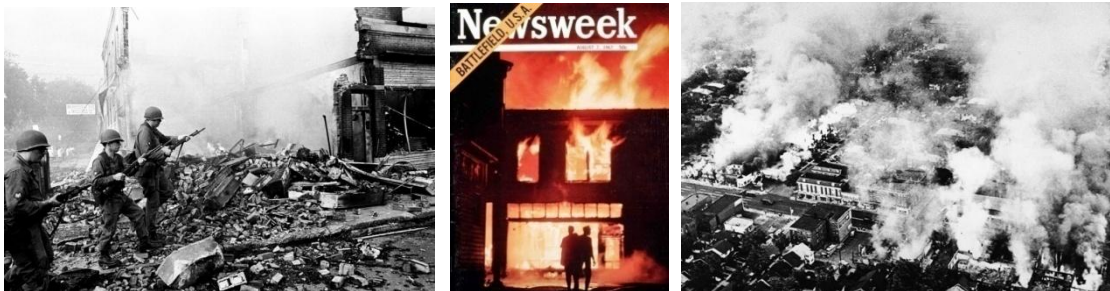


"The thing is that by the time I finished playing, I was too old to be starting out as a coach."

Yet another new team joined the **NFL**:



July 23, 1967...



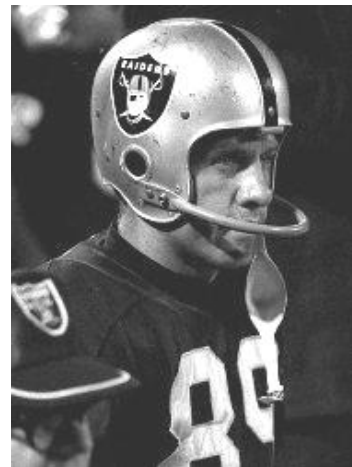
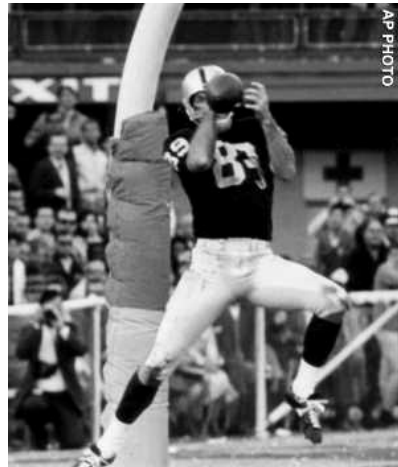
I called the team together. America's coming apart, but we're sticking together. Not about black and white. We **Raiders** are *Silver and Black!*

On October 7, the undefeated **Raiders** faced the **Jets** and my former mentor in New York, Pete Rozelle's headquarters. I wanted to win this game to show the **NFL** and the nation, coast-to-coast, that the **Oakland Raiders** were going to be champions!

We got beat, but it would be the team's only loss in 1967. Now it was our turn to face the **Green Bay Packers** as two-touchdown underdogs.



It's not that we didn't win the game; we were never *in* the game. Two late touchdowns failed to make us respectable.



What galled me most were the *pre-game intros*. CBS was the loyal **NFL** channel. There was Frank Gifford, the **Giants'** great, greeting Lombardi like he was a football deity. After Lombardi shook Gifford's hand, my coach put out his hand...and Gifford turned away.



That **NFL** snub symbolized the on-field futility of the **AFL**.

This was war and we lost it. We were on an urgent, even desperate mission, and we weren't mentally prepared to play the best team in football.

Back to work.

In their search for new young **Raiders**, which included small black colleges coast to coast, my tireless, secretive and inquisitive scouts have been compared to the CIA. I prefer the **Mossad** model.



"By way of deception, thou shalt make war."

And I hate racial myths, the worst being that a black man 'lacks the intellectual capacity' to be a professional; quarterback. So-called 'experts' keep a list of black 'busts'. Of course, if they ever gathered all the white QBs who failed... 'There's a traffic jam in Harlem that's backed up to Jackson Heights!'

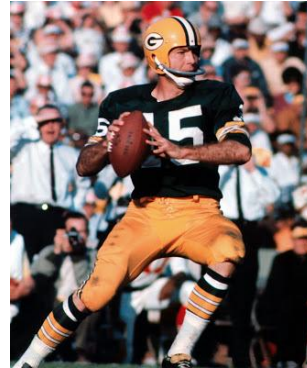
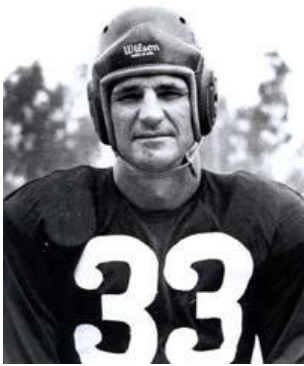
As part owner and general manager of the **American Football League** champions, my first choice in the 1968 combined **NFL/AFL** draft: Eldridge Dickey of Tennessee State.



"Coach Davis knocked down doors!"

Dickey had the physical tools. He also had 'athleticsm', a racial knock meaning that if a black can't figure out where and whom to pass the ball to, he can use his speed to run.

That's why we have running backs! Great QBs who rarely 'scrambled' had 'quarterbackism'.

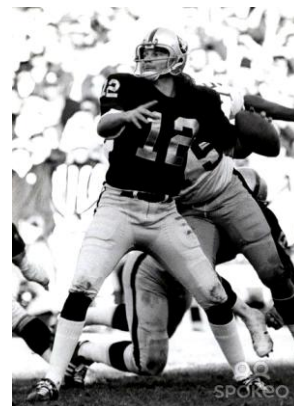
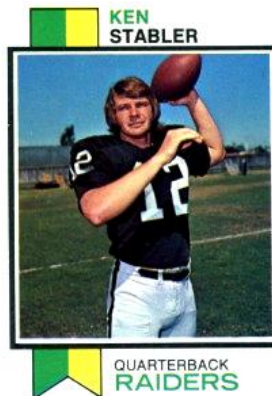
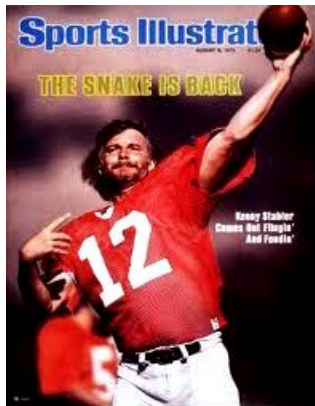


"The key is consistency."

Beyond dropping back, deciding and delivering the ball accurately to the right receiver, did this young man have that 'intangible' that would make him a champion?

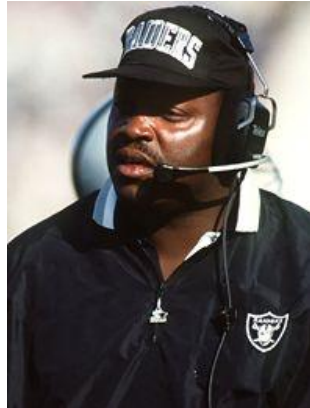
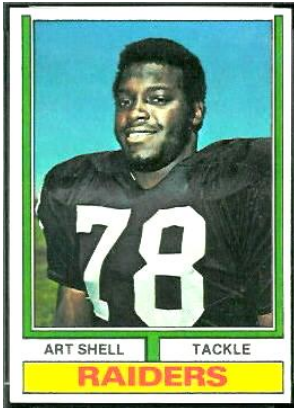
I drafted an Alabama QB number two. A fierce competitor, he could also interpret Jack London's poetry:

*"I would rather be ashes than dust,
I would rather my spark should burn out in a brilliant blaze,
Than it should be stifled in dry rot.
I would rather be a superb meteor,
With every atom of me in magnificent glow,
Than a sleepy and permanent planet."*



"Go deep!"

Our third pick...



*"God was great to me and I'm honored to say that I am a **Raider.**"*

Across the country, another draft wasn't going well.



"...It is increasingly clear to this reporter that the only rational way out then will be to negotiate, not as victors, but as an honorable people who lived up to their pledge to defend democracy, and did the best they could."

The Civil Rights Movement was gaining overdue momentum.



I soon understood that the **Oakland Raiders** had become more than a team, more than an organization, the **Raiders** were my *life*, and my every waking hour would be spent in my quest to create the finest team and the greatest organization all of sports has ever known.

In my tunnel-vision, I caught only quick glimpses of the outside world, I was no longer part of society. For as long as I live, I *am* the **Oakland Raiders!**

The **AFL** 'Game of the Year' fell on November, 17th, 1968 versus the **New York Jets** at home. The Coliseum filled to the brim. At 9-1-1, the **Raiders** were 10-point favorites.

(Everybody checked the Vegas spread. for *anomalies* that could tip off a fix.)



The game was a classic passing duel. Six times the lead changed hands. But with a minute and change left, a field goal put the **Jets** ahead.

The fans back east were overjoyed. Then suddenly...We got the ball back, and two passes got us a quick touchdown. When the **Jets** fumbled the kick-off we scored again, two TDs in nine seconds, and won 43-32.

But the East Coast never saw it. By corporate contract, at exactly 7 PM...



"My gravestone is gonna say, 'She was a great moment in sports.'"

On came *Heidi* as scheduled. Within seconds, NBC was bombarded with more than 10,000 calls, made headlines and offered a lame apology.

The *Heidi* game proved that America cared about the **AFL**, including my hometown.

To add New York insult to injury...



"If you had the Jets and ten...you lost!"

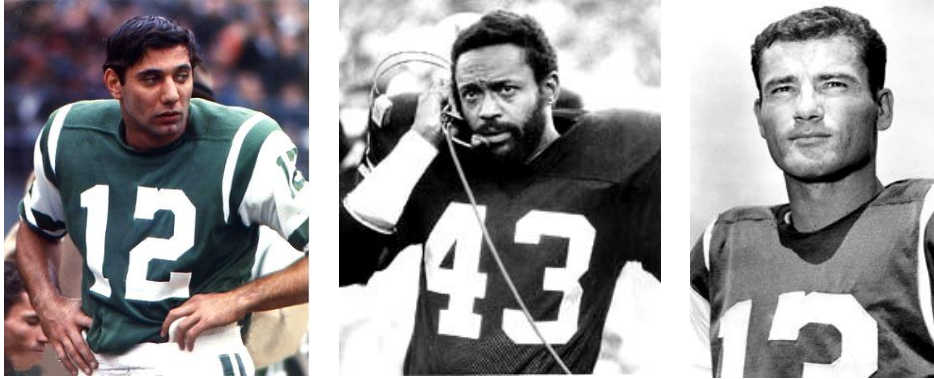
We finished the season 12-2, then destroyed the **Kansas City Chiefs** in the first round of the playoffs. The **AFL Championship Game** everybody wanted was set: Us vs. the **New York Jets**.

But no *Heidi* 'rerun'; the game was *blacked out* in 'fun city'. NBC played...



Short-sighted fools! Not if I were still running the **AFL**.

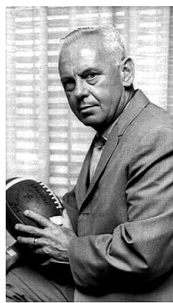
Before 70,000 screaming fans, this championship battle was near Biblical, as if only God Himself would decide the victor, the last team to touch the ball.



"Who are you callin' 'The Pigeon'?"

And it was going to be the **Oakland Raiders!** Late in the fourth quarter, we trailed 27-23, but driving, and the **Jets** couldn't stop us.

Lamonica threw a short swing pass to Charlie Smith in the flat, when suddenly...*Divine intervention?*



dayala0216c fotosearch.com

A gust of wind caught the ball in mid-air and pushed it back, turning an incomplete pass into a *lateral*. The **Jets** pounced on it and won the game.

AFL Commissioner *Milt Woodard's* name was on the ball.



The loss to the Jets had been heartbreaking, but as it turned out, the *best thing* to ever happen to the **Oakland Raiders**. In 1965, had Namath signed with the St. Louis Cardinals and not the Jets, the American Football League may not have lasted another season. And I into the 'dustbin of history.'

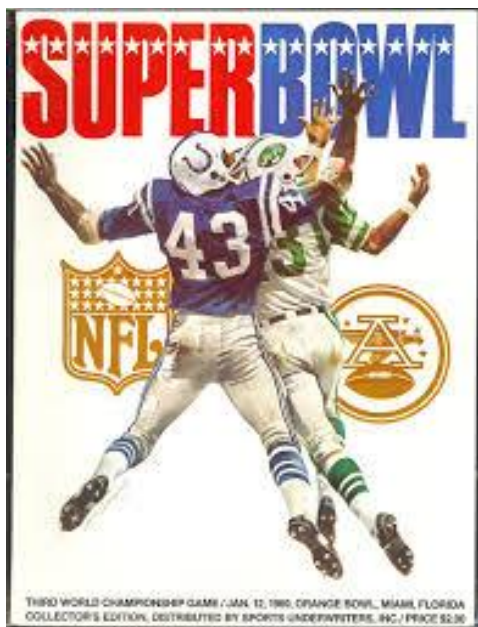


"The Colts will beat the Jets by three touchdowns."



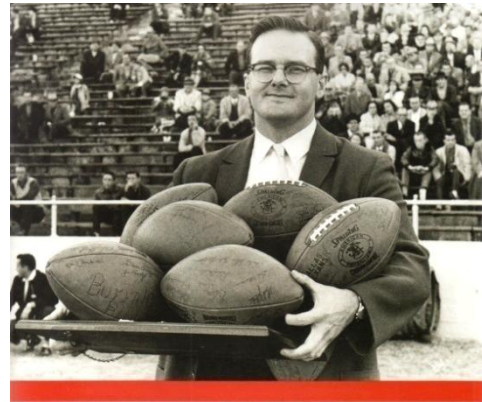
"I make the Jets 19 1/2 point underdogs!"

In the short history of the **AFL**, the league's finest play happened not on the field or in the locker room or in court, but right out in the open-- the confidence and the bravado of the **American Football League**.



"We're gonna win the game. I guarantee it!"

Daring entrepreneurs founded professional football.



Great players changed the game.



'Broadway Joe' was the *star* who made the league.



"If you aren't going all the way, why go at all?"

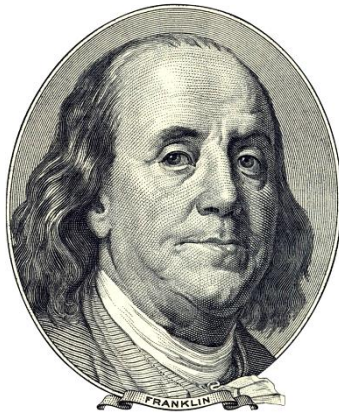
4



Unity



“R-E-S-P-E-C-T
Find out what it means to me”



*"We must, indeed, all hang together or,
most assuredly, we shall all hang separately."*



*"We may have all come on different ships,
but we're in the same boat now."*



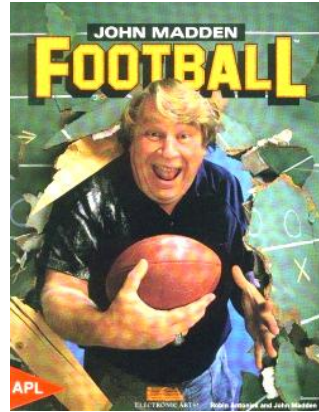
Many 'small steps' taken, this was the year the **Raiders** would make 'one giant leap' and place our footprints in the Super Bowl!



I told the staff first, that John Rauch had left for Buffalo, that I would be hiring a new head coach and if anyone were interested he 'should come and see me.'

Choosing a franchise coach is as difficult, as crucial, and as risky as choosing a franchise quarterback. Is this guy going to lead us to a championship? Wind up with anybody less, and you're stuck with the wrong guy.

As **AFL** Commissioner I had taken a close overview of both leagues. All of the good ones were taken or too expensive or wanted too much control. Then my offensive line coach came to see me.

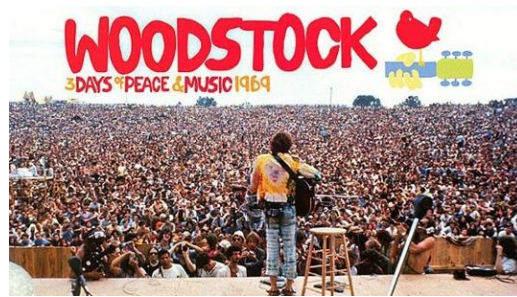
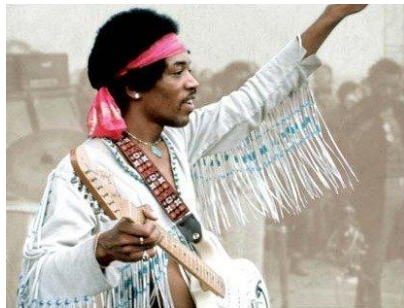


"I always felt I was the luckiest guy in the world."

I hired John Madden because he was John Madden, a man who knew the game, loved it and could smile and wave his hands and make the whole world believe.

Not telling, *selling*. I bought in and so did the team.

The Star Spangled Banner that starts football games...



Finished a festival.

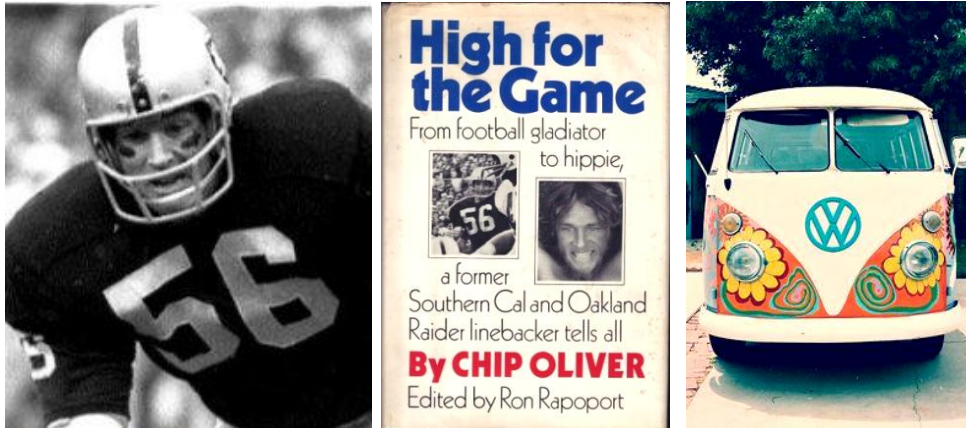
The **Raiders** had come a long way from **AFL** embarrassment, and the journey to a world championship...suddenly, miraculously, was no longer an 'impossible dream'.



*"If the **Mets** can win the World Series, anything is possible, even peace."*

- Madden had just three rules:
1. BE ON TIME.
 2. PAY ATTENTION.
 3. PLAY LIKE HELL!

Not everyone bought in.



"I didn't want to be another slab of beef."

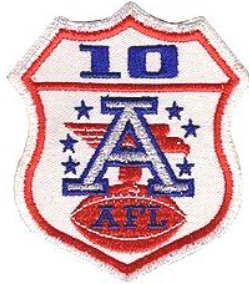
Early on in camp, one of our linebackers left us flat. Tired of the pro football establishment, he'd been living in his Volkswagen van for a time, parked in the Coliseum. He hopped in, and drove away heading north, a 'hippie hero' in search of his different destiny.

Sports Illustrated celebrated the fashion style of pro football coaches. Upon seeing John...



"The hamper look."

This would be the final year of the **AFL**, the last game to be Super Bowl IV on January, 7th, 1970. And the **Oakland Raiders** aimed to win it!



Not everyone thought we'd even get there. Charlie Jones, one of the original **AFL** announcers, made a bold pronouncement....



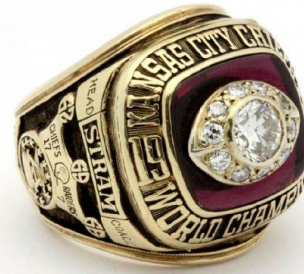
*"There's only one team in football that can beat the **Kansas City Chiefs**
...the **Kansas City Chiefs** themselves!"*

We beat them *twice*, and finished 12-1-1. After routing the **Houston Oilers** in the first round of the playoffs, we got the 11-3-0 **Chiefs** in the Oakland Coliseum.

On a beautiful Sunday for football, before 50,000 loyal fans, we lost.



Twelve and a half point underdogs, the **Chiefs** won the Super Bowl.



"Football has few secrets. So execute."

A new pro football age dawned in 1970. In negotiating the merger, the **NFL** wanted to keep a 16-10 split. I told them, "It's 13-13 or we're outa here."

Which meant that the **NFL** had to give the new **American Football Conference** three teams. We wanted the best *stadiums*. After a lengthy back and forth we got the **Baltimore Colts**, still a strong team, the **Cleveland Browns**, with a proud tradition, and last and not least, the dregs of professional football, the **Pittsburgh Steelers**.



The country had other concerns...

May 4, 1970...



"Four dead in O-Hi-O."

I am proud to be in football all my life because America loves and needs this game, to root for your team! After coping with all the good and bad life deals out, there's a place to escape...To root for *my Oakland Raiders!*

And root for something else...Not for a color or a race or creed or national origin, root for America. That's what *Americans* do!



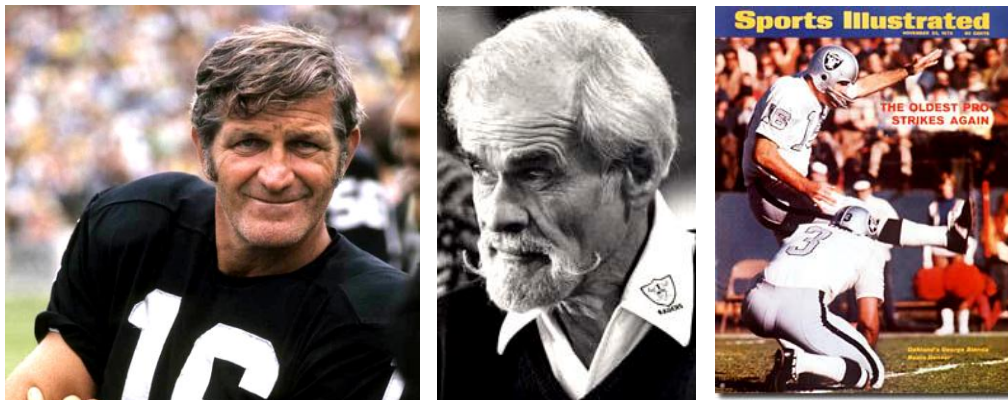
CBS and NBC had taken over the weekend. ABC got the leftovers few thought would last.



"He could go all the way!"

The Oakland **Raiders** didn't adjust to the new show, we would *dominate* it!

The year belonged to the 'Grand Old Man' who'd come off the bench late to win us game after game.



"George Blanda is king of the world!"

We went 8-4-2, beat the **Dolphins** in the playoffs, then played the **Colts** in the first **American Football Conference** Championship Game.

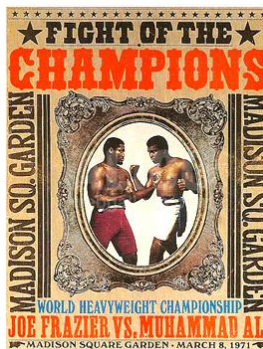
We lost.



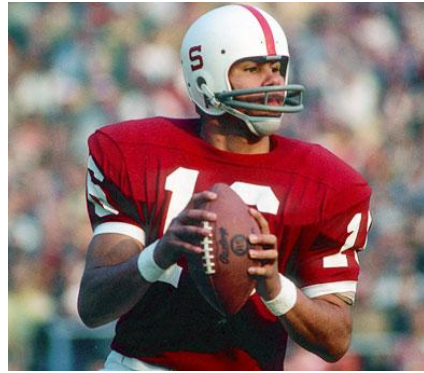
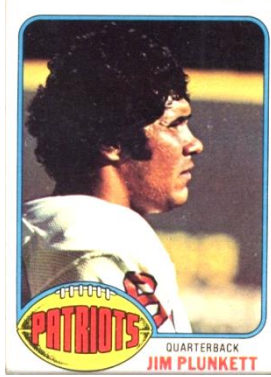
The Baltimore **Colts** won the Super Bowl.



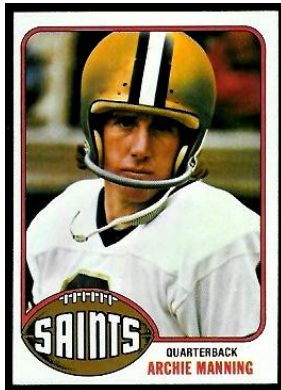
In March, 1971 Joe Frazier proved that the underdog can down the champ.



With the first pick in the NFL Draft, the Boston **Patriots** selected...

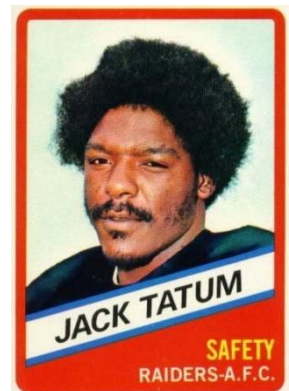
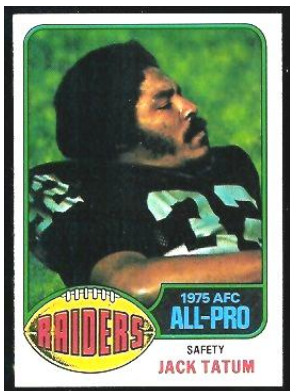


A Bay Area kid whose parents were born in Mexico, he's got the size and strength, and throws the most beautiful 'bomb' I've ever seen. He's also an incredible risk. Now, if I could get him for \$100 off the waiver wire...



As for the second-best QB: he's got talent and style, and can pass on the run, but I just don't see him producing a Super Bowl winner in the near future.

With our first choice, the 'monster man' from Ohio State...



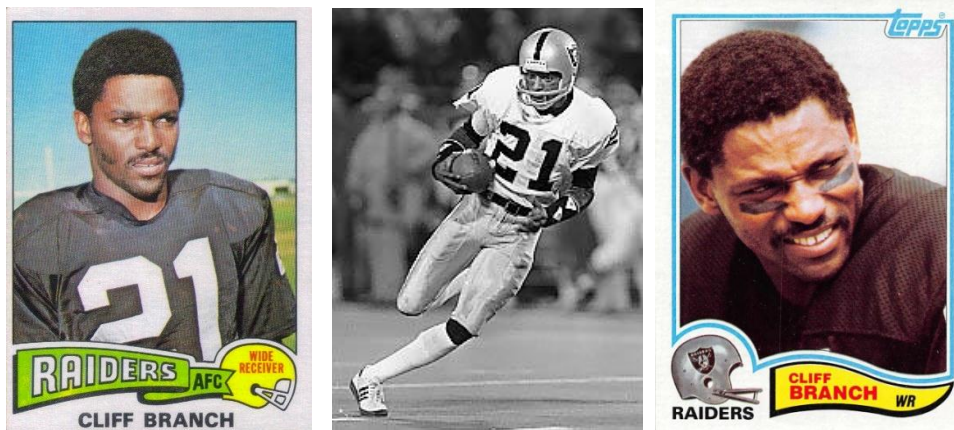
"I like to believe that my best hits border on felonious assault."

Then...



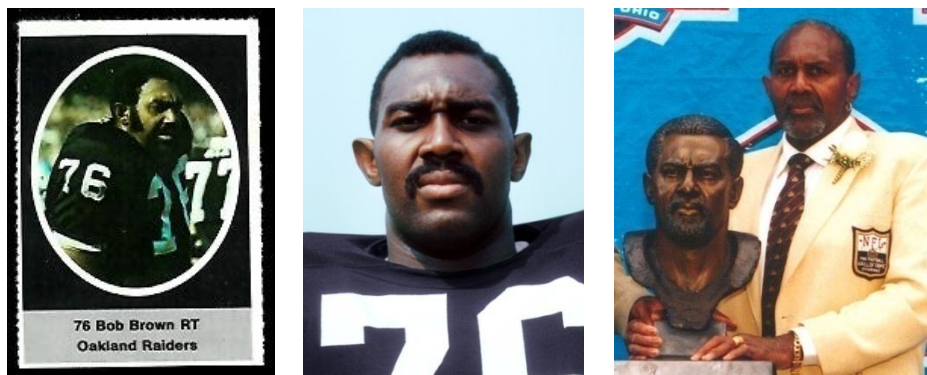
"When you play for the Raiders you play to win and you play tough. It's an attitude!"

In the fourth round we enhanced our 'vertical game'.



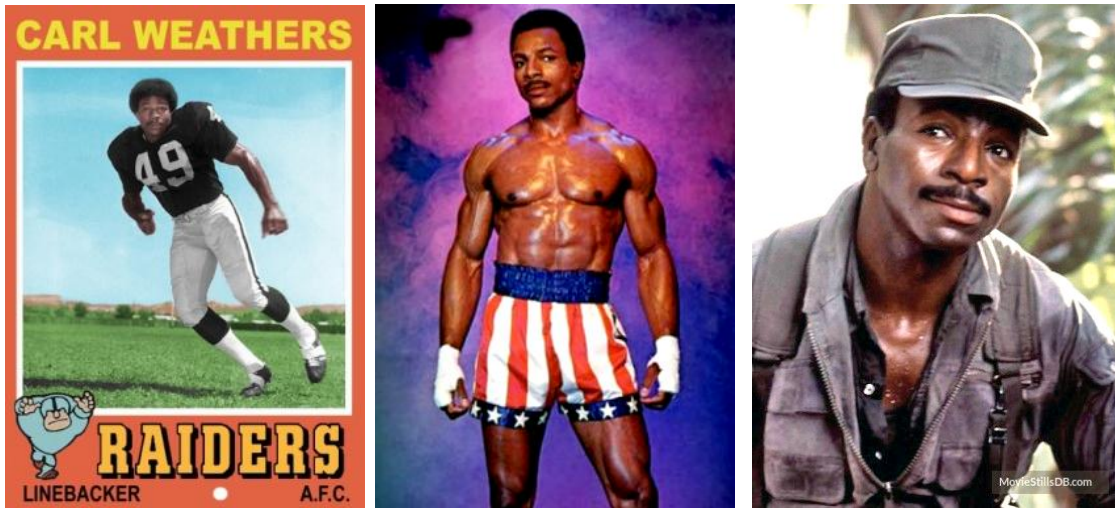
"I can beat my guy deep."

Via a trade...



"I was very attack oriented. I didn't want to be a shock absorber. I wanted to be the guy who was delivering the shock."

And on Special Teams...



"Without some damn war to fight, the warrior may as well be dead."

Again we finished 8-4-2, but this time, failed to make the playoffs. Not for a moment did I doubt John Madden. I ran the organization; John coached the team. The rub lay at quarterback.



"Mad Bomber" Lamonica had taken us far, but defenses had adjusted to his long game, forcing him to throw short which he wasn't good at. George, at his age, couldn't be expected to start and finish a game. In between waited Ken Stabler, warming the bench for three years.

John liked Stabler beyond his ability-- the 'Snake' was as cool as a cucumber; the team would follow him to the gates of Hell.

Before the season began...



"They're all gone."

In October, we found out how it felt when an Oakland team wins a championship.



This year had to be our turn.

With a 10-3-1 record, we made the playoffs and had to face what had been the worst team for the longest time - the **Pittsburgh Steelers**.

A brutal game from the very first snap. The **Steeler** defense shut us out until the 'Snake' made a twisting heroic TD run. 7-6 **Raiders** with 22 seconds left.

Then, yet again, *'divine intervention'!*



I saw the 'Immaculate Reception' live, the replay a hundred times, but I've never been to the statue or the monument.

Like football will ever forget it.



Were the **Raiders** cursed? Snakebit? I began to imagine a grand **NFL** conspiracy that would forever doom me and my team. I had to fight back!

The most feared cannon ever created was the German '88'. Accurate, long range, fast, mobile and dependable, fitted to the Tiger tank, it became the most intimidating war machine in history.



We drafted a *weapon* with our first pick, Ray Guy, the finest punter football had ever seen. Number **8** became our '88'.

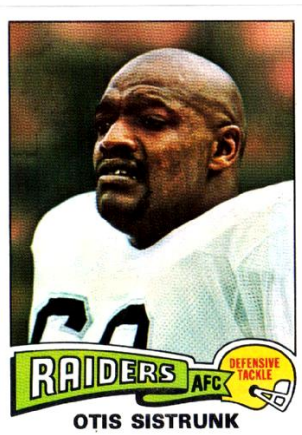


"We were kind of like those Transformers. You keep turning all those parts, fold them in, it's one big man."

Our scouting department scored a Mossad-like coup when we signed a defensive linemen who had never played college ball. After a hitch in the Marines, 'Trunk' played semi-pro and minor league ball and was spotted by the **Los Angeles Rams**.

Then we stole him away.

Monday Night Football couldn't resist.



"University of Mars"

Kenny Stabler established himself as the Raiders' quarterback. We went 9-4-1 and couldn't wait to face the damn **Steelers** in the playoffs!

No 'divine intervention' this time. We beat them going away. All we had to do was defeat the **Miami Dolphins** as we had earlier in the season, and, finally, we'd be going back to the Super Bowl.

We lost.



When **NFL Films** took over filming and editing the weekly highlights, every **Raider** game came with a rousing tune which became "The Battle Hymn of the Raider Nation".



Plus a poem written by NFL Films President and co-founder Steve Sabol and delivered by 'the voice of the NFL', the peerless John Fazenda.

*"The Autumn Wind is a pirate
Blustering in from sea,
With a rollocking song, he sweeps along,
Swaggering boisterously.*

*His face is weather beaten.
He wears a hooded sash,
With a silver hat about his head,
And a bristling black mustache.*

*He growls as he storms the country,
A villain big and bold.
And the trees all shake and quiver and quake,
As he robs them of their gold.*

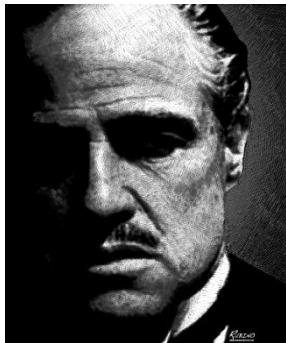
*The Autumn Wind is a raider,
Pillaging just for fun.
He'll knock you 'round and upside down,
And laugh when he's conquered and won."*

Since I first became coach in 1963, my silver and black **Oakland Raiders** have compiled the best record in pro football, and earned what so few teams ever achieve: an intimidating *mystique*.

OAKLAND *Raiders*



Back Row (left to right): Derek Lamontia, Jerry DeFuria, George Dickey, Mike Elston, Ken
 Stabler, Cliff Lee, Bud Thomas, George Davis, Jerry Brown, Charles Smith, Willie Brown.
 Second Row (left to right): Coach John Madden, Clarence Bushfield, Coach Jerry Peterson, Fred
 Brown, Steve Walsh, Clarence Davis, Jack Tatum, Don Higginbotham, Don Old, Howard Green,
 Fred Lewis, Clarence Lee, Coach Tom Spaworth, Clarence Lee, Coach Tom Spaworth, Steve
 Brown, Johnnie Smith, The Network, Greg Stout, NFL Properties, Tom Stewart, George
 Anderson, Mike Woodard, Bill Ripert, Norman Wilson, Guste Hansen, Terry McWhorter, Don
 Collins, Maurice Cook, Mike Morris, Third Row (left to right): Coach Ken Whitham, Walter
 Frazier, Gene Upshaw, George Slaughter, Paul Horton, Harold Hunt, Jim Harris, Tom Mack,
 Bob Brown, Ron Wiegman, Al Stovall, Debra-Ann Deckerfield, Coach Bill Dennis, Fourth Row (left to right):
 Coach Tom Spaworth, Bill Jackson, Tom Stone, Clarence Lee, Clarence Lee, Maurice Charles
 Brown, Steve Brown, Kenneth Walker, Richard Edwards, Fellow George Anderson.



"We have *class*. We are a *contender!*"

But when will *my Raiders* be champions?

5



Summit



"Endeavor to persevere."



"I'm here to break boundaries, man. That's all. I'm here to be the first so that the people after me don't have to think twice about expressing themselves and being free."



'I still believe in heroes!'

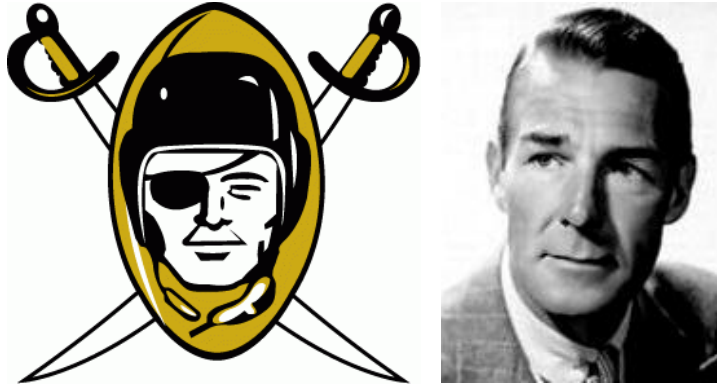


Oakland was a late and early city. Not until 1864, more than 200 years after New York, were the first streets paved. But in 1960, unlike bigger and 'more historic' cities, Oakland had the foresight and the guts to welcome an **American Football League** team.

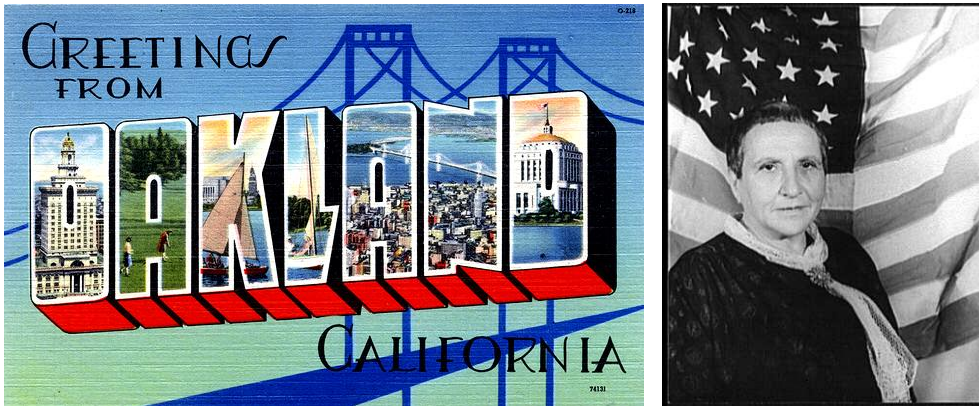
Unlike the other city on the Bay, Oakland has a *winning* **MLB** and **NFL** team, not a pair of long-term losers.

We weren't supposed to be the **Raiders**. A "name the team" contest was held by the *Oakland Tribune*, and the winner: **Señors**. The local media charged the contest had been fixed and soon after, the third-place name, **Raiders**, was chosen.

As legend has it, the original team logo was a take on Randolph Scott.



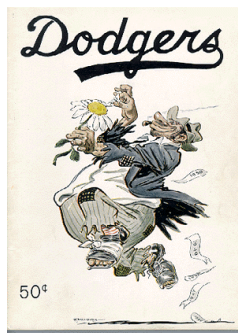
We came here to win. The **Raider** fans deserve it. The **Raider** players deserve it. Yet Oakland has been ridiculed, derided as 'undeserving'.



"There is no 'there' there."

I love this 'blue-collar', hardworking small city and it sickens me to hear rumors that I'd take a better stadium deal and leave Oakland for a 'big market' city.

The sports tragedy of my youth struck like a lightning bolt. My beloved champion **Dodgers** deserted Brooklyn over a stadium issue. People were crying in the streets!

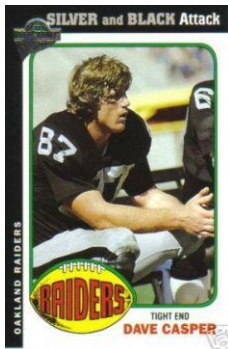


I live in Oakland. Leaving would be like Leonidas betraying Sparta!



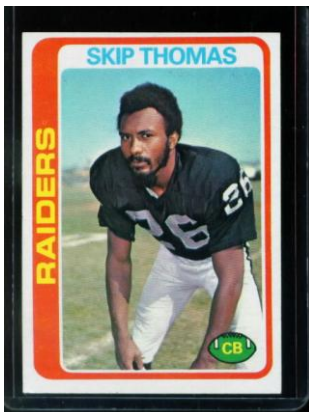
"We bow down before no man."

In the second round, a tight end from Notre Dame filled in the **Raiders'** phalanx.



"All I want is a friend."

'Doctor Death' rose to complete our secondary.



"The nastiest defensive backs this side of Attica's all-star intramural team."



"I shall resign the presidency..."

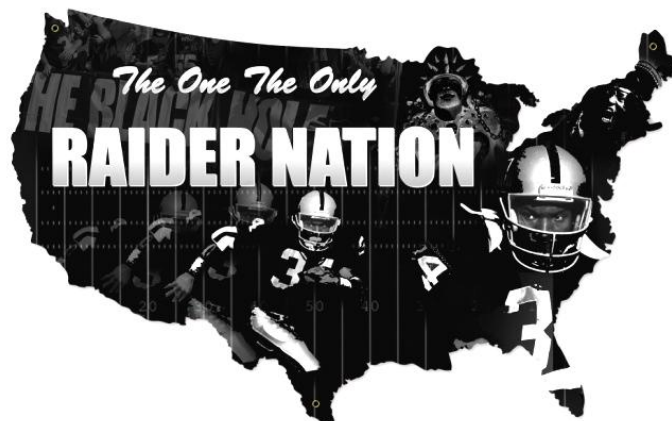
We started the '74 season in Buffalo and lost in the last minute by one point when George Blanda's fifty-yard field goal failed.



It was the first and only time John lost on Monday night. We finished 12-2 and got set to play the **Dolphins**, winners of the last two Super Bowls.

This first round of the playoffs was hyped like a championship game. Over the last three years, the **Dolphins** and **Raiders** had the best records in the **NFL**.

'Black Sunday' - every seat in the Coliseum was filled. Blackness filled my eyes and I imagined not just a fanatic fan base, but the birth of a movement that had crossed the country and one day would encircle the globe.



From start to finish, this was the game one dreams of, what my quest was all about. Miami ran the opening kick-off back for a touchdown. Back and forth the lead changed hands.

Down six points with a little more than two minutes left, the **Raiders** were 68 yards from victory. A succession of pinpoint passes got us to the 8 yard line with 23 seconds left.

Stabler dropped back. Primary receiver covered, Stabler looked and looked. A Miami rusher grabbed his legs. As he fell, 'Snake' lofted a wobbly pass into the end zone crowd and...



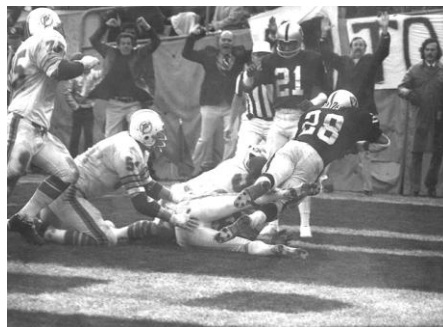
"He caught it! He caught it!"



"Unbelievable!"

"The greatest game I've ever seen."

Miraculous moments live forever, yet many forget that Bobby Thompson's 'Shot heard 'round the World', 'The Hail Mary' and the 'Sea of Hands' won a game...



Not a championship.

We had triumphed in 'Super Bowl 8 1/2'.

The next Sunday...



After beating us, the **Steelers** won Super Bowl IX.

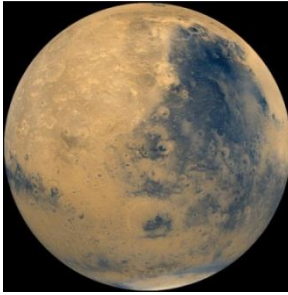
It was said that the **Dolphins'** coach and some of the players cried after their last second Oakland loss. *My Raiders* were made of sterner stuff.

We had to work harder. No way, not for a minute, was this organization going to let up.

Would we hit the jackpot in 1975? The games would decide.



While on another world...



*"If a dog had shit on the ground one meter from a **Viking** lander, it would never have detected it."*



1974-1975

There, but for the game of 'Sa-Lu-Gee', 'Broadway Joe' and *Heidi*, goes the **American Football League**.

In our 16th season, the **Raiders** went 11-3. In the first round of the play-offs, one of my idols came to Oakland and we beat him close.



"When you win, say nothing. When you lose, say less."

What was there to say against Pittsburgh in the **AFC** Championship Game?



The **Steelers** won Super Bowl X.



After yet another crushing defeat, I worried that the team would get a new song.



"I'm a loser!"

Instead of poets London and Sabol, Emily Dickinson taunted me.

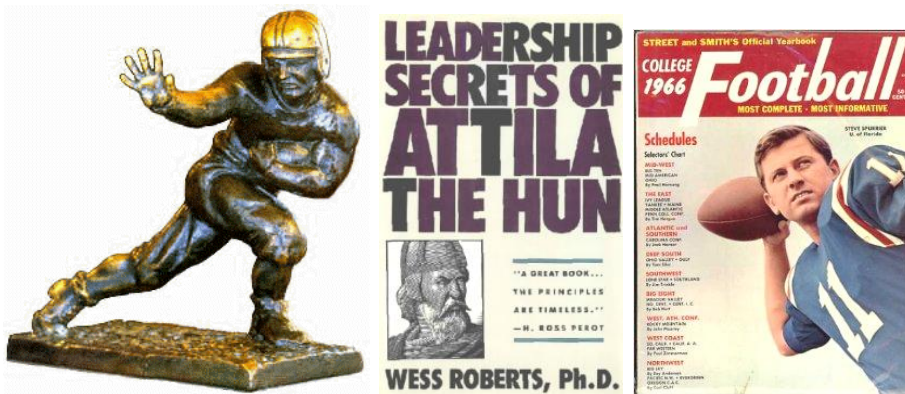


*"Success is counted sweetest
By those who ne'er succeed.
To comprehend a nectar
Requires sorest need.*

*Not one of all the purple Host
Who took the Flag today
Can tell the definition
So clear of victory*

*As he defeated – dying –
On whose forbidden ear
The distant strains of triumph
Burst agonized and clear!"*

I consulted a Heisman winner who suggested a book:



Chapter 14: "Surviving Defeat: There is another day."

The 27th and 28th **NFL** teams took to the field.



Only two *dominated*...



"In order to have a rivalry, both teams have to be good."

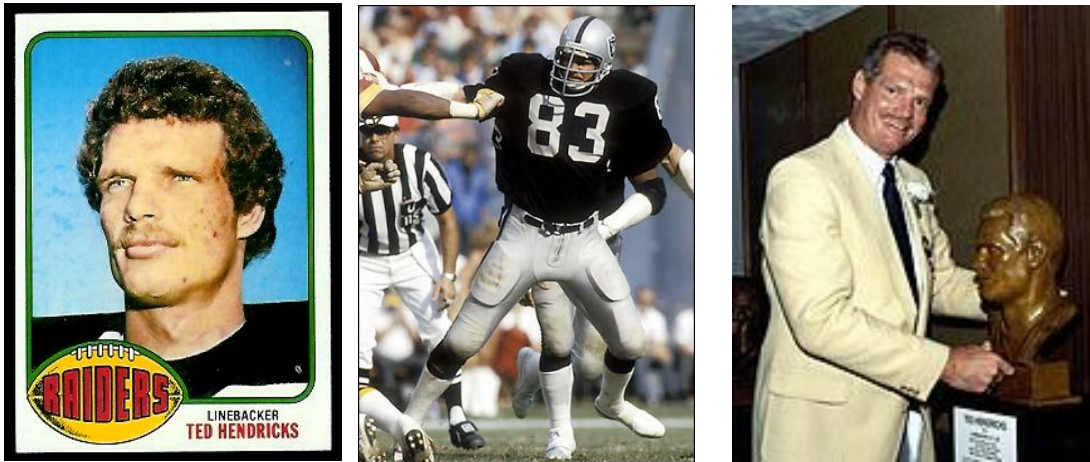
The **Jets** and the **Chiefs** used to be our rivals, but no more. (I don't see either getting back to the Super Bowl in my lifetime!) The **Dolphins** had won consecutive championships and would always compete; it's the culture of the franchise.

In 1969, the **Steelers** finished 1-13. Just three seasons later, Pittsburgh was in the postseason for the first time since 1947. Until we beat the **Steelers**, they were the best team and the better *organization*.



The Ultimate Battle - For the future and pride of **Raider Nation**, we must crush this brutal and ruthless enemy!

We had added a couple of unique individuals.



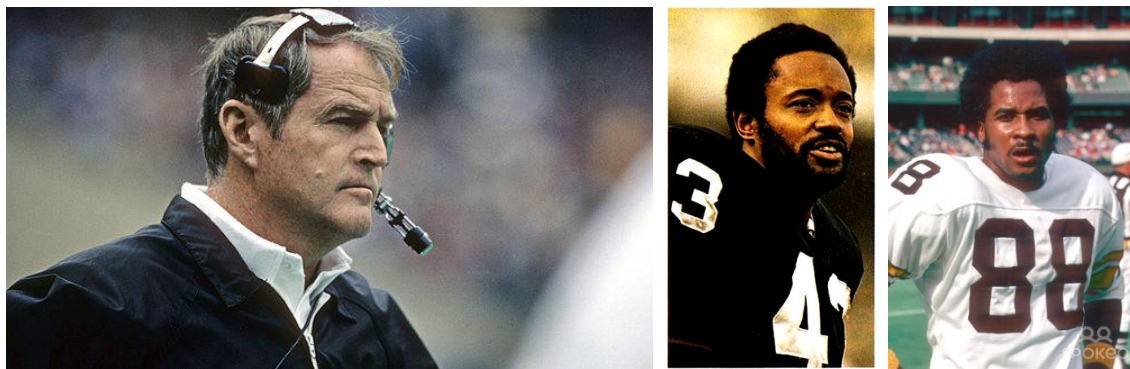
"I didn't want to be one-dimensional, to be only an athlete."

Would they be the final pieces of the puzzle?



"Cruisin' With the Tooz!"

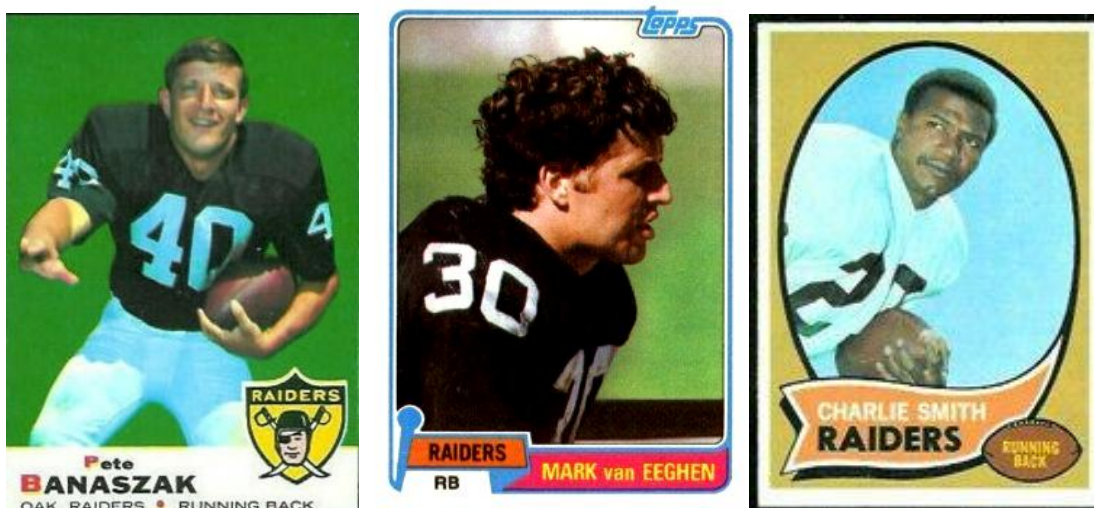
The first game of the 1976 season and we beat the champion **Steelers**! Their coach couldn't accept it, claiming one of my **Raiders** was part of a "criminal element who should be kicked out of the league."



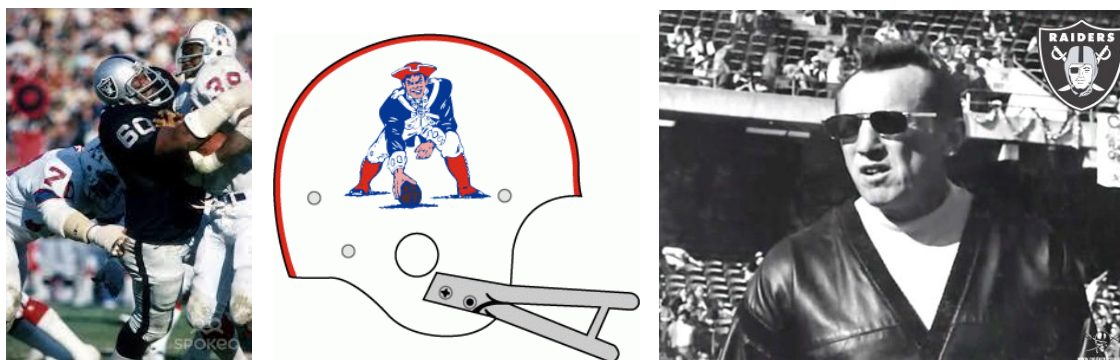
"Once 'The Pigeon', now 'The Hit Man!'"

George Atkinson sued. Chuck Noll was vindicated, but the lengthy proceedings kept the **Steelers** distracted for weeks. And it showed.

Turned out to be a lesson I should have taught myself.



Unleashing our ground attack, we lost only one game all year, a Bi-centennial blow-out at the hands of an original **AFL** team.

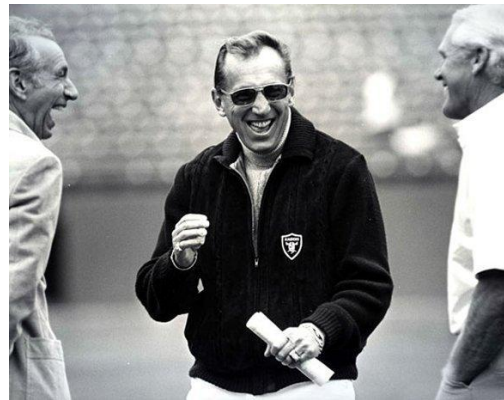
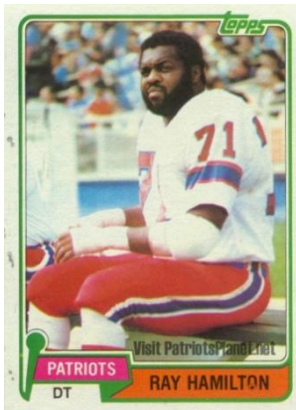


And we faced them again in the first round of the playoffs, only their second postseason game ever.

The **Patriots** played as hungry as we did. The contest came down to our last drive. With 1:24 to play, it was 3rd and 18. Stabler dropped back--do or die--the desperation pass fell incomplete.

And once again, into the 'dustbin of history' fell the **Oakland Raiders**.

But wait...



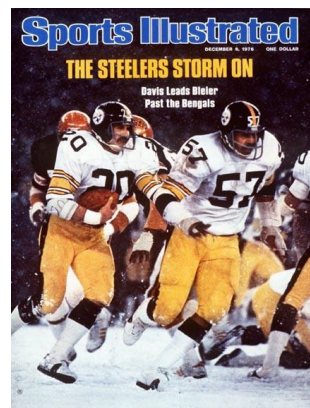
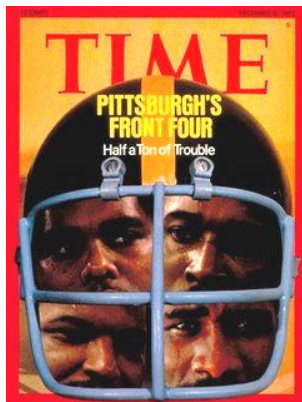
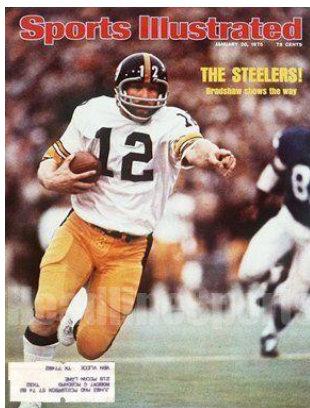
"Roughing the passer"

Resurrected, we scored and won the game.

Boston was outraged. They named the game after the ref who would be barred from New England for a decade, possibly saving his life.

'*Divine Intervention*', **Patriots**' fans! Tuck it in! -- There's no way you're ever getting even.

While we had a date at home with the champions of the **NFL**.



My **AFC** Western Division winners strode onto the Coliseum gridiron, proud and confident and from the opening kick-off till the final gun, *dominated*.



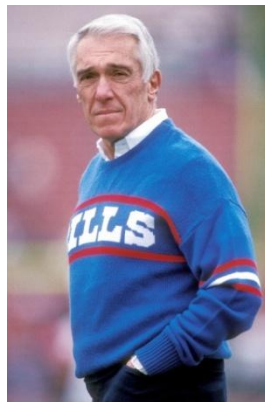
The Pittsburgh faithful had excuses - their two 1000-yard rushers were injured and couldn't play.

The most beautiful sound in the football universe: **Steelers'** fans *crying*.



"If Jesus were alive today, He would be at the Super Bowl."

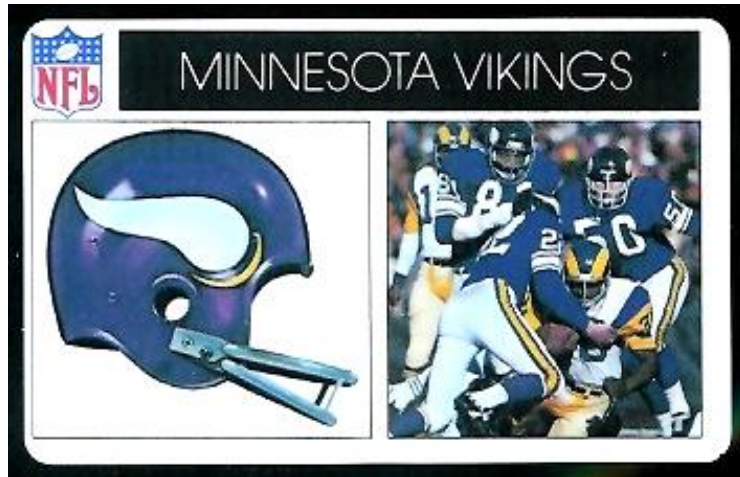
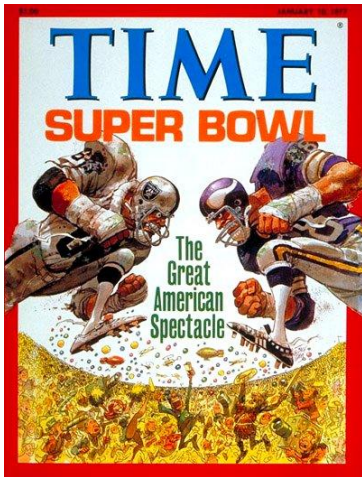
Before 103,424, plus a world-wide television audience of over 130 million, the BIG One, the game the **Raiders** had always lost.



"World War Two was a 'must win'."

I couldn't imagine losing. Neither could John

"We're gonna kill these guys!" he said, his hands waving like flags.



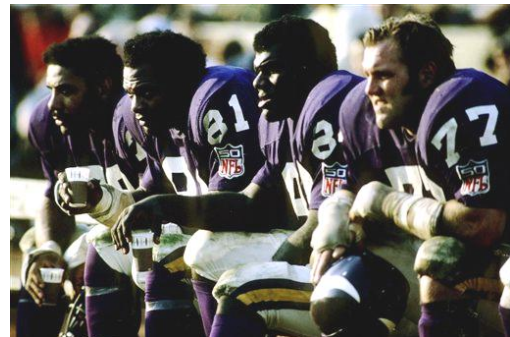
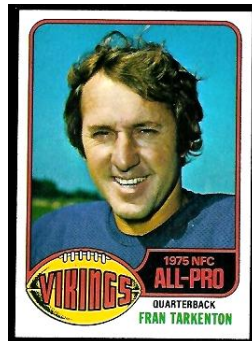
"Meet me at the quarterback!"

If not for the **Vikings**, there would have been *no Raiders*.

In 1960, Oakland was set to be an **NFL** city, to serve as a rival for the **LA Rams**. But at the last moment, a Minnesota group, backed by political influence, undercut Oakland and secured an **NFL** franchise.

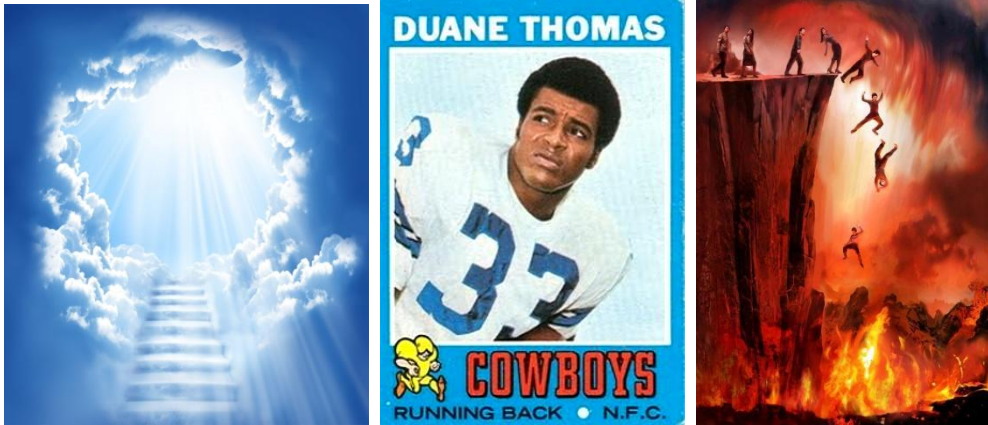
"V-I-K-I-N-G-S, Skol Vikings, Let's Go!"

The **Vikings** had appeared in more playoff games and more Super Bowls than we had and still had not won a championship. Which made them even more frustrated and desperate than we were.



"That's how I judge a quarterback: Either you make plays or you don't."

History was at hand in the historic Rose Bowl, shaking with life like Noah's Ark. The stakes were Biblical; one team would be going to NFL heaven, while the other...



"If it's the ultimate game, how come they're playing it again next year?"

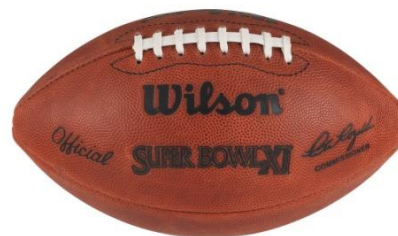
I was born on the Fourth of July and never felt more American than singing the *Star-Spangled Banner* before a Super Bowl.

"Here we go," said Carolee and squeezed my hand.

"Keep your eye on the eagle," I said, but not a word to the team.

As much as I wanted to pat myself on the back, the **Raiders** got here because I let John coach and he let the 'Snake' call the plays.

And Pete Rozelle's name was on the ball!



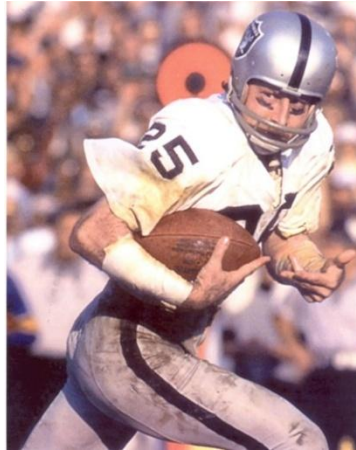
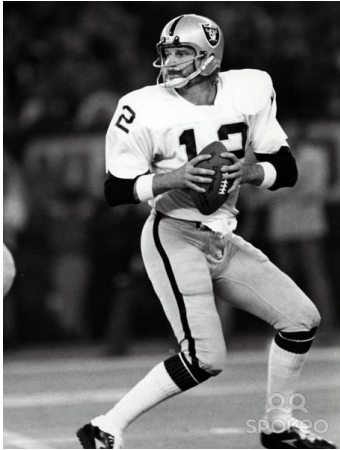
"...An awful lot of N.F.L. club owners have practically no influence on their players at all, simply because they're not full-time working owners."

We won the toss and took the ball to the Viking 12. Stopped, we blew a 'chip-shot' field goal.

The next crucial play: The 'Purple People Eaters' blocked our punt. First and goal on the 3-yard line.

The moment of Truth - Fumble!

We got the ball back and *dominated!*



Not even '*divine intervention*' was going to stop us. By the fourth quarter, the Vikings were no longer thinking victory, but fighting for football respect.

I treasured every moment of the 'living' game that I'd see again as tape a thousand times. I thought of the men who got us here and who'd never wear a Super Bowl ring and how proud they were going to be of *their* Oakland Raiders.

About to reach my goal, I realized that my quest to build the most successful organization in sports had only just kicked off, that I'd live my dream to my dying day.

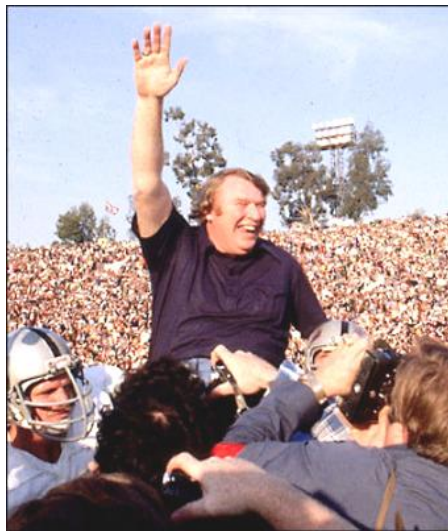
The Vikings advanced to our 26. A quick score here could...



"Tarkenton back to pass. It's intercepted. Fifty, forty, thirty..."



*"Old Man Willie, he's going all the way. Touchdown **Raiders!**"*



"The only yardstick for success our society has is being a champion. No one remembers anything else."



*"The greatness of the **Raiders** is their future!"*



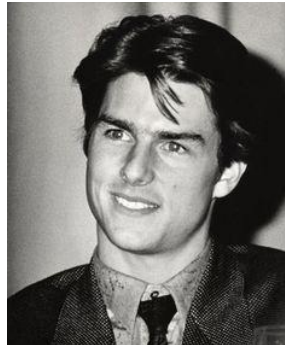
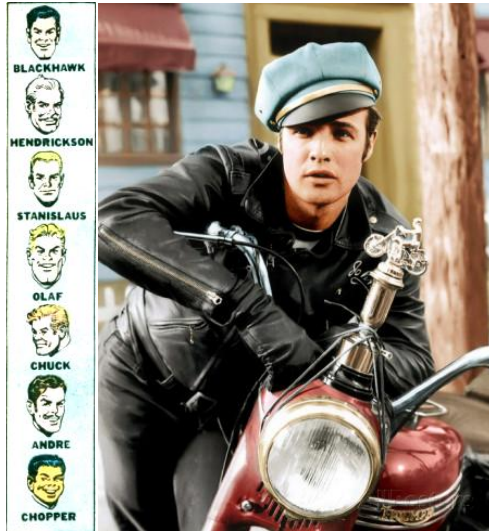
Ch. Jarvis



ALLEGiant STADIUM, “THE DEATH STAR” – LAS VEGAS RAIDERS

Also FREE and fully illustrated...

Kid Blackhawk 1 Coming of Age



*“Over land over sea we fight for liberty
We’re Blackhawks!”*

FREE & Fully Illustrated!

[KID BLACKHAWK – A REAL comic book STORY](#)