

The Faces Of Futility

Written by {ga=jerryroche}

Wednesday, October 28 2009 7:00 PM -

When asked about the execution of his 1976 expansion Tampa Bay Buccaneers, head coach John McKay said, "I'm in favor of it." After Sunday's 31-3 thrashing at the hands of the legendary Green Bay Packers (who rolled up 460 yards in total offense), local fans may well be in favor of executing the Browns (who managed just 139 yards). In an effort to prove that all is not lost for our favorite team, Jerry Roche today takes a fun look at the 10 worst teams in the NFL's Super Bowl era. And guess what, the 2009 Browns are on pace to join this list.



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After Sunday's 31-3 thrashing at the hands of the legendary Green Bay Packers (who rolled up 460 yards in total offense), local fans may well be in favor of executing the Browns (who managed just 139 yards). Based on the season to date, you would have to rank Eric Mangini's team (and it *is* his team) as perhaps the second-worst group of Browns ever assembled and perhaps the fifth-worst team in the NFL's Super Bowl era.

But let's look at the facts -- many of which are actually somewhat hilarious in retrospect, beginning with McKay and his inept Buccaneers.

In an effort to prove that all is not lost for our favorite team, listed herein are what many experts consider the 10 worst teams in the NFL's Super Bowl era. They are ranked by point differential over their full, dismal seasons. The lone exception are the 2009 Browns, whose offensive and defensive totals have been projected to a complete season based on their first seven games.

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1. 1976 Tampa Bay Buccaneers (0-14)

Points for: 125 (8.9 ppg). Points against: 412 (29.4 ppg). Scoring differential: -20.5 ppg.

This first-year expansion team featured an absolute comedic genius as head coach -- perhaps so he would retain his sanity. At a post-game press conference, McKay said, "You guys don't know the difference between a football and a bunch of bananas." The following week, after a media member had dropped off a case of bananas at his door, he said, "You guys don't know the difference between a football and a Mercedes-Benz."

In their opener, the Buccaneer players got lost in the [Houston Astrodome](#) after leaving the locker room. They spent 20 minutes trying to find their way out and made it onto the field just in time for the opening kick-off.

The Bucs did not score a touchdown until the fourth game when cornerback Danny Reece returned a fumble 44 yards. Their first touchdown pass was thrown by running back Louis Carter in a loss to the Seattle Seahawks during which the two teams combined for 310 yards in penalties.

The Bucs turned the ball over 37 times during the season, ranked dead last in team offense, and mustered only five rushing touchdowns. Shut out in its first two games, Tampa Bay would fail to score in three more. The Bucs averaged just 8.9 points per game (fourth-worst in the Super Bowl era), and lost by nine points or more in 11 games. The winless season was the start of an 0-26 run.

2. 1973 Houston Oilers (1-13)

Points for: 199 (14.2 ppg). Points against: 447 (31.9 ppg). Scoring differential: -17.7 ppg.

1973 was the Oilers' second consecutive 1-13 season, making them the only team in the Super Bowl era to have back-to-back one-win seasons. Their two quarterbacks, Dan Pastorini and Lynn Dickey, combined to throw 11 touchdown passes and 27 interceptions, and their rushing offense finished last in the league. Outside of their lone win, they came within three points of their opponents in just one game -- a 27-24 loss to the Cincinnati Bengals in the finale.

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3. 1990 New England Patriots (1-15)

Points for: 181 (11.3 ppg). Points against 446 (27.9 ppg). Scoring differential: -16.6 ppg.

The Pats lost their final 14 games. They failed to score more than 10 points in 10 games, including the final five. On and off the field, team was an absolute circus. Sexual harassment charges were brought against three players who supposedly flashed a female reporter in the lockerroom. A barroom brawl between Irving Fryar and Hart Lee Dykes resulted in an eye injury that would eventually end the latter's career.

At season's end, head coach Rod Rust was, predictably, unceremoniously, given the boot.

4. 2008 Detroit Lions (0-16)

Points for: 268 (16.8 ppg). Points against: 517 (32.3 ppg). Scoring differential: -15.5 ppg.

The Lions became the first team in NFL history to compile an 0-16 record. Team president and CEO Matt Millen -- who had made Joey Harrington, Charles Rogers and Mike Williams No. 1 draft picks -- was fired on Sept. 24. Head coach Rod Marinelli and most of his assistants were fired the day after the season ended.

This team was uniformly bad in every category: 30th of 32 teams offensively and dead last defensively. At one point, 15 of the Lions' starting players were on the injury list, including QB John Kitna. And when they signed Daunte Culpepper because substitute QB Dan Orlovsky also went down injured, that was another bad sign of things to come.

By season's end, Lions fans were ordering tee-shirts that boasted "0-16; The Perfectly Defeated Season."

5. 2009 CLEVELAND BROWNS (projected 2-14)

Projected points for: 165 (10.3 ppg). Projected points against: 409 (25.6 ppg). Projected scoring

The Faces Of Futility

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differential: -15.3 ppg.

Their two quarterbacks (Derek Anderson and Brady Quinn) occupy the bottom of the league efficiency ratings. They traded away two Pro Bowl athletes (Braylon Edwards and Kellen Winslow Jr.). One of their starting wide receivers (Donté Stallworth) was jailed and suspended indefinitely after killing a pedestrian with his vehicle in the off-season. Last week, a defensive back (Eric Wright) flipped his car at 2 a.m. The team's leading tackler from the previous year (D'qwell Jackson) was lost for the season when he suffered an injury in the fifth game.

The team's offense ranks 31st of 32 teams, and their defense ranks dead last. But at least their fans haven't seen the dreaded orange pants for a few weeks now.

6. 1991 Indianapolis Colts (1-15)

Points for: 143 (8.9 ppg). Points against: 381 (23.8 ppg.) Scoring differential: -14.9 ppg.

If it weren't for the equally awful Patriots being in their division, the Colts probably wouldn't have won a game. They went five consecutive games without a touchdown. Their 143 total points were the fewest in the era of the 16-game schedule to that point. Only a one-point victory in Week 11 saved these Colts from immortality. They lost by double-digits 10 times, and ranked dead last most offensive categories. They only gained 55 first downs via the run while allowing 305. They only scored three rushing touchdowns while allowing 23.

After five losses to open the season, the Colts fired head coach Ron Meyer and handed the keys to defensive coordinator Rick Venturi. Four losses later, he suspended the team's leading rusher, Eric Dickerson, for four weeks for refusing to practice. *Refusing to practice?*

7. 1999 Cleveland Browns (2-14)

Points for: 217 (13.6 ppg). Points against: 437 (27.3 ppg). Scoring differential: -13.7 ppg.

For those who care to remember, their top six choices in the expansion draft were Jim Pyne,

The Faces Of Futility

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Hurvin McCormack, Scott Rehberg, Damon Gibson, Steve Gordon and Tarek Saleh. Among their choices in the college draft were Rahim Abdullah, Marquis Smith, Marcus Spriggs and James Death -- er, Dearth.

They started their "new era" with a 49-0 loss to the Pittsburgh Steelers. They would go on to lose their first seven games, but finally won their first game against the Saints when Kevin Johnson caught a last-second Hail Mary pass from rookie and overall No. 1 pick in the draft, quarterback Tim Couch.

By season's end, they were 31st of 31 teams in both total offense and total defense, and they did not win a home game.

8. 1980 New Orleans Saints (1-15)

Points for: 291 (18.2 ppg). Points against: 487 (30.4 ppg). Scoring differential: -12.2 ppg.

The '80 Saints were immortalized by their "fans," who showed up at the Louisiana Superdome games with brown sacks over their heads to avoid being identified with the team. The Saints were universally known as "The Ain'ts." They lost their first 14 games, and their lone victory was by one point over the 4-12 Jets. The defense never allowed fewer than 20 points in a game but allowed at least 40 three times.

Coach Dick Nolan lasted 12 games before getting the pink slip. The Saints wouldn't finish above .500 until 1987.

9. 1989 Dallas Cowboys (1-15)

Points for: 204 (12.7 ppg). Points against: 393 (24.6 ppg). Scoring differential: -11.9 ppg.

The Cowboys were shut out three times in Jerry Jones's first season as owner and managed to score more than 20 points only four times. Jones's decision to dismiss the wildly popular Tom Landry, the only head coach in team history to that point, was the first of many lowlights.

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Running back Herschel Walker, the team's best player, was traded to Minnesota in the middle of the year. By the end of the season, the Cowboys had been outscored by a nearly 2-to-1 ratio.

10. 1996 New York Jets (1-15)

Points for: 279 (17.4 ppg). Points against: 454 (28.4 ppg). Scoring differential: -11.0 ppg.

Raw rookie Keyshawn Johnson of USC started writing a book before playing one down with the Jets. "So what if I'm doing a book?" he asked a *New York Times* reporter. "So what if I have a signature shoe? I haven't played a down yet. It's all based on potential."

When QB Neil O'Donnell got hurt early in the season after doing nothing, the Jets had to use the terrible two of Frank Reich and Glen Foley. The team led the league in turnovers. Head coach Rich Kotite was canned, and by season's end, the Jets had lost 33 of their previous 37 games -- one of the worst runs of futility in NFL annals.