

## Super Bowl Memories: Browns Edition

Written by {ga=davekolonich}  
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Before indulging in a most American of unofficial American holidays today, consider for a moment the Atlanta Falcons.

And why would a card-carrying member of Browns Nation do such a thing?

It's simple, for all of Super Bowl Sunday, any longtime Falcon fan who can associate themselves with the otherwise innocuous history of their franchise can at least say one thing to any Browns, Lions, Jaguars or Texans fan:

At least we've been to a Super Bowl.

If indeed half of life is just showing up, then your typical Falcon fan can boast of a magical 1998 run, one marked by a weak NFC conference and the annual plague brought on by field goal kickers in the postseason. Of course, the conversation ends there, as the events of Super Bowl 33 proved that the Falcons' role in the league's showcase game was that of mere participants.

However, because the Falcons managed to luck in to the big game, their sordid history as a mostly fledgling franchise is excused - at least temporarily - on Super Bowl Sunday.

Which, unfortunately is more than members of Browns Nation can say.

And really, what is there to say tomorrow?

The list of Super Bowl virgins has been reduced by one, as perhaps the hardest of hard luck franchises, the Saints, have emerged as a worthy contender. Now, the Browns stand alone with the woeful Lions and two franchise start-ups in Jacksonville and Houston as the only teams to never reach the league's big dance. Or, slow grind. Whatever.

So while Falcon fan can at least reach back for a Chris Chandler reference or perhaps a wistful Eugene Robinson hooker anecdote tomorrow, what can we as Browns fans do?

Because our Super Bowl slate is wide open, we're resigned to the nether regions of the Super Bowl basement, holding onto archaic facts from the 1950's and a littany of soul-crushing what-if's.

So, until our beloved franchise can finally reach the pinnacle of NFL credibility, I can only offer the following - and believe me, it's petty. You've been warned.



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### Best Browns Super Bowl Memories

#### Super Bowl 22 - Redskins over Broncos

Nothing was more cathartic than watching the Redskins destroy the Bronco defense during a 35-point second quarter - one that featured a backup quarterback and no-name running back run circles around a team that was unquestionably less deserving than our 1987 Browns.

In fact, the game seemed to represent the proper cycle of karma that allowed the Broncos to slip past the Browns in the first place. Coming off the most heartbreaking moment in Cleveland sports history, (and I'm not about to even utter the phrase), Browns Nation was feeling the effects of the hardest sucker punch ever collectively delivered to a fanbase.

Those who were emotionally stable enough to do anything more than passively watch the first quarter of Super Bowl 22 could not even fathom the depths of Cleveland sports misery, as it appeared that Denver was going to cruise to a most undeserving championship.

However, the remaining football gods still watching over Cleveland finally delivered some much-needed justice - along with reducing the Northeast Ohio suicide rate in the process.

#### Super Bowl 24 - 49ers over Broncos

While the effects of Super Bowl 22 represented a vicarious parade of lustful revenge for Browns fans, Super Bowl 24 was the kind of bloodletting that even the most depraved of Romans would consider gratuitous.

The 1989 version of the Broncos never had a chance against one of the most experienced and efficient Super Bowl champions ever. Joe Montana and the 49ers absolutely destroyed the Broncos in the most lopsided Super Bowl win ever. However, despite the sheer brutality that Denver suffered, the enjoyment factor seemed lost because of a few inconvenient truths.

First, 1989 version of the Browns - while still a solid playoff contender - did not carry the magic, or even purpose of the previous year's teams. I truly feel that even the most diehard of Browns fans did not - or possibly could not - emotionally invest themselves in this team, which sort of deflated the sense of revenge available from this Super Bowl destruction of our most hated rival.



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Second, by the end of the decade, another truth was becoming evident. Although our Browns could never figure him out, the allure of John Elway's 1980's teams had diminished. Basically, they were never a legitimate Super Bowl contender - and perhaps a feeling of apathy, or even a tinge of empathy towards Elway - had surfaced.

Finally, in a most depressing realization, most Browns fans knew that an era was ending, along with our hopes of actually reaching a Super Bowl, let alone winning one.

### **Super Bowl 30 - Cowboys over Steelers**

This anniversary game was the one that a great majority of Browns fans probably skipped. Considering the annoying luster of each franchise, a Cowboy-Steeler Super Bowl offers an attraction similar to stabbing yourself in the leg with a Dixon Ticonderoga pencil.

Also, considering our franchise had just been stolen away from us, this game served as yet another practical joke played on us by the football gods.

However, again the reliable face of football karma resurfaced. The Steelers, who had quietly gone against their historical identity by becoming a finesse passing offense, realized the error of their ways, as Neil O' Donnell threw the game away in the second half - or seriously cashed in, depending on your perspective.

And at least in a parting gift to Browns faithful everywhere, Steeler fans were silenced - for about two minutes.

### **Super Bowl 23 - 49ers over Bengals**

Much like the early going of Super Bowl 22, this was a game that had Browns heartbreak written all over it. The Bengals, who emerged in 1988 while the Browns scrambled to find a healthy starting quarterback for much of the season, virtually outplayed the 49ers for much of the game.

However, in a fitting tribute to yet another team undeserving of a championship berth/rival of the Browns, the 49ers executed the most famous game-winning drive in Super Bowl history, as Montana and Jerry Rice carved up the Bengal defense.

Perhaps the most enjoyable aspect of this game was the helpless expressions given by Bengal coach Sam Wyche, he of the "you're not in Cleveland" blasphemy, as his Super Bowl aspirations were dashed in the final seconds. And although Wyche was certainly no John Elway in terms of Cleveland villiany, the results of this game were most satisfying, if not altogether relieving.

