

**BROKE**  
**1957: THEY LEFT ^ THEIR HEART IN SAN FRANCISCO**

**By Joseph Hession**

*From Forty Niners: Looking Back*

The year 1957 was both magical and tragic for San Francisco football fans. Heart-stopping finishes became the 49ers' trademark as the team continued its winning ways and innovative tradition.

The 49ers were a box office smash around the league. Average attendance at their games was 60,000. In a game with the Rams, 102,368 fans packed into the Los Angeles Coliseum. It was the largest crowd in professional football history.

They drafted consensus All-America quarterback John Brodie out of Stanford and were blessed with three of the finest signal callers in the game. Brodie competed with Earl Morrall and Y.A. Tittle for the starting job. However, before the start of the regular season, Morrall was traded to Pittsburgh for linebacker Marv Matuszak.

In the league opener, the 49ers were soundly defeated by the Chicago Cardinals, 20-10. Former University of San Francisco star Ollie Matson returned to Kezar Stadium and ran through the 49er defense. After the game, local writers said there was no reason to believe the 49ers would be contenders. In 12 weeks they would eat their words.

In the second week of the season, the Los Angeles Rams met the 49ers at Kezar Stadium. The Rams had mauled San Francisco in a preseason game, 58-27. They were favored to win the league championship.

The Rams held a 20-16 lead late in the fourth quarter. But just as the 59,700 fans at Kezar were preparing to head for home, Tittle got the team untracked. With short passes to his receivers, and several fine runs by McElhenny, he drove the team 50 yards to the Rams' 11-yard line. With four minutes to play, Tittle dropped back and threw a high arching pass to the corner of the end zone. R. C. Owens, a rookie from College of Idaho, leaped into the sky. He outjumped Los Angeles defensive back Jess Castete and came down with the football. The Alley-Oop pass was born. San Francisco had itself a 23-20 win.

Spectacular finishes eventually became commonplace. The following week in Chicago, the Bears were in the driver's seat with a 17-14 lead and four minutes to play. Tittle dropped back and looked for Owens again but the receiver had been knocked to the turf by a Chicago defender. Undaunted, Tittle threw a low pass to the squatting Owens and he caught it on his knees to give San Francisco a 21-17 win.

Two weeks later they played Chicago at Kezar. Behind at the half, 17-7, the team received word in the locker room that owner Tony Morabito had suffered a heart attack while in the stands. He died a short time later. The inspired 49ers battled back and defeated Chicago, 21-17.

The next week they were behind Detroit, 31-28, with less than a minute to play. Tittle valiantly worked the ball downfield. With 11 seconds to play, he launched a rocket into the end zone. R. C. Owens came down with the pigskin. The Alley-Oop had done it again. The 49ers won it, 35-31.

With two weeks left in the season, San Francisco was 6-4. They needed wins at the last two games to tie for the league title.

Baltimore was the first hurdle. The Colts were a pass-oriented team with Johnny Unitas at the helm. The day before the game, a crowd formed at the Kezar Stadium ticket booths to buy tickets. When the booths finally opened, a near riot ensued and thousands of fans had to be turned away.

The game was a defensive battle most of the way. With less than two minutes remaining in the game, Baltimore held a precarious 13-10 lead. But the 49ers had the ball and Tittle was moving the club. A pass to Hugh McElhenny picked up 28 yards and put the ball on the Colts' 15-yard line.

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On the next play, Tittle was belted by Baltimore's defensive line as he tried to get off a pass. Afterward, he lay motionless on the field. His teammates carried him to the sideline while rookie John Brodie quickly warmed up. With precious seconds remaining on the stadium clock, Brodie took the field. Then, with 46 seconds to play, Brodie found McElhenny wide open. He drilled a pass to "the King" and San Francisco won, 17-13.

The Green Bay Packers were next. A win would leave the 49ers tied for the league crown with Detroit.

Before the game Tittle was still hobbling on pulled leg muscles suffered in the collision against the Colts. Brodie got the starting assignment. Rain soaked Kezar Stadium throughout the day but 59,530 paying customers remained in their seats.

Green Bay took a 20-10 lead into the locker room at halftime. Coach Frankie Albert decided to go with the old master, Y.A. Tittle, in the second half. On the 49ers first offensive possession in the third quarter, the fans roared their approval at the sight of Tittle leading the team onto the field. He didn't let them down.

The 30-year-old Tittle completed 10 of his 14 passes for 94 yards and Joe Perry gained 130 yards on 28 carries. There was no need for magical Alley-Oop passes this day. Perry scored two second-half touchdowns on runs of nine yards and two yards. That was all the scoring the 49ers needed to take a 27-20 win. They had gained a first-place tie with Detroit. A play-off was needed to determine who would face Cleveland in the NFL Championship Game.

The play-off was held at Kezar. Frenzied fans scrambled to get tickets. People began lining up at Kezar ticket booths on Friday night in hopes of purchasing a ticket on Saturday. The game was blacked out on local television. Busloads of fans unable to obtain tickets went to Reno to see the game on television.

The 49ers found themselves 3-1/2 point favorites at game time. The favorable odds were due in part to the broken leg suffered by Detroit quarterback Bobby Layne. He was replaced by Tobin Rote.

In the first quarter, Tittle connected on a 34-yard Alley- Oop pass to R. C. Owens to put the 49ers in front 7-0. A 47-yard pass to McElhenny made the score 14-0. Before the half, Tittle threw another touchdown pass, this one a 12- yarder to Billy Wilson. Gordy Soltau added a 25-yard field goal and the 49ers looked unbeatable. The halftime score read 24-7.

McElhenny opened the second half by taking a pitchout and racing 71 yards to the nine. The 49ers couldn't push it in and had to settle for a field goal. Their 27-7 lead looked insurmountable.

Suddenly, the Lions came to life. Three interceptions and two lost fumbles contributed to the Detroit cause. When it was all over the 49ers had lost a heartbreaker, 31-27.

### SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS 1957

8-4-0 .667 - 1st (tie) NFL

Coach: Frankie Albert

DAY	DATE	AT	OPPONENT	SF-OP	R	ATT
(Pre-Season Games, 6-1)						
Sun	A-18	H	New York Giants .....	24-15	-	---
Sun	A-25	H	Washington Redskins ..	27-21	-	---
Sun	S- 1	H	Cleveland Browns .....	21-17	-	---
Sat	S- 7	A^	Chicago Cards .....	27-21	-	---
Fri	S-13	A	Los Angeles Rams .....	27-58	-	---
Sun	S-22	H	Philadelphia Eagles ..	17-14	-	---
(Regular Season)						
Sun	S-29	H	Chicago Cardinals ....	10-20	L	35,743
Sun	O- 6	H	Los Angeles Rams .....	23-20	W	59,637
Sun	O-13	A	Chicago Bears .....	21-17	W	45,310
Sun	O-20	A+	Green Bay Packers ....	24-14	W	18,919
Sun	O-27	H	Chicago Bears .....	21-17	W	56,693
Sun	N- 3	H	Detroit Lions .....	35-31	W	59,702

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Sun	N-10	A	Los Angeles Rams	.....	24-37	L	102,368
Sun	N-17	A	Detroit Lions	.....	10-31	L	56,915
Sun	N-24	A	Baltimore Colts	.....	21-27	L	50,073
Sun	D- 1	A	New York Giants	.....	27-17	W	54,121
Sun	D- 8	H	Baltimore	.....	17-13	W	59,950
Sun	D-15	H	Green Bay Packers	....	27-20	W	59,100
			(Playoff)				
Sun	D-22	H	Detroit Lions	.....	27-31	L	60,118

^ = at Seattle, WA  
 + = at Milwaukee, WI

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## ALL-PROS

U.P.I. Player of the Year - Y.A. Tittle  
 Clyde Conner - OE - NYN (2)  
 Marv Matuszak - LB - AP, UPI, NEA, TSN, NYN (2), Pro Bowl  
 Hugh McElhenny - HB - AP (2), NEA (2), pro Bowl  
 Dick Moegle - DB - AP (2), UPI (2), NEA (2), NYN  
 Frank Morze - C - TSN  
 Leo Nomellini - DT - AP, UPI, NEA (2), NYN (2), Pro Bowl  
 Y.A. Tittle - QB - AP, UPI, NEA (2), TSN, NYN, Pro Bowl  
 Billy Wilson - OE - AP, UPI, NEA, TSN, NYN, Pro Bowl

Player	POS	YR	HGT	WGT	AG	SCHOOL	GM
Arenas, Joe	HB	6	5-11	180	31	Nebraska-Omaha	12
Babb, Gene	FB	1	6-3	207	22	Austin	12
Barnes, Larry	FB	1	6-1	225	24	Colorado State	10
Bosley, Bruce	OG	2	6-2	240	23	West Virginia	6
Brodie, John	QB	1	6-1	195	22	Stanford	5
Carr, Paul	DB-LB	3	6-0	205	25	Houston	8
Conner, Clyde	OE	2	6-2	195	24	U. of Pacific	8
Connolly, Ted	OG	3	6-3	240	25	Tulsa; S.Clara	10
Cross, Bob	OT	5	6-4	250	26	Kilgore J.C.	12
Dahms, Tom	OT	7	6-5	250	29	San Diego St.	8
Gonzaga, John	OT	2	6-3	240	24	none	12
Hazeltine, Matt	LB	3	6-1	205	24	California	12
Henke, Ed	LB-DE	6	6-3	227	29	U.S.C.	12
Herchman, Bill	DT	2	6-2	240	24	Texas Tech	12
Holladay, Bob	DB	2	5-11	175	24	Tulsa	7
Jessup, Bill	OE-FL	5	6-1	195	28	U.S.C.	12
Matuszak, Marv	LB	4	6-3	235	26	Tulsa	12
McElhenny, Hugh	HB	6	6-1	198	28	Washington	12
Moegle, Dick	DB-HB	3	6-0	195	23	Rice	12
Morze, Frank	C	1	6-4	280	23	Boston College	12
Nomellini, Leo	DT	8	6-3	255	32	Minnesota	12
Owens, R.C.	OE-FL	1	6-3	205	22	Col. of Idaho	12
Palatella, Lou	OG	3	6-2	230	24	Pittsburgh	12
Perry, Joe	FB	10	6-0	210	30	Compton Jr.	8
Powell, Charley	DE-LB	5	6-2	225	25	none	12
Ridlon, Jim	DB	1	6-1	195	22	Syracuse	12
Rubke, Karl	C-LB	1	6-4	235	21	U.S.C.	12
St. Clair, Bob	OT	5	6-9	263	26	Tulsa; S.Fran.	5
a-Sheriff, Stan	OG	3	6-1	224	26	Cal. St. Poly.	2
Smith, J.D.	DB	2	6-1	200	24	N.Carolian A&T	12
Soltau, Gordie	OE	8	6-2	195	32	Minnesota	12
Spence, Julian	DB	2	5-11	175	28	Sam Houston St	3
Stits, Bill	DB	4	6-0	195	26	U.C.L.A.	12
Tittle, Y.A.	QB	10	6-0	195	30	L.S.U.	12
Toneff, Bob	DT	5	6-3	255	27	Notre Dame	12

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Walker, Val Joe . DB 5 6-1 178 26 S.M.U. .... 12  
 Wilson, Billy ... OE 7 6-3 190 30 San Jose State 11

a = also with Cleveland

<u>KO RET.</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YDS</u>	<u>AVG</u>	<u>TD</u>	<u>INTERCEPTIONS</u>	<u>NO</u>
Arenas	24	657	27.4	0	Moegle	8
Smith	14	368	26.3	0	Hazeltine	2
Hazeltine	1	23	23.0	0	Smith	2
Carr	1	10	10.0	0	Stits	2
Jessup	1	8	8.0	0	Walker	2
Babb	1	0	0.0	0	Herchman	1
Palatella	0	30	---	0	Rubke	1
SF	42	1096*	26.1	0		
Opp	45	928	20.6	0		

<u>SCORING</u>	<u>TR</u>	<u>TP</u>	<u>TM</u>	<u>TD</u>	<u>XP</u>	<u>XA</u>	<u>FG</u>	<u>FA</u>	<u>SF</u>	<u>PTS</u>
Soltau	0	0	0	0	33	33	9	15	0	60
Tittle	6	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	36
Wilson	0	6	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	36
Owens	0	5	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	30
Conner	0	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	24
Babb	3	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	18
McElhenny	1	2	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	18
Perry	3	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	18
Arenas	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	6
Herchman	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	6
Moegle	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	6
Nomellini	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
SF	15	17	1	33	33	33	9	15	1	260
Opp	18	13	1	32	31	32	13	24	1	264

<u>RUSHING</u>	<u>ATT</u>	<u>YDS</u>	<u>AVG</u>	<u>TD</u>	<u>PASS REC.</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YDS</u>	<u>AVG</u>	<u>TD</u>
McElhenny	102	478	4.7	1	Wilson	*52	757	14.6	6
Perry	97	454	4.7	3	McElhenny	37	458	12.4	2
Babb	102	330	3.2	3	Conner	30	412	13.7	4
Tittle	40	220	5.5	6	Owens	27	395	14.6	5
Barnes	20	78	3.9	0	Babb	20	141	7.1	0
Moegle	9	48	5.3	1	Perry	15	130	8.7	0
Arenas	5	14	2.8	1	Soltau	5	47	9.4	0
Brodie	2	0	0.0	0	Jessup	2	29	14.5	0
SF	377	1622	4.3	15	Powell	1	27	27.0	0
Opp	434	1847	4.3	18	Arenas	1	10	10.0	0
					Barnes	1	1	1.0	0

<u>PASSING</u>	<u>ATT</u>	<u>COM</u>	<u>PCT</u>	<u>YDS</u>	<u>AvgG</u>	<u>TD</u>	<u>TD%</u>	<u>IN</u>	<u>IN%</u>
Tittle	279	*176	*63.1	2157	7.73	13	4.6	15	5.4
Brodie	21	11	52.4	160	7.62	2	9.5	3	14.3
Arenas	3	3	100.0	92	30.67	2	66.7	0	0.0
Barnes	1	1	100.0	-2	-2.00	0	0.0	0	0.0
Perry	1	0	00.0	0	0.00	0	0.0	0	0.0
SF	305	*191	*62.6	2407	7.89	17	5.6	18	5.9
Opp	332	182	54.8	2582	7.78	13	3.9	18	5.4

<u>PUNT RET.</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>YDS</u>	<u>AVG</u>	<u>TD</u>	<u>PUNTING</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>AVG</u>
Arenas	25	80	3.2	0	Jessup	38	43.6
McElhenny	10	41	4.1	0	Barnes	19	47.1
Hazeltine	1	1	1.0	0	SF	57	*44.7
Moegle	1	0	0.0	0	Opp	47	40.3
SF	37	122	3.3	0			

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Opp            35 205 5.9 0  
\* = League high