

A TOUCHDOWN AIN'T A BAD DEFENSE

by Coach T.J. Troup

Scoring on defense can instantly turn a game around. The 1952 Rams were defending NFL champions and were led by Hall of Fame quarterbacks Bob Waterfield and Norm Van Brocklin. After the first four weeks of the '52 season the Rams were 1-3 and had been outscored 106-67. On October 26 in Los Angeles, the Rams trailed the Bears 7-3 entering the fourth quarter. Led by rookie DB Richard "Night Train" Lane (who intercepted two passes) the Ram defense began to assert themselves, thus beginning an amazing streak of scoring on defense that has never been equaled. The Ram defense scored as rookie tackle Ken Casner scooped up Wil White's fumble and lumbered 3 yards for a touchdown (unbelievably, White lost 51 yards rushing on the play). During week six in L.A. the Rams crushed the Dallas Texans 42-20 as DB Herb Rich returned an interception 97 yards for a score.

Beginning the second half of the schedule on the road in rainy and windswept Dallas, the Rams overcame a 6-3 deficit to beat the Texans 27 to 6. The Rams intercepted six passes for over 125 yards in returns, and Andy Robustelli returned an interception 17 yards for a touchdown. The next week in Wrigley Field the Rams outscored the Bears 40-24, as the Rams scored 16 points in 39 seconds. After a touchdown pass to Elroy Hirsch, Dick Lane tackled Eddie Macon of the Bears for a safety, and Andy Robustelli recovered a fumble, lateraled to Jack Dwyer, and Jack raced 12 yards for the score. The next two weeks the Rams defeated the Forty-niners as DB Jack Dwyer sparked the defense by returning a fumble 52 yards for a touchdown in the Coliseum, and intercepted two passes in Kezar Stadium during week ten.

The final two weeks of the regular season belonged to rookie Night Train Lane. During the first ten weeks Night Train had intercepted eight passes (including a then team record of intercepting passes in five consecutive games), but this pales in comparison to his performances against Green Bay and Pittsburgh in the Coliseum. Night Train intercepted three passes in both games, returning a Packer pass 80 yards for a TD and a Steeler toss 42 yards for a score. Also during the victory over Pittsburgh, Andy Robustelli returned a fumble 29 yards for a touchdown.

During the win streak the Rams scored eight defensive touchdowns, and their league-leading secondary (38.0 based upon NFL Pass Defense Rating) intercepted twenty-eight passes. No team in NFL history can compare (based on a twelve-game schedule). The Rams' win streak took them to foggy Detroit for a play-off game on December 21 against the Lions. The Rams could not turn the four Lion passes they intercepted into victory (Night Train Lane missed the game with a sprained ankle), and the title would soon belong to Detroit. An interesting side note to the play-off game: One of the key plays was an interception by Torgy Torgeson that was tipped by Jack Christiansen (the beginning of his Chris's Crew) to set up the final Lion touchdown.

From 1950 through 1986 there have been 1,077 interceptions returned for touchdowns (80 percent in victories). The Rams have returned the most with eighty-one (seventy-one occurred in victories), and ten times they have returned more than one in a game. No other team in NFL history has returned more than fifty-four in this thirty-seven-year time span.

The '52 Rams served as a role model for all the Rams teams that followed, hence their defense scoring year in and year out to win games for them. From Night Train Lane and Will Sherman in the fifties to Eddie Meador in the sixties to Nolan Cromwell and Leroy Irvin in the eighties, the Rams have had a penchant for turning opponents' passes into 6-point mistakes.

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INTERCEPTIONS RETURNED FOR TOUCHDOWNS 1950-1986

Team	Intercept.	Won	Lost	Tied	2 or + in same game
Los Angeles Rams	81	71	8	2	10
San Francisco 49ers	44	39	5	0	3
Atlanta Falcons	25	17	8	0	1
New Orleans Saints	21	15	6	0	0
Tampa Bay Bucs	13	7	5	1	1
Minnesota Vikings	29	23	5	1	1
Green Bay Packers	47	35	10	2	4
Detroit Lions	53	39	13	1	2
Chicago Bears	43	35	7	1	2
Washington Redskins	39	31	6	2	2
New York Giants	42	31	10	1	1
Philadelphia Eagles	35	24	11	0	2
Chicago/St. Louis Cardinals	38	31	6	1	3
Baltimore/Indianapolis Colts	42	36	6	0	2
Miami Dolphins	22	16	6	0	3
Buffalo Bills	42	30	10	2	2
New York Titans/Jets	31	26	5	0	1
Boston/New England Patriots	28	23	5	0	3
Oakland/Los Angeles Raiders	44	34	8	2	5
Denver Broncos	37	29	7	1	2
Dallas Texans/K.C. Chiefs	54	45	9	0	1
Los Angeles/San Diego Chargers	48	40	8	0	1
Seattle Seahawks	21	17	4	0	2
Dallas Cowboys	35	30	5	0	1
Houston Oilers	28	25	1	2	4
Cincinnati Bengals	35	26	9	0	3
Cleveland Browns	53	45	7	1	3
Pittsburgh Steelers	40	28	12	0	4
Others	7	5	2	0	1
Total	1077	853	204	20	76

DECADES OF DOMINANCE

The Ten Most Dominant NFL Teams over Ten-Year Periods, 1958 to 1979

Team	Years	W	L	T	%	PS*	W	L
1. Oakland Raiders	67-76	108	25	7	.812	9	9	8
2. Dallas Cowboys	68-77	105	34	1	.755	9	12	7
3. Minnesota Vikings	68-77	104	35	1	.748	9	9	9
4. Cleveland Browns	50-59	88	30	2	.745	8	4	5
5. Los Angeles Rams	67-76	99	34	7	.744	6	3	6
6. Miami Dolphins	70-79	104	39	1	.727	7	8	5
7. Green Bay Packers	60-69	96	37	5	.721	6	8	1
8. Pittsburgh Steelers	72-81	105	42	1	.714	8	14	4
9. New York Giants	54-63	86	35	5	.710	6	2	5
10. Baltimore Colts	59-68	93	40	3	.699	4	2	3

* Years of postseason play during this period