

**A CHRONOLOGY OF PRO FOOTBALL ON
TELEVISION: Part 3**

by Tim Brulia

1980: Year three of the four year billion dollar contract with the big three.

CBS: Same as 1978.

NBC: Same as 1978.

ABC: Same as 1979.

Main commentary crews:

CBS: Pat Summerall, Tom Brookshier.

NBC: Dick Enberg, Merlin Olsen

ABC: Frank Gifford, Don Meredith, Howard Cosell. (Thursday night games Fran Tarkenton replaces Cosell).

Pre-Game shows:

CBS: The NFL Today. Brent Musberger, Irv Cross, Jayne Kennedy, Jimmy the Greek.

NBC: NFL '80. Bryant Gumbel.

Wild card playoff crews:

NFC (CBS): LA Rams at Dallas: Gary Bender, John Madden.

AFC (NBC): Houston at Oakland: Charlie Jones, Len Dawson

Divisional playoff crews:

NFC (CBS): Minnesota Vikings at Philadelphia Eagles; Pat Summerall, Tom Brookshier. Dallas Cowboys at Atlanta Falcons; Vin Scully, George Allen.

AFC (NBC): Buffalo Bills at San Diego Chargers; Dick Enberg, Merlin Olsen. Oakland Raiders at Cleveland Browns; Don Criqui, John Brodie.

Championship Game commentary crews:

NFC (CBS): Dallas at Phila.; Pat Summerall, Tom Brookshier.

AFC (NBC): Oakland at San Diego; Dick Enberg, Merlin Olsen.

Super Bowl XV (NBC): Oakland Raiders and Philadelphia Eagles; Dick Enberg, Merlin Olsen.

Pro Bowl (ABC): Frank Gifford, Don Meredith, Fran Tarkenton.

Notes: A late season game between the Jets and Dolphins on NBC featured no commentary, but enhanced audio from the field.

1981: Year four of the four year billion dollar contract with the big three.

CBS: Same as 1978.

NBC: Same as 1978.

ABC: Same as 1979.

Main commentary crews:

CBS: Pat Summerall and Vin Scully alternated as main play by play commentators, while John Madden and Hank Stram alternated as analysts till late in season when Summerall and Madden became 1A, and Scully and Stram became 1B.

NBC: Dick Enberg, Merlin Olsen.

1981 (continued): ABC: Frank Gifford, Don Meredith, Howard Cosell. (Thursday night games Fran Tarkenton replaces Cosell).

Pre-Game shows:

CBS: The NFL Today. Brent Musberger, Irv Cross, Phyllis George (returning from family leave), Jimmy the Greek.

NBC: NFL '81. Bryant Gumbel.

Wild card playoff crews:

NFC (CBS): NY Giants at Phila.: Pat Summerall, John Madden.

AFC (NBC): Buffalo Bills at NY Jets: Charlie Jones, Len Dawson

Divisional playoff crews:

NFC (CBS): Tampa Bay Buccaneers at Dallas Cowboys; Vin Scully, Hank Stram. New York Giants at San Francisco 49ers; Pat Summerall, John Madden.

AFC (NBC): San Diego Chargers at Miami Dolphins; Don Criqui, John Brodie. Buffalo Bills at Cincinnati Bengals; Dick Enberg, Merlin Olsen.

Championship Game commentary crews:

NFC (CBS): Dallas Cowboys at San Francisco 49ers (The Catch); Vin Scully, Hank Stram.

AFC (NBC): San Diego Chargers at Cincinnati Bengals (The Cold); Dick Enberg, Merlin Olsen.

Super Bowl XVI (CBS): San Francisco 49ers and Cincinnati Bengals; Pat Summerall, John Madden.

Pro Bowl (ABC): Frank Gifford, Don Meredith, Fran Tarkenton.

1982: ABC, CBS, and NBC sign a five year \$2 billion plus pact with the NFL. The details:

CBS: All Sunday NFC games. Interconference games on Sunday: If NFC team plays at AFC team (example: Philadelphia at Pittsburgh), CBS has rights. CBS has one Thanksgiving Day game. CBS has one game each of late

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season Saturday game. CBS has NFC wild card game and both NFC divisional playoff games. CBS has the NFC Championship game. CBS has Super Bowl XVIII and Super Bowl XXI. CBS 27th season of NFL coverage.

NBC: All Sunday AFC games. Interconference games on Sunday. If AFC team plays at NFC team (example: Pittsburgh at Philadelphia), NBC has rights. NBC has one Thanksgiving Day game. NBC has AFC wild card game and both AFC divisional playoff games. NBC has the AFC Championship game. NBC has Super Bowl XVII and Super Bowl XX. NBC 18th season of AFC coverage, 32nd season with some form of pro football coverage.

ABC: Has 16 Monday Night games, plus 5 other night games. No restrictions on conference games (e.g. does NFC, AFC, and interconference games. ABC's 13th season of Monday Night Football. For the first time, ABC gains a Super Bowl to cover, Super Bowl XIX. ABC also keeps rights to the Pro Bowl for 1982 thru 1986.

Main commentary crews:

CBS: Pat Summerall, John Madden. Vin Scully, miffed at not getting the Super Bowl assignment, moves to NBC to do baseball. Hank Stram works with Jack Buck.

NBC: Dick Enberg, Merlin Olsen

ABC: Frank Gifford, Don Meredith, Howard Cosell. (Non-Monday night games Fran Tarkenton replaces Cosell).

Pre-Game shows:

CBS: The NFL Today. Brent Musberger, Irv Cross, Phyllis George, Jimmy the Greek.

NBC: NFL '82. Len Berman, Pete Axthelm, Mike Adamle. Bryant Gumbel leaves to do the Today show. Mike Adamle is promoted from contributor to co-host. Berman is brought in from Boston and "Ax" comes over from Newsweek magazine.

First round playoff crews (see notes below):

NFC (CBS): Tampa Bay Buccaneers at Dallas Cowboys: Pat Summerall, John Madden.

Atlanta Falcons at Minnesota Vikings: Tom Brookshier, Charlie Waters.

St. Louis Cardinals at Green Bay Packers: Jack Buck, Hank Stram.

Detroit Lions at Washington Redskins: Dick Stockton, Wayne Walker.

AFC (NBC): San Diego Chargers at Pittsburgh Steelers: Dick Enberg, Merlin Olsen.

New York Jets at Cincinnati Bengals: Charlie Jones, Len Dawson.

Cleveland Browns at Los Angeles Raiders: Don Criqui, John Brodie.

New England Patriots at Miami Dolphins: Marv Albert, analyst (?)

1982 (continued): Second round crews:

NFC (CBS): Green Bay Packers at Dallas Cowboys: Pat Summerall, John Madden

Minnesota Vikings at Washington Redskins: Jack Buck, Hank Stram..

AFC (NBC): San Diego Chargers at Miami Dolphins; Don Criqui, John Brodie.

New York Jets at Los Angeles Raiders; Dick Enberg, Merlin Olsen.

Championship Game commentary crews:

NFC (CBS): Dallas at Washington ; Pat Summerall, John Madden.

AFC (NBC): NY Jets at Miami Dolphins; Dick Enberg, Merlin Olsen.

Super Bowl XVII (NBC): Miami Dolphins and Washington Redskins; Dick Enberg, Merlin Olsen.

Pro Bowl (ABC): Frank Gifford, Don Meredith, Fran Tarkenton.

Notes: There was a very lengthy players strike, which wreaked havoc on the NFL schedule. As a result, there was a one-year only schedule, which wiped out the divisional standings and focused on conference standings. The playoff formula from 1978 thru 1981 was scrapped for a "tournament" format in which the top eight teams in the NFC and AFC would qualify. For the first - and so far only time - playoff games (the first round) were televised regionally as opposed to nationally. From the second round on, the playoffs were televised nationally as normal.

1983: Year two of the five year contract.

CBS: Same as 1982.

NBC: Same as 1982.

ABC: Same as 1982.

Main commentary crews:

CBS: Pat Summerall, John Madden.

NBC: Dick Enberg, Merlin Olsen.

ABC: Frank Gifford, Don Meredith, Howard Cosell. (Non-Monday night games O.J. Simpson replaces Cosell). Fran Tarkenton left to concentrate on his business.

Pre-Game shows:

CBS: The NFL Today. Brent Musberger, Irv Cross, Phyllis George, Jimmy the Greek.

NBC: NFL '83. Len Berman, Pete Axthelm, Mike Adamle.

Wild card playoff crews:

NFC (CBS): LA Rams at Dallas: Pat Summerall, John Madden.

AFC (NBC): Denver at Seattle: Charlie Jones, Len Dawson

Divisional playoff crews:

NFC (CBS): Detroit Lions at San Francisco 49ers; Frank Gliber, Hank Stram. Los Angeles Rams at Washington Redskins; Pat Summerall, John Madden.

AFC (NBC): Seattle Seahawks at Miami Dolphins; Marv Albert, John Brodie. Pittsburgh Steelers at Los Angeles Raiders; Dick Enberg, Merlin Olsen.

Championship Game commentary crews:

NFC (CBS): San Francisco 49ers at Washington Redskins; Pat Summerall, John Madden.

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AFC (NBC): Seattle Seahawks at Los Angeles Raiders; Dick Enberg, Merlin Olsen.
Super Bowl XVIII (CBS): Washington Redskins and Los Angeles Raiders; Pat Summerall, John Madden.
Pro Bowl (ABC): Frank Gifford, Don Meredith, O.J. Simpson.

1984: Year three of the five year contract.

CBS: Same as 1982.

NBC: Same as 1982.

ABC: Same as 1982.

Main commentary crews:

CBS: Pat Summerall, John Madden.

NBC: Dick Enberg, Merlin Olsen.

ABC: Frank Gifford, Don Meredith, O.J. Simpson. Howard Cosell had retired from Monday Night Football.

Pre-Game shows:

CBS: The NFL Today. Brent Musberger, Irv Cross, Phyllis George, Jimmy the Greek.

NBC: NFL '84. Bob Costas, Pete Axthelm, Mike Adamle. Costas replaces Len Berman.

1984 (continued): Wild card playoff crews:

NFC (CBS): NY Giants at LA Rams; Pat Summerall, John Madden.

AFC (NBC): LA Raiders at Seattle; Charlie Jones, Len Dawson

Divisional playoff crews:

NFC (CBS): Chicago Bears at Washington Redskins; Frank Glibber, Hank Stram. New York Giants at San Francisco 49ers; Pat Summerall, John Madden.

AFC (NBC): Pittsburgh at Denver; Dick Enberg, Merlin Olsen. Seattle Seahawks at Miami Dolphins; Marv Albert, Bob Griese.

Championship Game commentary crews:

NFC (CBS): Chicago Bears at San Francisco 49ers; Pat Summerall, John Madden.

AFC (NBC): Pittsburgh at Miami; Dick Enberg, Merlin Olsen.

Super Bowl XIX (ABC): Miami Dolphins and San Francisco 49ers; Frank Gifford, Don Meredith, Joe Theismann. This was ABC's first Super Bowl and surprisingly, O.J. Simpson was relegated to the pre-game show (with Dallas coach Tom Landry), and Redskins quarterback Joe Theismann replaced O.J. in the booth.

Pro Bowl (ABC): Frank Gifford, Don Meredith, O.J. Simpson.

1985: Year four of the five year contract.

CBS: Same as 1982.

NBC: Same as 1982.

ABC: Same as 1982.

Main commentary crews:

CBS: Pat Summerall, John Madden.

NBC: Dick Enberg, Merlin Olsen.

ABC: Frank Gifford, O.J. Simpson, Joe Namath (Meredith retired from Monday Night Football).

Pre-Game shows:

CBS: The NFL Today. Brent Musberger, Irv Cross, Jimmy the Greek (George retires from The NFL Today).

NBC: NFL '85. Bob Costas, Pete Axthelm.

Wild card playoff crews:

NFC (CBS): San Fran. at NY Giants; Pat Summerall, John Madden.

AFC (NBC): New England at NY Jets; Marv Albert, John Brodie.

Divisional playoff crews:

NFC (CBS): Dallas at LA Rams; Jack Buck, Dick Vermiel, Hank Stram. New York Giants at Chicago Bears; Pat Summerall, John Madden.

AFC (NBC): Cleveland Browns at Miami Dolphins; Don Criqui, Bob Trumpy. New England at LA Raiders; Dick Enberg, Merlin Olsen.

Championship Game commentary crews:

NFC (CBS): LA Rams at Chi. Bears; Pat Summerall, John Madden.

AFC (NBC): New England at Miami; Dick Enberg, Merlin Olsen.

Super Bowl XX (NBC): Chicago Bears and New England Patriots; Dick Enberg, Merlin Olsen.

Pro Bowl (ABC): Frank Gifford, O.J. Simpson, Joe Namath.

1986: Final year of the five year contract.

CBS: Same as 1982.

NBC: Same as 1982.

ABC: Same as 1982.

Main commentary crews:

CBS: Pat Summerall, John Madden.

NBC: Dick Enberg, Merlin Olsen.

ABC: Al Michaels, Frank Gifford. Michaels is brought on to replace Gifford, who in turn replaces Simpson and Namath. The booth becomes hard-core football at last.

Pre-Game shows:

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CBS: The NFL Today. Brent Musberger, Irv Cross, Jimmy the Greek (George retires from The NFL Today).

NBC: NFL '85. Bob Costas, Pete Axthelm.

1986 (continued): Wild card playoff crews:

NFC (CBS): Los Angeles Rams and Washington Redskins: Pat Summerall, John Madden.

AFC (NBC): Kansas City Chiefs at New York Jets: Marv Albert, Bob Griese.

Divisional playoff crews:

NFC (CBS): San Francisco 49ers at New York Giants; Pat Summerall, John Madden. Washington Redskins at Chicago Bears; Dick Stockton, Dan Dierdorf.

AFC (NBC): New York Jets at Cleveland Browns; Don Criqui, Bob Trumpy. New England Patriots at Denver Broncos; Dick Enberg, Merlin Olsen.

Championship Game commentary crews:

NFC (CBS): Washington Redskins at New York Giants; Pat Summerall, John Madden.

AFC (NBC): Denver Broncos at Cleveland Browns (The Drive); Dick Enberg, Merlin Olsen.

Super Bowl XXI (CBS): Denver Broncos and New York Giants; Pat Summerall, John Madden.

Pro Bowl (ABC): Al Michaels, Frank Gifford

1987: ABC, CBS, NBC and cable outlet ESPN, sign a three year \$2 billion plus pact with the NFL. The details:

CBS: All Sunday NFC games. Interconference games on Sunday. If NFC team plays at AFC team (example: Philadelphia at Pittsburgh), CBS has rights. CBS has one Thanksgiving Day game. CBS has one game each of late season Saturday game. CBS has NFC wild card game and both NFC divisional playoff games. CBS has the NFC Championship game. CBS has Super Bowl XXIV. CBS 32nd season of NFL coverage.

NBC: All Sunday AFC games. Interconference games on Sunday. If AFC team plays at NFC team (example: Pittsburgh at Philadelphia), NBC has rights. NBC has one Thanksgiving Day game. NBC has AFC wild card game and both AFC divisional playoff games. NBC has the AFC Championship game. NBC has Super Bowl XXIII. NBC 23rd season of AFC coverage, 37th season with some form of pro football coverage.

ABC: Has 16 Monday Night games. No restrictions on conference games (e.g. does NFC, AFC, and interconference games. ABC has Super Bowl XXII. ABC's 18th season of Monday Night Football.

ESPN: Has 8 Sunday night games, starting halfway thru the season. Like ABC, no restrictions on conference games. ESPN has rights to 1987, 1988 and 1989 Pro Bowl.

Main commentary crews:

CBS: Pat Summerall, John Madden.

NBC: Dick Enberg, Merlin Olsen.

ABC: Al Michaels, Frank Gifford, Dan Dierdorf. Dierdorf is brought over from CBS.

ESPN: Mike Patrick, Roy Firestone, and a guest analyst.

Pre game shows:

CBS: The NFL Today. Brent Musberger, Irv Cross, Jimmy the Greek.

NBC: NFL Live. Bob Costas, Paul Maguire, Ahmad Rashad. Yet another format change for NBC. Pete Axthelm leaves for ESPN.

Wild card playoff crews:

NFC (CBS): Minn. at New Orleans: Pat Summerall, John Madden.

AFC (NBC): Seattle Seahawks at Houston Oilers. Marv Albert, Joe Namath.

Divisional playoff crews:

NFC (CBS): Minn. at San Francisco; Tim Ryan, Joe Theismann. Washington Redskins at Chicago Bears; Pat Summerall, John Madden.

AFC (NBC): Indianapolis at Cleveland; Don Criqui, Bob Trumpy. Houston Oilers at Denver Broncos; Dick Enberg, Merlin Olsen.

Championship Game commentary crews:

NFC (CBS): Minnesota Vikings at Washington Redskins; Pat Summerall, John Madden.

AFC (NBC): Cleveland Browns at Denver Broncos; Dick Enberg, Merlin Olsen.

Super Bowl XXII (ABC): Washington Redskins and Denver Broncos. Al Michaels, Frank Gifford, Dan Dierdorf.

Pro Bowl (ESPN): Mike Patrick, Roy Firestone, Chris Berman.

1988: Year two of the three year contract.

CBS: Same as 1987.

NBC: Same as 1987.

ABC: Same as 1987.

ESPN: Same as 1987.

Main commentary crews:

CBS: Pat Summerall, John Madden.

NBC: Dick Enberg, Merlin Olsen.

ABC: Al Michaels, Frank Gifford, Dan Dierdorf.

ESPN: Mike Patrick, Joe Theismann. Theismann comes from CBS. Firestone stays at ESPN for other duties.

Pre game shows:

CBS: The NFL Today. Brent Musberger, Irv Cross, Dick Butkus. Jimmy the Greek was fired from CBS in the off-season for some unfortunate racial remarks.

NBC: NFL Live. Bob Costas, Paul Maguire, Ahmad Rashad. Note that when NBC covered the Seoul Olympics during the season, Len Berman replaced Costas as host.

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Wild card playoff crews:

NFC (CBS): Los Angeles Rams at Minnesota Vikings; Pat Summerall, John Madden.

AFC (NBC): Houston Oilers at Cleveland Browns; Don Criqui, Bob Trumpy.

Divisional playoff crews:

NFC (CBS): Philadelphia Eagles at Chicago Bears (fog so thick, sideline cameras had to "follow" the action); Verne Lundquist, Terry Bradshaw. Minnesota Vikings at San Francisco 49ers; Pat Summerall, John Madden.

AFC (NBC): Seattle Seahawks at Cincinnati Bengals; Dick Enberg, Merlin Olsen. Houston Oilers at Buffalo Bills; Marv Albert, Paul Maguire.

Championship Game commentary crews:

NFC (CBS): San Francisco 49ers at Chicago Bears; Pat Summerall, John Madden.

AFC (NBC): Buffalo Bills at Cincinnati Bengals; Dick Enberg, Merlin Olsen.

Super Bowl XXIII (NBC): Cincinnati Bengals and San Francisco 49ers. Dick Enberg, Merlin Olsen

Pro Bowl (ESPN): Mike Patrick, Joe Theismann, Chris Berman.

Notes: During the early part of the season, NBC also covered the Olympics from Seoul. Most of NBC's top echelon football announcers (Costas, Albert, Enberg, etc.) went along. NBC decided to bring back some old-time announcers to fill in. Golden throats such as Ray Scott, Chuck Thompson, Curt Gowdy filled in admirably.

1989: Year three of the three year contract.

CBS: Same as 1987.

NBC: Same as 1987.

ABC: Same as 1987.

ESPN: Same as 1987.

Main commentary crews:

CBS: Pat Summerall, John Madden.

NBC: Dick Enberg, Bill Walsh. Merlin Olsen was dropped to regional coverage to make way for "The Genius".

ABC: Al Michaels, Frank Gifford, Dan Dierdorf.

ESPN: Mike Patrick, Joe Theismann.

Pre game shows:

CBS: The NFL Today. Brent Musberger, Irv Cross, Dick Butkus.

NBC: NFL Live. Bob Costas, O.J. Simpson. Rashad and Maguire went back to the analyst's chair in covering NBC's regional games.

Wild card playoff crews:

NFC (CBS): LA Rams at Phila: Pat Summerall, John Madden.

AFC (NBC): Pittsburgh at Houston Oilers; Marv Albert, Bob Trumpy.

Divisional playoff crews:

NFC (CBS): Minnesota at San Francisco; Verne Lundquist, Terry Bradshaw. LA Rams at NY Giants; Pat Summerall, John Madden.

AFC (NBC): Buffalo Bills at Cleveland Browns; Charlie Jones, Merlin Olsen. Pittsburgh Steelers at Denver Broncos; Dick Enberg, Bill Walsh.

Championship Game commentary crews:

NFC (CBS): Los Angeles Rams at San Francisco 49ers; Pat Summerall, John Madden.

AFC (NBC): Cleveland at Denver Broncos; Dick Enberg, Bill Walsh.

Super Bowl XXIV (CBS): San Francisco 49ers and Denver Broncos. Pat Summerall and John Madden.

Pro Bowl (ESPN): Mike Patrick, Joe Theismann, Chris Berman.