



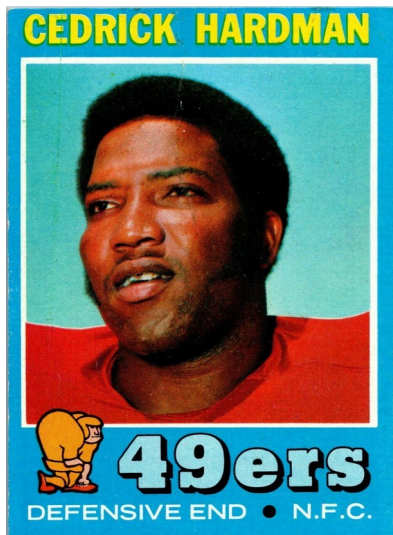
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### Cedrick Hardman

This article was written by Matthew Keddie.

Cedrick Hardman was on a mission during every snap. He was a relentless pass rushing defensive end, often creating havoc for the offense during his 12 seasons in the NFL with the San Francisco 49ers (1970 to 1979) and Oakland Raiders (1980, 1981).<sup>1</sup> He described his style as, “My passion was always getting to the quarterback. That was my mission in life.”<sup>2</sup> Although not officially tracked until 1982, Hardman racked up 108.0 unofficial career sacks with the 49ers, which stands today as the franchise record. He was also a part of the 49ers' famed 'Gold Rush' front four, that also consisted of Tommy Hart, Cleveland Elam and Jimmy Webb.<sup>3</sup> He said, “We were the 'Gold Rush.' There are no front fours now. Now, you have schemes and zone blitzes, where defensive linemen are dropping into pass coverage. You couldn't have gotten us to do that. We didn't know how to go south. We only went north.”<sup>4</sup>



A specific instance of their effectiveness was in 1976 against the Los Angeles Rams when the unit compiled ten sacks of James Harris, in a 16-0 victory. Los Angeles guard, future Hall of Famer, Tom Mack could not believe it saying, “Ten sacks for 97 yards? I've been in this league for 11 years and nothing like it has ever happened to us before. With those two young guys inside (Cleveland Elam and Jimmy Webb), they've got a great defensive line. They reminded me of the Rams old 'Fearsome Foursome.’”<sup>5</sup> Hardman recorded two unofficial sacks in the game, part of his count of 12.5 on the season.



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Throughout his 49ers career, Hardman was selected to the Pro Bowl twice (1971, 1975). He was also a two-time second-team all-pro selection courtesy of the Pro Football Writers Association (1971) and the *Newspaper Ent. Association* (1975) and earned All-Conference honors in 1971 and 1975.<sup>6</sup>

The 49ers were highly successful in his first three seasons (1970 to 1972), earning playoff appearances courtesy of three consecutive NFC West Division titles. The team boasted a powerful offense led by Pro Bowl and all-pro quarterback John Brodie, running backs Ken Willard and Doug Cunningham, and all-pro receiver Gene Washington that ranked in the top ten in scoring each season.<sup>7</sup> Ultimately, it was the Dallas Cowboys that ended their season each time in the playoffs.

Hardman started just five of 14 contests as a rookie in 1970. The following season, he slid into a starting position at right defensive end.<sup>8</sup> The results were extremely positive as compiled 18.0 unofficial sacks. Over the next seven years, Hardman would not record below 8.0 sacks per season.<sup>9</sup>

In 1976, the 49ers boasted the league's third ranked defense, its best ranking since 1960. Hardman recalls, "The 1976 season (with the 49ers), that was the highlight. Monte Clark had become the coach, and we had a fabulous team. We had the best running back in Delvin Williams, we had (wide receiver) Gene Washington, a great defense. We knew we were going to compete for the Super Bowl."<sup>10</sup> The season turned out to be a large missed

- 1 "Cedrick Hardman," ProFootballReference.com, accessed June 6, 2024, [Cedrick Hardman Stats, Height, Weight, Position, Draft, College | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).
- 2 Hession, Joe. "75 for 75: 'The Gold Rush' Sack Attack," 49ers.com, October 5, 2021, accessed June 6, 2024, [75 for 75: 'The Gold Rush' Sack Attack \(49ers.com\)](#).
- 3 Hession, Joe. "75 for 75: 'The Gold Rush' Sack Attack," 49ers.com, October 5, 2021, accessed June 6, 2024, [75 for 75: 'The Gold Rush' Sack Attack \(49ers.com\)](#).
- 4 Hession, Joe. "75 for 75: 'The Gold Rush' Sack Attack," 49ers.com, October 5, 2021, accessed June 6, 2024, [75 for 75: 'The Gold Rush' Sack Attack \(49ers.com\)](#).
- 5 Hession, Joe. "75 for 75: 'The Gold Rush' Sack Attack," 49ers.com, October 5, 2021, accessed June 6, 2024, [75 for 75: 'The Gold Rush' Sack Attack \(49ers.com\)](#).
- 6 "Cedrick Hardman," ProFootballReference.com, accessed June 6, 2024, [Cedrick Hardman Stats, Height, Weight, Position, Draft, College | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).
- 7 "San Francisco 49ers Franchise Encyclopedia," ProFootballReference.com, accessed June 6, 2024, [San Francisco 49ers Team Records, Leaders, and League Ranks | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).
- 8 "Cedrick Hardman," ProFootballReference.com, accessed June 6, 2024, [Cedrick Hardman Stats, Height, Weight, Position, Draft, College | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).
- 9 "Cedrick Hardman," ProFootballReference.com, accessed June 6, 2024, [Cedrick Hardman Stats, Height, Weight, Position, Draft, College | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).
- 10 Bush, David. "Where Are They Now?: Cedrick Hardman / Hardman's soft spot / Ex-49ers defensive line star liked '86 team best," sfgate.com, December 14, 2003, accessed June 6, 2024, [WHERE ARE THEY NOW?: Cedrick Hardman / Hardman's soft spot / Ex-49ers defensive line star liked '76 team best \(sfgate.com\)](#).



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opportunity. After a 6-1 start, the 49ers lost five of their final seven games to finish at 8-6, including overtime defeats to the St. Louis Cardinals (23-20) and San Diego Chargers (13-7).<sup>11</sup> Following the season, the defense began to unravel and the 49ers went through three more head coaches (Ken Meyer, Fred O'Connor and Pete McCulley) as team ownership changed hands to the DeBartolo family.

It marked the beginning of a new era for Hardman. Due to injury, he was placed on injured reserve following the 1979 season. He said, "My body parts were starting to wear out. And I had always played a four-man line, outside the (offensive) tackle. They were playing a three-man line and I was only 245 pounds and wasn't equipped to go inside."<sup>12</sup> As a result, he was traded across the bay to the Oakland Raiders for a 1982 sixth round draft choice and a fifth-round selection in 1983.<sup>13</sup>

The Raiders were a solid club, featuring all-pro defenders in linebacker and future Hall of Famer Ted Hendricks and defensive back Lester Hayes. They were a gritty, physical bunch that also featured defensive lineman John Matuszak and linebacker Rod Martin.<sup>14</sup> The Raiders' 1980 season was defined by a six-game winning streak spanning from October 12 through November 17. Finishing at 11-5, they made a run in the playoffs to Super Bowl XV, that included a 14-12 victory over the Cleveland Browns in the infamous 'Red Right 88' divisional playoff game, where Oakland safety Mike Davis intercepted Brian Sipe's pass in the end zone to seal the win.<sup>15</sup> In the Super Bowl, the Raiders dominated the Philadelphia Eagles, 27-10. On the victory Hardman said, "That was a great way to end a career, with a Super Bowl ring."<sup>16</sup>

In mostly a reserve role, Hardman recorded 9.5 sacks in the regular season. He also saw limited playing time in 1981 and retired from the NFL following that season. In 12

1 1 "1976 San Francisco 49ers Rosters, Stats, Schedule, Team Draftees," ProFootballReference.com, accessed June 6, 2024, [1976 San Francisco 49ers Rosters, Stats, Schedule, Team Draftees | Pro-Football-Reference.com](https://www.profootballreference.com/rosters/1976-san-francisco-49ers-rosters-stats-schedule-team-draftees).

1 2 Bush, David. "Where Are They Now?: Cedrick Hardman / Hardman's soft spot / Ex-49ers defensive line star liked '86 team best," sfgate.com, December 14, 2003, accessed June 6, 2024, [WHERE ARE THEY NOW?: Cedrick Hardman / Hardman's soft spot / Ex-49ers defensive line star liked '76 team best \(sfgate.com\)](https://www.sfgate.com/sports/article/Where-Are-They-Now-Cedrick-Hardman-Hardman-s-soft-spot-Ex-49ers-defensive-line-star-liked-86-team-best/101776).

1 3 "Cedrick Hardman," ProSportsTransactions.com, accessed June 6, 2024, [Football Transactions Search Results \(prosportstransactions.com\)](https://www.prosportstransactions.com/player/cedrick-hardman).

1 4 "1980 Oakland Raiders Roster & Players," ProFootballReference.com, accessed June 6, 2024, [1980 Oakland Raiders Roster & Players | Pro-Football-Reference.com](https://www.profootballreference.com/rosters/1980-oakland-raiders-roster-players).

1 5 "1980 Oakland Raiders Rosters, Stats, Schedule, Team Draftees," ProFootballReference.com, accessed June 6, 2024, [1980 Oakland Raiders Rosters, Stats, Schedule, Team Draftees | Pro-Football-Reference.com](https://www.profootballreference.com/rosters/1980-oakland-raiders-rosters-stats-schedule-team-draftees).

1 6 Bush, David. "Where Are They Now?: Cedrick Hardman / Hardman's soft spot / Ex-49ers defensive line star liked '86 team best," sfgate.com, December 14, 2003, accessed June 6, 2024, [WHERE ARE THEY NOW?: Cedrick Hardman / Hardman's soft spot / Ex-49ers defensive line star liked '76 team best \(sfgate.com\)](https://www.sfgate.com/sports/article/Where-Are-They-Now-Cedrick-Hardman-Hardman-s-soft-spot-Ex-49ers-defensive-line-star-liked-86-team-best/101776).



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seasons in San Francisco and Oakland, he played in 171 career games, making 121 starts.<sup>17</sup> His 122.5 unofficial career sacks rank him inside the Top 30 all-time.<sup>18</sup>

Following his career in the NFL, Hardman signed with the United States Football League's (USFL) Oakland Invaders for its inaugural 1983 season in a player-coach role. Oakland went 9-9, winning the Pacific Division, but lost to the Michigan Panthers in the playoffs.<sup>19</sup> He decided to hang up football following the season saying, "After the NFL, that was tough. We had a trip to Birmingham and it was like a whistle-stop. It took 10 hours by airplane. Somewhere over Tennessee I made up my mind I wouldn't play any more football."<sup>20</sup>

Hardman was drafted ninth overall in the 1970 NFL Draft by the 49ers after playing college football at North Texas State University (now the University of North Texas). Hardman started off playing in the defensive backfield in 1966, but then found his niche along the defensive line.<sup>21</sup> Switching to the defensive line for 1968, he lined up alongside future college and pro football Hall of Famer Joe Greene.<sup>22</sup> Led by head coaches Odus Mitchell (1966) and Rod Rust, North Texas was routinely at the top of the Missouri Valley Conference standings. They shared or won the conference title in 1966 and 1967.<sup>23</sup> The Mean Green also posted 8-2 and 7-3 records in 1968 and 1969, respectively, but finished one-half game behind Memphis State (now the University of Memphis).

The 1969 season is when Hardman showed his fullest potential. He recorded 38 sacks, including 11 against the Tulsa Golden Hurricane in a 42-16 blowout victory on senior day.<sup>24</sup> That season he earned first-team All-Missouri Valley Conference honors and was

- 1 7 "Cedrick Hardman," ProFootballReference.com, accessed June 6, 2024, [Cedrick Hardman Stats, Height, Weight, Position, Draft, College | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).
- 1 8 "NFL Sacks Career Leaders (since 1960)," ProFootballReference.com, accessed June 6, 2024, [NFL Sacks Career Leaders \(since 1960\) | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).
- 1 9 Bush, David. "Where Are They Now?: Cedrick Hardman / Hardman's soft spot / Ex-49ers defensive line star liked '86 team best," sfgate.com, December 14, 2003, accessed June 6, 2024, [WHERE ARE THEY NOW?: Cedrick Hardman / Hardman's soft spot / Ex-49ers defensive line star liked '76 team best \(sfgate.com\)](#).
- 2 0 Bush, David. "Where Are They Now?: Cedrick Hardman / Hardman's soft spot / Ex-49ers defensive line star liked '86 team best," sfgate.com, December 14, 2003, accessed June 6, 2024, [WHERE ARE THEY NOW?: Cedrick Hardman / Hardman's soft spot / Ex-49ers defensive line star liked '76 team best \(sfgate.com\)](#).
- 2 1 "North Texas Legend Cedrick Hardman Dies," meangreensports.com, March 9, 2019, accessed June 6, 2024, [North Texas Legend Cedrick Hardman Dies - University of North Texas Athletics \(meangreensports.com\)](#).
- 2 2 "North Texas Legend Cedrick Hardman Dies," meangreensports.com, March 9, 2019, accessed June 6, 2024, [North Texas Legend Cedrick Hardman Dies - University of North Texas Athletics \(meangreensports.com\)](#).
- 2 3 "North Texas Mean Green School History," sports-reference.com, accessed June 6, 2024, [North Texas Mean Green College Football History, Stats, Records | College Football at Sports-Reference.com](#).



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invited to play in the Senior Bowl as well as the Blue-Gray Game. In addition to Joe Greene, Hardman is known as one of the greatest players in school history.<sup>25</sup>

Born Cedrick Ward Hardman on October 4, 1948 in Houston, Texas, he attended George Washington Carver High School.<sup>26</sup> Interestingly, he never played high school football. Former North Texas University assistant coach Ken Bahnsen said, “He didn't play any high school football. He asked me if he could try out for the football team. He kept getting bigger and better. The best thing he could do was rush the passer. He was just a good kid and wanted to do well at whatever he was trying to do. He was a great teammate.”<sup>27</sup>

Hardman passed away at the age of 70 on March 8, 2019 in San Clemente, California. He spent most of his life after playing football in Southern California. Hardman was involved in a number of business and philanthropic ventures, such as volunteering at football camps, charity work, making public appearances and hosting autograph sessions.<sup>28</sup> He also spent time acting in various cinemas including *Stir Crazy* (1980), *House Party* (1990), *The Candidate* (1972) and *The Fall Guy* (1981). On the work he said, “I enjoy doing stuff like this, but I don't like watching the game much anymore. I think I have been to four football games since I retired.”<sup>29</sup>

Hardman was inducted into the 49ers 10-year Club that recognizes players with 10 or more years of service with the team. He was also elected to the North Texas Athletics Hall of Fame in 2001, named to the school's All-Century football team in 2013 and to the Missouri Valley Conference All-Century Team in 2006.<sup>30</sup>

2 4 “North Texas Legend Cedrick Hardman Dies,” meangreensports.com, March 9, 2019, accessed June 6, 2024, [North Texas Legend Cedrick Hardman Dies - University of North Texas Athletics \(meangreensports.com\)](https://meangreensports.com/north-texas-legend-cedrick-hardman-dies-university-of-north-texas-athletics/).

2 5 “North Texas Legend Cedrick Hardman Dies,” meangreensports.com, March 9, 2019, accessed June 6, 2024, [North Texas Legend Cedrick Hardman Dies - University of North Texas Athletics \(meangreensports.com\)](https://meangreensports.com/north-texas-legend-cedrick-hardman-dies-university-of-north-texas-athletics/).

2 6 “Cedrick Hardman,” ProFootballReference.com, accessed June 6, 2024, [Cedrick Hardman Stats, Height, Weight, Position, Draft, College | Pro-Football-Reference.com](https://www.pro-football-reference.com/players/H/Hardma01.htm).

2 7 Vito, Brett. “UNT Hall of Famer Cedrick Hardman dies at 70,” dentonrc.com, March 10, 2019, accessed June 6, 2024, [UNT Hall of Famer Cedrick Hardman dies at 70 | Sports | dentonrc.com](https://www.dentonrc.com/news/unt-hall-of-famer-cedrick-hardman-dies-at-70/).

2 8 Bush, David. “Where Are They Now?: Cedrick Hardman / Hardman's soft spot / Ex-49ers defensive line star liked '86 team best,” sfgate.com, December 14, 2003, accessed June 6, 2024, [WHERE ARE THEY NOW?: Cedrick Hardman / Hardman's soft spot / Ex-49ers defensive line star liked '76 team best \(sfgate.com\)](https://www.sfgate.com/sports/article/Where-Are-They-Now-Cedrick-Hardman-Hardman-s-soft-spot-Ex-49ers-defensive-line-star-liked-86-team-best-101547730.html).

2 9 Bush, David. “Where Are They Now?: Cedrick Hardman / Hardman's soft spot / Ex-49ers defensive line star liked '86 team best,” sfgate.com, December 14, 2003, accessed June 6, 2024, [WHERE ARE THEY NOW?: Cedrick Hardman / Hardman's soft spot / Ex-49ers defensive line star liked '76 team best \(sfgate.com\)](https://www.sfgate.com/sports/article/Where-Are-They-Now-Cedrick-Hardman-Hardman-s-soft-spot-Ex-49ers-defensive-line-star-liked-86-team-best-101547730.html).

3 0 “Cedrick Hardman,” northtexas.unt.edu, June 26, 2019, accessed June 6, 2024, [Cedrick Hardman | North Texan \(unt.edu\)](https://northtexas.unt.edu/athletics/hall-of-fame/cedrick-hardman/).



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On his passing the 49ers stated, “We are truly saddened by the loss of one of the all-time great 49ers, Cedrick Hardman. During his 10-year career in red and gold, he anchored the vaunted 'Gold Rush' defensive line with a non-stop motor that put fear in the minds of opposing quarterbacks. As a football player, Cedrick's accomplishments were many. As a man, his impact on the lives of others was just as impressive. ...”<sup>31</sup>

According to his obituary, Hardman did not marry. He was survived by two brothers, Albert and Frank, Jr.; two children: son Clayton and daughter Trenay as well as five grandchildren.<sup>32</sup>

End Notes:

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- 3 1 Maiocco, Matt. “Cedrick Hardman, 49ers' all-time sack leader, dies at age 70,” nbcspportsbayarea.com, March 9, 2019, accessed June 6, 2024, [Cedrick Hardman, 49ers' all-time sack leader, dies at age 70 – NBC Sports Bay Area & California](#).
  - 3 2 “Cedrick Ward Hardman,” dignitymemorial.com, accessed July 5, 2024, [Cedrick Ward Hardman Obituary - Houston, TX \(dignitymemorial.com\)](#).