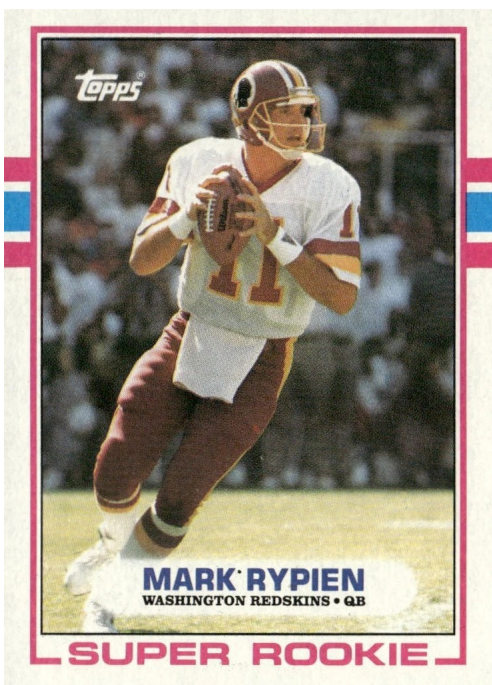


Mark Rypien

This article was written by Tommy Phillips.

Going from the 146th pick in the 1986 NFL Draft to the cockpit of one of the most dominant machines in NFL history five years later, quarterback Mark Rypien had one of the craziest roller-coaster rides that a football player could ever have. Fortunately, that roller coaster reached a very high peak, and it's that peak for which Rypien is most remembered.

Mark Robert Rypien (pronounced: RIP-in) was born on October 2, 1962, in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. After moving to Spokane, Washington, he went to Shadle Park High School. A multi-sport prodigy, everything Rypien did in high school turned to gold. He won the state basketball championship. He pitched in a state baseball championship game. And, of course, he rewrote the football program's record book.ⁱ Rypien wore three numbers in high school: 14 (football), 42 (basketball), and 32 (baseball); he wore none of those in the NFL.



Named “Mr. Blue Chip” of the state of Washington when being recruited, over 40 universities went after him, including what Rypien described as “big name throwing schools.” But Rypien instead decided to go to Washington State, where he said that he hoped to be the Cougars’ starting quarterback right away.ⁱⁱ



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That didn't happen. Rypien was the third-string quarterback his freshman year of 1981. While the Cougars went on to play in the Holiday Bowl, Rypien threw only 13 passes all season. He then was redshirted in 1982. Already, even at a young age, Rypien was hearing that dreadful word being tossed around – “overrated.”

In 1983, Rypien started two games for Washington State before breaking his collarbone. Frustrated with the offense WSU head coach Jim Walden was running, Rypien announced in November that he would no longer play football, and that he was going to transfer to another school to play baseball instead.ⁱⁱⁱ

The reasoning for this was unknown; some said Rypien wasn't being used correctly, some said he just wasn't getting used at all, and others said he just wanted to play baseball.^{iv} But a week later, he changed his mind and went back to the football team.^v Whatever the reason was, Rypien went back to being the third-stringer for the rest of the season, preparing to be the starter in 1984.^{vi}

Rypien had a solid junior year at WSU, throwing for 1,927 yards and 14 touchdowns, and gaining over 2,200 yards of total offense.^{vii} The six-foot-four, 225-pound quarterback was named first-team All-Pacific-10.^{viii} Going into his senior year, expectation were high for both Rypien and the Cougars, who were considered a threat to reach the Rose Bowl.^{ix}

But Washington State's 1985 season was an utter disaster. The Cougars lost seven of 11 games, and two of their victories came by only one point. Rypien threw for 2,174 yards and 14 touchdowns in his senior season, ranked 16th in the nation in passer rating.^x Rypien finished his Washington State career second-place all-time in school history in yards (4,573) and touchdowns (28).^{xi} At least Rypien was invited to the East-West Shrine Bowl and the Senior Bowl, with the chance to showcase his skills to NFL teams.^{xii} A last-minute addition to the Senior Bowl, Rypien completed 13 of 17 passes for 168 yards and three touchdowns in a 31-17 North victory.^{xiii}

When the 1986 NFL Draft came around in April, Rypien had high hopes. “I'd like to say I'd go before the first four rounds,” he said. His agent, Ken Staninger, concurred. “Mark could be the first quarterback taken. In any case, he will, in my opinion, be taken in the first three rounds.”^{xiv}

But Rypien had a long wait ahead of him, one that would make Aaron Rodgers blush. He wasn't taken until the sixth round, as the eighth quarterback chosen in the draft. The Washington Redskins traded with the Kansas City Chiefs for the pick which they used to select Rypien, which he said was “kind of neat,” adding that “maybe it was just for a pack of chewing gum.”^{xv}

Wearing #11, Rypien entered training camp with the Redskins with firmly entrenched starter Jay Schroeder as well as back-up Babe Laufenberg. In Washington's first preseason game in New England, Rypien got the nod in the second half over Laufenberg, but had a miserable performance. He completed only six of 15 passes, was intercepted once, and had a fumble that resulted in a safety. Laufenberg wasn't much better, failing to complete a pass.^{xvi}



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Perhaps because of that, the Redskins signed Doug Williams from the USFL to be Schroeder's backup.^{xvii} Rypien had to fight it out with Laufenberg for the number three spot on the depth chart. When the Redskins cut Laufenberg before the final preseason game to award Rypien that third spot, Rypien was booed by Washington fans who preferred Laufenberg. It would not be the last time Rypien found himself in hot water with the fans in D.C.^{xviii}

But Rypien's rookie season would be a short one. Due to a swollen knee and the signing of training camp holdout defensive end Dexter Manley, Rypien was placed on injured reserve before the season's first game.^{xix} He spent his rookie season sending in signals, real ones and decoys. "Maybe in two or three years you'd get frustrated sitting around," he said, "but if I'm the backup quarterback for the Redskins for two or three years, people will notice."^{xx}

The following year, after a contentious confrontation between Schroeder and Williams in the 1986 NFC Championship Game, Williams requested a trade. That seemed like a golden opportunity for Rypien.^{xxi} But yet again, Rypien suffered a back injury in a preseason game, and was put back on injured reserve.^{xxii} This time, he was activated in late November when Williams hurt his back, but did not see any playing time. He was made inactive again after Williams' return, and he remained as such for the remainder of the 1987 season.^{xxiii} There was one big positive for Rypien at the end of the season. He married 22-year-old Annette Hutcheson, a Redskins cheerleader.^{xxiv}

ⁱ "Shadle Park High School of Spokane Retires Rypien's Three Numbers," *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, May 18, 1992, 87.

ⁱⁱ Associated Press, "QB is Taking Plight with Cougs Calmly," *Daily Herald*, Oct. 5, 1982, 24.

ⁱⁱⁱ Vince Devlin and John Blanchette, "Rypien Hedging on Plans," *Spokesman-Review*, Nov. 3, 1983, 31.

^{iv} Vince Devlin, "Rypien, Cougars Put Troubles Behind Them," *Spokesman-Review*, Aug. 19, 1984, 37.

^v Dan Weaver, "Rypien Will Remain a Cougar," *Spokesman-Review*, Nov. 8, 1983, 20.

^{vi} Hec Hancock, "Lack of a Bowl Bid Shouldn't Dim Cougars' Fine Season," *Tri-City Herald*, Nov. 25, 1983, 19.

^{vii} "Mayes, Bickett Named Pac-10 Players of Year," *Spokane Chronicle*, Nov. 20, 1984, 12.

^{viii} "WSU's Mayes, Lynch, Rypien Voted to All-Conference Team," *Spokesman-Review*, Nov. 21, 1984, 15.

^{ix} Mike Davis, "Cougars Claim to Be Revving Up for Run at Pacific-10 Crown," *Olympian*, Aug. 20, 1985, 21.

^x "Scoreboard," *Columbian*, Dec. 2, 1985, 22.

^{xi} Dan Weaver, "Rypien Gets High Marks," *Spokesman-Review*, Apr. 26, 1986, 28.

^{xii} Tom Vogt, "Jim Walden's TORC Offense Could Rev, Too," *Columbian*, Dec. 12, 1985, 37.

^{xiii} Associated Press, "Rypien's Three TDs Help Win Senior Bowl," *Spokesman-Review*, Jan. 19, 1986, 39.

^{xiv} Weaver, *Spokesman-Review*, Apr. 26, 1986, 28.

^{xv} Vince Devlin, "An Early Start, Late Finish for WSU Trio," *Spokesman-Review*, Apr. 30, 1986, 32.

^{xvi} Vito Stellino, "Schroeder Isn't Sharp as Redskins Lose, 18-7," *Baltimore Sun*, Aug. 11, 1986, 17, 23.

^{xvii} Vito Stellino, "Redskins Close to Signing Ex-USFL Players," *Baltimore Sun*, Aug. 11, 1986, 22.

^{xviii} Associated Press, "Rypien a Redskin, At Least for Now," *Winnipeg Sun*, Sep. 1, 1986, 19.

^{xix} "Spinks is Winner Over Tangstad," *Akron Beacon Journal*, Sept. 7, 1986, 2.

^{xx} Dan Weaver, "Pacific-10 QBs Stick Together," *Spokesman-Review*, Jan. 24, 1987, 19.



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In 1988, Rypien's father Bob died of a heart attack on June 8. Later that summer, Rypien won the Redskins' backup quarterback job when head coach Joe Gibbs traded away Schroeder. Rypien then got his first chance to start when Williams had an appendectomy, allowing him to start the Redskins' Week 4 game against Phoenix.^{xxv} Rypien threw for 303 yards and three touchdowns with one interception in a 30-21 loss to the Cardinals.

Rypien remained the starter for four weeks, going 2-2 and throwing for over 1,000 yards and 12 touchdowns, with just three interceptions.^{xxvi} However, Rypien bruised his ribs late in the last of those four games, and a returning Williams got the next start.^{xxvii} After a couple of relief appearances, Rypien was back in the starting lineup against Cleveland ahead of a fatigued Williams. He started the next two games and played a little in Week 15 against Dallas.

When the dust cleared, Rypien finished the season 3-3 as a starter, throwing for 1,730 yards and 18 touchdowns, with 13 interceptions, for a passer rating of 85.2. Notably, Rypien's performance changed drastically from his first four starts, in which he had a passer rating of 114.7, to the games after he was benched again, where his passer rating was just 53.8.^{xxviii}

Rypien went into the 1989 season as the starter for the Redskins, and for much of the year, he played magnificently. He threw for 3,768 yards, a total he'd never top, along with 22 touchdowns and 13 interceptions, for a passer rating of 88.1.^{xxix} He was the fifth-highest rated quarterback in the NFL.^{xxx} The Redskins went 10-6, but they picked a bad year to win 10 games. To get a wild card in the loaded NFC, it took 11 victories, so Washington missed the playoffs. But Rypien finished his season in Honolulu, having earned his first Pro Bowl berth.

Golf was always one of Rypien's passions. In 1990, he participated in the first ever Celebrity Golf Championship at Edgewood Golf Course in Lake Tahoe. Players were required to have a handicap of 10 or less. Rypien easily cleared that; he shot an even-par 72 on the third and final day of the event, finishing 5-over-par overall. Rypien won the tournament when former Dolphin safety Dick Anderson missed an eagle putt on the final hole.^{xxxi}

^{xxi} Dave Sell, "Ex-Coug Rypien's Career on Hold," *Olympian*, Aug. 25, 1987, 21.

^{xxii} Jim Egle, "Wilson Wants to Remain No. 1," *Green Bay Press-Gazette*, Sept. 20, 1987, 39.

^{xxiii} Associated Press, "'Skins Bryant Doubtful," *Stamford Advocate*, Dec. 4, 1987, 31.

^{xxiv} Dan Weaver, "D.C. Short for Decidedly [sic] Calm with Rypien," *Spokesman-Review*, Jan. 13, 1988, 13.

^{xxv} Vito Stellino, "Ready or Not, Here He Comes," *Hartford Courant*, Sept. 25, 1988, 48.

^{xxvi} "Mark Rypien 1988 Game Log," Pro-Football-Reference.com, Accessed June 3, 2026, <https://www.pro-football-reference.com/players/R/RypiMa00/gamelog/1988/>.

^{xxvii} Associated Press, "Gibbs Wary of Winning Packers," *Sheboygan Press*, Oct. 23, 1988, 40.

^{xxviii} "Mark Rypien 1988 Game Log," Pro-Football-Reference.com, Accessed June 3, 2026, <https://www.pro-football-reference.com/players/R/RypiMa00/gamelog/1988/>.

^{xxix} "Mark Rypien 1989 Game Log," Pro-Football-Reference.com, Accessed June 3, 2026, <https://www.pro-football-reference.com/players/R/RypiMa00/gamelog/1989/>.

^{xxx} "Mark Rypien's Standout Year," *Spokesman-Review*, Sept. 18, 1990, 28.



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That 1990 season, Rypien started the first three games, going 2-1 with 578 yards and four touchdowns. He didn't throw an interception, but his completion percentage was under 50 percent.^{xxxii} Against Dallas in Week 3, Rypien sprained his left knee, and he missed a good amount of time.^{xxxiii} He didn't return until Week 11, one week after the "Body Bag Game" in which the Eagles had injured all of Washington's remaining quarterbacks to force running back Brian Mitchell to step under center.^{xxxiv}

When Rypien returned, it was impossible to know whether he'd put up a good performance or not. In his first game back against New Orleans, he threw for 311 yards and four touchdowns in a win. But the week afterward, he completed less than half of his passes again in a loss in Dallas. Against Miami, he was back to his good self again, throwing for 245 yards and three touchdowns with a 75% passing completion percentage in a blowout victory. But then he threw five interceptions to the Bears in a 10-9 victory, and he struggled mightily in his team's final three games against AFC East opponents.^{xxxv}

In his first playoff appearance, Rypien was steady in Philadelphia, as the Redskins got revenge for the "Body Bag Game" from earlier in the season. He threw for 206 yards and two touchdowns with just one interception in a 20-6 victory. The Redskins' run ended in a 28-10 loss in San Francisco, where Rypien threw for 361 yards, but just one touchdown, along with three costly interceptions.^{xxxvi}

Going into training camp in 1991, Rypien wanted a new contract, after earning under \$300,000 the previous year, the least any NFL starting quarterback made in 1990.^{xxxvii} Ten days later, both sides agreed to end the conflict, and Rypien was free to return to training camp.^{xxxviii} But the D.C. fans didn't forget it. After a bad pass in practice, he got booed by spectators in attendance. "I don't think it's anything against the person," Rypien said. "It's an instinct. It happens to everyone."^{xxxix} Little did anyone know that this season would be the year of his career.

Rypien threw for 3,564 yards, 28 touchdowns, and just 11 interceptions, leading the Redskins to a 14-2 record, best in the entire NFL. Rypien was named to the Pro Bowl and finished fourth in the MVP voting; ahead of him were two Buffalo Bills, including Jim Kelly, who edged him out for the first-team All-Pro spot.^{xl}

^{xxxxi} United Press International, "Redskins' Rypien Wins Golf Tourney," *Tyler Morning Telegraph*, July 16, 1990, 15.

^{xxxii} "Mark Rypien 1990 Game Log," Pro-Football-Reference.com, Accessed June 3, 2026, <https://www.pro-football-reference.com/players/R/RypiMa00/gamelog/1990/>.

^{xxxiii} Jim Ducibella, "Lohmiller, Green Lead 'Skins by Dallas," *Roanoke Times*, Sept. 24, 1990, 13.

^{xxxiv} Paul Domowitch, "'Skins Lose More than the Game," *Philadelphia Daily News*, Nov. 13, 1990, 76.

^{xxxv} "Mark Rypien 1990 Game Log," Pro-Football-Reference.com, Accessed June 3, 2026, <https://www.pro-football-reference.com/players/R/RypiMa00/gamelog/1990/>.

^{xxxvi} "Mark Rypien 1990 Game Log," Pro-Football-Reference.com, Accessed June 3, 2026, <https://www.pro-football-reference.com/players/R/RypiMa00/gamelog/1990/>.

^{xxxvii} Associated Press, "Contract Dispute Keeps Rypien Out of Camp," *Public Opinion*, July 15, 1991, 15.

^{xxxviii} Associated Press, "Redskins, Rypien Reach Accord," *Stanly News and Press*, July 25, 1991, 12.

^{xxxix} Vito Stellino, "Rypien Hears Boos in Practice," *Evening News*, July 26, 1991, 35.



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Rypien's 97.9 passer rating in 1991 was the best by a Redskin since the AFL-NFL merger, and second only to Sammy Baugh's 109.9 back in 1945. His 442-yard, six-touchdown performance against Atlanta in a 56-17 victory at midseason marked the second-most passing yards in a game by a Redskin at the time, as well as a share of the record for most touchdown passes in a single game. Rypien's 28 touchdown passes were tied for third-most by a Redskin in a season at the time.^{xli}

In the divisional round in a rematch with the Falcons, Rypien had a tenuous performance, completing less than half his passes for just 170 yards and no touchdowns, with a pick. He was fortunate to get a lot of help in the running game, and the Redskins won, 24-7, as seat cushions rained down from the RFK Stadium stands.^{xlii}

Behind the "Hogs" offensive line that gave up only nine sacks the entire regular season, Rypien had a fantastic game in the NFC Championship against Detroit. He threw for 228 yards and two touchdowns while not even being hit by the Lions in a 41-10 Redskins rout.^{xliii}

Super Bowl XXVI against Buffalo was next, where Rypien was outstanding again. He connected on 18 of his 33 passes, gaining 292 yards. Rypien threw a 10-yard touchdown pass to running back Earnest Byner, and a 30-yard scoring pass to receiver Gary Clark. The Redskins won in a 37-24 rout, and Rypien received 11 out of 13 votes to be named Super Bowl MVP.^{xliv}

Rypien's approval rating in the nation's capital was sky-high, but it soon dropped to below that of even President Bush in 1992. He again held out of training camp, wanting a \$4 million annual contract, which was in the neighborhood of future Hall of Famer Dan Marino, who made \$4.2 million. The Redskins offered up to \$3 million, on the same scale as Boomer Esiason. Rypien wanted more, and the longer he held out, the more Washington fans turned on him.^{xlv}

Eventually, Rypien gave in. After holding out for 18 days, and lowering his target to \$3.7 million, he settled for a three-year, \$9 million contract. The Redskins had a four-year, \$12 million contract on the table, but Rypien chose the shorter deal.^{xlvi}

Rypien had an awful 1992 season statistically. He threw only 13 touchdown passes in 16 games, never throwing for more than two touchdowns in a single game. Moreover, he threw 17 interceptions, giving him a passer rating of just 71.7, worst in the

^{xli} "1991 Awards Voting," Pro-Football-Reference.com, Accessed June 4, 2026, https://www.pro-football-reference.com/awards/awards_1991.htm.

^{xlii} Michael Richman, *The Redskins Encyclopedia*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008, 365-366.

^{xliii} "Divisional Round – Atlanta Falcons at Washington Redskins, January 4, 1992, Pro-Football-Reference.com, Accessed June 4, 2026, <https://www.pro-football-reference.com/boxscores/199201040was.htm>.

^{xliiii} Steve Schoenfeld, "Offensive Line Gives Rypien Clean Bill of Health," *Arizona Republic*, Jan. 13, 1992, 30.

Steve Brandon, "Rypien Gets MVP, But Many Deserved It," *Oregonian*, Jan. 27, 1992, 30.

^{xliv} Gordon Forbes, "Rypien in Need of a Reality Check," *USA Today*, Aug. 5, 1992, 15.

^{xlvi} Warner Hessler, "Rypien, 'Skins Strike Deal," *Daily Press*, Aug. 12, 1992, 27.



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NFC. Somehow, though, the Redskins limped their way to a 9-7 record and even won a playoff game in Minnesota. In the divisional round at San Francisco, the Redskins hung with the mighty #1-seeded 49ers, but Rypien's two interceptions led to a 20-13 Washington loss.^{xlvi}

Rypien would feel more pain in 1993, but this time more of the physical type. He sprained his MCL in his right knee in a 17-10 loss to the Phoenix Cardinals in Week 2.^{xlvi} The Redskins lost with and without Rypien. He missed two games, then came back and got shell-shocked by the Giants and Cardinals in back-to-back games with a combined score of 77-13 against the 'Skins. Rypien later missed two more games, both losses; the Redskins went 0-4 without him.^{xlvi}

But even with Rypien, the 'Skins went 4-8. He threw just four touchdown passes in 12 games, while throwing 10 interceptions, including four in a Super Bowl XXVI rematch in Buffalo which Washington lost 24-10.^l Rypien ended 1993 as the lowest-rated quarterback in the entire league.^{li} The Redskins finished 4-12 and in last in the NFC East.

In April 1994, the Redskins cut Rypien, as they went into rebuilding mode and planned on using the #3 overall pick on a quarterback.^{lii} A month later, Rypien signed with the Cleveland Browns, but not before a vigorous, eight-hour physical to make sure his knee was good to go. Rypien wouldn't be the starter, though; he'd be backing up Vinny Testaverde.^{liii}

Rypien spent the first half of the season on the bench, until Testaverde had concussion problems. Testaverde suffered his first concussion against Cincinnati with the Browns holding a big lead. Rypien went only three-of-11 for 31 yards, but Cleveland easily won, 37-13. The next week, Testaverde took a vicious hit at Denver and a serious concussion that knocked him out of the game and out of consciousness. Rypien came in and gave a much better performance, going 17 of 30 for 210 yards, but the Browns lost to the Broncos, 26-14.^{liv}

Browns head coach Bill Belichick made Rypien the starter on a week-to-week basis. He ended up starting the next three games, winning the first two. In each game, he threw one touchdown and one interception. After a 20-13 loss to Kansas City, Belichick opted to go back to a now-ready Testaverde.^{lv} Rypien's only remaining playtime would

^{xlvi} "Mark Rypien 1992 Game Log," Pro-Football-Reference.com, Accessed June 12, 2026, <https://www.pro-football-reference.com/players/R/RypiMa00/gamelog/1992/>.

^{xlvi} Barry Wilner, "Rypien Hurts Knee; Montana Sits Out," *Rockford Register Star*, Sept. 13, 1993, 13.

^{xlvi} "Mark Rypien 1993 Game Log," Pro-Football-Reference.com, Accessed June 12, 2026, <https://www.pro-football-reference.com/players/R/RypiMa00/gamelog/1993/>.

^l "Mark Rypien 1993 Game Log," Pro-Football-Reference.com, Accessed June 12, 2026, <https://www.pro-football-reference.com/players/R/RypiMa00/gamelog/1993/>.

^{li} Associated Press, "Rypien to Be Browns' Backup QB," *Blade*, May 11, 1994, 21.

^{lii} David Aldridge, "Washington's Ryp Off," *Spokesman-Review*, Apr. 14, 1994, 21.

^{liii} Ed Meyer, "Browns Certain Mark Rypien Not Damaged Goods," *News Journal*, May 11, 1994, 28.

^{liv} Terry Pluto, "Rypien Feels He Is Ready," *Akron Beacon Journal*, Oct. 31, 1994, 20.



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be mop-up duty in a 35-9 rout of Seattle in the season finale. He would not appear in either of Cleveland's two playoff games.^{lvi}

Rypien had interests in other sports besides football. He owned a NASCAR team along with Detroit businessman Greg Pollex, named Mark Rypien Motorsports. Driver Chad Little performed well in the mid-nineties in the Busch Grand National Series.^{lvii} Rypien eventually sold the team to Roush Fenway Racing after the 1997 season.^{lviii}

Going back to golf, Rypien started up the Bank of America Quarterback Classic in 1995, where he invited dozens of other quarterbacks to play at the Coeur d'Alene Resort in Idaho.^{lix} Rypien didn't get the win in this one, though; John Elway won the individual tournament and John Friesz of the Seahawks won the scramble.^{lx}

Rypien was an unrestricted free agent in 1995, so he had freedom to move on. He decided to sign a one-year, \$750,000 contract with the newly moved St. Louis Rams. He was signed to be the backup to oft-injured starter Chris Miller, an Oregon Duck who once beat Rypien at Washington State back in 1985.^{lxi}

But playing time in St. Louis would be hard to find. In his first extended action of the season in Week 8, Rypien relieved Miller after he threw four interceptions against San Francisco. Rypien threw for 158 yards and a touchdown, but the Rams lost 44-10 to the 49ers.^{lxii}

Miller was knocked out cold against the Jets in Week 14, and Rypien took over for the remainder of the season. He managed to get the Rams to a 23-20 victory over New York despite throwing three interceptions, as he also threw for two touchdowns to receiver Isaac Bruce.^{lxiii} But Rypien couldn't find a win in any of his final three games. Despite putting up impressive numbers – 372 yards vs. Buffalo, 347 vs. his former Redskins, and 320 against Miami, the Rams were soundly defeated in all three games.^{lxiv}

In 1996, Rypien once again had a contract dispute, this time with the Rams. They offered him \$600,000, but Rypien wanted closer to a million. With the contract being taken off the table, Rypien threatened retirement.^{lxv} He left the Rams and did not sign with anyone until October, when Philadelphia Eagles quarterback Rodney Peete went

^{lv} Associated Press, "Vinny Is the Man for Cleveland," *Urbana Daily Citizen*, Nov. 25, 1994, 6.

^{lvi} "Mark Rypien 1994 Game Log," Pro-Football-Reference.com, Accessed June 12, 2026, <https://www.pro-football-reference.com/players/R/RypiMa00/gamelog/1994/>.

^{lvii} *Birmingham Post-Herald*, July 20, 1995, 43.

^{lviii} Bob Pockrass, "NFL and NASCAR: Former NFL Stars Who Dabbled in Stock-Car Racing," *Sporting News*, Jan. 31, 2013.

^{lix} Dave Boling, "Rypien Puts Golf Challenge to NFL Peers," *Spokesman-Review*, June 30, 1995, 25.

^{lx} Howie Stalwick, "Scramble Wraps Up QB Classic," *Coeur d'Alene Press*, July 2, 1995, 21.

^{lxi} Jim Thomas, "Rams Get a Super Quarterback," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 6, 1995, 29.

^{lxii} Ira Miller, "49ers Punch Out Rams," *San Francisco Chronicle*, Oct. 23, 1995, 33.

^{lxiii} Brian Heyman, "Rams Get Back in Playoff Hunt," *Daily Times*, Dec. 4, 1995, 31.

^{lxiv} "Mark Rypien 1995 Game Log," Pro-Football-Reference.com, Accessed June 22, 2026, <https://www.pro-football-reference.com/players/R/RypiMa00/gamelog/1995/>.



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down with a season-ending knee injury. Ty Detmer was the backup, but the Eagles wanted insurance, so they signed Rypien to a contract that could escalate to \$1 million.^{lxvi}

But the only time Rypien would get in a game came in a late-season blowout loss to Indianapolis. Rypien came on in relief of Detmer with the game far out of reach. He completed 10 of 13 passes for 76 yards and his final career touchdown pass, to Irving Fryar, as the Eagles lost, 37-10.^{lxvii}

With a new regime in St. Louis headed by Dick Vermeil in 1997, the Rams brought back Rypien into the fold as a backup to Tony Banks.^{lxviii} But snaps under center were few and far between. Rypien got into five games, but only threw more than one pass in two of them. He threw for 132 yards against Green Bay and 138 yards against Carolina, both times coming off the bench.^{lxix}

Everything changed for Rypien when his son Andrew got brain cancer at less than two years old. Rypien did everything he could for Andrew, and he seemed to respond to chemotherapy. But at age three in 1998, Andrew died peacefully beside Rypien's wife Annette. She herself was diagnosed with cervical cancer. Rypien had signed with Atlanta but never played for the Falcons; instead, he went into semi-retirement while trying to pick the pieces up and to be there for his daughters Ambre and Angela.^{lxx} He'd sit out the 1998, 1999, and 2000 seasons.

Several months after his marriage ended amicably, Rypien decided to try to make a return to the NFL. Before the 2001 season, he signed with Indianapolis to become Peyton Manning's backup.^{lxxi} Since he was backing up one of the all-time greats, Rypien didn't get much playing time, but he did complete five of nine passes in a 44-13 loss to New England in Week 3. Those would be his final passes in the NFL.^{lxxii}

Rypien started up the Mark Rypien Foundation in 2004 (later renamed just the Rypien Foundation), which helps families of children with cancer in the Pacific Northwest.^{lxxiii} Two years later, a 44-year-old Rypien signed a one-day contract for the Rochester Raiders of the Great Lakes Indoor Football League for charitable reasons.^{lxxiv} Rypien did not actually play in the game, but suited up for the final time in his career.^{lxxv}

^{lxv} "Unwanted' Rypien Eyes Retirement," *Daily American Republic*, July 17, 1996, 11.

^{lxvi} John F. Bonfatti, "Rypien Says He's Ready for Eagle's Backup Role," *Morning Call*, Oct. 4, 1996, 37.

^{lxvii} Associated Press, "Marshall Plan," *State Journal-Register*, Dec. 6, 1996, 33.

^{lxviii} R.B. Fallstrom, "Rypien is Happy Being Rams' Insurance Policy at QB," *Belleville News-Democrat*, July 17, 1997, 25.

^{lxix} "Mark Rypien 1997 Game Log," Pro-Football-Reference.com, Accessed June 22, 2026, <https://www.pro-football-reference.com/players/R/RypiMa00/gamelog/1997/>.

^{lxx} Richard Justice, "Rypien's Ultimate Loss," *Ottawa Citizen*, Dec. 2, 1998, 21.

^{lxxi} Tom Weir, "Rypien Puts Bounce in His Step," *USA Today*, Aug. 8, 2001, 31.

^{lxxii} "Mark Rypien 2001 Game Log," Pro-Football-Reference.com, Accessed June 22, 2026, <https://www.pro-football-reference.com/players/R/RypiMa00/gamelog/2001/>.

^{lxxiii} Vince Grippi, "A Firm Foundation for Kids," *Spokesman-Review*, Oct. 26, 2004, 35.

^{lxxiv} Scott Pitoniak, "Rypien Provides Boost for Raiders, Charity," *Democrat and Chronicle*, June 8, 2006,

4.

^{lxxv} Matt Schoch, "Pirates Envision Big Crowds for Playoffs," *Times Herald*, June 13, 2006, 13, 16.



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Much later, in 2014, he won the American Century Championship at Lake Tahoe for his second victory at the golf tournament he kicked off with a victory back in 1990. He eagled hole 16 and birdied the final two holes to clinch the victory over LPGA great Annika Sorenstam and NHL star Jeremy Roenick.^{lxxvi}

But Rypien's post-career days have been hindered by chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE), which his second wife Danielle believes he has, as seen by mental health problems. He admitted in 2018 that he tried to commit suicide via a drug overdose.^{lxxvii} In 2019, Rypien was arrested for allegedly assaulting his wife, but both he and his wife denied the allegations. The charges were eventually dismissed.^{lxxviii}

Rypien's nephew Brett went on to play in the NFL. He has served as backup for the Broncos, Rams, and Bengals, with spot starts from time to time, like his uncle in his late career.

Mark Rypien's story is a cautionary tale about the dangers of concussions and brain injuries. It is sad to see Rypien struggling in his later years, due to all the hits he took.

But perhaps it's best to remember Rypien running down the field in a crazy celebration after throwing a 30-yard touchdown pass to Gary Clark in the second half of Super Bowl XXVI. He proved that Joe Gibbs could win a Super Bowl with any quarterback he pleased. But this quarterback in particular was special, and forever a Super Bowl MVP.

End Notes:

^{lxxvi} Associated Press, "Rypien Strikes Again in Tahoe – 25 Years Later," *Merced Sun-Star*, July 21, 2014, B3.

^{lxxvii} Scott Allen, "Former Super Bowl MVP Says He Attempted Suicide," *News Tribune*, Mar. 31, 2018, B6.

^{lxxviii} Thomas Clouse, "Charges Against Ex-QB Rypien Dismissed," *Spokesman-Review*, Aug. 31, 2019, C1.