

“THE PITTSBURGH STEELERS: THE FRANCHISE THAT DESTINY BUILT”

(The 10 Greatest Super Bowl Plays & Moments and The Immaculate Reception)

For almost four decades, starting from their founding by Art Rooney in 1933, the Pittsburgh Steelers never won a playoff game ... let alone a championship. What the franchise lacked in talent, it made up in grit, tenacity, hard-nosed play. It shared the work ethic and pride of its devoted fans. It fielded players like Hall-of-Famer Ernie Stautner, who was the very embodiment of the Steelers and Pittsburgh, and Gene “Big Daddy” Lipscomb, who literally worked in a steel mill before pro football. Despite its lack of success, the team earned the respect of its opponents. Said Tom Landry during his days as a star with the powerful New York Giants in the 50s: “We would rather play the Browns twice than the Steelers once.” Said the incomparable Jim Brown: “You play the Steelers on Sunday and you feel it Monday.”

There is a profound saying that states: “**Watch your character, for it becomes your destiny.**” If so, where was Destiny? Here were the Steelers ... playing the game the way it’s supposed to be played ... year after year paying their dues in a league of hard knocks ... and their reward was futility. The Steelers had earned the respect of their opponents; they apparently did not earn the respect of Destiny. Destiny, it seems, had turned its back on the Steelers.

And then on December 23, 1972—a date with Destiny if there ever was one—the Steelers trailed the Oakland Raiders 7-6. It was fourth-and-10 on the Pittsburgh 40 yard line with 22 seconds left in the game: *a scrambling Terry Bradshaw about to be pulverized ... hurled the football to the outstretched arms of Frenchy Fuqua ... who was slammed by the impacting missile of Jack Tatum ... and suddenly a bending Franco Harris grasping the football and ... **Destiny!*** It was the Black and Gold’s first playoff win ever. Only three words can accurately and adequately describe the play: **The Immaculate Reception**. In the franchise’s 40th year of existence, Destiny—finally, fittingly—bowed down low and embraced the Steelers. And the Steelers and Destiny have become an inseparable team ever since!

Depicted in this Artwork by acclaimed artist Ben Teeter are the forever-etched-in-the-mind Super Bowl plays and moments—as well as The Immaculate Reception—that have earned the Destiny Seal of Approval. You will note every play and moment is depicted in that area of the field where each actually occurred. Here, then, is a description of those 10 Super Bowl plays and moments:

Super Bowl IX Steelers 16 Vikings 6: Vikings may have no trouble storming towns, fortresses and NFL defenses. But legendary STEEL CURTAINS ... not so much. In fact, not at all. When all was said and done, Hall-of-Fame quarterback Fran Tarkenton and his team put up a staggeringly-less-than-paltry 17 yards rushing and 119 total yards against the indomitable Steeler defense. Meanwhile, Super Bowl MVP Franco Harris and his blockers chewed up 158 yards rushing versus the Purple People Eaters. **Shown** is the play that vividly sums up Minnesota futility against sport’s greatest immovable object: the first-ever Super Bowl safety. Fullback Dave Osburn had muffed a Tarkenton pitch and the Viking QB fell on the ball in the endzone. It was a case of “you’re damned if you hold on to the ball, and you’re damned if you don’t.” Surrounding the fallen Viking leader was—fittingly—the heart of the Steel Curtain: Messrs. White (credited with the safety), Greenwood, Holmes, Greene and Lambert (up close and personal). Sir Francis and the Vikings were decidedly vanquished.

Super Bowl X Steelers 21 Cowboys 17: Matched were football’s two most popular teams. But popularity could only take the Cowboys so far against the stronger defending champs. Terry Bradshaw and Super Bowl MVP Lynn Swann stretched—and severed—the formally vaunted Dallas Flex defense to the tune of 161 yards. **Shown** is Swann’s juggling, acrobatic, poetry-in-motion, seemingly levitating, securing-on-the-ground catch. Whew! It was a frame-it-and-hang-it-in-a-museum catch; the Mona Lisa of catches.

After Roy Gerela missed a field goal, Cowboy Cliff Harris showed how to play the game with class by taunting the Steeler kicker. **Shown** is what ensued: an incensed Jack Lambert laying down the law by laying down—forcefully—the stunned Harris as if a rag doll. You might say Jack splat Mr. Harris. Referring to the incident after the game, No. 58 said matter-of-factly: “No one can be allowed to intimidate us. We’re supposed to be the intimidators.” Then and now, part and parcel of Steeler Football!

Super Bowl XIII Steelers 35 Cowboys 31: This rematch of Super Bowl X pitted America’s Team against ... well ... **Arguably the Greatest Team in the History of the National Football League**. And judging from the results (after an early scare the Steelers surged to an insurmountable 35-17 lead), America got a raw deal. Ya think?! With the score tied 14-14 and 33 seconds to go in the half, **shown** is Rocky Bleier as he skied heavenward to snare a Terry Bradshaw touchdown pass at its apex. Overmatched Dallas defender D.D. Lewis could only helplessly look on in wonderment. Such elevating catches are expected of the Swanns and Santonio Holmeses of the world. But Rocky Bleier?! Productive running and unsurpassed blocking was his mark. But of course Rocky Bleier. *Extraordinary people do extraordinary things*. Which begs the question: Rocket J. Squirrel or Rocket J. Bleier?!!

(Over)

Super Bowl XIV Steelers 31 Rams 19: It was the magnificent performance of repeat Super Bowl MVP Terry Bradshaw and the Steeler receivers—as well as a Jack Lambert interception—that did in the feisty Rams. Early in the fourth quarter Bradshaw and John Stallworth hooked up with a dazzling 73-yard touchdown. But it was this (**shown**) jaw-dropping, backwards-bending, over-the-helmet grab by Stallworth that outshined the earlier catch. This 44-yard beauty led to the Steelers' 31st point —and game-clinching—touchdown. It was the fourth Super Bowl Championship for the 1970s Steelers and for the man Myron Cope dubbed the Emperor—Chuck Noll.

Super Bowl XL Steelers 21 Seahawks 10: The Bill Cowher-led Steelers were the first 6-seed to win a Super Bowl, and it was the first Super Bowl appearance for Seattle in its 30-year history. But two long Steeler touchdowns gulled the Seahawks and a Ben Roethlisberger goal-line-plane-breaking score galled them. Just 22 seconds into the third quarter, **shown** is Willie Parker's 75-yard touchdown run—the longest in Super Bowl history! It was simply a matter of the Steeler O-line giving the Seahawks a lesson in 101 blocking. It was sheer perfection resulting in sheared Seahawk would-be tacklers and a 14-3 lead. Reading his blocks—among them a beak-flattening job by Alan Faneca—Fast Willie saw the opening and—*beep-beep/meep-meep*—left Seattle in its wake.

Not to be outdone, Antwaan Randle El, Hines Ward and the rest of the offense followed up by teaching the Seahawks the art of the wide receiver reverse pass. With 8:43 left in the fourth quarter, Randle El found Ward behind the Seattle secondary for a 21-10 Steeler lead and the game's final score. **Shown** is a joyously leaping Super Bowl MVP Hines Ward breaking the goal line as well as the wings and spirit of the Seahawks.

We now take you back to Super Bowl XIII and the Steelers' victory over the Cowboys. Lynn Swann had made yet another astounding catch from the golden arm of Terry Bradshaw; this time snaring the ball while seemingly floating in space and then sliding on his knees in the back of the endzone ala Baryshnikov. It was the Steelers' last touchdown of the 35-31 triumph.

Yet it's what occurred after the play was over that was even more memorable and more significant. For Swann raced back over the goal line and was immediately hoisted (**shown**) by his teammates one after another while emphatically pointing his No. 1 index finger heavenward. It was a gesture that proclaimed to the football world Steeler Sovereignty. Steeler Destiny. **And it has stood the test of time to this day.**

Super Bowl XLIII Steelers 27 Cardinals 23: The Arizona Cardinals, a team suffering through the NFL's longest championship drought, a 9-7 team that reached the Super Bowl via a startling post season, a team whose quarterback—Kurt Warner—made yet another astonishing comeback adding yet another chapter to his storied career, a team coached and staffed by former Steelers, a team that prominent sportswriters had confidently ordained as Destiny's Darlings ... surely, surely the Arizona Cardinals were the rightful heirs to the Throne of Destiny at the expense of Mike Tomlin and his Steelers.

Surely you jest. Oh, ye sportswriters of little sense and no sense of history. They're not called the SUPER STEELERS for nothing. Oh, well, you'll just have to learn the hard way:

With the Cardinals on the Steelers 1 yard line, on what was to be the last non-kicking play of the half, James Harrison (**shown**) stepped in front of a Kurt Warner-intended pass to Anquan Boldin. We all know what happened next: What—save Destiny—could propel a 245-lb. man to run an improbable—to put it mildly—Super Bowl-record 100 yards through countless obstacles before breaking the goal-line plane? It was a potential 14-point swing. But this was by no means an Immaculate Reception. It was merely ... **SECOND BY ITS LONESOME to The Immaculate Reception!!**

But with Larry Fitzgerald's 64-yard touchdown—and 16th unanswered point to give the Cardinals the lead—with only 2 minutes and 37 seconds to go in the fourth quarter, Cardinal backers could hear the knocking on Destiny's door. Unfortunately for Arizona, it was only **opportunity knocking for Ben Roethlisberger.**

In what will forever be known as "Big Ben's Big Drive," the Steeler QB marched his teammates down the football field. And with 43 seconds left in the game, Super Bowl Most Valuable Player Santonio Holmes and Destiny slammed the door in the Cardinals' face. **Shown** is Holmes' head-to-toe-stretching touchdown reception from Roethlisberger as he out-flew a trailing and outmanned flock of Cardinal dbs. **When it comes to the Steelers, that Destiny is such a softy for the dramatic, ain't it?!!**

In the first half of the franchise's existence—despite blood, sweat and tears—the Steelers were never rewarded with a playoff victory. But it's been a second half of blood, sweat and cheers, of still playing Steelers Football, of players—be they Hall of Famers or not—tough of mind, body and spirit, of more Super Bowl Championships than any other franchise. It is the franchise most identified with pro football by hard-core and casual fans alike. (Steeler Super Bowls are typically among the highest-rated telecasts in television history.) It is the Black and Gold. It is Steelers Nation. It is ... **The Pittsburgh Steelers: The Franchise That Destiny Built.**