

**A CHRONOLOGY OF PRO FOOTBALL ON  
TELEVISION: Part 2**

by Tim Brulia

**1970:** The merger takes effect. The NFL signs a massive four year \$142 million deal with all three networks: The breakdown as follows:

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 both NFC divisional playoff games. CBS has the NFC Championship game. CBS has Super Bowl VI and Super Bowl VIII. CBS has the 1970 and 1972 Pro Bowl.

The Playoff Bowl ceases. CBS 15<sup>th</sup> 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 both AFC divisional playoff games. NBC has the AFC Championship game. NBC has Super Bowl V and Super Bowl VII. NBC has the 1971 and 1973 Pro Bowl. NBC 6<sup>th</sup> season of AFL/AFC coverage, 20<sup>th</sup> season with some form of pro football coverage.

ABC: Has 13 Monday Night games. Do not have a game on last week of regular season. No restrictions on conference games (e.g. will do NFC, AFC, and interconference games). ABC's first pro football coverage since 1964, first with NFL since 1959.

Main commentary crews:

CBS: Ray Scott and Pat Summerall

NBC: Curt Gowdy and Kyle Rote

ABC: Keith Jackson, Don Meredith and Howard Cosell. Pre game shows:

CBS: The NFL Today, Frank Gifford host.

NBC & ABC: None.

Post game shows:

CBS: Pro Football Report. Bruce Roberts host.

NBC: The Sperry-NFL Report. Pat Herndon host (new)

Divisional playoff commentary crews:

NFC (CBS): Detroit at Dallas; Jack Whitaker, Frank Gifford.

San Francisco at Minnesota; Ray Scott, Pat Summerall.

AFC (NBC): Cincinnati at Baltimore; Jim Simpson, Al DeRogatis.

Miami at Oakland; Curt Gowdy, Kyle Rote.

Championship commentary crews:

NFC (CBS): Dallas at San Francisco; Ray Scott, Pat Summerall.

AFC (NBC): Oakland at Baltimore; Curt Gowdy, Kyle Rote.

Super Bowl V (NBC):

Baltimore and Dallas; Curt Gowdy and Kyle Rote.

Pro Bowl: (CBS) announcers unknown.

Notes: When the merger took effect and some Congressional leaders saw that the blackout rules were as firm as ever, some grumbings were heard that things would change...Irony: The three teams that shifted from NFC to AFC, Baltimore, Cleveland and Pittsburgh, were the last three NFL teams that were non-CBS covered teams in the NFL...ABC, in their first year of Monday Night Football, offers something unique at halftime. Courtesy of NFL Films, several Sunday games' highlights are featured, with Howard Cosell offering ad-libbed commentary. The other networks continue to feature the traditional marching bands as halftime entertainment.

**1971:** Year two of four year contract with CBS, NBC, and ABC.

CBS: Same as 1970. 16<sup>th</sup> season of NFL coverage.

NBC: Same as 1970. 7<sup>th</sup> season of AFL/AFC coverage, 21<sup>st</sup> season overall.

ABC: Same as 1970. 2<sup>nd</sup> season.

Main commentary crews:

CBS: Ray Scott and Pat Summerall

NBC: Curt Gowdy and Al DeRogatis

ABC: Frank Gifford, Don Meredith and Howard Cosell. Gifford leaves CBS after 6 years.

Pre game shows:

CBS: *The NFL Today*, Jack Whitaker and Pat Summerall, co-hosts.

NBC & ABC: None.

Post game shows:

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CBS: *Pro Football Report*. Bruce Roberts host.  
NBC: *The Sperry-NFL Report*. Pat Herndon host.

Divisional playoff commentary crews:

NFC (CBS): Dallas at Minnesota; Frank Glibier, Tommy Mason (?).  
Washington at San Francisco; Ray Scott, Pat Summerall.  
AFC (NBC): Miami at Kansas City; Curt Gowdy, Al DeRogatis.  
Baltimore at Cleveland; Jim Simpson, Kyle Rote.

Championship commentary crews:

NFC (CBS): San Fran.at Dallas; Lindsey Nelson, Tom Brookshier.  
AFC (NBC): Baltimore at Miami; Curt Gowdy, Al DeRogatis.

Super Bowl VI (CBS):

Dallas and Miami; Ray Scott and Pat Summerall.

Pro Bowl: (NBC) Curt Gowdy and Al DeRogatis.

Notes: More pressure by Congress to relieve blackout rules on Rozelle.

**1972:** Year three of four year contract with CBC, NBC, and ABC.

CBS: Same as 1970. 17<sup>th</sup> season of NFL coverage.

NBC: Same as 1970. 8<sup>th</sup> season of AFL/AFC coverage, 22nd season overall.

ABC: Same as 1970. 3rd season.

Main commentary crews:

CBS: Ray Scott and Pat Summerall  
NBC: Curt Gowdy and Al DeRogatis  
ABC: Frank Gifford, Don Meredith and Howard Cosell.

Pre game shows:

CBS: *The NFL Today*, Jack Whitaker and Pat Summerall, co-hosts.  
NBC & ABC: None.

Post game shows:

CBS: *Pro Football Report*. Bruce Roberts host.  
NBC: *The Sperry-NFL Report*. Pat Herndon host.

Divisional playoff commentary crews:

NFC (CBS): Dallas at San Francisco; Ray Scott, Pat Summerall.  
Green Bay at Washington; Jack Whitaker, Tom Brookshier.  
AFC (NBC): Oakland at Pittsburgh (The Immaculate Reception); Curt Gowdy, Al DeRogatis.  
Cleveland at Miami; Jim Simpson, Kyle Rote.

Championship commentary crews:

NFC (CBS): Dallas at Washington; Ray Scott, Pat Summerall.  
AFC (NBC): Miami at Pittsburgh; Curt Gowdy, Al DeRogatis.

Super Bowl VII

(NBC): Miami and Washington; Curt Gowdy and Al DeRogatis.

Pro Bowl: (CBS) commentators unknown..

Notes: Pete Rozelle allows blackout to be lifted in Los Angeles for the Super Bowl.

**1973:** Congress lifts the NFL's blackout rules mere days before the '73 season is set to go. Basically, a home team's game, if sold out 72 hours before kickoff, can be televised in the home market.

Year four of four year contract with CBC, NBC, and ABC.

CBS: Same as 1970. 18<sup>th</sup> season of NFL coverage.

NBC: Same as 1970. 9<sup>th</sup> season of AFL/AFC coverage, 23rd season overall.

ABC: Same as 1970. 4<sup>th</sup> season.

Main commentary crews:

CBS: Ray Scott and Pat Summerall  
NBC: Curt Gowdy and Al DeRogatis  
ABC: Frank Gifford, Don Meredith and Howard Cosell.

Pre game shows:

CBS: *The NFL Today*, Jack Whitaker and Pat Summerall, co-hosts.  
NBC & ABC: None.

Post game shows:

CBS: *Pro Football Report*. Bruce Roberts host.  
NBC: *The Sperry-NFL Report*. Pat Herndon host.

Divisional playoff commentary crews:

NFC (CBS): Washington at Minnesota; Jack Whitaker, Tommy Mason, Wayne Walker.  
Los Angeles at Dallas; Frank Glibier, Pat Summerall, Bart Starr.  
AFC (NBC): Pittsburgh at Oakland; Jim Simpson, Kyle Rote.  
Cincinnati at Miami; Curt Gowdy, Al DeRogatis.

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Championship commentary crews:

NFC (CBS): Minnesota at Dallas; Jack Buck, Pat Summerall, Wayne Walker.

AFC (NBC): Oakland at Miami; Curt Gowdy, Al DeRogatis.

Super Bowl VIII (CBS): Miami and Washington; Ray Scott, Pat Summerall.

Bart Starr with occasional commentary from the production truck.

Pro Bowl: (NBC) commentators unknown.

Notes: After 12 years of having commentators announce the score and saying "...Let's pause for a moment" ("with the score Green Bay 14, Chicago 10, let's pause for a moment!") before a commercial break, CBS begins playing disco-ish music when cutting to a commercial.

**1974:** NFL signs new four year \$200 million contract with CBS, NBC, and ABC. The breakdown:

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 both NFC divisional playoff games. CBS has the NFC Championship game. CBS has Super Bowl X and Super Bowl XII. CBS 19<sup>th</sup> 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 both AFC divisional playoff games. NBC has the AFC Championship game. NBC has Super Bowl IX and Super Bowl XI. NBC 10<sup>th</sup> season of AFC coverage, 24<sup>th</sup> season with some form of pro football coverage.

ABC: Has 13 Monday Night games, plus a week 14 Saturday night game. No restrictions on conference games (e.g. does NFC, AFC, and interconference games. ABC's fifth season of Monday Night Football. ABC also gains rights to the Pro Bowl for 1974, 1974, 1976, and 1977.

Main commentary crews:

CBS: None. Commentary crews under constant rotation throughout season but Pat Summerall and Tom Brookshier emerge late in season as de facto top pairing.

NBC: Curt Gowdy, Al DeRogatis and Don Meredith.

ABC: Frank Gifford, Alex Karras and Howard Cosell.

Pre-Game Shows:

CBS: After having a pre-recorded show for many years, CBS adopts a fully live format covering pre-game, halftime, and post-game show all in one. The show is called *"The NFL on CBS"*, and features Jack Whitaker and Lee Leonard as co-hosts.

NBC and ABC: none.

Post-Game Shows:

CBS: The aforementioned *The NFL on CBS*, with Jack Whitaker and Lee Leonard co-hosting.

NBC: The renamed *"The Gillette-NFL Report"*. Pat Herndon emcee.

Divisional Playoff commentary crews:

NFC (CBS): St. Louis at Minnesota; Brent Musberger, Irv Cross, Johnny Unitas.

Washington at Los Angeles; Pat Summerall, Tom Brookshier, Bart Starr.

AFC (NBC): Miami at Oakland; Curt Gowdy, Al DeRogatis, Don Meredith.

Buffalo at Pittsburgh; Jim Simpson, John Brodie.

Championship Game commentary crews:

NFC (CBS): Los Angeles at Minnesota; Pat Summerall, Tom Brookshier, Johnny Unitas.

AFC (NBC): Pittsburgh at Oakland; Curt Gowdy, Al DeRogatis, Don Meredith.

Super Bowl IX (NBC): Pittsburgh and Minnesota; Curt Gowdy, Al DeRogatis, Don Meredith.

Pro Bowl (ABC): Frank Gifford, Alex Karras, Howard Cosell.

Notes: Ray Scott leaves CBS after many years as a major voice due differences on "directives" of CBS to change his style (e.g. be more talkative)... Don Meredith leaves ABC for NBC after signing contract with NBC for acting roles as well as being paired with Curt Gowdy and Al DeRogatis.... ABC then hires Fred "The Hammer" Williamson to replace Dandy Don. He is a disaster in pre-season games and is fired. Within hours of the regular season's first Monday nighter, ABC signs up Alex Karras.

**1975:** Year two of four year contract with CBS, NBC, and ABC.

CBS: Same as 1974.

NBC: Same as 1974.

ABC: Same as 1974.

Main commentary crews:

CBS: Pat Summerall and Tom Brookshier.

NBC: Curt Gowdy, Al DeRogatis and Don Meredith

ABC: Frank Gifford, Alex Karras, and Howard Cosell.

Pre-game shows:

CBS: Taking 1974 one step further, CBS again retools the Pre-Game show into a full wrap around show. The eye brings back *"The NFL Today"* name, brings in a whole new panel, with lead man Brent Musberger, Irv Cross, and former

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Miss America Phyllis George. The show is not 100% NFL, a major departure. Other sports news of major importance (i.e. The World Series) are covered. NFL Today also is the half-time and post-game show.

NBC: After years of ignoring pre-game shows, NBC finally gets into the mix with one called "*GrandStand*". The host is veteran ex-CBS'er Jack Buck. The format is very similar to *The NFL Today*, covering other sports as well. Later in the season, a young Bryant Gumbel becomes co-host. *GrandStand* is also a wrap around format (Pre, Half, Post). NBC becomes the last network to leave the stadium halftime entertainment to the stadium.

ABC: None.

Divisional Playoff crews:

NFC (CBS): St. Louis at Los Angeles; Frank Glieber, analyst unknown.

Dallas at Minnesota (the Hail Mary pass); Gary Bender, Johnny Unitas.

AFC (NBC): Baltimore at Pittsburgh; Jim Simpson, John Brodie.

Cincinnati at Oakland; Curt Gowdy, Al DeRogatis, Don Meredith.

Championship Game commentary crews:

NFC (CBS): Dallas at Los Angeles; Vin Scully, Sonny Jurgensen.

AFC (NBC): Oakland at Pittsburgh; Curt Gowdy, Al DeRogatis, Don Meredith.

Super Bowl X (CBS): Dallas and Pittsburgh; Pat Summerall, Tom Brookshier.

Pro Bowl (ABC): Frank Gifford, Alex Karras, Howard Cosell.

**1976:** Year three of four year contract with CBS, NBC, and ABC.

CBS: Same as 1974.

NBC: Same as 1974.

ABC: Same as 1974.

Main commentary crews:

CBS: Pat Summerall and Tom Brookshier.

NBC: Curt Gowdy and Don Meredith. (Al DeRogatis retired after 1975)

ABC: Frank Gifford, Alex Karras, and Howard Cosell.

Pre-game shows:

CBS: *The NFL Today* returns for a second season with Brent Musberger, Irv Cross, and Phyllis George at the CBS Sports Center.

NBC: *GrandStand* returns for a second season. Jack Buck, heads back to the broadcast booth at NBC. Bryant Gumbel becomes a full-fledged co-anchor, along with ex-CBS'er Lee Leonard.

ABC: None.

Divisional Playoff crews:

NFC (CBS): Washington at Minnesota; Vin Scully, Paul Hornung.

Los Angeles at Dallas; Pat Summerall, Tom Brookshier.

AFC (NBC): New England at Oakland; Curt Gowdy, Don Meredith.

Pittsburgh at Baltimore; Jim Simpson, John Brodie.

Championship Game commentary crews:

NFC (CBS): Los Angeles at Minnesota; Pat Summerall, Tom Brookshier.

AFC (NBC): Pittsburgh at Oakland; Curt Gowdy, Don Meredith.

Super Bowl XI (NBC): Oakland and Minnesota; Curt Gowdy, Don Meredith.

Pro Bowl (ABC): Frank Gifford, Alex Karras, Howard Cosell.

**1977:** Year four of four year contract with CBS, NBC, and ABC.

CBS: Same as 1974.

NBC: Same as 1974.

ABC: Same as 1974.

Main commentary crews:

CBS: Pat Summerall and Tom Brookshier.

NBC: Curt Gowdy and John Brodie. (Dandy Don returns to ABC)

ABC: Frank Gifford, Don Meredith, and Howard Cosell. (Alex Karras returns to acting.)

Pre-game shows:

CBS: *The NFL Today*. Third season with Brent Musberger, Irv Cross, and Phyllis George.

NBC: *The GrandStand* format ceases, and NBC puts more emphasis on football, renames the show "*NFL '77*" and keeps Bryant Gumbel and Lee Leonard as co-hosts.

ABC: None.

Divisional Playoff crews:

NFC (CBS): Minnesota at Los Angeles; Frank Glieber, Paul Hornung.

Chicago at Dallas; Pat Summerall, Tom Brookshier.

AFC (NBC): Oakland at Baltimore; Curt Gowdy, John Brodie.

Pittsburgh at Denver; Jim Simpson, Merlin Olsen.

**1977 (continued):** Championship Game commentary crews:

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NFC (CBS): Minnesota at Dallas; Vin Scully, Alex Hawkins.

AFC (NBC): Oakland at Denver; Dick Enberg, Len Dawson.

Super Bowl XII (CBS): Dallas at Denver; Pat Summerall, Tom Brookshier.

Pro Bowl (ABC): Frank Gifford, Don Meredith, Howard Cosell.

**1978:** The big three sign the first billion-dollar contract with the NFL. With it come two additional games in the season (14 to 16), and an extra wild card team in each conference, meaning an extra playoff game for each conference.

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 XIV and Super Bowl XVI. CBS 23rd 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 XIII and Super Bowl XV. NBC 14<sup>th</sup> season of AFC coverage, 28<sup>th</sup> season with some form of pro football coverage.

ABC: Has 16 Monday Night games, plus three Sunday night games and a Thursday night game. No restrictions on conference games (e.g. does NFC, AFC, and interconference games. ABC's ninth season of Monday Night Football. ABC also keeps rights to the Pro Bowl for 1978, 1979, 1980, and 1981.

Main commentary crews:

CBS: Pat Summerall, Tom Brookshier.

NBC: 1A: Dick Enberg, Merlin Olsen

1B: Curt Gowdy, John Brodie.

ABC: Frank Gifford, Don Meredith, Howard Cosell.

Pre-Game shows:

CBS: *The NFL Today*. Brent Musberger, Irv Cross, Jayne Kennedy (Phyllis George left the show for maternity reasons).

NBC: *NFL '78*. Lee Leonard, Bryant Gumbel.

Wild card playoff crews:

NFC (CBS): Philadelphia at Atlanta: Gary Bender, Hank Stram.

AFC (NBC): Houston at Miami: Dick Enberg, Len Dawson

Divisional playoff crews:

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

Minnesota at Los Angeles; Vin Scully, George Allen, Jim Brown.

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

Houston at New England; Charlie Jones, Len Dawson.

Championship Game commentary crews:

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

AFC (NBC): Houston at Pittsburgh; Curt Gowdy, John Brodie, Merlin Olsen.

Super Bowl XIII (NBC): Pittsburgh and Dallas; Curt Gowdy, John Brodie, Merlin Olsen.

Pro Bowl (ABC): Frank Gifford, Don Meredith, Howard Cosell.

**1979:** Year two of the four year billion dollar contract with the big three.

CBS: Same as 1978.

NBC: Same as 1978.

ABC: Has 16 Monday Night games, plus three Thursday night games and a Sunday night game. Otherwise, same as 1978.

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 (promoted from contributor).

NBC: *NFL '79*. Bryant Gumbel becomes sole host.

Wild card playoff crews:

NFC (CBS): Chicago at Philadelphia: Vin Scully, George Allen.

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

Divisional playoff crews:

NFC (CBS): Philadelphia at Tampa Bay; Curt Gowdy, Hank Stram.

Los Angeles at Dallas; Vin Scully, George Allen.

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

Miami at Pittsburgh; Don Criqui, John Brodie.

Championship Game commentary crews:

NFC (CBS): Los Angeles at Tampa Bay; Pat Summerall, Tom Brookshier.

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

Super Bowl XIV (CBS): Los Angeles and Pittsburgh; Pat Summerall, Tom Brookshier.

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

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