

The countdown starts

Cincy, 49ers start workouts in Silverdome

PONTIAC, Mich. (AP) — Even before the 1981 season began San Francisco Coach Bill Walsh believed he had as good a team as the Cincinnati club which went 11-3 in 1975.

That was his last year as an assistant coach with the Bengals before beginning a circuitous route which took him to San Francisco.

What he didn't know, of course, was that his 49ers would be comparable to this year's Cincinnati squad as well, the team which will play his 49ers in next Sunday's Super Bowl.

their hotel here, they were met by Walsh, dressed as a doorman. Walsh likes his little jokes. Some of his players didn't even recognize him.

It'd be hard to recognize these 49ers as the same team he took over in 1979. They were, the year before that, the losingest team in the NFL. And they were that again in his first year as their head coach and general manager. "This is one of the greatest epics in the league, a team coming from 2-14 all the way to the Super Bowl in just two years," he exclaimed.

He did it primarily through the draft, two of the biggest picks being quarterback Joe Montana, his third-round pick in 1979, and wide receiver Dwight Clark, the 10th-round selection that year.

This year they were the National Conference's leading passer and receiver, respectively. And, of course, it was Montana's desperation 6-yard pass to the leaping Clark in the final minute that gave the 49ers the NFC title with a 28-27 victory over Dallas.

The 49ers have been installed as slender one-point favorites for Sunday's game, one which on several counts ranks as one of the most unique since the NFL began attaching Roman numerals to its championships XVI years ago.

Meanwhile, the Cincinnati Bengals arrived in Super Bowl country Monday to put the final touches on their preparation for their National Football League championship battle against the San Francisco 49ers Sunday. With them came the news that kick returner-wide receiver

David Verser should be able to play in Super Bowl XVI against the San Francisco 49ers next Sunday.

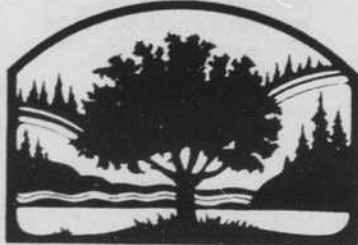
Verser, a rookie from Kansas who led the Bengals in kickoff returns this season, tore a ligament in his right thumb during the Bengals 27-7 American Football Conference championship victory over the San Diego Chargers.

Verser had the thumb put in a cast after the San Diego game and wore it for a week. He worked out Monday with only a protective brace on the thumb.

"We had an appliance made for it specially," said Coach Forrest Gregg.

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Super Bowl

The 49ers arrived Sunday night. Walsh wanted his team here as soon as possible in order to adapt to the three-hour time change from the West Coast.

Walsh got here even earlier, arriving Sunday morning from Washington, D.C., where he'd received an award from the Touchdown Club. When the 49ers stepped off the bus at

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