

Super Bowl features survivors

■ **SUPER BOWL:** Both Dallas and Pittsburgh have gone through tough times this season to get to Sunday

TEMPE, Ariz. (AP) — For the Pittsburgh Steelers, it was 3-and-4. For the Dallas Cowboys, it was fourth-and-1.

The Super Bowl participants didn't have an easy ride to Sunday's game. For nearly half the schedule, the Steelers struggled. Just about when Pittsburgh began turning it on, the Cowboys slipped into a funk.

How they dealt with those critical junctures explains why they got this far.

The Steelers lost All-Pro cornerback Rod Woodson and quarterback Neil O'Donnell in the season opener. Their prize rookie runner of the previous season, Bam Morris, was overweight and wound up on the bench.

By the seventh week of the season, Pittsburgh had four losses, including a 20-16 defeat at expansion Jacksonville. The players were confused, their confidence ebbing and their ranking as an NFL power rapidly disappearing.

"Three months ago, when we were 3-and-4, a lot of people did not give us a chance," O'Donnell said Wednesday. "And we've lost one game in the past three months. We all came together."

On and off the field, the players give all the credit to coach Bill Cowher.

"When we were 3-and-4, we'd gotten out of our style of playing," said Morris, who returned to form by getting in better shape. "We were trying to be more of a finesse team."

"We had a team meeting and Bill said, 'This is like a new half.' We all took our play up to another level and we are here."

Cowher didn't come down hard on his team. Realizing the Steelers had the talent to win the AFC championship, he told them to evaluate what had happened and then rededicate and refocus for the remaining nine weeks.

"We were embarrassed on national television at home by Cincinnati on a Thursday night," Cowher said. "We had a chance to get away for the weekend. We got a chance to sit back and maybe do a self-check on ourselves."

The coaches opened up the offense, began using Kordell Stewart everywhere, and moved Carnell Lake from strong safety to cornerback. The Steelers won eight straight, easily taking the AFC Central.

"They responded," Cowher said. "You can make all of the changes in the world as a coach, but if the players don't accept and believe in it, it isn't going to get it done."

There was little doubt the Cowboys would get to January. There was widespread skepticism they would get very far into January.

Dallas went through a horrible December after impressive victories over Oakland and Kansas City. The Redskins beat them for the second time. The next week, at Philadelphia, came the now-infamous fourth-and-1 play, with Switzer twice going for it at the Dallas 29 in the waning moments. And twice falling short, although the two-minute warning erased one failure.

Switzer was lambasted. Cowboys players rallied to his defense, but questioned their own motivation and focus.

"When you go for fourth-and-1 and don't get it and get blasted and people are talking about how your season is over and you are on the downhill side, you have a tendency to say, 'We know we're not this bad,'" Emmitt Smith said. "So we packed up the wagon and moved on to where we want to be."

More than anything, the Cowboys were offended by the way Switzer was treated by the media. Headlines such as "Bozo The Coach" didn't sit well with them.

Although they barely beat a weak Giants team in Game 15, the Cowboys received a Christmas gift from San Francisco, which lost its finale to Atlanta. That gave Dallas a shot at home-field advantage in the NFC playoffs. The Cowboys grabbed it and haven't looked back.

"I think if we didn't have the character within our football team," Troy Aikman said, "this team would not be here right now. This football team overcame a great deal. It overcame the normal things that every football team has to overcome to be successful, like injuries."

"But the thing that makes this team special for me is that this team overcame a lot of internal strife that I don't think was necessary."

Smith provides power Dallas needs

■ **STAR:** Without the superstar running back the Cowboys have gone 0-4 in last six seasons

TEMPE, Ariz. (AP) — Leave it to Nate Newton, the Dallas Cowboys' 330-pound chatterbox, to define Emmitt Smith's impact on the team.

"Before Emmitt came, I was just a normal fat guy," the left guard said. "Now I'm a fat guy who goes to the Pro Bowl."

Emmitt Smith can do that for people.

He's not the biggest running back in football. Nor is he the fastest. He'd love to have Barry Sanders' moves and Barry Sanders' speed.

Yet it's conceivable that if his 5-foot-9, 209-pound body stands up for another six to eight years, he could hold every NFL rushing record.

"He's not as big as Jim Brown and he's not as fast. But if he continues to play at this level for a few more years, he'll have done everything that Jim Brown did and more," said Dick LeBeau, Pittsburgh's defensive coordinator — the man in charge of finding a way to stop Smith in Sunday's Super Bowl.

Consider this:

- Smith's 25 rushing touchdowns this year were the most in a single season, one more than John Riggins' old mark. His 96 career TDs in just six seasons are fifth behind Walter Payton, Brown, Marcus Allen and Riggins. Next season, he should catch Payton, who has 110.

- His 1,773 rushing yards broke his own Dallas record, set in 1992. He's already 13th on the all-time rushing list with 8,956 yards, more than halfway to Payton's 16,726, set over 13 seasons.

Coach gives players credit for trip to whichever Bowl

TEMPE, Ariz. (AP) — Barry Switzer still can't give up the Oklahoma analogies.

So when he was asked what Troy Aikman, Emmitt Smith and Michael Irvin had done for his Dallas Cowboys, he had a quick retort.

"You think coaches win football games? They got us here to the Orange Bowl, er, I mean the BIG Orange Bowl," he said.

Switzer's news conferences aren't always informative, but they're usually entertaining. Such was the case on Wednesday, another news conference day prior to Sunday's game.

The first question came from Spencer Tillman, a television newsman in Houston who played for the San Francisco 49ers, Houston Oilers and, before that, in Oklahoma for a coach named Barry Switzer.

His question was about

ways to combat the Pittsburgh defense.

Switzer, who often answers questions he doesn't like with a "Did you ever play THE GAME?" responded to Tillman with a series of Xs and Os.

He ended by saying: "You know what I mean, Spencer, BECAUSE YOU PLAYED THE GAME!"

Then came the inevitable question, the one about his decision to go for a first down on fourth-and-1 from his own 29 in a tie game in Philadelphia on Dec. 10, 1995. The play failed and the Eagles took advantage and kicked the winning field goal.

"Every kid knows, and every coach knows that you have to punt in that situation," Switzer said. "But there are times you make the decision. Sometimes you win 'em. Sometimes you lose 'em. You roll the dice."

- He's also 115 yards away from breaking Franco Harris' record of 354 rushing yards in Super Bowl games.

- Most important: Since 1993, the first of Dallas' Super Bowl seasons, the Cowboys are 0-4 in games he has missed; 31-5 in games he's played.

The 1993 season is the best illustration of just what Smith means to Dallas.

He held out in training camp and missed the first two games, both of which the Cowboys lost. He joined the team for the third

game and the Cowboys went 12-2 the rest of the way and on to the Super Bowl. Dallas became the first team in the Super Bowl era to lose its first two and win the title.

But it was the last regular-season game that most defines Smith, a game against the New York Giants at the wind-swept Meadowlands. Because the Cowboys had lost those two early games without him, they had to beat the Giants to win the NFC East and avoid taking the wild-

Turn to STAR, Page 16

Hammy's Special Back to School Meal Deal

Super Pretzel + 16 oz Drink for a buck!

Valid 1/8/96 - 1/31/96 Monday - Friday
2:00pm - 4:30pm and 8:00pm - 10:00pm
Hammy's is located in Hamilton Mall 345-0777

Have you checked out the **EMU BEER GARDENS** lately?

Guaranteed to make you smile.

Come see for yourself.

Just about every Friday from 4-7pm.

Chips and Salsa, and a good time are on us! See ya there!

Ski Bus To Mt. Bachelor and Willamette Pass!



Saturday & Sunday

Sign up at Berg's



Berg's Ski Shop

Mon-Thur 10-7 • Fri-Sat 10-9 • Sun 12-5 13th & Lawrence • 683-1300

OLD TEXAS STEAK HOUSE

Voted "Best Steaks in Eugene" 3 years in a row!

Steaks • Chicken • Seafood • Prime Rib Daily
Cocktails • Beer • Wine
Lunch T-F 11:30-2 • Dinner Daily 4:30-Closing

Daily Specials Include:

Every Thursday- All You Can Eat BBQ Pork Ribs \$9.95

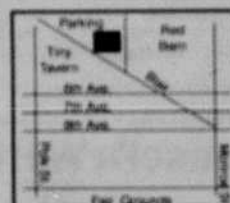
Every Sunday- Prime Rib Night \$9.95

We Won't Steer You Wrong and That Ain't No Bull!!

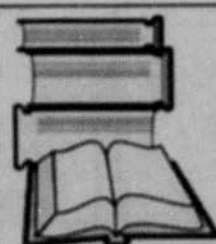
OLD TEXAS STEAK HOUSE

\$200 OFF ANY DINNER

Not valid on Daily Specials. Not valid with any other offer.



325 Blair Blvd.
345-5322
Expires 3/15/96



A true friend is like a good book — the inside is better than the cover.