

Cowboys cut Steelers' comeback attempt short

■ GAME: Dallas wins its third Super Bowl in four years and first under head coach Barry Switzer

TEMPE, Ariz. (AP) — Those limo-ridin' glamour boys from Dallas backed up their bluster, but barely.

And they can thank one of their least glamorous players, Larry Brown, for their third Super Bowl victory in four years.

The Cowboys beat Pittsburgh 27-17 Sunday to extend the NFC's streak of victories in the NFL's showcase game to an even dozen.

And while Troy, Emmitt and Michael all had their moments, the biggest one was reserved for Brown, the right cornerback overshadowed by the spotlight on left corner, a guy named Deion Sanders.

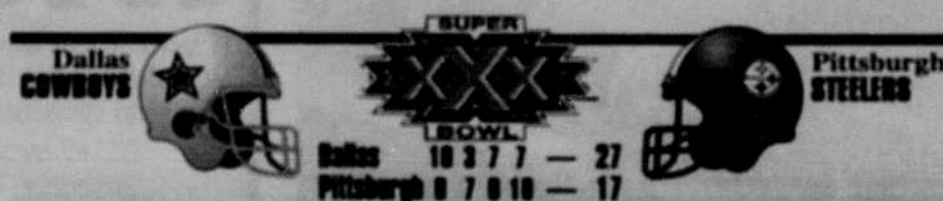
Brown came up with two interceptions at moments when Pittsburgh was just about to take control of the game and was named the Super Bowl's most valuable player.

His 44-yard return in the third quarter of Neil O'Donnell's pass set up a 1-yard touchdown run by Emmitt Smith that put Dallas up 20-7 after Pittsburgh, which fell behind 13-0, seemed ready to take the lead.

Then, after Pittsburgh had closed to 20-17 and had the ball with four minutes left, Brown, just as he did to seal the NFC title game with Green Bay, made another interception, returning it 34 yards to set up another Smith TD run, this one of four yards.

Only then did the Cowboys and Coach Barry Switzer celebrate a struggling Super Bowl victory that capped a struggling season. And the hugs in the end zone reflected relief more than the "in-your-face" braggadocio with which the Cowboys faced Super Bowl week.

Dallas controlled the first half, with help from O'Donnell, the Pittsburgh quarter-



SCORING SUMMARY

First Quarter
 Dal—FG Boniol 42.
 Dal—Novacek 3 pass from Aikman (Boniol kick).
Second Quarter
 Dal—FG Boniol 35.
 Pit—Thigpen 6 pass from O'Donnell (Johnson kick).
Third Quarter
 Dal—E. Smith 1 run (Boniol kick).
Fourth Quarter
 Pit—FG Johnson 46.
 Pit—Morris 1 run (Johnson kick).
 Dal—E. Smith 4 run (Boniol kick).

GAME STATS

	Dallas	Pittsburgh
First downs	15	25
Rushes-yards	25-66	31-103
Passing	198	207
Punt Returns	1-11	2-18
Kickoff Returns	3-37	5-98
Interceptions Ret.	3-77	0-0
Comp-Att-Int	15-23-0	26-49-3
Sacked-Yards Lost	2-11	4-32
Punts	5-38	4-45
Penalties-Yards	5-25	2-15
Time of Possession	26:11	33:49

MATT GARTONE/Emerald

back who was high and outside most of the time, even on his completions.

But while they scored on their first two possessions, they could convert those only into 13 points, leaving the Steelers within striking range, even with O'Donnell struggling so much.

Then the Steelers, as they have so often, scored in the last two minutes, turning it into a 13-7 game.

But while the Dallas offense fizzled, the defense didn't, particularly Brown, who joined Miami's Jake Scott 13 years ago as the only other defensive back to win a Super Bowl MVP trophy. And that was enough for the Cowboys to join San Francisco as the only teams to win five Super Bowls.

Pittsburgh, which won four Super Bowls during the 1970s, lost for the first time in

five appearances.

Dallas' victory also bailed out Switzer, who took over for Jimmy Johnson last season after Johnson and Dallas owner Jerry Jones had their well-publicized divorce. Switzer thus joined Johnson as the only coaches to win both college and pro championships despite a season of gaffes that left him labeled "Bozo the Coach."

The Cowboys were favored by 13½ points, but after the narrow win even the trophy celebration was subdued.

"This ball game represents the kind of season we've had," said Jones in accepting the Vince Lombardi Trophy from commissioner Paul Tagliabue, who had bitterly attacked Jones on national television earlier in the day.

"This was a struggle," said Jones, who

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Unlikely star lifts Dallas to victory

■ STAR: Larry Brown's two interceptions seal the Dallas victory and take the steam out of the Steelers' upset attempt

TEMPE, Ariz. (AP) — Twice, Larry Brown waited in the Dallas secondary with the Cowboys needing a break.

And twice he provided it with game-turning interceptions that made him the Super Bowl MVP in the Cowboys' 27-17 victory over Pittsburgh on Sunday night.

Larry Brown?

On a team bulging with big name stars like Troy Aikman, Emmitt Smith, Michael Irvin and Deion Sanders, Brown was an unlikely hero, a mostly anonymous guy working in the secondary.

Brown was an NFL longshot right from the start, a 12th-round draft choice out of Texas Christian in 1991, the 57th defensive back chosen that year. He was only a two-year starter at TCU but earned some attention with 75 tackles and 10 passes defended in his senior year. When he was MVP of the Blue-Gray game, it made him a prospect.

Twelfth-rounders don't usually stick around very long. Brown not only stuck around but by the fourth game of his rookie year, he was a starter on a rebuilding Dallas team. And he's been there ever since, when the Cowboys won two Super Bowls under Jimmy Johnson and again Sunday night when they captured their third in four years.

During the season, Brown tied for the

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Switzer reloaded and hit his target

TEMPE, Ariz. (AP) — The guy we all thought couldn't get out of his own way was waltzing now with the Super Bowl trophy, right next to the guy who got him the date.

So grateful was Barry Switzer to have any kind of dance this night that he screamed at owner Jerry Jones when he was close enough to lean over and just whisper thanks in his ear.

"Jerry, we did it our way, baby!" Switzer screamed. "We did it! We did it! We did it!"

Did they ever. With most of America rooting against the self-styled America's Team, with most of the NFL powers arrayed against them, with commissioner Paul Tagliabue threatening to gag over every other word during the presentation, the evil genius of an owner and the bumbler of a coach did their best to be gracious.

They had precious little time to prepare, considering how late Dallas waited before sewing up its third Super Bowl championship in four years, 27-17 over Pittsburgh.

But when someone asked Jones how this one ranked against his two previous titles, his words seemed carefully chosen. He spoke them directly to Tagliabue, in stark contrast to a body language that seemed to say to the commissioner: get lost.

"Under the circumstances," Jones said, "this one for me is the sweetest."

COMMENTARY

Jim Luke

He didn't elaborate about "the circumstances," which, if nothing else, should win him some kind of prize of restraint.

Jones is being sued by the league for everything but the star at the 50-yard line in Texas Stadium and has a countersuit snaking through the same courts.

Only that morning, Tagliabue had ripped Jones up and down on a national news show, had gone top to bottom on the familiar list of offenses lodged against Jones: selfish, greedy and a confidence man to boot.

But even that characterization might have seemed charitable to Switzer.

He will never be smooth, and unlike Jones, he will never have to worry about being called slick. Just the opposite.

Switzer arrived in Dallas so soon after the messy Jones-Jimmy Johnson divorce two years ago that he seemed more like a consolation prize than the No. 1 choice. And then Jones had the great idea to introduce him as just one of the 500 coaches who could take the Cowboys to the Super Bowl.

As soon as Switzer got out-coached a handful of times in short order — first in the NFC championship game at San Francisco a year ago and several times during this regular season — even Cowboy fans clamored for another one of the

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”

499 coaches Jones passed up.

Strangely, though, no hue and cry resounded through Valley Ranch itself. There was rumored trouble between Switzer and Troy Aikman, the engine of the Dallas offense, but that was the only crack in the Cowboys' solid front.

If anything, they propped Switzer up the more his critics piled on. And Sunday night, what once seemed like grudging tolerance of Switzer's ways softened and became downright affection.

Leon Lett and Robert Jones, two defenders who improved big-time this season under Switzer, touched off the parade of well-wishers by dumping a barrel of Gatorade on their coach.

In quick succession, Deion Sanders threw a towel across Switzer's soaked shoulders, patted him on the back and then gave way to Charles Haley.

The snarling defensive end practically bear-hugged Switzer, and that gesture of approval opened the way for the Cowboy sideline to become a receiving line with Switzer as the honored guest.

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