

OPINION: THE GREATEST OFFENSE

By Bob Carroll

The other day a fellow allowed that Air Coryell looked like the most irresistible force since the *Wermacht* took Paris, and I said I didn't know but thought 1950 Los Angeles Rams might have been better. He agreed I didn't know.

He said I was an old foof and I said Oh Yeah! or something snappy like that. Anyway, he left in a huff. I think it was a huff; I'm not good at recognizing foreign cars.

But I got to wondering if there might not be a better way to compare the Rams and Chargers than shouting at the top of my lungs.

I tried listing players in two columns down a sheet of paper -- Waterfield, Van Brocklin, Fears, Hirsch, Younger, Towler, Hoerner and V.T. Smith in one list; Fouts, Chandler, Winslow, Joiner, and Muncie in the other. All I was doing was listing my own prejudices! I gave Tommy Kalmanir two points because I liked his name.

I thought of conducting a poll by writing to ten or twenty people who ought to know, but I decided that would still be inconclusive and, worse, cost a lot in stamps.

Finally, I opted for the mathematical approach. After all, back in high school I'd successfully completed two weeks of algebra before changing my major to study hall.

I looked at a few figures. Then I put away my nudist magazine and got to work. My goodness! San Diego gained 6,744 yards rushing and passing this season after setting a record with 6,410 last year. If that team didn't come back and kick off once in a while, it would soon be in Guam.

It all seemed good until I noticed the 1961 Houston Oilers got 6,288 yards in only 14 games. That averaged to better than 25 more yards per game than the 1981 Chargers.

When I divided 1950's twelve games into the Rams' 5520 yards, it came out to 460 yards per outing -- nearly 40 more yards per game than this year's San Diego Chargers! Old foof, huh?

It's always been awkward for me to pat myself on the back, so I patted myself on the elbow for an hour or so. But, eventually, something besides a sore arm began troubling me.

A boatload of yardage between the 20-yard lines didn't add up to a high-powered offense for my money. The mark of a great offense is points on the scoreboard -- and points put there by rushing and passing, not by the defense or special teams.

I couldn't decide about field goals. Do they show the offense was good enough to get close or not good enough to go all the way? I decided to ignore field goals, under the old dictum: "When in doubt, leave it out!" which was coined either by a newspaper editor or a manufacturer of jigsaw puzzles.

The way to rate offenses, at least in the "high-powered" sense, I decided, was to find out how quickly they scored their touchdowns.

The thing to do, was divide the number of rushing and passing touchdowns into the number of rushing and passing attempts. Oops! Also the number of sacks.

$$\frac{ra + pa + s}{rtd + ptd} = p\text{ptd (plays per td)}$$

And so, after years of searching, or maybe a couple of hours, I had my sure-as-shootin' method of rating the '81 Chargers and the '50 Rams.

