

LAS VEGAS COWBOYS – 1969

BY Ace Hendricks

The Las Vegas Cowboys were a team that played in the fledgling Continental Football League. They lasted a total of two seasons, went from worst to first and nearly made the last championship game in league history. Unfortunately for the Cowboys, it was also a team that was starved for attention in a city that has a tough time with professional football. It was a club made up of young men eager to show their stuff and even though they were the best team in the division, never truly were given the opportunity to show all their goods.

The 1969 version of the Cowboys were a totally different entity than the one which played in 1968. It was under new management, new coaching staff and, with the exception of eight players, a totally revamped roster. It was a team that made the biggest turnaround in the Continental Football League's brief history.

The squad from 1968 had been somewhat of an "undesirable" team. Brought in to the ContFL following the folding of the Quad Cities Raiders, the team failed to win a home game, fielded few "big-time" players and produced very few fans. Thus, they ended the season at 1-9, with only a 14-6 victory over the Sacramento Capitols.

1969's version of the Las Vegas Cowboys finished the regular season at 8-4, tied with the Capitols for the Pacific Division lead. In a divisional playoff, the Cowboys pounded the Californians, 31-0. A week later, the Cowboys lost to the San Antonio Toros, 21-17, at Alamo Stadium in a league playoff game for the right to play in the final Continental Football League championship.

The team was coached and managed by Paul Massey, who had been an assistant coach for Lou Saban at both Maryland and the Denver Broncos. Larry Luongo, a businessman from the East Coast, was hired to handle the business affairs and public relations for the Cowboys. He had experience as a scout and recruiter with Massey helping him at both Maryland and Denver. He would also coach the Cowboys.

Two of Massey's assistant coaches had played in the AFL. Jim McMillin, who intercepted 14 passes in a six year career with both the Broncos and Oakland Raiders, was the Defensive Coordinator. Max Leetzow, who played for Idaho, was a fourth round draft choice of the Broncos. He won a starting position with Denver in 1965, but suffered knee injuries in 1967 and 68 that ended his career. A third assistant, Dick Pruitt, was a Las Vegas native and had played with the Cowboys in 1968 as a quarterback.

Players came from everywhere. Some came from college and some from the AFL and even the NFL. It proved that good, young players would play for any sum of money and come from any part of the country for a chance at a bigger league. It was a group of young men that were trying to help one another make it to that next level. The team jelled quickly and were a force to be reckoned with that season. They had an outstanding passing attack, a burly-tough defense and a former AFL place-kicker.

So, what happened? Why did this team fold after the season? Money, mostly. A millionaire named Thomas M. Redmond, from Anderson, Indiana who made his money in insurance, owned the Cowboys. He took a shot at owning a team in Las Vegas with the hopes of possibly someday owning an NFL team in the casino town. He in essence was no different than the ballplayers that he paid. Somebody trying to reach the top by playing lower level ball. By season's end, his dream had slipped away; due mostly to the fact that he found out that owning a professional team took a lot of time, effort and paying customers. And paying customers in Las Vegas were hard to come by.

Las Vegas is a tough act for football. Other professional football teams, such as the Las Vegas Calvary of the CFL and the Las Vegas Outlaws of the XFL found out in later years. There seems to be too many things to do there. At the time, everyone in the community wanted a favor for their services. Rescue units couldn't be serviced to the team unless the organization paid a hefty price. No one would take tickets for the services; everyone and everything seemed to be about money or being compensated.

It wasn't as if Massey and Luongo didn't try to work with the community. Blocks of tickets were sold to Caesars Palace, which in turn were given to youth clubs in the area. They hired the Las Vegas Youth Band, had a "Miss Cowboy" contest and had a cheerleading squad.

Massey checked with the gaming industry and found that a majority of its employees were off on Tuesdays, so he chose that night to play its home games after originally having them on Saturday. It was chosen as not to interfere with high school football, UNLV games or promoter Bill Miller's fight of the week. Still, no support.

The Cowboys had no exposure to television or radio, although KLAV offered to carry their games on radio at a total cost of \$1,800 or \$200 for each of the nine games. The station owned by eccentric Howard Hughes even offered potential sponsors free air time. All they had to do was pay the line charges. Nobody bought.

The Hughes Nevada Operations reportedly did their part when it was announced that a block of 400 tickets was purchased for all home games for the employees.

"If you bring a winner," the management was promised, "We will fill the stadium."

The stadium, if that is what you want to call it, was a bad excuse for a football complex. Cashman Field, used for rodeos and stock car races, had cement seats, small and dilapidated washrooms, and its locker rooms were a mess.

Massey had come directly from the Broncos and had the inside track on players being cut or released from the 'Mile High' team.

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No less than nine players came from the Broncos. Every man on the roster had been in some sort of camp -- AFL, NFL, Canadian and Continental Football League. They all had skills that had attracted the 'big leagues' and in turn were given a "look see".

They had experienced players. Starting quarterback Dewey Warren, had been with the Cincinnati Bengals in 1968 and had started seven games with them. Ron McCall, an All-American linebacker at Weber State had been drafted by the Chargers in the second round and spent two years with San Diego. Larry Cox, an All-American Tackle at Abilene Christian, played three seasons with the Broncos. Jim Boudreux, had played three with the Boston Patriots. Seven others had spent at least one season with an AFL or NFL team.

The Cowboys had the 1966 AFL Rookie of the Year in running back Bobby Burnett. Burnett, who scored the winning touchdown in the 1965 Cotton Bowl to give Arkansas the national championship, had played two seasons with the Buffalo Bills before a severe knee injury cut into his career. He came back from nearly two seasons of inactivity to make Denver's 1969 opening day roster. He hooked up with the Cowboys after the fifth game of the season. 1969 would be his final season.

Las Vegas also had diminutive cornerback Marvin Pettaway, who played organized football from 1966 to 1975 in four different leagues from the West Coast to the Atlantic shoreline. He is a member of the American Football Association's Minor League Football Hall of Fame. In ten seasons, he returned 123 punts for 1,266 yards (10.3 average) and 140 kickoffs for 3,706 yards (26.4 average) all minor league football all-time records.

Another interesting player on the team was Teddy Washington, now known as Sultan Salaam. He played for the Bengals in 1968 after playing his college football at San Diego State. He was the father of Colorado's Heisman Trophy winner and Chicago Bears first round draft choice, Rashaan Salaam.

Las Vegas played during a time without specialized players -- no "third down backs", no nickel defensive backs, and no pass rush specialists. In those days, the AFL and NFL kept just 40 men on active rosters.

The 1968 version of the Cowboys had reportedly lost \$140,000 during the season and Redmond knew he needed a complete change in the front office to create a "new" Cowboy image for the fans of Las Vegas to come out. Hiring Massey was his first step toward that change. With Redmond's pockets and Massey's connections to AFL teams, Redmond felt he couldn't lose.

Camp opened on July 14 at Cashman Field with 45 players. The Cowboys had a new coaching staff, nearly new roster, and a new lease on life.

Practicing twice a day in 100 degree weather, the "new" Cowboys were well conditioned and in shape for their first game, against the Mexico Golden Aztecs scheduled for Monterrey, Mexico on August 2nd.

Two days before their trip to Monterrey, Massey signed two former AFL players, who had previously played with the Broncos and would provide the Cowboys with veteran leadership. Bob Humphreys, who had kicked for the Broncos in 1967 and 1968, was signed to do the place-kicking for the Cowboys. Bob Scarpitto, an eight-year AFL veteran, was signed to play both receiver and punt. He was the most experienced player on the roster.

In 1968, Scarpitto was traded from Denver to the Boston Patriots. After the season, Scarpitto, who had business interests in the Denver area, retired and returned to the Rocky Mountain area. Signed by Massey, Scarpitto was expected to punt for the Cowboys and supply relief help at the flanker position. His trip to Mexico was his last with Las Vegas. Shortly after the game, the Patriots announced that Scarpitto was still obligated to them and since he had retired from football he was unable to play with anyone else. Again Scarpitto, retired.

Humphreys, another former Bronco would have no such problems, as he became the Cowboys kicker for the season. Playing parts of two seasons in Denver, the Wichita State product had made 19 of 20 extra points and eight of 20 field goal attempts with the Broncos. At the age of 29, he was the oldest player on the Cowboy roster.

Playing the Golden Aztecs, the Cowboys were welcomed by 18,276 fans, who saw a see-saw battle in very warm conditions. Mexico had already played one exhibition game, against the Chicago Owls and had tied them, 14-14. Mexico was an expansion club, made up of many Texas-bred players and were owned by San Antonio based businessmen.

Las Vegas had two rookie quarterbacks, Terry Stone of the University of New Mexico and Bill Casey, who played at UNLV. Both were neck to neck in the starting battle. Stone had been the nation's leading passer in 1967 with the Lobos. Casey, had played one season with the Rebels, leading them to an 8-1 record in 1968. Unfortunately for Casey, he was unable to play in the first game due to an inner ear infection.

Stone played the whole evening, completing nine of 22 passes for 153 yards in his first pro start. Six of his completions came in the fourth quarter when the Cowboys mounted a comeback.

Mexico led 7-0, when the Cowboys tied the score in the third quarter. After three pass completions by Stone, running back Mike Vogel, from San Fernando Valley State, scampered 11 yards for the touchdown.

The Cowboys seemed on the verge of winning the game late in the fourth quarter. With the ball at the Golden Aztec four-yard line. Humphreys came in to attempt an 11-yard field goal, but the ball slipped from Stone's hold, and the kick was partially blocked. James Gibson scooped up the kick and raced 97-yards for the tie-breaking touchdown and a 13-7 lead.

Las Vegas had one more shot, and Stone moved them downfield and got within scoring range, but had four passes fall incomplete with the Cowboys at the Mexico 14-yard line.

Following the loss, the Cowboys regrouped and prepared to play their next opponent. The Portland Loggers, formerly the Orange County Ramblers, had been in the past two ContFL championship games. In two seasons they had combined for a 21-3 record.

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Casey was making his first start, and in front of his home crowd. The local boy didn't disappoint either as he was sharp, completing 11 of 14 passes for 131 yards and three touchdowns. He also added a sneak in the second quarter. Humphreys delivered two field goals -- 44 and 25 yards -- as the Cowboys routed the Loggers 34-7. Portland was never in the game as the Cowboys intercepted three passes and allowed just one drive into scoring territory and held a 31-0 lead at halftime.

On August 12, the Cowboys signed possibly the most important person in terms of lifting them from "Good team" to "Great Team" – quarterback Dewey Warren. The "Swamp Rat" had just been given his release by the Bengals, following Greg Cook's arrival in camp. The cocky, former All-American from Tennessee was expected to be a good gate draw, as well as give the Cowboys a solid veteran at a very important position.

Warren had rewrote the passing records during his time in Knoxville, completing 258 passes in 440 attempts for 3,357 yards and 27 TD's. During his three seasons as the Volunteers quarterback, he led them to an overall record of 25-6-2 and a Southeast Conference title in 1967.

Warren's arrival didn't necessarily mean he was given the starting position, nor did it mean all the Cowboys players were happy that the local press in Las Vegas had automatically given him the starting spot. One teammate even went as far as to write an editorial in a newspaper claiming that Casey and Stone "deserved the chance to be starters" due to the fact they had been there since mid-July.

With the highly touted Fort Worth Braves coming to town, all three players would get the opportunity to show their stuff.

Fort Worth had been in the Texas Football League, which joined the ContFL in 1969. They were expected to battle for the Texas Division title, and when former Texas Longhorn All-American Chris Gilbert signed with them, they received instant credibility. But it was the Las Vegas passing game that stood out. Three quarterbacks combined for 245 yards and 17 completions. In all, the Cowboys offense rolled up 347 yards of offense and 17 first downs.

Casey got the starting nod for the Cowboys and threw well, going 5 for 10 for 72 yards and a touchdown. He zipped a 34-yarder to Hendricks in the first quarter for the Cowboys first touchdown. Warren played just one full quarter and completed eight of 10 passes for 111 yards, including a 24-yard scoring toss to Lindsey early in the fourth quarter. Stone, who by this time seemed like the odd man out, was fair for eight for 69 yards and was intercepted twice -- the last one resulting in the Braves only score. The Cowboys wound up with a 20-7 victory and finished the exhibition season, 2-1.

With the opening game just a week away, Warren was given the starting berth in the battle for quarterback. Casey, who had done a fine job in the two games he played became the backup and Stone, who was the odd man out, went to the Taxi Squad.

The first game of the season was at Spokane on August 23rd. The Shockers were coached by Hugh "Bones" Taylor a former NFL end with the Washington Redskins. Warren showed the crowd of 9,876 at Joe Albi Stadium why he was the Cowboys' choice for the starting position. He came out firing and completed 17 of 28 passes for 220 yards and two touchdowns. But the game was far from easy for the Cowboys.

Las Vegas took an early 7-0 lead when fullback Jim Hageman, a ContFL veteran, slid six yards for the game's first touchdown. Late in the second quarter, that lead went to 14-0 when Warren found Washington for a 24-yard touchdown pass play.

The Shockers came to life in the second half and cut the lead to 14-13 midway in the fourth quarter. But, Warren helped the Cowboys put the game away with 4:34 remaining in the contest when he connected with Lindsey for a 28-yard scoring toss.

The Cowboys had played well offensively and made the plays on defense when needed. Jim Lavrusky, a linebacker who played for Massey at Maryland, intercepted two passes. The 6' 1", 225-pounder was a hard-nosed player from the Ohio River area of Pennsylvania.

Next up for the Pokes was San Antonio, the class of the Texas Division. The Toros were a rough and tough team and had dominated play in the TFL for the past two seasons. Las Vegas would be facing its toughest team to date.

An announced 6,585 fans came out to the ballpark to watch the game (it was later made known that just 3,750 actually were in attendance) on the first Tuesday night of the season. The Toros built a 14-0 lead in the first quarter behind a ball control attack.

The Cowboys came back in the second quarter, tying it up behind the play of Warren and the Cowboys' defense. Warren scored on a 2-yard sneak, then hit his tight end Rick Carlson late in the first half on a 7-yard touchdown pass to tie the score.

Neither team could punch it across in the second half, but the Cowboys got two field goals from Humphreys -- 23 yards in the third quarter, and a 36-yarder in the fourth, as the Vegans built a 20-14 lead. The Toros made one last thrust late in the game, but Cowboy Bob Burton recovered a fumble deep in the Las Vegas territory. San Antonio had gained 344 yards of offense but was unable to score in the second half.

The Cowboys moved to 2-0 in the Pacific Division. In the wacky world of ContFL, they would then travel to Seattle to face the Rangers in just four days.

In that time the Cowboys had signed Mike Tomasini, who had recently been released by Denver. The 6'3", 258-pounder had been a two sport All-American at Colorado State College (now the University of Northern Colorado) and a 10th round draft choice of the Atlanta Falcons in 1968. The big lineman was put at a end position for the Seattle game, although he would be moved to tackle in later weeks with the signing of other linemen.

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Tired from the limited rest time, the Cowboys ran out of luck, getting clipped by the Rangers, 20-3. In front of 5,590 fans, the Rangers rolled up 207 yards rushing and seemed to make every Las Vegas mistake come back to haunt them. The Rangers gave up just a 12-yard Humphreys field goal in the second quarter. Warren gave way to Casey in the third quarter.

The Cowboys had 11 days until their next game, September 16th, at home against Sacramento, 2-0 and first in the division. The AFL and NFL had started releasing players from the last line of cuts and Massey with his long list of connections took full advantage. In those days following the game at Seattle, he signed five players from the big leagues.###

The most notable were two defensive linemen and a linebacker. Larry Cox, from the Broncos was a last cut by them as he was caught in a numbers game. Cox paid instant dividends as he became one of the most dominate defensive tackles in the ContFL earning All-Pacific Division honors. The other defensive lineman was Lew Kamanu, who played two seasons with the Detroit Lions and was a standout at Weber State. He played defensive end and his signing enabled the Cowboys to move Tomasini inside to tackle.

The Cowboys defensive line had been a bit suspect early in the season, with size, but not much quickness. Other than end Steve Booras, the Las Vegas linemen were average. With the signing of the three players - Tomasini, Cox and Kamanu the Cowboys now had the best overall front four in the league.

Booras, who was the only player there all season, would play steady football all season and in 1970 would move the CFL where he would become All-Eastern Division for the Montreal Alouettes. Cox would make All-League honors in 1969 and Tomasini and Kamanu would dominate the right side of the line of scrimmage. With those four, Las Vegas had the most experienced defensive line in the ContFL.

McCall, a former Weber State linebacker, came directly from the San Diego Chargers. McCall had been a standout for the Wildcats in college and played in the East-West Shrine Bowl. Arriving in Las Vegas, he was placed in the starting position in his first game.

The Capitols came to Las Vegas as the favorites after defeating Seattle and West Texas. They left town in second place behind the Cowboys. But the Cowboys were the better team that evening, as they thrashed the Capitols, 24-7. Aided by the signing of Cox and Kamanu, they held the Capitols to 33 yards rushing and sacked Sacramento quarterbacks four times.

Warren had another fine evening completing 16 of 31 passes for 158 yards and two touchdowns. He hooked up with Ace Hendricks five times for 85 yards and a touchdown late in the second quarter to give the Cowboys a 21-7 lead.

Henry Jones, whom the Cowboys had signed earlier in the week, gained 40 yards on 11 carries. He was in Las Vegas after being sent there from Denver. Shortly after the game, Jones returned to the Broncos due to an injury to Floyd Little. It would be an unfortunate move in Jones' career, as he would carry the ball just once for 3 yards in Denver and wouldn't play in the NFL following the 1969 season.

The Cowboys traveled to Midland, Texas next to face the West Texas Rufnecks, who were coached by the 1960 AFL Coach of the Year, Lou Rymkus. It would be an interesting game, as the Rufnecks had just received 12 players from the Mexico Golden Aztecs, who had folded.

With the loss of its newest rusher, the game would fall again on the shoulders of Warren. And once again, he would not falter. He completed 24 of 46 passes for 248 yards and three touchdowns -- all of which were thrown in the second half.

The game started as a field goal battle, with Humphreys and West Texas and former Texas Tech kicker, Tim Vinyard, who had held the Southwestern Conference record with a 55-yard kick, hammering two for a 6-6 tie.

Suddenly, the Rufnecks came to life, scoring two touchdowns in the second quarter and taking a 20-6 lead into the locker rooms at halftime.

In the second half, Warren came to life, hitting Lindsey for touchdown passes of 13 and 8-yards and another field goal from Humphreys. But the Rufnecks countered with a touchdown of their own late in the game and led, 27-23.

Warren then went to work. He completed an apparent 40-yard touchdown pass to Hendricks, but the former New Mexico Lobo receiver was ruled out of bounds. After another completion for a first down, Warren scrambled away from a strong Rufneck pass rush and delivered a 27-yard pass across the field to Hendricks who was all alone in the end zone. The touchdown came with 1:27 remaining in the game and the Cowboys left Texas with a 30-27 victory.

Using Texas officials, the game was heavy-sided with penalties by Las Vegas, as they were hit with 119 yards in infractions. Many calls weren't made. Obvious calls were let go and it nearly cost the Cowboys a victory.

So frustrated was the Las Vegas management that they sent a letter to the ContFL offices asking that if they played in Texas again, that Texan officials not be used. The November 1st game against the same Rufnecks in Midland, was cancelled.

Sacramento came back to town the following week, and once again, the Cowboys were primed for victory. They had signed Burnett during the week and was expected to help the struggling rushing attack. In its first five games, the Cowboys had rushed for 100 yards or more just once - 137 against the Capitols on September 16th.

They gained just 48 on the ground, but Warren once again made up for it with 22 completions for 327 yards and two touchdowns to Hendricks, who caught six passes for 111 yards. He snagged a 51-yard pass from Warren to start the scoring, then hauled in a 34-yarder to end the evening's points and a 21-0 lead.

In between, Vogel slashed across for a 2-yard touchdown in the third quarter. The game was sort of a 'coming out' for Vogel, who had played behind Washington for most of the season to that point. He doubled as a punter. He rushed for 52 yards on 10 carries and caught another 10 passes for 65 yards.

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The defense was once again dominating. Holding the Sacramento offense to 81 yards rushing and 74 yards passing along with causing four turnovers.

The score wouldn't have been nearly as close, except for the fact that two Cowboy touchdowns were called back.

The game that was scheduled for October 11th in Tulsa against the Tulsa Thunderbirds was cancelled and gave the Cowboys two weeks to prepare for the Portland Loggers, who were 2-5 and in last.

Playing in cool conditions in Las Vegas, the Cowboys rolled past the Loggers 42-13. For three quarters, Portland hung around until Las Vegas scored three touchdowns in the final quarter.

Newly acquired linebacker Mike Foote, sent from the Rams, intercepted two passes to set up scores for the Cowboys and the defense held the strong Portland rushing attack to just 80 yards, while they rolled up 108 yards on the ground. Vogel again led the Cowboys with 46 yards on the ground in eight carries.

Warren once again left the opponents defense looking for answers, completing 20 of 36 passes for 274 yards and two touchdowns. With the performance, he became the ContFL leading passer. He also split his completions between six different receivers. Hendricks caught five for 84 yards, Carlson five for 63 and Mike Oslin, who played his college football with Washington at San Diego State, four catches for 76 yards.

Pettaway played a fantastic game at his cornerback spot and broke the scoreless game in the first quarter with a 65-yard punt return for a touchdown.

By this time of the season, it was fairly obvious that money-wise, things weren't going well for the Cowboys. Fans weren't coming out to watch a good team. This was good football, but it was more 'minor league' than the Las Vegas community wanted. The Cowboys had a good hard core base of fans, but not many, or enough to cut a profit.

That Saturday before the next home game against Spokane, it was reported in the Memphis Press-Scimitar that the Cowboys were planning to move its franchise to Memphis for the 1970 season and that former Memphis State assistant coach and Broncos assistant coach Ray Malavasi would become coach. Malavasi would later become head coach of the Rams and lead them to Super Bowl XIV against the Pittsburgh Steelers.

Massey and Redmond appeared to be unaware of such rumors and maintained that they wanted to remain in Nevada. In all reality, the Cowboys had lost so much money by that time, they were looking for help in the business community to keep them afloat and in town. Unfortunately, for the Cowboys management, they had no takers.

Racial tensions in the city and untimely cool, wet weather didn't do much for the Cowboys economy, either. For nearly two weeks, the city of Las Vegas had problems with rioting and uneasiness among the minority community. The fact that it rained on games nights didn't help much either. In a town unsure of what football was being played, that combination did little to sell exposure for the Cowboys.

Spokane was the most improved team in the division and had played very competitive football in recent weeks. They came into Las Vegas with an upset on their minds and nearly did just that.

Warren was blitzed, chased and harassed. He was dumped five times in the game for 48 yards of losses. The defense of the Cowboys meanwhile, was equally as impressive at rushing the quarterback, as they found Spokane throwers five times, also. Tomasini had three of them.

After tying the score at 7-7 on Vogel's 1-yard run, the Cowboys gained the lead when Kamanu latched onto a errant pass and rumbled 31 yards for a touchdown. Suddenly, the Cowboys got the momentum in their favor and took a 21-7 lead when Vogel scored his second touchdown when he caught a 12-yard pass from Warren.

Things looked good for Las Vegas until midway in the fourth quarter when Bill Ackman of Spokane picked off a Warren pass and raced 25 yards for a touchdown. Moments later, Warren was intercepted again, and the Shockers tied the score, 21-21 with 1:27 left in the game.

Looking for that magic touch, Warren got the ball at the Las Vegas 29. On the first play from scrimmage, he hooked up with Hendricks at the Spokane 40. He fought off one defender and raced the final 30 yards untouched for the score with just 62 seconds left in the game. Once again, Warren and Hendricks had hooked up to give the Cowboys the victory.

The next two games would be against the Capitols in California, as Sacramento replaced West Texas on the schedule. Las Vegas was 7-1 and seemed to be in total control of the division as the second place Seattle Rangers were 5-4, and Sacramento 4-4. The Cowboys magic number was now just three and the Pacific Division title was theirs.

The Capitols were ready to spoil any victory parties for the Cowboys as 7,826 fans witnessed the inept scoring Capitols take advantage of every Cowboys mistake and roll to a 31-10 victory. Warren was forced out of his game plan early and the Capitols took advantage of it, intercepting four passes - two of them returned for touchdowns - as they totally dominated the Cowboys.

One week later, with another 7,026 people at Hughes Stadium, the two teams battled to a low scoring affair, that saw the teams take turns with the lead behind it special teams.

Down 6-3, the Cowboys took the lead late in the game when Warren hooked up once again with Hendricks on a 34-yard touchdown pass. But moments later, Sacramento quarterback John Goodman hit Hugh Oldham for a 35-yard touchdown with just 1:12 remaining in the game and a 13-10 come from behind victory for the Capitols.

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All of the sudden, the Las Vegas divisional lead was no longer safe. At 7-3, they had Sacramento at 6-4 and Seattle 6-5 at their doorstep. And with the Rangers coming to town, it was make or break time for the Cowboys.

The Cowboys were also rumored to have a forfeit victory over the Rangers, when it was reported that the Seattle outfit was required to come up with \$ 40,000 dollars or drop out of the league. They would come up with the money and give the Cowboys fits.

A crowd of 3,500 arrived at a cool Cashman Field to witness a hard hitting, defensive battle. The Rangers had the second best defense in the ContFL, the Cowboys the fifth. And with that the score would produce low numbers.

Seattle took a 5-0 lead at halftime, with Don Martin hitting a 24-yard field goal and a safety when Vogel was tackled in the end zone. The Cowboys twice marched into Seattle territory, but fumbles cost them scoring chances.

The Rangers increased their lead to 12-0 when former NFL quarterback Tom Kennedy fired a 36-yard pass to John Bledsoe in the third quarter.

Late in the game, following a fumble recovery by Kamanu, the Cowboys put a march on and then got on the board when Burnett dove across from the 1 for the score. Humphreys conversion failed, but the Cowboys would have one last shot at victory.

Starting at their own 33 with 1:54 left in the game, Warren hit Hendricks for 20-yards, Burnett for another nine and Oslin for seven more. Burnett picked up another three to the 28.

On the next play Warren was smothered by the Rangers defensive line, and fumbled as he tried to lateral the ball. Recovered by Seattle, with 1:05 remaining, they ran the clock out for a 12-6 victory.

For Las Vegas, its season may have ended there as Warren was knocked cold on the play and suffered an ankle injury. He would be unable to play the final regular season game against Portland. In the Seattle game Warren had returned to his throwing ways, completing 27 of 49 passes for 265 yards, but was rushed widely by the tough Seattle defense.

Casey was now the starting quarterback for the trip to Portland. The Cowboys were now, 6-4 as was Sacramento. Seattle finished at 7-5. The Loggers playing out the string, were 3-8, and looking for the season to be over. The Cowboys had to win to tie for the divisional title.

The Cowboys arrived in Portland ready to play in the rain and cold of Multnomah Stadium. The Logger fans surprisingly showed up to watch their team possibly upset the Cowboys, as 4,688 fans sat in on the contest.

But the Cowboys rolled to a 34-10 victory over the Loggers. Casey ran a controlled offense, as the Cowboys gained a season high 222 yards on the ground. Burnett was the teams leading rusher with 62 yards on 14 carries. Lindsey picked up 60 on 14 attempts. Vogel 42 in 13 trips and Washington 41 in seven totes.

Casey completed eight of 17 for a soggy 120 yards without an interception. Up to that point the former backup had thrown just four passes.

Burnett gave the Cowboys all the points they needed when he crashed over for three yards early in the game. Vogel scored his first touchdown after a Portland field goal as the Cowboys had a controlled 14-3 halftime lead.

In the second half, Humphreys booted two 12-yard field goals. Casey added a quarterback sneak in the third quarter then Vogel scored his final touchdown in the fourth quarter, on a 1-yard dive. The Loggers scored a gimme touchdown late in the game, but by that time, the score was 34-3.

The Cowboys and Capitols had tied for the regular season lead with identical 8-4 records and had to decide the Pacific Division championship with a playoff game at Sacramento. The winner would meet San Antonio for the ContFL semifinal playoff game.

Warren was again healthy and ready to go. The Capitols though, were coming off a four game winning streak and were expecting a solid crowd for the game. And they weren't disappointed as nearly 10,000 fans showed up for the battle.

What they saw was Las Vegas totally dominate the game, winning 31-0 in front of the stunned Sacramento crowd.

Humphreys kicked at 9-yard field goal in the early stages of the second quarter for the only points they needed. Burnett then increased the lead when he plunged over from the one for a 10-0 lead.

Pettaway scored the first of his two defensive touchdowns when he intercepted a pass and then returned it 80-yards with 1:02 left in the first half, and a 17-0 lead.

Pettaway returned a missed field goal attempt 92-yards in the second half and Lindsey crossed from the one for the final touchdowns.

The stingy Las Vegas defense held the Capitols to 120 yards while the Cowboys gained 237.

San Antonio was next for the Cowboys and a chance at the final ContFL championship game. Both teams were much alike, good passing attacks and strong defenses. The crowd of 7,194 on hand saw a fantastic game.

The Toros, much like the first game jumped out to a fast, 14-0 lead, before the Cowboys had even warmed up. Then with 6:32 before intermission, Warren zipped a 40-yard pass to Oslin to cut the lead to 14-7. San Antonio got back the touchdown in a hurry, scoring late in the first half on a 1-yard run.

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In the second half it was all Las Vegas. The Cowboys cut the score to 21-14 with 1:56 remaining in the third quarter when Warren found seldom used Gene Cabading wide open at the Toros 30, and the former Utah Utes product raced home for an 80-yard touchdown.

Humphreys drilled a 34-yard field goal to make the score 21-17 and had the Toros reeling as they staged one final drive.

With 27 seconds remaining, Warren again found Oslin in the end zone for an apparent touchdown, but Oslin was ruled out of bounds by the officials. On the following play, Warren had his pass intercepted at the San Antonio 19 and the game, season and for all intent and purposes, the Cowboys lifeline in Las Vegas was over.

Warren played another fine game, completing 22 of 38 passes for 264 yards. Cabading had five receptions for 128 yards and Oslin six for 70. Washington led the rushing attack with 40 yards in eight carries.

That same weekend four Cowboys were named to the All-Division team. Warren at quarterback, Cox at defensive tackle, Bobby Webb at offensive guard and Foote at linebacker. It was doubtful any of them noticed as following the plane ride home, nearly all of the players went back to their respective homes.

Three days later, on December 11th, it was reported that the Cowboys franchise was sold to a group in Memphis. Mid-South Sports Action Inc. reported it had acquired the team for an undisclosed amount of cash and stock estimated at \$ 300,000 dollars.

It was all for naught as the ContFL folded in the spring of 1970 and many of the Cowboys coaches and players moved on to the Orlando Panthers, who had then become members of the Atlantic Coast Football League.

What started out as a fantastic dream of a young millionaire, young players and a chance to make the next step to the NFL, ended with no financial backing from the Las Vegas community and no backing from the average paying customer, who was more interested in sitting at home watching the Dallas Cowboys instead of the Las Vegas outfit. It was said that Redmond lost nearly \$ 600,000 dollars in that time. A lot of money if you consider this wasn't the 'big leagues'.

Unfortunately, the people of Las Vegas never truly gave the 'minor league' Cowboys much of a chance. They were a young, hungry energetic team that had no backing and finally no chance of making it in the desert. And my Christmas were but a memory to the city.

LAS VEGAS PLAYERS WHO MADE AFL/NFL ROSTERS

Jim Boudreaux, 1965-68 - Boston, Offensive Line
Bobby Burnett, 1966-67, 69 - Buffalo, Denver, Running Back
Larry Cox, 1965-68 - Denver, Defensive Line
Bob Humphreys, 1967-68, Denver, Kicker
Henry Jones, 1969, Denver, Running Back
Lew Kamanu, 1967-68, Detroit, Defensive line
Gordon Lambert, 1968-69, Denver, Linebacker
Hub Lindsey, 1968, Denver, Running Back
Ron McCall, 1966-68, San Diego, Linebacker
Dick Speights, 1968, San Diego, Defensive Back
Dewey Warren, 1968, Cincinnati, Quarterback
Teddy Washington, 1968, Cincinnati, Running Back

1969 Regular & Post-Season Schedule

August 23	@ Spokane	W	21-13
September 2	San Antonio	W	20-14
September 6	@ Seattle	L	3-20
September 16	Sacramento	W	24-7
September 27	@ West Texas	W	30-27
October 7	Sacramento	W	21-0
October 21	Portland	W	42-13
October 28	Spokane	W	28-21
November 4	@ Sacramento	L	10-31
November 11	@ Sacramento	L	10-13
November 18	Seattle	L	6-12
November 23	@ Portland	W	34-10
November 29	@ Sacramento***	W	31-0
December 7	@ San Antonio ****	L	17-21

*** Pacific Divisional Playoff

**** ContFL Semifinal game

It was a team that also had financial troubles. Some players had their last checks bounce. To this day, some players and coaches are still owed money. With lack of community support, no media exposure they had no chance of making it in the desert and by mid-December, the team was in mothballs.