

WHAT IF THERE HADN'T BEEN STRIKES?

By Roger Gordon

I thought it would be interesting to take a look at the two strike-marred NFL seasons of 1982 and '87, and play the "what-if" game. What if the 1982 postseason had been orchestrated as planned, just like any other season from 1978-89 - with the three division winners and two wild-card teams from the AFC and the NFC qualifying rather than how it was actually done - changing the format so the top eight teams in each conference qualified, completely ignoring the division standings?

And what if the three "replacement" games during the 1987 strike had never been played, and the final regular season standings were the result of 12 games for each team - but with their actual players, rather than the 15 games each team played due to the "replacement" games with "replacement" players (plus a handful of regulars for the final replacement" games)?

We'll begin with 1982. Here are what the final 1982 standings would have looked like had the NFL proceeded with its postseason under the normal procedure (* - division champion, # - wild card):

AFC		
East		
*Miami	7-2	.778
N.Y. Jets	6-3	.667
New England	5-4	.556
Buffalo	4-5	.444
Baltimore	0-8-1	.056
Central		
*Cincinnati	7-2	.778
#Pittsburgh	6-3	.667
Cleveland	4-5	.444
Houston	1-8	.111
West		
*L.A. Raiders	8-1	.889
#San Diego	6-3	.667
Seattle	4-5	.444
Kansas City	3-6	.333
Denver	2-7	.222

Playoff seedings

1. L.A. Raiders (division champion)
2. Miami (division champion)
3. Cincinnati (division champion)
4. Pittsburgh (wild card)
5. San Diego (wild card)

The three playoff teams from '82 who would have missed the postseason under the normal format would have been the N.Y. Jets, New England and Cleveland, the teams that were seeded Nos. 6, 7 and 8, respectively, in the revamped format anyway.

[Notes: Miami is seeded above Cincinnati based on a better conference record than the Bengals (6-1 to 6-2). The Jets are not a wild card team because their conference record (2-3) is worse than Pittsburgh's (5-3) and San Diego's (5-3). Pittsburgh is seeded above San Diego based on a better record against common opponents (3-1 to 2-1). In the 1999 NFL Record & Fact Book, it states that if a tiebreaker comes down to measuring records against common opponents, there must be at least four common opponents. This is not the case here, for the Steelers and Chargers had three common opponents - Cincinnati, Cleveland and Kansas City. Thus, the next tiebreaker - net points in conference games - looks like the one that should be

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used. The Chargers' plus-63 bested the Steelers' plus-50. However, in the actual '82 playoffs, the Steelers were seeded above the Chargers, so I am assuming since the regular season was shortened to nine games, the NFL decided to scrap the minimum-of-four-common-opponents rule, so I have done the same here.]

NFC		
East		
*Washington	8-1	.889
#Dallas	6-3	.667
St. Louis	5-4	.556
N.Y. Giants	4-5	.444
Philadelphia	3-6	.333
Central		
*Green Bay	5-3-1	.611
#Minnesota	5-4	.556
Tampa Bay	5-4	.556
Detroit	4-5	.444
Chicago	3-6	.333
West		
*Atlanta	5-4	.556
New Orleans	4-5	.444
San Francisco	3-6	.333
L.A. Rams	2-7	.222

Playoff seedings

1. Washington	(division champion)
2. Green Bay	(division champion)
3. Atlanta	(division champion)
4. Dallas	(wild card)
5. Minnesota	(wild card)

The three playoff teams from '82 who would have missed the postseason under the normal format would have been St. Louis, Tampa Bay and Detroit, the teams that were seeded Nos. 6, 7 and 8, respectively, in the revamped format anyway.

[Note: Minnesota earns the final wild card berth over St. Louis and Tampa Bay on the basis of a better conference record (4-1) than the Cardinals (5-4) and Buccaneers (3-3).]

Now on to 1987. Here are what the final standings would have looked like had the three "replacement" games not been played (* - division champion, # - wild card):

AFC		
East		
*Indianapolis	7-5	.583
Miami	7-5	.583
New England	6-6	.500
Buffalo	6-6	.500
N.Y. Jets	5-7	.417
Central		
*Cleveland	8-4	.667
#Houston	7-5	.583
Pittsburgh	6-6	.500
Cincinnati	3-9	.250
West		
*Denver	8-3-1	.708
#Seattle	7-5	.583
San Diego	5-7	.417
Kansas City	4-8	.333
L.A. Raiders	4-8	.333

Playoff seedings

1. Denver	(division champion)
2. Cleveland	(division champion)

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3. Indianapolis (division champion)
4. Houston (wild card)
5. Seattle (wild card)

[Notes: Indianapolis finishes ahead of Miami on the basis of a better division record (3-3 to 2-5). Miami is beaten out for a wild card spot by Houston because the Oilers' conference record (5-3) bested the Dolphins' (4-5). Miami loses out to Seattle for the final wild card spot on the basis of the Seahawks' better mark of net points in conference games (plus-2 to minus-31). Houston finishes ahead of Seattle on the basis of a better conference record than the Seahawks (5-3 to 4-5). New England finishes ahead of Buffalo based on head-to-head competition. Kansas City finishes ahead of the L.A. Raiders based on head-to-head competition also.]

NFC

East

*Washington	8-4	.667
Philadelphia	7-5	.583
S. Louis	6-6	.500
N.Y. Giants	6-6	.500
Dallas	5-7	.417

Central

*Chicago	9-3	.750
#Minnesota	8-4	.667
Green Bay	3-8-1	.292
Detroit	3-9	.250
Tampa Bay	2-10	.167

West

*San Francisco	10-2	.833
#New Orleans	10-2	.833
L.A. Rams	5-7	.417
Atlanta	2-10	.167

Playoff seedings

1. San Francisco (division champion)
2. Chicago (division champion)
3. Washington (division champion)
4. New Orleans (wild card)
5. Minnesota (wild card)

[Notes: San Francisco finishes ahead of New Orleans based on a better division record (4-1 to 3-1). St. Louis finishes ahead of the N.Y. Giants on the basis of a better conference record than the Giants (6-5 to 4-6).]

So, as you can see, the playoff seedings would have been the exact same had the "replacement" games not been played as they actually were with the "replacement" games BEING played. Thus all of this research went for naught, right? Not really, because in my mind, those "replacement" games were nothing but garbage and should not have had any bearing on the final official 1987 NFL playoff seedings. And now, thank heaven, we can all rest easy knowing they didn't.

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KENOSHA MAROONS – 1924

Cleveland players mentioned either. The "Kenosha" team consisted almost entirely of the Hammond Pros lineup. The quarterback, 2 halfbacks, fullback, 2 ends, 3 linemen and 2 substitutes were all former Hammond players. Only Herb Sies and Bill Gardner were non-Hammond players. Sies played Dayton and Rock Island earlier in the season.

This game went as an exhibition (or non-league) game for Rock Island. On the surface, an argument could be made that the Rock Island Independents beat the Hammond Pros on Thanksgiving 1924 in a league game. Even with the majority of Hammond players in the lineup, the *Hammond Times* made no mention of the game. In fact, stories about the Hammond Pros disappeared from the Hammond papers in early November, even though the Pros sported a credible 2-2-1 record.

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Back in Kenosha, the Maroons never played another NFL game and quietly disappeared from the local newspapers.

Kenosha's mark in the NFL was an unimpressive 0-4-1 record after only one season. Kenosha, like many other teams in the NFL in the 1920's, suffered from a lack of talent and lack of fan support.

Sat	10/04	A	Frankford Yellow Jackets	6-31
Sun	10/12	A	Milwaukee Badgers	0-21
Sun	10/19	H	Hammond Pros	6- 6
Sun	10/26	A	Duluth Kelleys	0-32
Sun	11/02	A	Waukegan (IL) Elks	cancelled
Sun	11/09	A	Buffalo Bisons	0-27
Sun	11/16	H	Racine Legion	cancelled
Sun	11/23	H	Duluth Kelleys	cancelled
Thu	11/27	A	Racine Legion	cancelled
Sun	11/30	A	Kansas City Cowboys	cancelled

Final Record 0-4-1 Points Scored: 12 Points Allowed: 117

Sources: Kenosha Evening Press, Moline Dispatch, Duluth News-Tribune, Hammond Times, Chicago Tribune, Waukegan Sun, *Total Football*
