

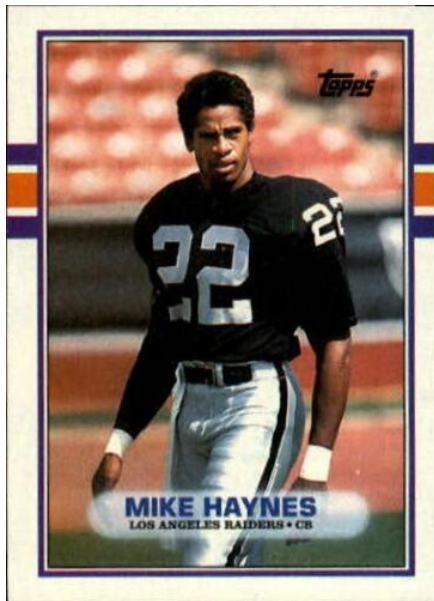


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Mike Haynes

This article was written by Rich Shmelter

From historic New England to the glitz and glamour of Los Angeles, Mike Haynes' pro football journey was filled with excellence that eventually led him to everlasting fame in Canton, Ohio. During the late 1970's, and through most of the 80's, Haynes established himself as one of the premier defensive backs in pro football history. Blessed with speed, quickness, and size, he specialized in playing man-to-man coverage to perfection by staying so close to a receiver that it appeared they were in the same jersey. In preparation for an opponent, Haynes studied countless hours of film, and then rearranged his moves according to those of the man he would be facing on game day.



In November of 1983, Haynes became a member of the Raiders, and was teamed up with Lester Hayes at cornerback. Together, these two men gave the Silver and Black the best cornerback tandem in the game, and from that point on, Haynes went on to become a Raider legend. However, long before he put on a Raider's jersey, Haynes was already a proven star.

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Raised in Los Angeles, California, Haynes established himself on the high school level in both football and track before becoming a star defensive back and punt returner at Arizona State University. After earning All-American honors following his junior and senior seasons, Haynes was ready to take his talents to the pro ranks.

The New England Patriots made him the first defensive back taken in the 1976 draft, and fifth player selected overall. Expectations were high for Haynes when he reported to New England's training camp in the summer of 1976, and he did not let anyone down. He became a starting cornerback and punt return specialist, and was named 1976 AFC Rookie of the Year. From 1976 to 1978, he led the Patriots in interceptions, and was also the team's all-time punt returner with a 10.4-yard average. He earned six trips to the Pro Bowl, and was named All-Pro in 1977, 1978, and 1982.

After seven seasons with New England, Haynes played out his option, and signed with the Los Angeles Raiders in November of 1983. In exchange, the Raiders gave up a first round draft pick in 1984, and a second-round pick in 1985.

The cornerback dynamic duo of Haynes and Lester Hayes clamped down on any set of receivers who opposed them. This made things extremely miserable for quarterbacks looking to get rid of the ball while being rushed by some of the best linemen (Lyle Alzado, Howie Long) and linebackers (Ted Hendricks, Rod Martin) in the business. When the Raiders played the Washington Redskins in Super Bowl XVIII following the 1983 season, Haynes and Hayes totally shut down a receiving corps regarded as one of the best. Haynes also had an interception in the lopsided, 38-9 Los Angeles win.

In 1984, he started every game, intercepted six passes, and led the league with 220 yards off those thefts. He also set team records with 151 yards ran back off two interceptions. He earned All-Pro and All-Conference honors, and another trip to the Pro Bowl. Two more Pro Bowl selections followed the 1985 and '86 campaigns. Haynes played until the completion of the 1989 season, and left the game with 46 career interceptions, plus the distinction of being one of the greatest defensive backs to ever play professional football. He was selected to the 1980's All-Decade Team, the NFL's 75th Anniversary Team, and in 1997, it came as surprise to no one when he received the highest honor by becoming a member of the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

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