

SUPER BOWL XXVI: QB MARK RYPIEN, Washington Redskins – Rypien and his Redskins handed the Bills their second Super Bowl loss (37-24), leading by as much as 37-10. Passing for 292 yards and two touchdowns, Rypien tallied more yards in his 33 attempts than did the Bills’ Jim Kelly, who threw 58 times in the game. Rypien’s 35-yard touchdown pass to Gary Clark in the second half provided some much-needed breathing room for Washington.

SUPER BOWL XXVII: QB TROY AIKMAN, Dallas Cowboys – This 52-17 win over Buffalo marked the resurgence of Dallas’ Super Bowl dominance, and turned out to be the first of three Cowboys Super Bowl wins to come in the next four years. Aikman hooked up with wide receiver Michael Irvin twice for scores, with wideout Alvin Harper and tight end Jay Novacek also finding paydirt via the pass. Aikman’s performance was spectacular. He completed 22 of 30 passes for 273 yards to go along with his four touchdowns.

SUPER BOWL XXVIII: RB EMMITT SMITH, Dallas Cowboys – With Dallas trailing at halftime, it was Smith’s two second-half scoring runs that propelled the Cowboys to victory (30-13) for the second consecutive year over the rival Bills. Smith’s first score gave Dallas the lead for good, as he carried the ball seven times on an eight-play scoring drive punctuated by a 15-yard touchdown scamper. Carrying the ball 30 times for 132 yards, Smith’s workmanlike effort helped stifle the Bills.

SUPER BOWL XXIX: QB STEVE YOUNG, San Francisco 49ers – Stepping out of the shadow of the man he replaced (Joe Montana), Young torched San Diego’s defense for 325 yards passing to go along with his Super Bowl record six touchdown tosses. Jerry Rice caught three of the six scoring strikes from the left-handed Young, who also led the 49ers in rushing with 49 yards. Young and the 49ers jumped out to an early 14-0 lead following passing touchdowns to Rice and running back Ricky Watters. Fittingly, Young surpassed Montana’s single-game Super Bowl record for touchdown passes in the 49-26 victory.

SUPER BOWL XXX: CB LARRY BROWN, Dallas Cowboys – Brown intercepted two passes thrown by Steelers quarterback Neil O’Donnell in the Cowboys’ record-tying fifth Super Bowl triumph. Both interceptions stymied viable Pittsburgh drives, setting up short rushing touchdowns by Emmitt Smith. Brown’s opportunistic interceptions helped Dallas overcome a deficit of 13-7 as well as preserve a 20-17 advantage in this eventual 27-17 Cowboys victory.

SUPER BOWL XXXI: KR-PR DESMOND HOWARD, Green Bay Packers – Howard picked the grandest of stages to carve out his niche in NFL history, putting up more than 250 combined yards on his kickoff and punt returns in a 35-21 win over New England. The key play to his selection as MVP was perhaps a 99-yard kickoff return that dashed hopes of a comeback by the Patriots. Signed as a free agent in the offseason, the former Heisman Trophy winner from Michigan helped the Packers to their first Super Bowl title since the Lombardi era.

SUPER BOWL XXXII: RB TERRELL DAVIS, Denver Broncos – After leading the AFC in rushing in only his second year, Davis’ 30 carries and 157 yards proved to be the difference in this 31-24 victory over quarterback Brett Favre and the Packers. The fleet-footed Davis utilized his unique combination of speed and power to become the first player in Super Bowl history to rush for three touchdowns in one game.

SUPER BOWL XXXIII: QB JOHN ELWAY, Denver Broncos – After waiting so long for his first Super Bowl ring, Elway wasted no time in adding a second one to his collection. Elway, the only other quarterback besides Dan Marino to throw for more than 50,000 career yards, amassed 336 yards in Denver’s 34-19 win over a Falcons squad led by powerful halfback Jamal Anderson. A member of the famed Class of ’83 quarterbacks, Elway walked away from football after winning his second Super Bowl, ending on the highest of notes.

SUPER BOWL XXXIV: QB KURT WARNER, St. Louis Rams – Becoming a starter via a journey through the Arena Football League to NFL Europe to the Rams, Warner’s Cinderella climb from backup to superstar captured the imagination of America. Leading the Rams to their first-ever championship, Warner’s 414 passing yards are still a single-game Super Bowl best. He spread the ball around to everyone on the Rams’ offense, as nine different players registered at least one catch. The speedy receiving tandem of Isaac Bruce and Torry Holt each topped 100 yards receiving and caught one touchdown apiece. In one of the most exciting finishes in Super Bowl history, the Rams held on to their 23-16 lead by just one yard, as Titans wideout Kevin Dyson was dragged down short of the goal line by Mike Jones in the waning moments of the fourth quarter.

SUPER BOWL XXXV: LB RAY LEWIS, Baltimore Ravens – Becoming only the seventh defensive player to win a Super Bowl MVP award, Lewis inspired Baltimore to a 34-7 win over the Giants. Though his five tackles and four passes defended did not jump off the stats page as remarkable, it was Lewis’ tenacity and leadership that propelled the Ravens to the win.

SUPER BOWL XXXVI: QB TOM BRADY, New England Patriots – After stepping in for an injured Drew Bledsoe during the regular season, Brady eventually led the Patriots to the first Super Bowl victory in franchise history over a Rams team featuring a vaunted offense. After St. Louis overcame a 14-point deficit to tie the game with just 1:30 left in the fourth quarter, Brady put together a drive of five completions in six attempts that set up Adam Vinatieri’s game-winning kick (20-17) to save the game from going into overtime. Brady completed 16 of 27 passes for 145 yards and one touchdown.

SUPER BOWL XXXVII: S DEXTER JACKSON, Tampa Bay Buccaneers – A bevy of Bucs defenders were worthy of the MVP award, but Jackson’s two first-half interceptions, one of which led to a go-ahead field goal, was the deciding factor in his selection. Cornerback Dwight Smith returned two INTs for scores in the fourth quarter, but Jackson’s big plays keyed the outcome of the game.

SUPER BOWL XXXVIII: QB TOM BRADY, New England Patriots – Brady’s Patriots treated the fans to another exciting finish that ended with a game-winning Adam Vinatieri field goal with four seconds left on the game clock to edge Carolina 32-29. The Michigan product completed 32 of 48 passes for 354 yards and three touchdowns to become the first quarterback in Super Bowl history to start and win two title games before his 27th birthday.

SUPER BOWL XXXIX: WR DEION BRANCH, New England Patriots – The University of Louisville graduate hauled in 11 receptions for 133 yards and the Patriots’ defense forced four turnovers en route to becoming the eighth team to post consecutive Super Bowl titles. The Pats matched the Dallas Cowboys (XXVII, XXVIII, and XXX) as the only team with three Super Bowl victories in the span of four seasons. Branch’s 11 receptions tied the Super Bowl record for most all-time (Dan Ross, Cincinnati, XVI; Jerry Rice, San Francisco, XXIII).

