

1981 cowboys roster

1981 cowboys roster represents a significant chapter in the history of the Dallas Cowboys, one of the NFL's most storied franchises. This roster reflects a team in transition, blending seasoned veterans with emerging talent as they aimed to compete in the highly competitive NFC East division. Understanding the 1981 Cowboys roster provides insight into the players who contributed to the team's identity during that season, their positions, and overall team dynamics. From offensive stalwarts to defensive standouts, the roster highlights key athletes and coaching strategies that defined the 1981 campaign. This article delves into the full composition of the 1981 Dallas Cowboys roster, detailed positional breakdowns, and notable players who made an impact on and off the field. The following sections will provide an organized overview, categorizing the roster by offense, defense, and special teams, supplemented with historical context and statistical highlights.

- Overview of the 1981 Dallas Cowboys Roster
- Offensive Players and Key Contributors
- Defensive Lineup and Impact Players
- Special Teams Personnel
- Coaching Staff and Team Leadership

Overview of the 1981 Dallas Cowboys Roster

The 1981 Cowboys roster was composed of a balanced mix of experienced veterans and promising newcomers. The team sought to maintain its competitive edge following several successful seasons in the late 1970s. The roster was carefully crafted to address both offensive firepower and defensive resilience, reflecting the coaching philosophy of head coach Tom Landry. Depth at key positions was a priority, allowing the team to adapt to injuries and strategic challenges throughout the season. The 1981 roster also featured players who would become notable figures in Dallas Cowboys history, contributing to the team's legacy.

Team Composition and Roster Size

The roster for the 1981 season consisted of approximately 45 active players, typical of NFL team rosters during that period. This included players distributed across offense, defense, and special teams units. The Cowboys' management emphasized versatility, with several players capable of contributing in multiple roles. The overall depth allowed the team to maintain a competitive level despite the physical demands of the NFL season.

Offensive Players and Key Contributors

The offensive squad of the 1981 Cowboys roster was designed to execute a versatile and dynamic game plan. The unit featured a combination of reliable veterans and emerging stars. The offensive line was tasked with protecting the quarterback and creating running lanes, while the skill positions focused on generating yardage and scoring opportunities. This section explores the main offensive players and their roles within the 1981 team.

Quarterbacks

The 1981 Cowboys roster included key quarterbacks who led the offense. Danny White was the primary quarterback, known for his dual-threat capability as both a passer and a runner. His leadership and experience were vital to the offense's rhythm and execution throughout the season.

Running Backs

The running back corps provided a balanced rushing attack. Players like Tony Dorsett, a Pro Football Hall of Famer, were central to the ground game. Dorsett's speed, vision, and consistency made him a primary offensive weapon and a threat in both rushing and receiving roles.

Wide Receivers and Tight Ends

Wide receivers and tight ends were critical in stretching the field and supporting the passing game. Key players included Drew Pearson, renowned for his precise route running and clutch receptions. Tight ends contributed both as blockers and receivers, adding versatility to the offensive scheme.

- Danny White – Quarterback
- Tony Dorsett – Running Back
- Drew Pearson – Wide Receiver
- Doug Cosbie – Tight End
- Ron Springs – Running Back
- Mike Renfro – Wide Receiver

Defensive Lineup and Impact Players

The defense of the 1981 Cowboys roster was structured to counter the powerful offenses prevalent in the NFC East. The defensive line emphasized pressure on opposing quarterbacks and run-stopping abilities. Linebackers and defensive backs were responsible for coverage and tackling, aiming to limit

big plays by opponents. This section details the defensive core and notable contributors.

Defensive Linemen

The defensive line was anchored by stalwarts such as Harvey Martin, who excelled at pass rushing and run containment. The line aimed to disrupt offensive backfields and force turnovers, playing a crucial role in the team's defensive strategy.

Linebackers

Linebackers like Bob Breunig were vital for their tackling and leadership on defense. Their responsibilities included defending the run, covering tight ends and running backs, and assisting in pass defense schemes.

Defensive Backs

The secondary included cornerbacks and safeties tasked with pass coverage and ball-hawking. Players such as Dennis Thurman provided experience and athleticism, contributing to the overall defensive stability.

- Harvey Martin – Defensive End
- Ed "Too Tall" Jones – Defensive End
- Bob Breunig – Linebacker
- Dennis Thurman – Defensive Back
- Mike Hegman – Linebacker
- Charlie Waters – Safety

Special Teams Personnel

The special teams unit of the 1981 Cowboys roster played a critical role in field position battles and scoring opportunities. Specialists included kickers, punters, and returners who contributed to the team's overall performance. Special teams were often a deciding factor in closely contested games.

Kickers and Punters

Efren Herrera served as the placekicker, known for his accuracy and range in field goal attempts. The punting duties were handled by Mike Saxon, who provided consistent field position advantages with

his punts.

Return Specialists

The Cowboys relied on players like Tony Hill and others for returning kickoffs and punts, utilizing their speed and agility to generate favorable field position or occasional scoring plays.

- Efren Herrera – Placekicker
- Mike Saxon – Punter
- Tony Hill – Kick Returner

Coaching Staff and Team Leadership

The 1981 Cowboys roster was complemented by a highly experienced coaching staff led by legendary head coach Tom Landry. Known for his innovative strategies and disciplined approach, Landry's leadership was a defining element of the team's identity. The coaching staff emphasized fundamentals, adaptability, and maximizing the talents of their roster.

Head Coach Tom Landry

Tom Landry's tenure as head coach was marked by consistent playoff appearances and a reputation for tactical ingenuity. His ability to develop players and adjust game plans was instrumental in shaping the 1981 Cowboys roster into a competitive unit.

Assistant Coaches

The assistant coaching staff included coordinators and position coaches specialized in offense, defense, and special teams. Their expertise contributed to player development and in-game adjustments.

- Tom Landry – Head Coach
- Mike Solari – Offensive Line Coach
- Jim Garrett – Defensive Line Coach
- Whitey Dovell – Defensive Backs Coach

Frequently Asked Questions

Who was the starting quarterback for the 1981 Dallas Cowboys?

The starting quarterback for the 1981 Dallas Cowboys was Danny White.

Which notable players were on the 1981 Dallas Cowboys roster?

Notable players on the 1981 Dallas Cowboys roster included Danny White, Tony Dorsett, Everson Walls, and Randy White.

Who was the head coach of the 1981 Dallas Cowboys?

The head coach of the 1981 Dallas Cowboys was Tom Landry.

Did any players from the 1981 Cowboys roster make the Pro Bowl that season?

Yes, several players from the 1981 Cowboys roster made the Pro Bowl, including Tony Dorsett and Randy White.

What was the overall performance of the 1981 Dallas Cowboys?

The 1981 Dallas Cowboys finished the season with a 12-4 record, making the playoffs but losing in the Divisional Round.

Additional Resources

1. *Steel Curtain to Super Bowl: The 1981 Dallas Cowboys Roster*

This book delves into the legendary 1981 Dallas Cowboys roster, highlighting the key players who defined the team's identity. It explores the season's pivotal moments and the strategic plays that brought the Cowboys closer to NFL glory. Readers gain insight into the coaching philosophy and player dynamics that shaped the team's performance that year.

2. *Gridiron Legends: Profiles of the 1981 Dallas Cowboys*

A comprehensive collection of biographies and career highlights of the 1981 Dallas Cowboys players. The book provides detailed accounts of each athlete's journey to the NFL, their contributions during the 1981 season, and their lasting impact on the franchise. It's a must-read for fans seeking to understand the men behind the helmets.

3. *Behind the Stars: The Unsung Heroes of the 1981 Cowboys*

Focusing on the lesser-known but crucial players of the 1981 Dallas Cowboys, this book sheds light on those who provided depth and resilience to the team. Through interviews and game analysis, it

celebrates the role players who often went unnoticed but were vital to the Cowboys' success.

4. The Playbook of 1981: Dallas Cowboys Tactical Mastery

An in-depth analysis of the offensive and defensive strategies employed by the 1981 Dallas Cowboys. This book breaks down key plays, formations, and coaching decisions that made the team competitive. Football enthusiasts will appreciate the technical insights and game film breakdowns presented.

5. Champions in the Making: The 1981 Dallas Cowboys Season Journey

Chronicles the entire 1981 season from preseason to playoffs, capturing the highs and lows faced by the Dallas Cowboys. With game summaries, player interviews, and behind-the-scenes anecdotes, readers experience the emotional rollercoaster of the team's quest for victory.

6. Dallas Cowboys 1981: A Roster Review and Legacy

This book offers a detailed review of the 1981 Cowboys roster, evaluating each player's performance and career trajectory. It also discusses how the 1981 team influenced future Dallas Cowboys squads and contributed to the franchise's storied history.

7. From Draft to Glory: Building the 1981 Cowboys Roster

Explore the drafting decisions, trades, and training camp battles that constructed the 1981 Dallas Cowboys roster. The book highlights the management's approach to team building and the challenges faced in assembling a competitive lineup.

8. Dallas Cowboys 1981: Stories from the Locker Room

A collection of personal stories, anecdotes, and memories from players, coaches, and staff of the 1981 Dallas Cowboys. This intimate look provides fans with a unique perspective on team chemistry and the off-field experiences that shaped the 1981 season.

9. The Defensive Backbone: 1981 Cowboys' Defensive Line Powerhouse

Dedicated to the defensive stars of the 1981 Dallas Cowboys, this book examines how the defensive line dominated opponents and kept the team in contention. It includes player profiles, game highlights, and analysis of defensive schemes that frustrated opposing offenses.

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