

dallas cowboys history of quarterbacks

Dallas Cowboys History of Quarterbacks: A Legacy Under Center

dallas cowboys history of quarterbacks is a fascinating journey through decades of iconic players, memorable moments, and evolving strategies that have shaped one of the NFL's most storied franchises. From the early days of the team's inception in 1960 to the modern era, the quarterbacks who have led Dallas have left indelible marks on both the team and the league. This article dives deep into the legacy of the Cowboys' signal-callers, examining their contributions, challenges, and the overall impact they've had on the franchise's identity.

The Early Years: Building the Foundation

When the Dallas Cowboys joined the NFL as an expansion team in 1960, finding a reliable quarterback was paramount. The franchise's first starting quarterback was Eddie LeBaron, a player known for his grit and leadership. Though not a Hall of Famer, LeBaron set a tone of toughness and resilience that would become synonymous with Dallas football.

The Don Meredith Era

One of the earliest stars in the Cowboys' quarterback history was Don Meredith. Playing from 1960 to 1968, Meredith was a charismatic leader who helped establish the Cowboys as a competitive team. His style combined a strong arm with mobility, and he became a fan favorite not only for his play but for his personality off the field. Meredith was pivotal in leading Dallas to their first winning seasons, laying the groundwork for future success.

Craig Morton and Roger Staubach: Setting the Stage for Greatness

The late 1960s and early 1970s saw the Cowboys searching for a franchise quarterback. Craig Morton and Roger Staubach became central figures during this period. Morton was reliable and steady, but it was Staubach, nicknamed "Captain America," who truly defined the era. Staubach's leadership and clutch performances, especially in playoff games, propelled Dallas to multiple Super Bowl appearances and victories. His scrambling ability and improvisational skills revolutionized the quarterback position in Dallas, making him a legend in the franchise's history.

The Golden Age: Roger Staubach's Legacy

Roger Staubach's tenure with the Cowboys from 1969 to 1979 marked a golden age for Dallas football. Under his guidance, the Cowboys became "America's Team," known for their polished offense and relentless defense.

Staubach's Impact on Dallas Cowboys Quarterbacks

Staubach's style influenced future quarterbacks in Dallas. His ability to read defenses, extend plays, and deliver precise passes under pressure became a benchmark. The Cowboys' offensive schemes evolved to maximize a quarterback's mobility, a reflection of Staubach's unique skill set.

Super Bowl Triumphs and Playoff Heroics

During Staubach's reign, the Cowboys won two Super Bowls (VI and XII) and appeared in several NFC Championship games. His performances in these high-stakes contests elevated the quarterback position within the franchise and set expectations for future Dallas quarterbacks to be clutch performers with leadership qualities beyond just throwing ability.

Post-Staubach Era: Challenges and Transitions

After Staubach's retirement, the Cowboys faced a period of transition at quarterback. Finding a player who could replicate his success proved difficult, leading to a carousel of quarterbacks and inconsistent performances.

Danny White and the Search for Stability

Danny White, Staubach's immediate successor, brought a strong arm and was known for his versatility, also serving as the team's punter early in his career. While he led the Cowboys to several playoff appearances, White was never able to capture a Super Bowl victory, and his era was marked by near misses and frustrations.

The 1980s and 1990s: Inconsistent Quarterback Play

Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, the Cowboys struggled to find a franchise quarterback, rotating through players like Steve Pelluer, Babe

Laufenberg, and others. This instability contributed to the team's uneven performance during this time. However, this period set the stage for a transformational figure who would change the Dallas Cowboys history of quarterbacks forever.

The Troy Aikman Era: Returning to Glory

Drafted first overall in 1989, Troy Aikman became the cornerstone of the Cowboys' resurgence in the 1990s. His tenure is often regarded as the pinnacle of Dallas quarterback history.

Aikman's Style and Achievements

Aikman was the prototype of a classic pocket passer—precise, intelligent, and efficient. His ability to read defenses and deliver accurate passes made him a perfect fit for the Cowboys' offensive system under head coach Jimmy Johnson. Together with stars like Emmitt Smith and Michael Irvin, Aikman led Dallas to three Super Bowl championships in the 1990s (XXVII, XXVIII, and XXX).

Legacy and Influence

Aikman's success reinvigorated the Cowboys franchise and set a new standard for quarterback play in Dallas. His leadership and consistency during a dominant era are often cited when discussing the greatest quarterbacks in Cowboys history.

The Post-Aikman Years: Quarterback Turnover and New Challenges

Following Aikman's retirement in 2000, the Cowboys entered a period of quarterback uncertainty once again. The team cycled through several starters as it tried to find a long-term solution.

Quincy Carter, Drew Bledsoe, and Tony Romo

Quincy Carter, drafted in 2001, showed potential but struggled with consistency. Later, veterans like Drew Bledsoe provided temporary stability but failed to bring lasting success. It wasn't until Tony Romo, an undrafted free agent signed in 2003, that the Cowboys finally found a quarterback who

could combine skill, leadership, and charisma.

Romo's Impact and Playing Style

Tony Romo became one of the most beloved Cowboys quarterbacks of the modern era. His improvisational skills and ability to make plays under pressure echoed some of the traits of Roger Staubach. Although Romo never won a Super Bowl, he set numerous franchise records and brought the team back into playoff contention multiple times. His tenure showed that even undrafted players could become franchise icons with the right opportunity and mindset.

The Dak Prescott Era and the Future of Cowboys Quarterbacks

In 2016, Dallas drafted Dak Prescott, who would go on to become a transformative figure in the franchise's ongoing quarterback saga.

Prescott's Rise and Leadership

Taking over as a rookie after Romo's injury, Prescott quickly earned fans' trust with his poise, accuracy, and leadership on and off the field. He revitalized the Cowboys' offense and led them to several playoff appearances. His ability to avoid turnovers and make smart decisions has made him a franchise cornerstone.

The Evolution of the Quarterback Role in Dallas

With Prescott at the helm, the Cowboys have embraced a more dynamic offensive approach that combines traditional pocket passing with modern mobility and versatility. This evolution reflects the broader trends in the NFL and highlights how the Dallas Cowboys history of quarterbacks is continuously adapting to the game's changing demands.

Key Takeaways from Dallas Cowboys History of Quarterbacks

Understanding the Cowboys' quarterback history reveals several important themes:

- **Leadership is paramount:** The most successful Cowboys quarterbacks, from Staubach to Aikman to Prescott, have been exceptional leaders.
- **Adaptability matters:** Dallas quarterbacks have had to evolve with changes in offensive philosophy and league trends.
- **Legacy and expectations:** The franchise's rich history sets a high bar for every new quarterback stepping into the role.
- **Fan connection:** Charisma and personality often enhance a quarterback's status among the Cowboys faithful.

The story of Dallas Cowboys quarterbacks is more than just stats and records—it's about the personalities, the clutch moments, and the ongoing quest to find that special player who can lead the team back to championship glory. As the franchise continues to grow, the legacy of its quarterbacks remains one of the most compelling aspects of its history.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who was the first starting quarterback for the Dallas Cowboys?

The first starting quarterback for the Dallas Cowboys was Eddie LeBaron, who played for the team in its inaugural season in 1960.

Which Dallas Cowboys quarterback has the most career passing yards?

Troy Aikman holds the record for the most career passing yards by a Dallas Cowboys quarterback, with over 32,000 yards.

How many Super Bowl-winning quarterbacks have the Dallas Cowboys had?

The Dallas Cowboys have had two Super Bowl-winning quarterbacks: Roger Staubach and Troy Aikman.

When did Tony Romo become the starting quarterback for the Dallas Cowboys?

Tony Romo became the starting quarterback for the Dallas Cowboys in the 2006 NFL season.

Which Dallas Cowboys quarterback was known as 'Captain Comeback'?

Roger Staubach was known as 'Captain Comeback' for his ability to lead the team to late-game victories during his tenure in the 1970s.

Have the Dallas Cowboys ever drafted a quarterback who became a long-term starter?

Yes, the Dallas Cowboys have drafted several long-term starters, including Troy Aikman, who was the first overall pick in the 1989 NFL Draft and became a Hall of Fame quarterback for the team.

Additional Resources

Dallas Cowboys History of Quarterbacks: An In-Depth Review of the Franchise's Signal-Callers

dallas cowboys history of quarterbacks reveals a rich tapestry of talent, triumph, and transformation that has significantly shaped one of the NFL's most storied franchises. From the early days of the team to the modern era, the quarterback position has been pivotal, often reflecting the broader fortunes and identity of the Dallas Cowboys. This article delves deeply into the evolution of the Cowboys' quarterbacks, highlighting key players, their impact on the team's success, and how the role has evolved alongside changing NFL dynamics.

The Early Years: Establishing the Quarterback Legacy

The Dallas Cowboys were founded in 1960, and their initial years were marked by instability at the quarterback position. The franchise struggled to find a consistent starter, cycling through several players without settling on a long-term solution. This period was characterized by frequent changes and experimentation, common for expansion teams trying to carve out their identity.

Don Meredith and the Birth of a Franchise Identity

Don Meredith, who became the Cowboys' first notable quarterback, was instrumental in laying the foundation for the team's early identity. Playing from 1960 to 1968, Meredith combined athleticism with leadership, helping the Cowboys reach their first NFL Championship game in 1966. His charismatic presence also made him a fan favorite and a pioneer in popularizing the

quarterback position in Dallas.

Craig Morton and Roger Staubach: The Transition to Greatness

The late 1960s and early 1970s marked a turning point with Craig Morton and Roger Staubach vying for the starting role. Morton, known for his strong arm and steady play, helped the Cowboys reach Super Bowl V. However, it was Roger Staubach, who took over in the early 1970s, that became synonymous with Dallas' rise to NFL dominance.

Staubach's tenure (1969–1979) was defined by his athleticism, clutch performances, and ability to execute under pressure. Nicknamed "Captain America," Staubach led the Cowboys to two Super Bowl victories (VI and XII) and became a Hall of Fame quarterback. His style of play combined mobility with precise passing, setting a standard for future Cowboys signal-callers.

The Golden Era: Quarterbacks and the Cowboys' Super Bowl Success

During the 1970s and early 1980s, the Cowboys solidified their reputation as "America's Team," with the quarterback position at the heart of their success. Roger Staubach's leadership was complemented by strong supporting casts, and the team's offensive strategy capitalized on his dual-threat capabilities.

Tony Romo: Modernizing the Cowboys' Offense

Fast-forward to the 2000s, Tony Romo emerged as one of the most significant quarterbacks in Dallas Cowboys history. Despite going undrafted, Romo's rise showcased perseverance and development within the Cowboys' system. Between 2003 and 2016, Romo became the franchise's all-time leader in passing yards and touchdowns, blending improvisation with accuracy.

Romo's tenure was marked by both spectacular comebacks and frustrating injuries, reflecting the volatility of the quarterback position in the modern NFL. While he did not secure a Super Bowl, Romo's influence on the Cowboys' offensive identity is undeniable, emphasizing a pass-heavy, dynamic attack.

Comparing Staubach and Romo: Different Eras,

Different Challenges

Comparing Roger Staubach and Tony Romo offers insight into how the quarterback role has evolved within the Cowboys organization. Staubach operated in a more run-focused, defense-oriented league, with mobility playing a key role in his success. Romo, meanwhile, thrived in an era that favored passing efficiency and aerial assaults.

Both quarterbacks, however, shared traits of leadership and resilience. Staubach's postseason success contrasts with Romo's regular-season excellence but postseason struggles, highlighting how team context and surrounding talent influence quarterback legacies.

Recent Developments: Dak Prescott and the Future of the Franchise

The current era of the Dallas Cowboys quarterback history centers on Dak Prescott, who entered the league in 2016 and quickly became the team's franchise quarterback. Prescott's impact has been immediate and profound, combining strong arm talent with poise and consistency.

Dak Prescott's Early Success and Leadership

Drafted in the fourth round, Prescott's emergence was unexpected but transformative. He took over as a starter in his rookie season, leading the Cowboys to a playoff berth and winning the NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year award. Since then, Prescott has been the face of the franchise, known for his durability, decision-making, and ability to rally teammates.

His statistical output has been impressive, consistently ranking among the league leaders in passing yards, touchdowns, and quarterback rating. Prescott's style is a blend of traditional pocket passing with the ability to extend plays, reflecting modern quarterback traits.

Challenges and Expectations Ahead

Despite Prescott's successes, the Cowboys' quarterback situation is not without challenges. Injuries and offensive line concerns have occasionally hampered his performance, and playoff success remains an elusive goal. The franchise's investment in Prescott underscores their belief in his potential to lead Dallas to another Super Bowl era.

Legacy and Impact: Quarterbacks as Catalysts for the Dallas Cowboys

The Dallas Cowboys' history of quarterbacks is not merely a chronology of players but a narrative of leadership, adaptation, and cultural significance. Each era's quarterback has reflected the broader NFL trends and the Cowboys' organizational philosophy.

- **Stability vs. Transition:** Periods of quarterback stability have often coincided with the Cowboys' most successful phases, notably during the Staubach and Prescott eras. Conversely, times of frequent changes at the position have mirrored team struggles.
- **Evolution of Play Style:** From Meredith's pioneering days to Romo's improvisational flair and Prescott's balanced approach, the Cowboys' quarterbacks have adapted to evolving offensive schemes and NFL rules favoring passing.
- **Franchise Identity:** Quarterbacks have been central to branding Dallas as "America's Team," with their on-field charisma and leadership helping cultivate a nationwide fanbase.

Pros and Cons of the Cowboys' Quarterback History

While the Cowboys have enjoyed periods of quarterback excellence, their history also features challenges common to NFL franchises:

1. Pros:

- Production of Hall of Famers like Roger Staubach.
- Development of franchise quarterbacks from late-round picks (e.g., Tony Romo, Dak Prescott).
- Strong leadership that translated into multiple Super Bowl appearances and wins.

2. Cons:

- Inconsistencies at the position in early years and transitional periods.

- Injury-prone quarterbacks limiting sustained success.
- Occasional playoff underperformance despite regular-season success.

The Dallas Cowboys history of quarterbacks underscores a complex interplay between individual talent and team dynamics. As the franchise continues to pursue championship aspirations, the quarterback position remains central to their identity and future prospects. Each new signal-caller adds a chapter to this ongoing story, reflecting the enduring significance of the position within the Dallas Cowboys legacy.

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