

What's Wrong With The Oakland Raiders?

By Elson Armstrong, Jr.
When they are on their game, they truly represent the characteristics of the city that's their home base. A hard-nosed non-nonsense bunch that goes by the motto, "The Pride and Poise". Since their birth in 1960, the Oakland Raiders have become one of the winningest franchises in NFL history.

The bad boys from the East Bay have won two Super Bowls, finished second in the showcase game once, and seven times came within one game of making it to Super Sunday. They have compiled the best winning percentage on Monday Night Games and they hold a winning edge over just about any NFL opponent. They're

one of the few teams that can boast of a winning edge over the Pittsburgh Steelers — which was voted the team of the 1970's.
Just last year the Raiders rose from the ashes and rode the arm of their quarterback, Jim Plunkett, to a win over Philadelphia in the Super Bowl to become the first wild card team to accomplish this feat.
In less than a year, the Raiders have gone from the Penthouse to the outhouse. During the past three weeks, not only have they been losing

but they've been shut out on three straight weekends — something that has not occurred in the NFL in 37 years.
What has happened to the pride and poise? Don't they have the same team that went all the way last year?
These questions are hard to answer but there are several intriguing possibilities. First, to win a Super Bowl, a team must be good and lucky. Oakland possessed both qualities in 1980. They pulled out many games that maybe they should've lost and on Super Sunday, their game plan was executed to perfection.
Another point, when you're the champ. Everyone's out for your scalp the next season. Just ask Pittsburgh and Dallas how hard it is to defend a Super Bowl title.
Then there's complacency. Once you win the big one, it is only natural that your head will swell and the next season you think you can win just by showing up. During the Super Bowl era, only Dallas and Pittsburgh have been able to win on two separate time spans.
The possibility of dissension has got to be considered. After Oakland got past the first round a year ago, the media hopped on the Jim Plunkett bandwagon. He was the most interviewed player on the team. That's natural since the quarterbacks have the most glamorous position. Although it hasn't surfaced publicly, there've probably been more than one disgruntled player on the Raiders who believe that Plunkett was given all the credit for the Super win.
The Raiders have also been the center of a firestorm for over a year. Their rebellious owner is involved in a landmark court case in his attempt to move the team to Los Angeles. The Raiders have almost become a team without a city because the Oakland fans who've loyally supported them for over 15 years feel that they've been slapped in the face. Several Raiders have expressed a desire to move to LA and this could account for their lackluster play of late.
Finally, this may seem like a minor point, but it's got to be considered. The Raiders have not been treated by fans or the media like most Super Bowl Champions (except in Oakland).

When most teams win the big one, it leads to a swirl of speaking engagements and commercial endorsements. This has not happened in Oakland's case.
If you didn't know better, you'd think that Pittsburgh was still the champs. You see them in various commercials even though they didn't even make the playoffs last season. If it's not the Steelers, then it's the Dallas Cowboys, LA Rams, any team other than Oakland.
For some reason, the Raiders aren't especially popular with people who run Madison Avenue or with NFL fans in general. Many fans believe that Oakland's Super Bowl victory was a fluke and the best team didn't win this past season.
When one asks what's wrong with the Raiders, one has to take all these factors into consideration. The Raiders have won before and they'll more than likely win again, but for now, they're only a shadow of that former awesome team from the East Bay.

Dawson's Sports Briefs

Mississippi Valley will play at Grambling Saturday. Valley's second year head coach Archie Cooley says he'll rely heavily on the team's twelve returning starters to defeat Eddie Robinson's Tigers.
Tyronne Anthony, UNC Tar Heel's tailback who replaced injured Kelvin Bryant, rushed for 224 yards in his first start Saturday against Wake Forest. Anthony's yards were the most gained by an ACC back this season. Gov. Jim Hunt has proclaimed October 23 as North Carolina Sports Hall Of Fame Day.

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GOTCH'A is what Northern's Kenny Keith said to Hillside's Brian Sullivan in the Hornet's 14-13 loss to Northern Friday night at Durham County Stadium. Photo by Silas Mayfield

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| 1974 FORD MUSTANG | 1979 TRIUMPH SPITFIRE 4 speed transmission, 4 cylinder, AM-FM radio. | 1980 CHEVROLET CHEVETTE Automatic transmission, 4 cylinder, AM-FM radio. | 1978 PONTIAC GRAND PRIX Automatic transmission, air condition, 4 door hatchback, only 14,000 miles. |
| 1977 CADILLAC SEDAN DEVILLE Loaded. | 1980 FORD PINTO Automatic, air condition. | 1975 VOLVO STATION WAGON 4 speed transmission, air condition. | 1979 HONDA ACCORD 2 door hatchback, LK, automatic, air condition, power steering and brakes, cassette, clock, rear window defroster. |
| 1977 PONTIAC GRAND PRIX Automatic transmission, air condition, radio. | 1979 FORD PICKUP Automatic transmission, air condition, approximately 17,000 low miles. | 1978 FORD MUSTANG 4 speed transmission, air condition. | 1985 FORD THUNDERBIRD Automatic transmission, power steering and brakes, air condition, bucket seats. |
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