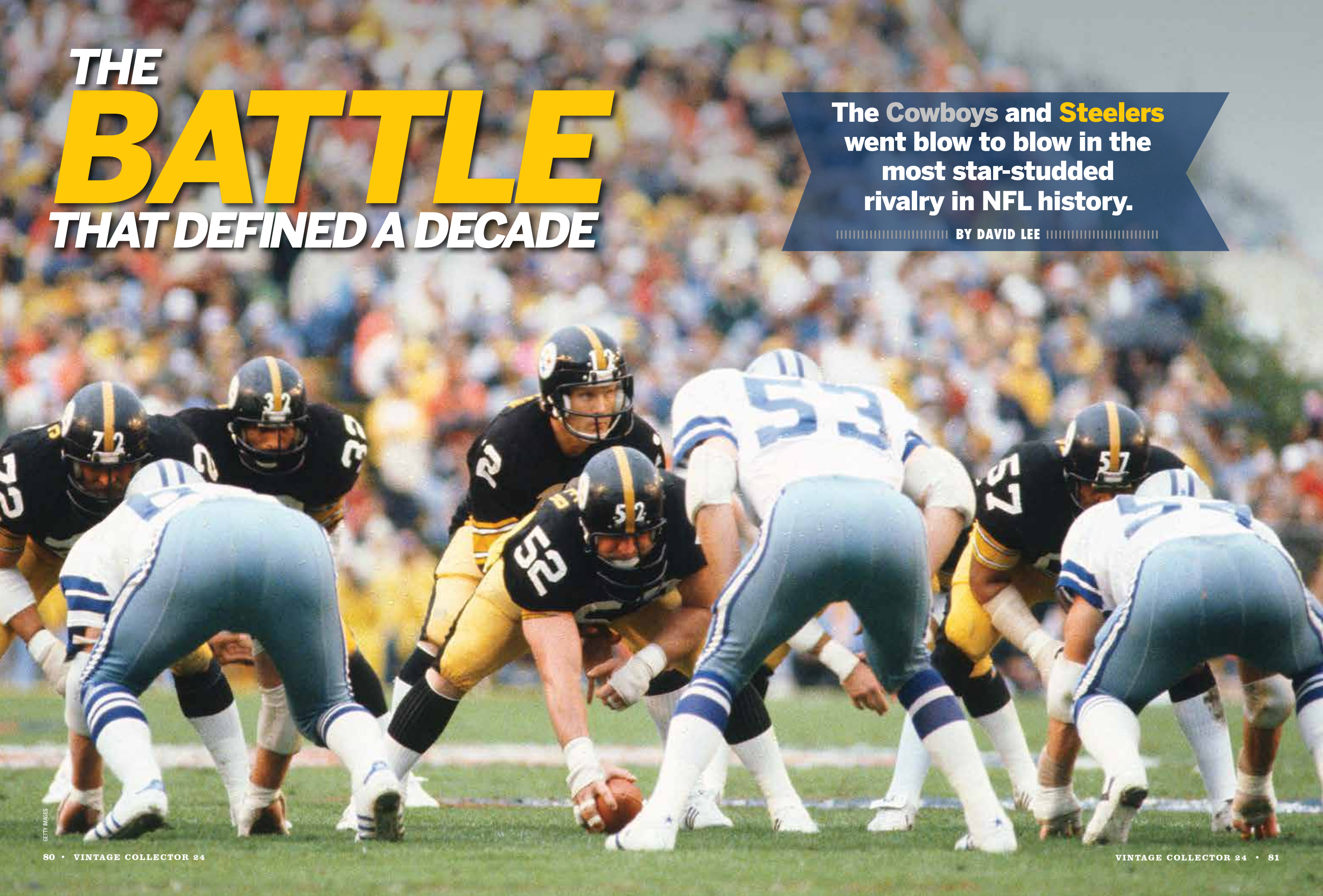


THE **BATTLE** THAT DEFINED A DECADE

The Cowboys and **Steelers**
went blow to blow in the
most star-studded
rivalry in NFL history.

BY DAVID LEE



The Cleveland Browns dominated the NFL in the 1940s and '50s. The Green Bay Packers bullied the league through the '60s. But after the AFL and NFL finally merged, the 1970s was a decade of struggle between the Dallas Cowboys and Pittsburgh Steelers that wouldn't be settled until January 1979.

It was a clash of north vs. south, NFC vs. AFC, Noll vs. Landry, Bradshaw vs. Staubach, the Hail Mary and The Immaculate Reception.

Through the decade, Dallas won 105 regular-season games and 14 postseason games. The Steelers won 99 in the regular season and 14 in the postseason. The Steelers made it to the AFC Championship Game six times and went 4-0 in Super Bowls. The Cowboys reached the NFC Championship Game seven times and were 2-3 in Super Bowls.

Of the 48 total players selected to the NFL's 1970s All-Decade Team, 14 are Cowboys or Steelers—nearly one-third of the list. The NFL's All-Time team, selected in 2019 to celebrate the league's 100th Anniversary, features nine Cowboys and Steelers who starred during the '70s. The teams faced off in Super Bowl X and Super Bowl XIII—both Pittsburgh victories by four points each.

"They were labeled as the team of the decade, of the '70s, but if we win those two games, we would have been labeled that," Cowboys receiver Drew Pearson said of the rivalry on NFL Network.

The deciding Super Bowl XIII, arguably the greatest Super Bowl of all time, featured 19 future Hall of Famers. The Steelers became the first team to win three Super Bowls and secured their dynasty. They topped it off with their fourth title the next season.

NFL'S GREATEST PLAYS

The NFL's 100 all-time greatest plays were ranked last year in another celebration of the NFL's 100th Anniversary. Three of the top 20 are attributed to the Cowboys or Steelers during the '70s.



#15. THE HAIL MARY

It was the 1975 NFC Divisional Playoff game, Cowboys vs. Vikings. Dallas trailed 14-10 with 32 seconds left, setting up at the 50-yard line. Roger Staubach told Drew Pearson to go deep and just try to get open. Lined up in Dallas's signature shotgun, Staubach stepped back, pump-faked the safety, and heaved the ball.

"I closed my eyes and said a Hail Mary," Staubach said on NFL Films.



Pearson caught the ball on his hip and walked into the end zone for the game-winning touchdown. The play is the epitome of hope and the never-give-up attitude that makes the game so great.

The next day, the Dallas Times Herald headline read "Cowboys Win by a Hail Mary."

"The term Hail Mary started that moment in the NFL," Staubach added. "I'm kind of proud of that."

COURTESY OF YOUTUBE

#12. LYNN SWANN'S CIRCUS CATCH

The 12th greatest play on the list happened just two games after the Hail Mary in Super Bowl X between the Cowboys and Steelers.

"It was a mistake," Lynn Swann said on the NFL Films presentation of the play's ranking. "Obviously Mark Washington tipped the ball away. If I actually caught it without it being tipped, I might have run it into the end zone for a touchdown."

The Steelers set up at their own 6-yard line. Dallas blitzed, and Terry Bradshaw threw deep. Swann and Cowboys defensive back Mark Washington went up for the ball, both putting hands on it. Swann landed on one leg and maintained body control to stay under the ball, catching it on his back and advanced to the Dallas 37-yard line. It's considered one of the most acrobatic catches in NFL history.

"I thought I was pretty lucky," Swann said.



#1 THE IMMACULATE RECEPTION

"I put my hands out, you know, and I guess my hands were in the right place at the right time."

That was Franco Harris's account in the locker room after making the greatest play in NFL history, The Immaculate Reception.

Two days before Christmas in the 1972 AFC Divisional Playoff, the Steelers were losing to the Raiders 7-6. With seconds left, Terry Bradshaw scrambled and threw to the middle of the field. Harris had left the backfield to be an outlet receiver. The ball deflected and bounced back toward Harris, who grabbed it as most other players thought the play was over. He ran to the end zone for the game-winning touchdown.

"I remember nothing until I'm running down the sideline and going into the end zone," Harris said.



With 22 seconds left in the Steeler-Raider playoff game, Steeler quarterback Terry Bradshaw threw a 4th down desperation pass intended for John "Frenchy" Fuqua. When the ball was deflected by Raider Jack Tatum it traveled 7 yards into the arms of Franco Harris who ran 42 yards for the winning TD.

Like many great moments, The Immaculate Reception isn't without some controversy. Some say the ball grazed the turf before Harris secured it, but no known film clearly shows whether the ball hit the ground first. The play gave Pittsburgh its first playoff win in history, and even though they would not win a Super Bowl for two more seasons, it essentially propelled the team to dominate the rest of the decade.

GETTY IMAGES

COLLECTING KEY 1970s COWBOYS CARDS

5 MUST-HAVES

1. 1972 TOPPS #200 ROGER STAUBACH RC (\$175)

After serving four years of active duty in the Navy, Roger Staubach didn't start his NFL career until he was 27. He played nearly the entire '70s decade in his 30s and played in 19 postseason games. Staubach led Dallas to four Super Bowls, winning two. He was at the heart of the run that earned the Cowboys the moniker of America's Team. This Rookie Card is the second-most value NFL card of the decade. Recent online sales of PSA 8 graded versions were around \$800-\$1,000.



2. 1978 TOPPS #315 TONY DORSETT RC (\$40)

Tony Dorsett didn't enter the NFL until 1977, but he went to two Super Bowls, helping win a championship in his rookie season. In the six postseason games during 1977 and 1978, he totaled 600 yards rushing and receiving plus five touchdowns. His Rookie Card is an easy pickup that can be found more less than \$40.



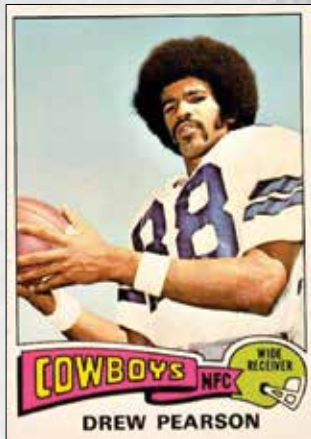
3. 1972 TOPPS #316 RAYFIELD WRIGHT RC (\$50)

It might be odd to see an offensive lineman's Rookie Card at No. 3 here, but Rayfield Wright was an anchor for the Cowboys offense through the '70s after playing tight end and defensive end early in his career. He went to six consecutive Pro Bowls. This is a key card in the third series from 1972 Topps—one of the toughest vintage football sets to complete.



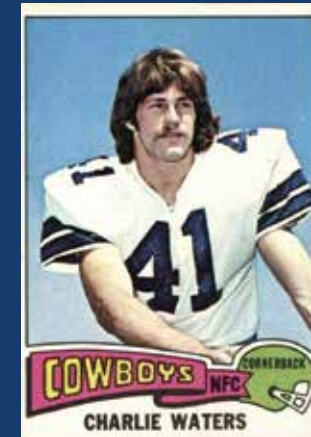
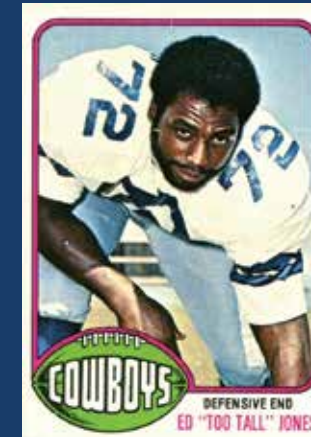
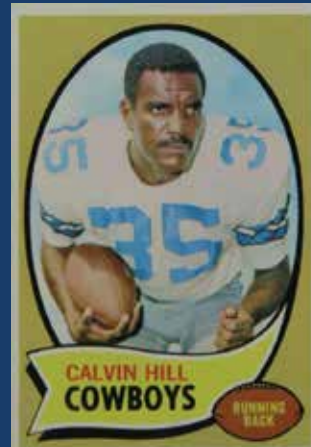
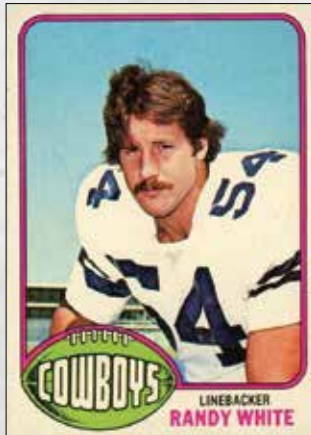
4. 1975 TOPPS #65 DREW PEARSON RC (\$20)

Although not in the Hall of Fame, Drew Pearson compiled more career catches and yards than Lynn Swann—his Steeler counterpart who is in the HOF. Pearson was an All-Pro by his second season, and led the NFL in receiving in 1977—the year Dallas won the Super Bowl. He played in 22 postseason games, including three Super Bowls. Pearson was on the receiving end of Staubach's famous Hail Mary pass—arguable the most famous play of the decade.



5. 1976 TOPPS #158 RANDY WHITE RC (\$20)

Randy White was known as "The Monster"—half man, half monster. He didn't join the Cowboys until 1975, but was a Pro Bowler the final three seasons of the decade. He, along with Harvey Martin, was named Co-MVP of Super Bowl XII. White was also named to the NFL's All-Time Team. This Rookie Card is an easy find for no more than \$20.



5 KEY CARDS

- 1970 TOPPS #260B CALVIN HILL RC (\$20)
- 1972 TOPPS #329 JOHN NILAND RC (\$30)
- 1975 TOPPS #59 CHARLIE WATERS RC (\$4)
- 1976 TOPPS #427 ED TOO TALL JONES RC (\$20)
- 1976 TOPPS #44 HARVEY MARTIN RC (\$6)

Calvin Hill was the Cowboys' Pro Bowl running back before Dorsett. John Niland was a six-time Pro Bowl guard who started for nine seasons and was part of the 1971 championship team. Charlie Waters was a rookie in 1970 and was a core member of the defense through the decade. He had nine postseason interceptions. Ed "Too Tall" Jones was an anchor for Tom Landry's flex defense during the second half of the decade, standing 6-9 at left defensive end. Super Bowl XII Co-MVP Harvey Martin anchored the right side of line for the Doomsday Defense.

OTHERS TO COLLECT

- 1970 TOPPS #189 BOB HAYES (\$6)
- 1970 TOPPS #87 BOB LILLY (\$5)
- 1970 TOPPS #45 MEL RENFRO (\$2.50)
- 1970 TOPPS #71 LEE ROY JORDAN (\$2.50)
- 1970 TOPPS #228 CHUCK HOWLEY (\$2)
- 1971 TOPPS #8 WALT GARRISON RC (\$2)
- 1973 TOPPS #216 JETHRO PUGH RC (\$1.50)
- 1974 TOPPS #277 BILLY JOE DUPREE RC (\$3)
- 1974 TOPPS #303 D.D. LEWIS RC (\$1.50)
- 1975 TOPPS #490 CLIFF HARRIS RC (\$6)
- 1975 TOPPS #464 GOLDEN RICHARDS RC (\$0.75)
- 1976 TOPPS #14 ROBERT NEWHOUSE RC (\$1.50)
- 1978 TOPPS #213 THOMAS HENDERSON RC (\$1.50)
- 1979 TOPPS #182 TONY HILL RC (\$1)



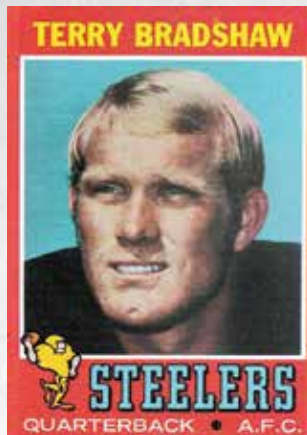
Head Coach Tom Landry of the Dallas Cowboys stands with his team prior to playing the Pittsburgh Steelers in Super Bowl XIII on January 21, 1979 at the Orange Bowl in Miami, Florida. The Steelers won the Super Bowl 35-31.

COLLECTING KEY 1970s STEELERS CARDS

5 MUST-HAVES

1. 1971 TOPPS #156 TERRY BRADSHAW RC (\$200)

Terry Bradshaw was a rookie in 1970, and the starter by his second season. He compiled a 14-5 postseason record. The second half of his career was his best after major NFL rule changes favored the passing game, combined with the emergence of receivers Lynn Swann and John Stallworth. This is the second-most valuable Topps card of the 1970s. "



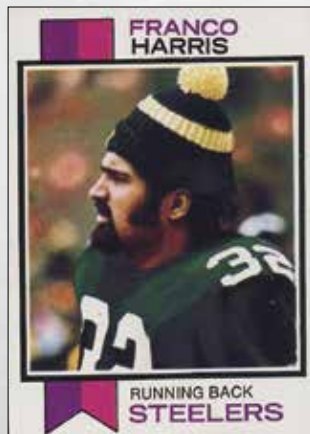
2. 1971 TOPPS #245 JOE GREENE RC (\$60)

"Mean Joe" Greene was a 10-time Pro Bowler and the heart of the Steel Curtain defense. He epitomized the personality of the franchise and city. "By far, the best Steeler of all time," teammate and fellow Hall of Famer Jack Ham said of Greene. He was the fourth overall pick in the 1969 NFL Draft. His Rookie Card appears in the same set as Bradshaw's.



3. 1973 TOPPS #89 FRANCO HARRIS RC (\$50)

In the early part of the decade, the Steelers were a rushing machine led by 6-2, 230-pound Franco Harris. He rushed for more than 1,000 yards seven of eight seasons in the '70s. Harris's most famous play (one of the most famous in NFL history) was the controversial "Immaculate Reception" that won the AFL Divisional playoff game against the Raiders. This card can be found for less than \$30.



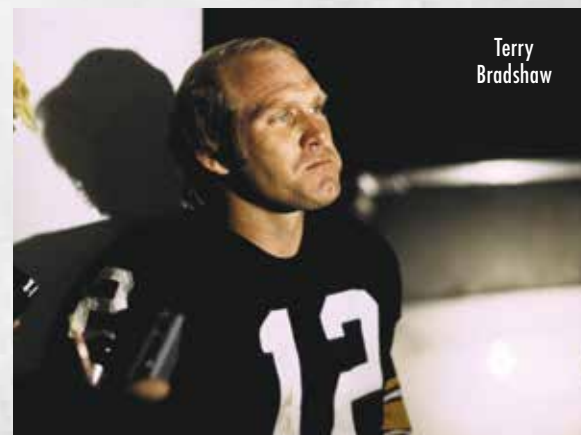
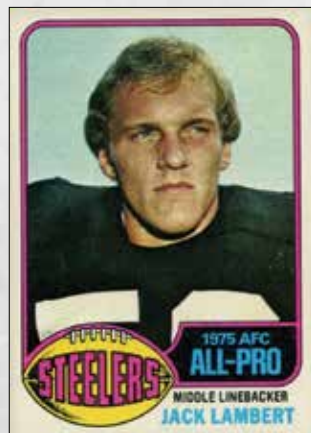
4. 1975 TOPPS #282 LYNN SWANN UER RC (\$60)

Lynn Swann's impact didn't come until the second half of the decade, leading the Steelers in receiving yards four straight seasons. He was a rookie in 1974, so he was part of all four Super Bowl title teams. Swann totaled 285 yards and two touchdowns in the two Super Bowl wins over Dallas and was named MVP of Super Bowl X.



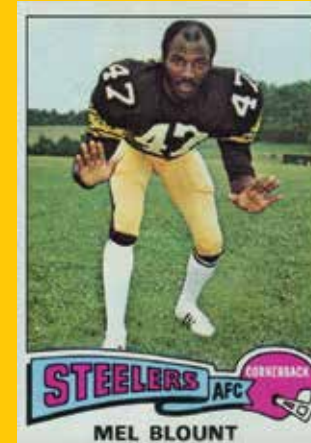
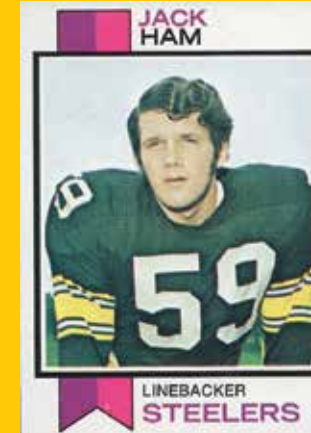
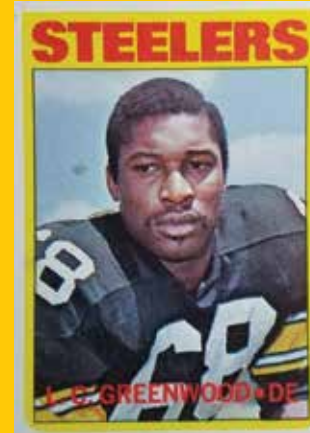
5. 1976 TOPPS #220 JACK LAMBERT AP RC (\$35)

Jack Lambert was one of the most intimidating players in NFL history. He just looked scary. A six-time All-Pro, he was right in the middle of the Steel Curtain defense. Lambert was one of two Steelers linebackers, along with Jake Ham, selected to the NFL's All-Time team. He started right away as a rookie in 1974, winning Defensive Rookie of the Year. This card wasn't issued until 1976—the same year he was named NFL Defensive Player of the Year.



Terry Bradshaw

GETTY IMAGES



5 KEY CARDS

- 1972 TOPPS #101 L.C. GREENWOOD RC (\$15)
- 1973 TOPPS #115 JACK HAM RC (\$30)
- 1973 TOPPS #140 DWIGHT WHITE RC (\$5)
- 1975 TOPPS #39 ROCKY BLEIER RC (\$20)
- 1978 TOPPS #320 JOHN STALLWORTH RC (\$20)

L.C. Greenwood was a six-time Pro Bowler at left defensive end throughout the '70s. Jack Ham is one of 12 linebackers selected to the NFL's All-Time Team. His RC is one of the most underrated cards of the 1970s. Dwight "Mad Dog" White was the right defensive end for the Steel Curtain defense, playing in 18 postseason games. Overshadowed by Franco Harris early in the decade, Rocky Bleier was a legitimate weapon at running back from 1975-79. Hall of Famer John Stallworth actually had more career yards and touchdowns than Lynn Swan. He was the team's leading receiver in 1979.

OTHERS TO COLLECT

- 1970 TOPPS #107 RAY MANSFIELD RC (\$1)
- 1971 TOPPS #30 TERRY HANRATTY RC (\$1.25)
- 1971 TOPPS #76 JOHN FUQUA RC (\$1.25)
- 1971 TOPPS #177 PRESTON PEARSON RC (\$4)
- 1972 TOPPS #198 JOHN ROWSER RC (\$0.75)
- 1973 TOPPS #246 MIKE WAGNER RC (\$3)
- 1973 TOPPS #456 FRANK LEWIS RC (\$1)
- 1973 TOPPS #191 GERRY MULLINS RC (\$0.60)
- 1973 TOPPS #219 JOHN MCMAKIN RC (\$0.60)
- 1974 TOPPS #169 GLEN EDWARDS RC (\$0.60)
- 1975 TOPPS #12 MEL BLOUNT RC (\$20)
- 1975 TOPPS #328 ERNIE HOLMES RC (\$6)
- 1977 TOPPS #99 MIKE WEBSTER RC (\$12)
- 1979 TOPPS #411 DONNIE SHELL RC (\$4)

1970s DALLAS COWBOYS

YEAR	RECORD	RESULT
1979	11-5	LOST DIVISION ROUND
1978	12-4	LOST SUPER BOWL
1977	12-2	WON SUPER BOWL
1976	11-3	LOST DIVISION ROUND
1975	10-4	LOST SUPER BOWL
1974	8-6	THIRD IN DIVISION
1973	10-4	LOST NFC CHAMPIONSHIP
1972	10-4	LOST NFC CHAMPIONSHIP
1971	11-3	WON SUPER BOWL
1970	10-4	LOST SUPER BOWL

1970s PITTSBURGH STEELERS

YEAR	RECORD	RESULT
1979	12-4	WON SUPER BOWL
1978	14-2	WON SUPER BOWL
1977	9-5	LOST DIVISION ROUND
1976	10-4	LOST AFC CHAMPIONSHIP
1975	12-2	WON SUPER BOWL
1974	10-3-1	WON SUPER BOWL
1973	10-4	LOST DIVISION ROUND
1972	11-3	LOST AFC CHAMPIONSHIP
1971	6-8	SECOND IN DIVISION
1970	5-9	THIRD IN DIVISION