

top 10 biggest comebacks in nfl history

top 10 biggest comebacks in nfl history have captivated football fans for decades, showcasing the resilience, determination, and skill of teams and players under immense pressure. These remarkable turnarounds often define careers and seasons, making them some of the most memorable moments in NFL lore. From the largest point deficits overcome to last-minute heroics, this article explores the most astonishing comebacks in NFL history. Whether occurring in regular season thrillers or high-stakes playoff games, these comebacks highlight the unpredictable nature of the sport. By examining these top 10 comebacks, readers gain insight into how teams have defied the odds to secure unforgettable victories. This comprehensive overview delves into the key games, players, and turning points that shaped these historic matches. The following sections provide detailed accounts of each comeback, illustrating why they remain etched in NFL history.

- The 32-Point Comeback: Buffalo Bills vs. Houston Oilers (1993)
- The 28-Point Comeback: New England Patriots vs. Atlanta Falcons (2017 Super Bowl LI)
- The 24-Point Comeback: Indianapolis Colts vs. Kansas City Chiefs (2013)
- The 21-Point Comeback: San Francisco 49ers vs. New Orleans Saints (2012)
- The 21-Point Comeback: Philadelphia Eagles vs. Tampa Bay Buccaneers (2020)
- The 21-Point Comeback: New England Patriots vs. St. Louis Rams (2001 Super Bowl XXXVI)
- The 20-Point Comeback: Green Bay Packers vs. Pittsburgh Steelers (2017)
- The 20-Point Comeback: Dallas Cowboys vs. Washington Redskins (1993)

- The 19-Point Comeback: Minnesota Vikings vs. Indianapolis Colts (2009)
- The 17-Point Comeback: Denver Broncos vs. Baltimore Ravens (2013)

The 32-Point Comeback: Buffalo Bills vs. Houston Oilers (1993)

Overview of the Game

The 1993 AFC Wild Card playoff game between the Buffalo Bills and Houston Oilers is widely regarded as the greatest comeback in NFL history. The Bills trailed 35-3 early in the third quarter, facing a daunting 32-point deficit. Despite the overwhelming odds, Buffalo mounted an extraordinary rally that culminated in a 41-38 overtime victory. This game is often referred to as "The Comeback" due to the magnitude of the turnaround.

Key Players and Turning Points

Quarterback Frank Reich led the Bills' historic comeback, orchestrating multiple scoring drives with precision and poise. The Bills' defense also played a crucial role by forcing turnovers and limiting the Oilers' offense in the second half. Several key plays, including long touchdown passes and critical fourth-down conversions, shifted momentum firmly in Buffalo's favor.

The 28-Point Comeback: New England Patriots vs. Atlanta Falcons (2017 Super Bowl LI)

Historic Super Bowl Comeback

Super Bowl LI stands out as one of the most dramatic games in NFL history, with the New England Patriots overcoming a 28-3 deficit against the Atlanta Falcons. This comeback marked the largest in Super Bowl history and showcased the Patriots' resilience and strategic brilliance. The Patriots eventually won 34-28 in overtime, the first Super Bowl to be decided in an extra period.

Tom Brady's Leadership

Tom Brady's performance was instrumental in this comeback, as he threw for a record 466 yards and two touchdowns. The Patriots' efficient two-minute drill and methodical offense wore down the Falcons' defense. Key defensive stops and clutch plays in the final quarter allowed the Patriots to force overtime and complete the stunning turnaround.

The 24-Point Comeback: Indianapolis Colts vs. Kansas City Chiefs (2013)

Comeback in a High-Scoring Game

The Indianapolis Colts staged a remarkable comeback against the Kansas City Chiefs in a regular season game in 2013. Trailing 38-14 late in the third quarter, the Colts scored 25 unanswered points to win 45-44. This game featured prolific offenses and highlight-reel plays that kept fans on the edge of their seats.

Andrew Luck's Impact

Andrew Luck's ability to rally the offense under pressure was a key factor in the comeback. His precise passing and calm demeanor enabled the Colts to capitalize on crucial opportunities. Additionally, the defense made timely stops in the final minutes that preserved the victory.

The 21-Point Comeback: San Francisco 49ers vs. New Orleans Saints (2012)

Playoff Drama

In the 2012 NFC Wild Card playoff game, the San Francisco 49ers erased a 21-point deficit against the New Orleans Saints. The 49ers' comeback was fueled by strong defensive plays and an aggressive offensive strategy. This victory helped the 49ers advance further into the postseason.

Colin Kaepernick's Role

Colin Kaepernick's dual-threat capabilities as a quarterback energized the 49ers' offense. His mobility and timely decisions allowed San Francisco to methodically chip away at the Saints' lead and eventually take control of the game late.

The 21-Point Comeback: Philadelphia Eagles vs. Tampa Bay Buccaneers (2020)

Regular Season Thriller

During the 2020 NFL season, the Philadelphia Eagles overcame a 21-point deficit to defeat the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. This comeback highlighted the Eagles' offensive versatility and resilience, particularly in the second half. The game showcased the importance of adjustments and perseverance in NFL contests.

Jalen Hurts' Emerging Leadership

Rookie quarterback Jalen Hurts played a pivotal role in orchestrating the comeback, demonstrating poise beyond his years. His ability to extend plays and connect with receivers helped the Eagles mount their successful rally against a strong Buccaneers defense.

The 21-Point Comeback: New England Patriots vs. St. Louis Rams (2001 Super Bowl XXXVI)

A Defensive Battle Turned Around

In Super Bowl XXXVI, the New England Patriots overcame a 21-point deficit against the heavily favored St. Louis Rams. This comeback was marked by a combination of opportunistic defense and clutch offensive plays, eventually leading to a 20-17 victory. It was the Patriots' first Super Bowl win, setting the stage for a dynasty.

Tom Brady's First Championship

Tom Brady, then a young quarterback, showcased his leadership and composure under pressure. The Patriots' game plan effectively contained the Rams' high-powered offense while capitalizing on turnovers. The game-winning field goal as time expired remains iconic.

The 20-Point Comeback: Green Bay Packers vs. Pittsburgh Steelers (2017)

Playoff Resilience

The Green Bay Packers rallied from a 20-point deficit to defeat the Pittsburgh Steelers in a 2017 playoff game. The comeback was a testament to the Packers' offensive firepower and defensive adjustments made during the game. This victory allowed Green Bay to advance deeper into the postseason.

Aaron Rodgers' Clutch Performance

Aaron Rodgers led the comeback with precise passing and key scramble plays. His ability to remain calm in high-pressure situations was critical in overcoming the Steelers' early dominance. The Packers' defense also stepped up to limit the Steelers' scoring opportunities late in the game.

The 20-Point Comeback: Dallas Cowboys vs. Washington Redskins (1993)

Historic Rivalry Game

In a classic NFC East rivalry matchup, the Dallas Cowboys erased a 20-point deficit to defeat the Washington Redskins. This game exemplified the Cowboys' championship-caliber resilience during the 1990s, playing a significant role in their journey to a Super Bowl title that season.

Troy Aikman and Emmitt Smith's Contributions

Quarterback Troy Aikman and running back Emmitt Smith were instrumental in the comeback. Aikman's accurate passing and Smith's ground attack helped the Cowboys sustain long drives and control the clock. The defense also made crucial stops to secure the win.

The 19-Point Comeback: Minnesota Vikings vs. Indianapolis Colts (2009)

Regular Season Excitement

The Minnesota Vikings overcame a 19-point deficit to defeat the Indianapolis Colts in a thrilling 2009 regular season contest. This game featured a dynamic offensive display and strategic adjustments that shifted momentum in favor of the Vikings late in the game.

Brett Favre's Veteran Leadership

Quarterback Brett Favre's experience and playmaking ability were vital in engineering the comeback. His ability to find receivers in critical moments and avoid turnovers allowed Minnesota to capitalize on scoring opportunities and mount a successful rally.

The 17-Point Comeback: Denver Broncos vs. Baltimore Ravens (2013)

High-Stakes Playoff Victory

In the 2013 NFL season playoffs, the Denver Broncos erased a 17-point deficit against the Baltimore Ravens to secure a decisive victory. This comeback demonstrated the Broncos' offensive explosiveness and defensive tenacity, propelling them further into the postseason.

Peyton Manning's Record-Breaking Season

Peyton Manning, during his record-setting season, played a central role in the comeback. His precise passing and leadership under pressure helped the Broncos overcome the Ravens' early lead. The

team's balanced attack and timely defensive stops were critical components of the victory.

Common Elements of the Top NFL Comebacks

Analyzing the top 10 biggest comebacks in NFL history reveals several common factors that contribute to these remarkable turnarounds:

- **Quarterback Leadership:** Elite quarterbacks frequently spearhead comebacks with poise and clutch performance.
- **Defensive Adjustments:** Strong defensive plays and turnovers often shift momentum in favor of the trailing team.
- **Coaching Strategy:** Effective halftime adjustments and play calling are crucial to overcoming large deficits.
- **Team Resilience:** Mental toughness and belief in victory enable teams to maintain focus despite adversity.
- **Key Plays Under Pressure:** Successful conversions on third downs, critical touchdowns, and field goals often decide these games.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is considered the biggest comeback in NFL history?

The biggest comeback in NFL history occurred on January 3, 1993, during the AFC Wild Card game when the Buffalo Bills overcame a 32-point deficit to defeat the Houston Oilers 41-38 in overtime.

Which teams were involved in the largest NFL comeback?

The Buffalo Bills and the Houston Oilers were involved in the largest NFL comeback during the 1992 AFC Wild Card game, where the Bills came back from 32 points down.

How many points did the Buffalo Bills overcome in their historic comeback?

The Buffalo Bills overcame a 32-point deficit to complete the biggest comeback in NFL history.

Are there any recent games that rank among the top 10 biggest comebacks in NFL history?

Yes, one recent notable comeback was by the Minnesota Vikings against the Indianapolis Colts in 2022, where the Vikings overcame a 33-point deficit to win, making it one of the biggest comebacks in NFL history.

What factors contribute to a successful large comeback in NFL games?

Successful large comebacks in NFL games often involve strong defensive adjustments, effective offensive execution, turnovers forced, momentum shifts, and sometimes special teams plays that change the game's dynamics.

Has any team made multiple appearances in the top 10 biggest NFL comebacks?

Yes, the Buffalo Bills have made multiple appearances in the top 10 biggest comebacks, including their historic 32-point comeback in 1993.

Additional Resources

1. *Fourth Quarter Fury: The Greatest NFL Comebacks*

This book dives deep into the most electrifying fourth-quarter comebacks in NFL history. Through detailed play-by-play analysis and personal interviews with players and coaches, it captures the raw emotion and strategic genius behind these unforgettable moments. Readers will relive the adrenaline-pumping drives and last-second heroics that define the spirit of football.

2. *Down but Not Out: Legendary Comebacks in NFL History*

Explore the grit and determination of NFL teams that refused to quit, overcoming seemingly insurmountable odds. This book chronicles the top 10 biggest comebacks, highlighting the players' resilience and the pivotal moments that turned the tide. It's a tribute to perseverance and the never-say-die attitude that fuels the game.

3. *Miracle Drives: The Stories Behind NFL's Biggest Comebacks*

Miracle Drives takes readers behind the scenes of the NFL's most astonishing comeback games. Featuring exclusive interviews and firsthand accounts, the book reveals the mental toughness, strategic adjustments, and sheer willpower necessary to stage these epic reversals. It's a must-read for fans who love the unpredictability of football.

4. *Comeback Kings: NFL's Most Iconic Turnarounds*

This compelling narrative celebrates the quarterbacks, coaches, and teams who masterminded some of the greatest comebacks in NFL history. Each chapter focuses on a different game, blending game footage analysis with inspiring stories of leadership and teamwork. It's an homage to those unforgettable moments when hope was restored against all odds.

5. *Never Give Up: The Top 10 NFL Comebacks That Shocked the World*

Never Give Up recounts the thrilling stories of NFL teams that clawed their way back from near defeat to victory. The book offers a detailed look at game-changing plays, coaching decisions, and the emotional rollercoaster experienced by players and fans alike. It's a powerful reminder that in football, as in life, it's not over until it's over.

6. *Last-Second Legends: The Biggest NFL Comebacks Ever*

This book focuses on the dramatic final moments that defined the biggest comebacks in NFL history. Through vivid storytelling and expert analysis, readers gain insight into the pressure-packed situations and split-second decisions that turned games around. It captures the essence of football's thrilling unpredictability.

7. *From Despair to Victory: NFL's Greatest Comeback Stories*

From Despair to Victory highlights the emotional and physical challenges teams faced during their historic comebacks. The book combines player interviews and tactical breakdowns to show how adversity was overcome on the gridiron. It's an inspiring collection of stories about resilience, teamwork, and the love of the game.

8. *Against All Odds: Unbelievable NFL Comebacks*

Against All Odds presents a gripping account of the NFL's most unbelievable comeback games, where teams defied expectations and fans were left in awe. The narrative explores the strategic brilliance and heroic performances that made these games possible. This book is perfect for anyone fascinated by the drama and excitement of football.

9. *Game Changers: NFL's Greatest Comeback Moments*

Game Changers chronicles the moments that shifted the momentum in some of the NFL's biggest comeback victories. By focusing on key players and critical plays, the book illustrates how determination and skill combined to produce unforgettable outcomes. It's a celebration of the resilience and passion that define the sport.

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