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Commentary

Michael Richman: This was Redskins' most extraordinary season



Michael Richman

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WASHINGTON -

The emotional roller coaster the [Washington Redskins](#) rode this season ended with their playoff loss to [Seattle](#), but what a special year it was. In fact, it was the most extraordinary season I've ever witnessed in Redskins history, and I've seen about four decades of them.

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It was a gutsy performance by a team that endured one adversity after another but still found a way to claw and scratch its way into the postseason. The 2007 Redskins endured repeated heartbreaking losses, multiple injuries to key players, embarrassing coaching blunders and something unimaginable and unprecedented in NFL history — the slaying of [Sean Taylor](#), the team's best player and the face and future of the franchise.

Taylor's death was tragic, but there was also triumph. Led by [Todd Collins](#), a reserve quarterback who hadn't started an NFL game in a decade, the Redskins won their final four games to finish 9-7 as an NFC wild card team. The loss to Seattle ended their magical run, but I'm still so proud of my beloved team.

To put this season in perspective, I must turn the clock back to Dec. 2, a gray day on which the Redskins and their faithful fans at [FedExField](#) honored Taylor, who had been slain about a week earlier in a botched burglary attempt at his [Miami](#) home. A victory was sorely needed to lift the spirits of Redskin nation.

But they fell that day to the [Buffalo Bills](#), a 17-16 loss compounded by an embarrassing time-out gaffe by Hall of Fame [coach Joe Gibbs](#), who later called it the lowest moment of his celebrated professional career.

This maddening defeat, the Redskins' fourth straight loss, left them 5-7 with playoff hopes flickering. Four days later, [Jason Campbell](#), the Redskins' talented starting quarterback, dislocated his kneecap in the second quarter of the game against the Bears. With Campbell down, the Redskins looked like they were down for the count too in the eyes of many, including mine.

Following sports for so many years, I've learned that sometimes an obscure figure comes out of nowhere and makes the clutch plays that lead a team to victory. For the Redskins, Todd Collins was that man. Behind his stellar play, and riding the emotional wave triggered by Taylor's death, the 'Skins beat tremendous odds to win their last four games.

It was like a kid who'd been told all his life that he'd never realize his dream but then went on to prove everybody wrong.

I can't say I'm happy with the way the season ended, but I'm not disappointed either. The momentum the Redskins generated at the end of the regular season gives me optimism for 2008. They will have a group of young players who made major contributions this past season, plus most of their 2008 draft picks. Campbell will be back by training camp, and his presence — along with core impact players [Santana Moss](#) and [Clinton Portis](#) — bodes well for the future.

I've always felt so much pride being a fan of the burgundy and gold, but the unique circumstances of this season have elevated my feelings for the team to a new level.

Hail to the Redskins!

Michael Richman is the author of "The Redskins Encyclopedia."

Examiner