



THE "RIGGO DRILL"

If not for twists in the 1982 preseason, however, who knows if the Redskins would have realized such success? Joe Washington damaged his knee, leaving Riggins as the main back, and Moseley, who made 19 of 30 field goals in 1981, was about to lose his job until his competitor missed two field goals in the last exhibition game.

Riggins and Moseley put the Redskins on their backs. In the season opener against the Eagles, 10-6 the previous year and two seasons removed from a Super Bowl appearance, Moseley's 48-yard field goal tied the game at regulation's end, and his 26-yarder won it in overtime 37-34. Riggins pounded out 136 yards in a 21-13 win over Tampa Bay that improved the Redskins to 2-0.

But then play stopped. NFL players, accusing the owners of not fairly sharing television revenue, carried out the first regular-season strike in league history. They returned after 62 days and eight weeks of canceled games, and the two sides agreed to play seven more games plus a four-week "Super Bowl Tournament" that was based on how teams finished in their conference. The Redskins won three of their next four games, including a 12-7 win over St. Louis on Moseley's four field goals.

(Left) The 1983 Washington Redskins cheerleaders. (Opposite page) Riggins, who ran for 166 yards in Super Bowl XVII, celebrates his game-winning touchdown with Starke.

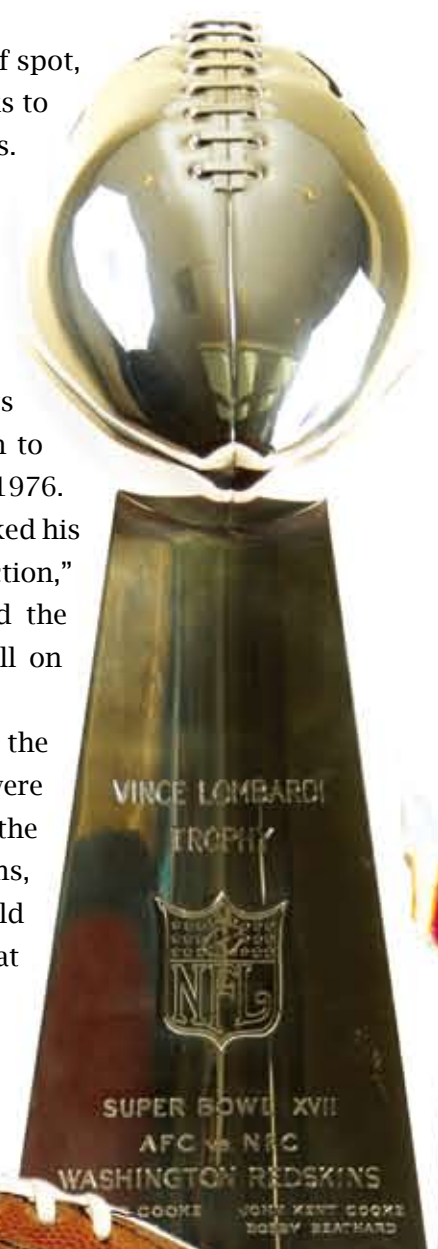
10 BIG GAMES REMEMBERED: 1981-1992

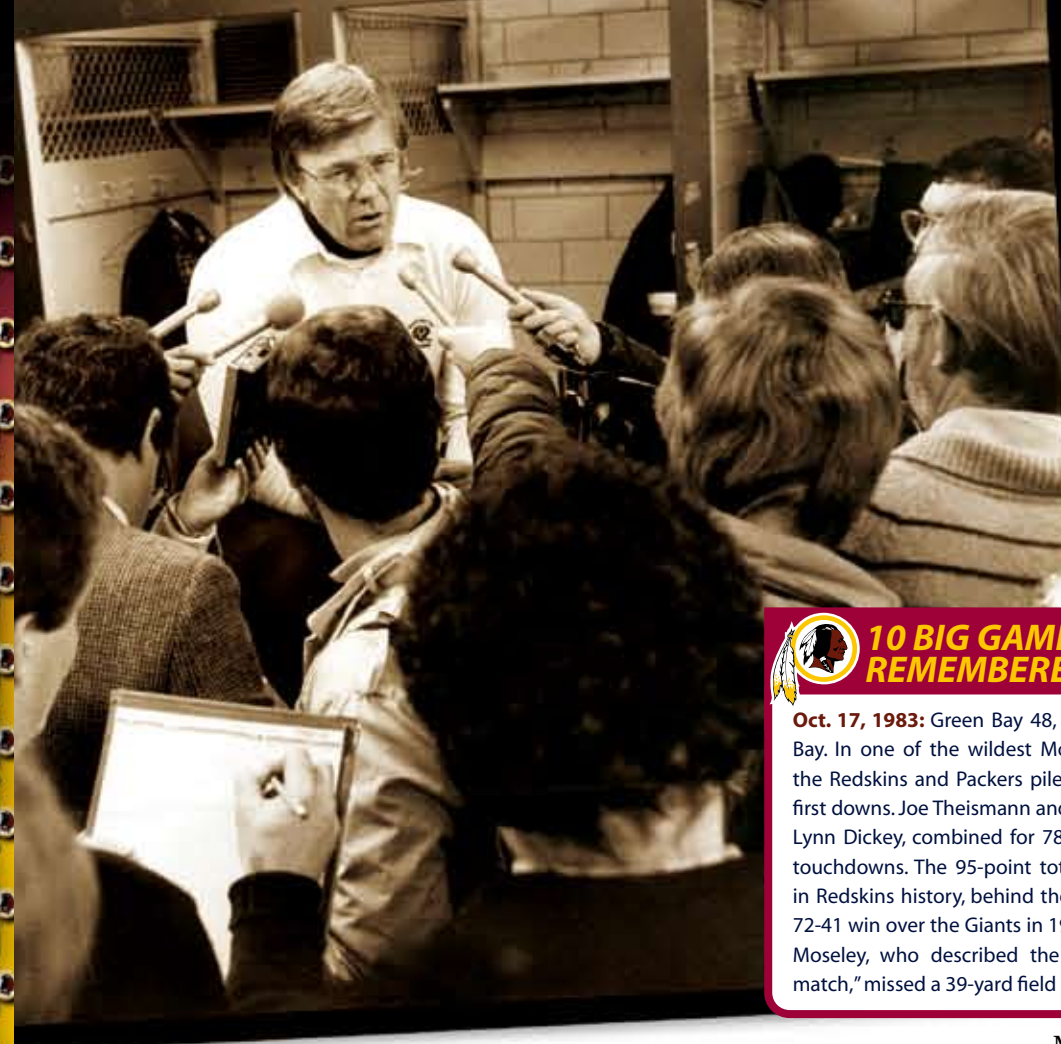
Jan. 30, 1983: Washington 27, Miami 17, in Pasadena. This day belonged to John Riggins, who capped a prolific postseason performance by rushing for a Super Bowl-record 166 yards in Super Bowl XVII at the Rose Bowl. On the most famous play in Redskins history, the "Diesel" rumbled 43 yards for a touchdown on a fourth and 1 in the fourth quarter to put the Redskins up for good. The eccentric Riggins, named the game's MVP, responded to President Reagan's congratulatory phone call by saying, "Ron may be president, but I'm the king." It was the Redskins' first NFL championship in 40 years.

They needed one victory to clinch a playoff spot, and the hot-footed Moseley needed three kicks to break the NFL record of 20 straight field goals. Both goals were achieved Dec. 19, 1982, at RFK Stadium in one of the most indelible moments in Redskins history. With the Giants up 14-12 and nine seconds left, Moseley, the league's MVP that season, converted a 42-yard field goal in a snowstorm. A Giants player touched the ball, but it sailed through to clinch Washington's first playoff berth since 1976.

"I hit the ball so true and hard that it knocked his hand out of the way and never changed direction," Moseley said. "People don't realize how bad the weather was. It was hard just to get the ball on the ground."

Wins over the Saints and Cardinals left the 8-1 Redskins in first place in the NFC. They were guaranteed home-field advantage through the playoffs, and their initial foe was the 4-5 Lions, the NFC's lowest-seeded team. Riggins told Gibbs and offensive line coach Joe Bugel that he wanted a lot of carries in the playoffs.





10 BIG GAMES REMEMBERED: 1981-1992

Oct. 17, 1983: Green Bay 48, Washington 47, in Green Bay. In one of the wildest Monday night games ever, the Redskins and Packers piled up 1,025 yards and 56 first downs. Joe Theismann and his Packers counterpart, Lynn Dickey, combined for 785 passing yards and five touchdowns. The 95-point total is the second-highest in Redskins history, behind the NFL-record 113 in their 72-41 win over the Giants in 1966. Redskins kicker Mark Moseley, who described the game as a "ping-pong match," missed a 39-yard field goal on the last play.

"I said, 'Buges, give me the ball, and everything is going to be okay,'" he recalled. "Buges gets this big grin and says, 'Don't tell me, go tell the old man.' So I went in and said, 'Joe, we've got a few guys down — give me the football. This is my opportunity.'"

The cocksure Riggins seized the moment, becoming the first player to rush for more than 100 yards in four straight postseason games:

- 119 in a 31-7 win over Detroit
- 185 in a 21-7 win over Minnesota
- 140 in a 31-17 win over Dallas
- 166 in a 27-17 win over Miami in Super Bowl XVII

In all, Riggins rumbled for 610 yards and four touchdowns in a smash-mouth routine dubbed the "Riggo Drill." Redskin fans blew diesel horns to salute the "Diesel" as he grinded out yards on plays such as "40 Gut," "50 Gut" and "70 Chip." Riggins, known for his great stage presence, bowed to the crowd at RFK Stadium after his performance against the Vikings.

Riggo ran behind the "Hogs," one of the NFL's first behemoth offensive lines. Charter members included Grimm, May, Jacoby, Warren and Starke. They were treated like stars in a town going "Hog Wild," and signs at RFK Stadium read, "Love Them Hogs."

May and Jacoby appeared in a television commercial to promote a giant TV screen, and the public gobbled up "Hog" hats and "Hog" T-shirts. The Hogs even had their own cheerleaders, the "Hogettes," men who began attending Redskins home games wearing hog snouts, polka dot and checkered dresses, and colorful wigs. Today, the Hogettes are featured in a special exhibit at the Hall of Fame.

"BEST TEAM IN THE HISTORY OF FOOTBALL"

Gibbs was named NFL Coach of the Year in 1982 and repeated that honor in 1983, becoming the first coach in two decades to receive the distinction in two straight seasons. In 1983, his squad bludgeoned its opponents and produced eye-popping statistics such as an NFL-record 541 points and team highs for regular-season wins (14) and yards (6,139). In his best season ever, Theismann posted career-highs of 3,714 yards and 29 touchdowns and threw just 11 interceptions. Charlie Brown caught a team-record 78 passes, Riggins rushed for a career-high 1,347 yards and a league-record 24 touchdowns, and Moseley's 161 points snapped the NFL record for most points without touchdowns.

The Redskins also registered an NFL-record plus-43 turnover ratio, a mark that may never be broken. It seemed that whenever there was a loose ball, they found it.

After a 14-2 regular season, a 51-7 demolition of the Rams in the first round of the playoffs and a 24-21 win over the 49ers in the NFC Championship game, the Redskins were primed to go down as one of the greatest teams in NFL history. Gibbs has long said that the 1983 squad was his most talented team.

(Preceding page) Gibbs was the man of the hour after coaching the Redskins to their first Super Bowl win in just his second season. (Below) Jacoby (66) and Russ Grimm (68) were part of a monster offensive line nicknamed "The Hogs" (right), which helped open holes for Riggins and others. Like "The Hogs" stars Darrell Green (28) and Monk (81) were huge fan favorites.

