

A Christmas Day Miracle

My father was a loyal Strat man for over 40 years (baseball, hockey, football, some basketball). That's right, since the early 1970s. He has dozens upon dozens of Strat boxes stacked in his attic. Seemed he purchased the new seasons annually. About 10 years ago, he gave me his complete 1971 Strat Football set for Christmas. What a gift! I loved that season—the old 49ers made a run at the Conference Championship, the Steelers were just getting started, and classic HOF'ers were still relevant—Namath, Starr, Unitas, Butkus, Bubba Smith, etc. My dad was about 75 years old at the time and didn't quite have the concentration he once possessed. But I wanted to play Strat football head-to-head so badly. No football game comes close to Strat in a face-to-face setting. Well, after Christmas dinner, dad and I sat down and played a full game—49ers vs. Cowboys for the Conference Championship. It came down to 4th and goal on the 2-yard line (My 49ers had the ball and were down by 6). Dad knew that I loved Ken Willard (fullback). In fact, I traveled to VA a year earlier to meet Ken, a real gentleman. He was picked over Gale Sayers in the first round in 1965. Dad knew I would run Ken up the middle for that last play. He called run and keyed on Ken. But I didn't run him! I dropped a short pass to TE Kwalick for the TD! It was a great memory.

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