



1972 Miami Dolphins season

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The **1972 Miami Dolphins season** was the team's seventh season, and third season in the National Football League (NFL). The 1972 Dolphins are the only NFL team to win the Super Bowl with a perfect season. The undefeated campaign was led by coach Don Shula and notable players Bob Griese, Earl Morrall, and Larry Csonka. The 1972 Dolphins went 14–0 in the regular season and won all three post-season games, including Super Bowl VII against the Washington Redskins, to finish 17–0.

The team remains the only NFL team to complete an entire season undefeated and untied from the opening game through the Super Bowl (or championship game). The closest team to repeating this feat was the 2007 New England Patriots, who recorded the most wins in a season in NFL history by going 18–0 before losing to the New York Giants in Super Bowl XLII (the Dolphins won 18 straight through and until the first week of the 1973 season). The 2007 Patriots were able to record a better regular season than the 1972 Dolphins because the NFL lengthened it to 16 games in 1978. Besides the 1972 Dolphins and 2007 Patriots, the only other team to ever complete the regular season undefeated and untied is the Chicago Bears, who accomplished the feat in both 1934 and 1942. Both of those Bears teams however failed to win the NFL Championship Game.

During the 1972 season, Bob Griese's ankle was broken in Week 5 as he was sacked by San Diego Chargers defensive tackle Ron East and defensive end Deacon Jones. He was replaced by veteran Earl Morrall for the rest of the regular season. Griese returned to the field as a substitute in the final regular season game against the Baltimore Colts and then also relieved Morrall for the second half of the AFC Championship game versus the Pittsburgh Steelers and then started for Miami in Super Bowl VII. On the ground, running backs Larry Csonka and Mercury Morris became the first teammates to each rush for 1,000 yards in a season. Paul Warfield led the receivers, averaging over 20 yards per catch on 29 receptions. The offensive line included future Hall of Fame members Jim Langer and Larry Little and Pro Bowler Norm Evans.

The 1972 Dolphins defensive unit, called the *No-Name Defense* because Miami's impressive offense received much more publicity, as well as Cowboys coach Tom Landry coining the phrase in an interview, was the league's best that year. It was led by linebacker Nick Buoniconti, end Bill Stanfill, tackle Manny Fernandez, and safeties Dick Anderson and Jake Scott. In all, nine players—Csonka, Morris, Warfield, Little, Evans, Buoniconti, Stanfill, Anderson and Scott—were selected to the Pro Bowl, and Morrall, Stanfill and Anderson were named 1st team All-Pro.^[1]

On August 20, 2013, four decades after their accomplishment, President Barack Obama hosted the 1972 Dolphins, noting that they "never got their White House visit".^{[2][3]}

1972 Miami Dolphins season	
Owner	<u>Joe Robbie</u>
Head coach	<u>Don Shula</u>
Home field	<u>Miami Orange Bowl</u>
Results	
Record	14–0
Division place	1st <u>AFC East</u>
Playoff finish	Won <u>Divisional Playoffs</u> (<u>Browns</u>) 20–14 Won <u>AFC Championship</u> (at <u>Steelers</u>) 21–17 Won <u>Super Bowl VII</u> (vs. <u>Redskins</u>) 14–7



Jim Kiick (center right) rushing the ball for Miami in Super Bowl VII.

Roster

1972 Miami Dolphins roster

Quarterbacks

- 15 [Earl Morrall](#)
- 11 [Jim Del Gaizo](#)
- 12 [Bob Griese](#)

Running backs

- 22 [Mercury Morris](#)
- 39 [Larry Csonka](#) FB
- 21 [Jim Kiick](#)
- 23 [Charles Leigh](#) FB
- 32 [Hubert Ginn](#)

Wide receivers

- 81 [Howard Twilley](#)
- 42 [Paul Warfield](#)
- 86 [Marlin Briscoe](#)
- 28 [Ed Jenkins](#)
- 82 [Otto Stowe](#)

Tight ends

- 80 [Marv Fleming](#)
- 88 [Jim Mandich](#)

Offensive linemen

- 77 [Doug Crusan](#) T
- 67 [Bob Kuechenberg](#) G
- 62 [Jim Langer](#) C
- 66 [Larry Little](#) G
- 73 [Norm Evans](#) T
- 54 [Howard Kindig](#) T
- 60 [Al Jenkins](#) G
- 79 [Wayne Moore](#) T

Defensive linemen

- 83 [Vern Den Herder](#) DE
- 75 [Manny Fernandez](#) DT
- 72 [Bob Heinz](#) DT
- 84 [Bill Stanfill](#) DE
- 78 [Jim Dunaway](#) DT
- 65 [Maulty Moore](#) DT

Linebackers

- 59 [Doug Swift](#)
- 85 [Nick Buoniconti](#)
- 57 [Mike Kolen](#)
- 51 [Larry Ball](#)
- 53 [Bob Matheson](#)
- 56 [Jesse Powell](#)

Defensive backs

- 25 [Tim Foley](#) CB
- 45 [Curtis Johnson](#) CB
- 40 [Dick Anderson](#) SS
- 13 [Jake Scott](#) FS
- 49 [Charlie Babb](#) SS
- 43 [Mike Howell](#) FS
- 26 [Lloyd Mumphord](#) CB
- 48 [Henry Stuckey](#)

Special teams

- 1 [Garo Yepremian](#) K
- 20 [Larry Seiple](#) P
- 7 [Billy Lothridge](#) P

Reserve lists

{{{reserve_lists}}}

Practice squad {{{practice_squad}}}

Rookies in italics

Regular season

Preseason

Week	Date	Opponent	Result	Record
1	August 5, 1972	at Detroit Lions	L 23–31	0–1
2	August 12, 1972	Green Bay Packers	L 13–14	0–2
3	August 19, 1972	at Cincinnati Bengals	W 35–17	1–2
4	August 25, 1972	Atlanta Falcons	W 24–10	2–2
5	August 31, 1972	at Washington Redskins	L 24–27	2–3
6	September 10, 1972	Minnesota Vikings	W 21–19	3–3

Schedule

Week	Date	Opponent	Result	Record	Attendance
1	September 17, 1972	at Kansas City Chiefs	W 20–10	1–0	79,829
2	September 24, 1972	Houston Oilers	W 34–13	2–0	77,821
3	October 1, 1972	at Minnesota Vikings	W 16–14	3–0	47,900
4	October 8, 1972	at New York Jets	W 27–17	4–0	63,841
5	October 15, 1972	San Diego Chargers	W 24–10	5–0	80,010
6	October 22, 1972	Buffalo Bills	W 24–23	6–0	80,010
7	October 29, 1972	at Baltimore Colts	W 23–0	7–0	60,000
8	November 5, 1972	at Buffalo Bills	W 30–16	8–0	46,206
9	November 12, 1972	New England Patriots	W 52–0	9–0	80,010
10	November 19, 1972	New York Jets	W 28–24	10–0	80,010
11	November 27, 1972	St. Louis Cardinals	W 31–10	11–0	80,010
12	December 3, 1972	at New England Patriots	W 37–21	12–0	60,999
13	December 10, 1972	at New York Giants	W 23–13	13–0	62,728
14	December 16, 1972	Baltimore Colts	W 16–0	14–0	80,010

Postseason

Game	Date	Opponent	Result	Record	Attendance
Divisional playoffs	December 24, 1972	Cleveland Browns	W 20–14	15–0	80,010
Conference championship	December 31, 1972	at Pittsburgh Steelers	W 21–17	16–0	50,350
Super Bowl VII	January 14, 1973	Washington Redskins	W 14–7	17–0	90,182

Standings

AFC East									
	W	L	T	PCT	DIV	CONF	PF	PA	STK
Miami Dolphins	14	0	0	1.000	8–0	11–0	385	171	W14
New York Jets	7	7	0	.500	6–2	6–5	367	324	L2
Baltimore Colts	5	9	0	.357	4–4	5–6	235	252	L2
Buffalo Bills	4	9	1	.321	2–6	2–9	257	377	W1
New England Patriots	3	11	0	.214	0–8	0–11	192	446	L1

Urban legend

There is an urban legend that every season, whenever the last remaining undefeated NFL team loses its first game, all the surviving members of the 1972 Miami Dolphins open bottles of champagne in celebration. Coach Don Shula tried to play down the myth by saying that two players, [Dick Anderson](#) and [Nick Buoniconti](#), who live near each other sometimes have a toast together.^{[4][5]} However, in a college football broadcast on ABC, following the loss of an undefeated team, Bob Griese, after being asked by his colleague, commented that he called former Dolphins, and they had [Diet Cokes](#) together. That celebration comes with the connotation that they no longer drink alcoholic beverages, but that a toast was customary.^[6]

The perfect season

The 1972 Miami Dolphins were the first team to execute a perfect regular season in the post-merger NFL. They are the only team in NFL history to go undefeated and untied in the regular season and postseason.

After their loss to [the Dallas Cowboys](#) in [Super Bowl VI](#) (Miami's only loss during calendar year 1972), Don Shula had vowed to not get to the Super Bowl but to win it. To achieve this, he made the team watch the loss two times at training camp. Shula would later go on to say:

I think that's when we all came together for what was going happen for the next two years. What I stressed in the locker room was that we wanted to make sure this wouldn't happen again. Our goal was not to go to the Super Bowl but to win it.^[7]



The 1972 team on the [Miami Dolphins Honor Roll](#)

An enduring controversy is that the 1972 Dolphins played a soft schedule not possible under the current scheduling formula.^[8] Prior to the implementation of position scheduling in 1978, opponents were set by the NFL on a rotating basis.^[9] Statistically, the Dolphins' 1972 regular-season opponents had an aggregate winning percentage of .397 and only two had winning records for that season (both the [Kansas City Chiefs](#) and [New York Giants](#) finished 8–6). This does not however constitute any record: [the 1975 Minnesota Vikings](#), who began 10–0 and finished 12–2, played fourteen opponents with an average winning percentage of .332 and nine of their games were against teams 4–10 or worse.^[10]

The Dolphins were beneficiaries of a weak AFC East which saw the [Colts](#) lapse from a perennial contender into a three-year stretch in which they would win only 11 games; a [Bills](#) team which had yet to find its legs with [O.J. Simpson](#) and the return of coach [Lou Saban](#); a dysfunctional [Patriots](#) organization which had little to no talent to surround former No. 1 overall draft choice [Jim Plunkett](#); and a [Jets](#) squad with a porous defense, offsetting the benefits of [Joe Namath](#) remaining healthy throughout the season and an emerging [John Riggins](#) in the running game. Miami also caught a scheduling break by facing an [Oilers](#) squad in the midst of back-to-back 1–13 seasons, a [Chargers](#) squad beginning a run of four consecutive seasons in the AFC West cellar, and a [Cardinals](#) squad which appeared to lack direction by rotating its starting quarterbacks instead of giving the job full-time to [Jim Hart](#). Also, the Dolphins caught the [Vikings](#) in the midst of a massive transformation following the return of [Fran Tarkenton](#). 1972 saw Minnesota miss the playoffs for the only time between 1968 and 1978, going 7–7.

However, the NFL's rules at the time also forced the undefeated Dolphins (14–0) to play the [Steelers](#) (11–3) in Pittsburgh for the AFC Championship Game, a game in which the Dolphins won on the road to reach the Super Bowl. Subsequent rule changes have since changed the playoff structure so that this would never happen again. Since the 1975 season, teams that have won their division and have had a superior record than their opponent (as was the case with the 1972 Dolphins when they faced the [Steelers](#)) would play their postseason games at home.

The Miami Dolphins 1972 team consisted mostly of the same core of players it possessed from 1970 through 1974 (five seasons) was the most dominant professional football team in the NFL during that stretch. In those five seasons the Dolphins made the playoffs all five years, won three AFC Championships, went to the Super Bowl three times for two wins and went undefeated and untied while winning the Super Bowl in 1972. They posted a record of 64–14–1, and were also the fastest franchise to win a Super Bowl after its inception and joining the NFL (7 years after they started in the AFL and then 3 years after becoming a member of the NFL).

Television coverage

Fans in the Miami area could not catch the home games on television – they had to be there at the games, listen to the radio, or travel to watch the games on TV. For Miami-Dade residents in 1972, that would have meant driving northwest on Florida's Turnpike towards Orlando, or north on Interstate 95 to areas along the east coast of the state which picked up signals from Orlando and/or Jacksonville.

1972 was the last year that all home games were blacked out on local television even if they sold out. Super Bowl VII was the first game to be televised in the market of origin under new rules which would come into effect the following season – games must be sold out within 72 hours of kickoff time in order to be aired in the market of origin. As all Super Bowls except the first have sold out, none have been blacked out since (tickets sell out rather quickly due to high demand to see such a major game).

Coincidentally, President Richard Nixon, many of his White House staff, and members of Congress were angered by the blackout rules, since they could not watch the Dolphins' eventual Super Bowl opponent, the Redskins, play at home, even though all games at RFK Stadium had been sold out since 1966.

2013 White House visit

Four decades later in 2013, the team was invited by President Barack Obama to visit the White House. This occurred on August 20, when Obama noted that the team "never got their White House visit".^[11] As to why this team had not been invited by President Richard Nixon in 1973, Larry Csonka stated that he did not feel neglected as it had not been a regular occurrence at the time.^[12] However, MSNBC reported that this was a deliberate snub by Nixon, who was a Redskins fan, even though Nixon owned a vacation home in nearby Key Biscayne, Florida and telephoned Shula only hours after the Dolphins defeated the Colts in the 1971 AFC Championship game to suggest a play for Miami to use in Super Bowl VI (a down-and-out pass to Warfield which was broken up by Cowboys safety Cornell Green).^[13] Obama had previously invited the 1985 Bears to the White House, as their visit had gotten cancelled due to the Space Shuttle Challenger disaster by President Reagan. President Obama, a Chicago resident and Bears fan,^[14] had called them the greatest team ever, but during the Dolphins' visit he called his own words into question, also noting that the only loss the 1985 Bears had was to the Dolphins.^[15] Bob Kuechenberg, Jim Langer, and Manny Fernandez all refused to attend due to political differences with the Obama administration.^[16]



President Obama honoring the 1972 team at the White House in 2013

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External links

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