

= 1973 Buffalo Bills season =

The 1973 Buffalo Bills season was the 14th season for the team and their fourth season in the National Football League (NFL) . The Bills finished in second place in the AFC East division and finished the 1973 NFL season with a record of 9 wins and 5 losses , the team 's first winning record since 1966 .

Head coach Lou Saban began the second season of his second tenure with the Bills . Saban had previously led the team to the 1964 and 1965 AFL championships . It was the first season that the team played in Rich Stadium (now " Ralph Wilson Stadium ") after thirteen years playing at War Memorial Stadium .

The Bills ' were coming off of 1 ? 13 and 4 ? 9 ? 1 records in 1971 and 1972 , respectively . Incumbent starting quarterback Dennis Shaw found himself in a battle with rookie Joe Ferguson for the starting job .

The season was defined by O.J. Simpson becoming the first player in NFL history to rush for 2 @, @ 000 yards in a season . Behind Simpson 's record @-@ setting season , the Bills set an NFL record for most team rushing yards in a 14 @-@ game season , with 3 @, @ 088 . Simpson was coming off of his best professional season , in which he earned his first All @-@ Pro recognition and first rushing title . In addition to establishing a then @-@ record for single @-@ season rushing yardage , with 2 @, @ 003 , Simpson established the single @-@ season record for rushing yards gained per game , which still stands . The explosive offense centered on O.J. Simpson was nicknamed the " Electric Company " for its ability to turn on " The Juice " (i.e. " O.J. " Simpson)

= = Electric Company Era Begins = =

Although some describe the entire 1970s decade as the Electric Company era , the 1973 season marked a new era in Bills history and is regarded by many as the beginning of the Electric Company era of the mid @-@ 1970s . The team ushered in a new stadium , new uniforms and a transformed team built through the draft and a few key trades . With all the emphasis on rushing the team would only post two 100 @-@ yard receiving efforts .

The Bills started the season 4 ? 1 and then lost four of their next five before winning their final 4 games . Rookie quarterback Joe Ferguson , who eventually would be the Bills starting quarterback for 12 seasons , started all 14 games at quarterback . Dennis Shaw who had been the starter the previous three season , saw action in four games .

= = Simpson 's Record @-@ Breaking year = =

Running back O.J. Simpson broke the 2 @, @ 000 @-@ yard barrier for rushing yards in a season , and was voted NFL Most Valuable Player . Simpson began and ended the fourteen @-@ game season with bookend five @-@ game streaks where he ran for at least 100 yards . 1973 was the fifth of nine consecutive seasons that Simpson led the team in rushing yards .

It was also the first time Simpson would lead the NFL in rushing touchdowns , first time he would lead the league in yards from scrimmage and the second time he would lead the league in rushing yards . (Although Simpson posted a career best 6 @. @ 0 yards per carry in 1973 , he was surpassed by Mercury Morris who posted a 6 @. @ 4 yards per carry average for the 1973 Miami Dolphins . The only season that Simpson led the league in yards per carry was two years later when he averaged 5 @. @ 5 yards per carry .)

Although Simpson 's 2003 yard total has now been eclipsed by 5 other runners , as of 2010 , his 143 @. @ 1 yards per game remains an NFL single @-@ season record due to being achieved in a fourteen @-@ game season . (All subsequent 2 @, @ 000 @-@ yard seasons took place in 16 games .)

Simpson was named Associated Press Athlete of the Year .

= = Offensive firepower = =

The " Electric Company " of Simpson , Jim Braxton , and rookie Paul Seymour and Joe DeLamielleure led a dramatic turnaround on the field . The " Electric Company " was the nickname of the offensive line (OG Reggie McKenzie , OT Dave Foley , Centers Mike Montler and Bruce Jarvis OG Joe DeLamielleure and OT Donnie Green) which " turned on the Juice " (i.e. O.J. Simpson) . The offensive guards were a pair of young future All @-@ Pro performers : Pro Football Hall of Famer DeLamielleure (drafted 26th overall in 1973) and College Football Hall of Famer McKenzie (drafted 27th overall in 1972) .

Paul Seymour , who would play his entire career with the Bills , became the team 's starting tight end . Seymour had been an All @-@ American tackle for Michigan after having played two season at tight end . Seymour went on to start at tight end for a total of five seasons. replacing former tight end Jan White .

Running backs Braxton and Larry Watkins shared the fullback duties with each accumulating over 400 yards rushing . Braxton 's 4 @-@ 6 yards per carry were eighth @-@ most in the NFL .

Wide receiver Bob Chandler led the team in receiving yards , the first of four years he would do so . During the season , Wallace Francis , who finished second in the league in kickoff return average , was the only player in the league to return two kickoffs for touchdowns . John Leypoldt 's 70 % field goal percentage ranked fifth in the league .

= = Awards , Accolades and Legacy = =

The 1973 Bills had three participants in the 1974 Pro Bowl and two members of the All @-@ Pro team .

1973 was the second Pro Bowl and first All @-@ Pro season for cornerback Robert James . Offensive tackle Foley was also voted to the Pro Bowl . Guard McKenzie 's was voted to the All @-@ Pro team . Simpson made this third Pro Bowl and second All @-@ Pro team . Both Simpson and James were returning Pro Bowl selections .

The team was featured in the video game Madden NFL ' 96 as one of the game 's " classic " teams , along with 1990 ? 1993 Bills , who won four consecutive AFC Championships .

= = Offseason = =

On April 19 , 1973 the Bills traded linebackers Edgar Chandler and Jeff Lyman and fullback Wayne Patrick to the New England Patriots for linebacker Jim Cheyunski and offensive linemen Halvor Hagen and Mike Montler . Although Patrick had been the Bills ' Fullback , he lost the starting job to Jim Braxton in 1972 .

The Bills also acquired of the Miami Dolphins ' top draft selection Mike Kadish in exchange for offensive lineman Irv Goode . The Bills traded defensive tackle Al Cowlings to Houston in exchange for defensive end Earl Edwards . Long @-@ time Bills linebacker Mike Stratton , who had spent the last ten seasons with Buffalo , left the team to play his final season with the San Diego Chargers .

= = = NFL draft = = =

The team drafted several players in the 1973 NFL Draft who contributed to the offense as starters during this record @-@ setting season . Offensive linemen Paul Seymour and Joe DeLamielleure became cornerstones of the Bills ' " Electric Company " offensive line . DeLamielleure was voted to five consecutive Pro Bowls for the Bills (1975 ? 1979) , to the NFL 1970s All @-@ Decade Team , and to the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 2003 .

Quarterback Joe Ferguson played 164 games at quarterback in 12 seasons for the Bills , a franchise @-@ record . Ferguson retired as the team 's all @-@ time leading passer , and his 27 @-@ 590 passing yards are still second in franchise history behind Hall of Famer Jim Kelly .

= = Regular season = =

=== Schedule ===

On Week 1 , (played on September 16) , against the New England Patriots , O.J.Simpson sets record with 250 yd rushing and two touchdowns .

On Week 14 , (played on December 16) , against the New York Jets . O.J. Simpson rushes for 200 yd and rushes for 2003 yd becoming the first RB to eclipse 2000 yd . Simpson breaks Jim Brown 's record of 1863 set 10 years earlier .

=== Standings ===

=== O.J. Simpson ===

O.J. Simpson had three 200 @-@ yard rushing games , six 150 @-@ yard rushing games and eleven 100 @-@ yard rushing games . He only had 30 rushes in a game twice all season , but totaled 2 @,@ 003 yards due to a 6 @.@ 0 yards @-@ per @-@ carry average . Over the course of the season Simpson also caught six pass receptions .

=== Game summaries ===

==== Week 1 ====

Simpson rushed for 250 yards on 29 carries , setting a new NFL single @-@ game rushing record . He surpassed Willie Ellison 's 247 @-@ yard performance in 1971 . Although the Bills had gone 0 ? 6 in their exhibition schedule , they started the season with a 31 ? 13 victory in Chuck Fairbanks 's debut as New England Patriots coach . Simpson scored on an 80 @-@ yard run in the first quarter and a 22 @-@ yard run in the third quarter .

==== Week 2 ====

The Bills surrendered an opening kickoff return touchdown , 3 quarterback sacks and 4 interceptions . Despite 103 yards rushing by Simpson and 118 yards receiving by Hill . The Bills surrendered 27 consecutive points after Simpson tied the score 7 ? 7 with a 6 @-@ yard second quarter run .

==== Week 3 ====

The Bills ' Rich Stadium debut was a sellout of 80 @,@ 200 with 2595 no @-@ shows . Simpson rushed for 123 yards , giving him 476 in his first three games . The Bills scored on three Leypoldt field goals . He made a 42 @-@ yarder in the first quarter and added two more in the fourth quarter . The Jets almost became the Bills ' first shutout victim since 1965 , but Al Woodall (playing in place of an injured Joe Namath) hit Jerome Barkum for 34 yards with two seconds left .

==== Week 4 ====

The Bills opted for a 47 @-@ yard Leypoldt field goal with four minutes remaining after driving 42 yards to Eagles ' 40 @-@ yard @-@ line . The score held up in the final minutes . On the day , Simpson 's 171 @-@ yard rushing performance offset a pair of 100 @-@ yard performances by Tom Sullivan and Norm Bulaich .

===== Week 5 =====

O.J. posted 166 yards , giving him his fifth 100 @-@ yard rushing effort in five games and giving him 813 for the season . The Colts had given Simpson 1 @-@ yard losses on his first two carries . Ferguson got the scoring started by connecting with Larry Watkins for 10 @-@ yards and later scored on a 1 @-@ yard quarterback keeper . Simpson scored on a 3 @-@ yard run in the third quarter and on a 78 @-@ yard run in the fourth " thrilled a crowd of 78 @, @ 875 " .

===== Week 6 =====

Miami took over first place in the AFC East by halting Simpson 's streak of consecutive 100 @-@ yard performances . They held him to 55 yards on 14 carries before he left the game with an ankle sprain in the fourth quarter . Miami posted a 21 @-@ point second quarter highlighted by a pair of touchdown passes from Bob Griese to Jim Mandich . The Bills made no first downs in the first half . Leypoldt and Garo Yepremian opened and closed the scoring by swapping field goals . The Dolphins ' other touchdown came when a 21 @-@ yard Paul Warfield reception set up a Mercury Morris 4 @-@ yard touchdown .

===== Week 7 =====

Simpson set an NFL record for yards in the first seven games by surpassing 1 @, @ 000 yards with a 157 @-@ yard effort . His total of 1 @, @ 025 was 54 ahead of Brown 's pace . Simpson set the NFL single @-@ game record for carries with 39 surpassing the 38 by Jim Nance in 1966 and Harry Newman in 1934 . In the game , the Chiefs fumbled on their opening possession on their own 15 @-@ yard @-@ line , leading to a Bills touchdown on four consecutive rushes . Three plays into the Chiefs ' second possession Cheyunski intercepted Len Dawson and returned it 31 yards to the 4 @-@ yard @-@ line leading to another Simpson score , giving them a 14 ? 0 lead 3 : 37 into the game . Leypoldt added three field goals .

===== Week 8 =====

Simpson had totaled 1025 yards in the first half of the season , which was ahead of the 971 Brown had gained in his first seven games . The Saints posted all their scoring in the first half and kept the Bills to under 200 yards of total offense while shutting them out .

===== Week 9 =====

Simpson posted 99 yards on 20 carries including a 32 @-@ yard game @-@ tying touchdown run in the third quarter . He had a 1 @, @ 203 total for nine games . It appeared the game would end in a tie until the Bengals ' Horst Muhlmann made a 33 @-@ yard field goal with three seconds remaining .

===== Week 10 =====

The Dolphins clinched the East Division title with a 17 ? 0 shutout of the Bills . Miami 's first touchdown drive included two fourth @-@ and @-@ one conversions by Jim Kiick . With Miami leading 10 ? 0 , Buffalo drove from their own 20 @-@ yard @-@ line to the Dolphins ' 4 @-@ yard @-@ line and then turned the ball over on downs four plays later at the 1 @-@ yard @-@ line . In the game , the Bills were shut out despite a pair of 100 @-@ yard rushing efforts by Simpson and Braxton who posted 120 and 119 yards respectively .

===== Week 11 =====

The Bills built a 10 ? 7 halftime lead on the strength of a 58 @-@ yard Simpson touchdown run . Marty Domres connected with Tom Mitchell and George Hunt added a field goal to give Baltimore a 17 ? 10 lead . Late in the game the Colts gave the Bills good field position following an 18 @-@ yard punt by David Lee . Ferguson passed for 38 @-@ yards to Bob Chandler to tie the score with 1 : 34 remaining . Then Dwight Harrison recorded a 31 @-@ yard interception return with 1 : 11 remaining to give the Bills their final margin of victory . The game marked only the second and final time all season the Bills passed for 100 yards .

== == Week 12 == ==

Braxton , who totaled 80 yards on 23 carries accounted for both of the Bills ' touchdowns . Simpson posted 137 yards on 24 carries . The Falcon 's scoring came from future Bills kicker Nick Mike @-@ Mayer who posted two field goals .

== == Week 13 == ==

After New England posted a first @-@ quarter field goal , Francis returned the kickoff 90 yards to give the Bills a lead they would not relinquish . Simpson posted 219 yards on 22 carries including a 6 @-@ yard touchdown that put the Bills ahead 14 ? 3 in the second quarter . Chandler caught two touchdown passes from Ferguson and Leyboldt added three field goals . The effort earned Simpson his third NFL Offensive Player of the Week honor .

== == Week 14 == ==

Simpson entered the final game needing 61 yards to eclipse Brown 's record of 1863 yards and the team entered the game needing 177 rushing yards to break the team record of 2960 set by the 1972 Miami Dolphins . He posted 200 yards on 34 carries to bring his total to 2003 in Weeb Ewbank 's final game as Jets coach . He became the first to accumulate 200 yards in a game three times in a season . In O.J. ' s post @-@ game press conference , he brought the entire Electric Company to meet the media . Before he would field any questions , he introduced each of his teammates .

== Roster ==

== Awards and records ==

O.J. Simpson , NFL MVP
O.J. Simpson , NFL Offensive Player of the Year
O.J. Simpson , Bert Bell Award
O.J. Simpson , UPI AFL @-@ AFC Player of the Year
O.J. Simpson , AP Male Athlete of the Year
O.J. Simpson , 1974 Pro Bowl Selection
O.J. Simpson , All @-@ Pro Selection
Robert James , All @-@ Pro Selection
Robert James , 1974 Pro Bowl Selection
Dave Foley , 1974 Pro Bowl Selection
Reggie McKenzie , All @-@ Pro Selection

== Milestones ==

O.J. Simpson , First 2 @,@ 000 Yard Rushing Season in NFL History
Single @-@ season record : 143 @.@ 1 rushing yards per game
Single @-@ season record : 2 @,@ 243 yards from scrimmage

Single @-@ season record : 23 touchdowns

Single @-@ game record : 250 rushing yards

First back @-@ to @-@ back 200 @-@ yard rushing games

Single @-@ game carries record (39)

Consecutive 100 @-@ yard rushing games (7 , ending with week 5) .

Single @-@ season record : 3 200 @-@ yard games

Single @-@ season record : 11 100 @-@ yard games