

= 1987 Tampa Bay Buccaneers season =

The 1987 Tampa Bay Buccaneers season was a year of great change for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers ' organization in the National Football League . The season began with the hiring of former New York Giants and University of Alabama head coach Ray Perkins . Perkins had only needed three seasons to build the Giants into a playoff team , and it was hoped that he would be able to repeat the feat with the Buccaneers .

The Buccaneers possessed the first overall pick in the NFL Draft , and used it to select University of Miami quarterback Vinny Testaverde . The Buccaneers appeared changed and won four games early in the season , but they notably lost large leads in later games and fell from playoff contention after midseason . The season was marked by a 1987 players ' strike in which regular play was interrupted for a month , while the NFL owners fielded teams of replacement players .

= = Overview = =

Perkins brought discipline to a team that had been described as " the country club of the NFL " , and rebuilt the team with youth . Perkins claimed that the Buccaneers were more talented than the New York Giants team he had taken over in 1979 , and selected a then @-@ record 20 players in the 1987 NFL Draft . He improved their conditioning program , and instituted three @-@ a @-@ day practices . Perkins ' harsh style was in stark contrast to the laid @-@ back approach of his predecessor Bennett , of whom it was said that his " idea of team discipline was everyone wearing the same color uniform on game day " . Conditioning improvements included emphasizing free weights over Nautilus machines , to improve explosiveness . Players were also given pay incentives to work out , although Perkins expressed surprise that players should need extra incentive to improve their conditioning . The improved conditioning paid off early in the season : their opening @-@ week 48 ? 10 win over the Atlanta Falcons still (as of 2012) ranks as the most Buccaneer points scored in a game , matched only in Super Bowl XXXVII . The team had a 1 ? 1 record when the season was disrupted by the 1987 players ' strike . Unlike in previous seasons , when players ' strikes stopped all play , the owners formed teams of replacement players to play the scheduled games . The Buccaneers had a 3 ? 2 record when regular play resumed , and nearly beat a Chicago Bears team only one season removed from its Super Bowl victory . The game had been preceded by much media speculation over whether Bears star quarterback Jim McMahon would play . It was the first week since undergoing surgery after being dropped on his shoulder following a play the previous November that McMahon was in the Bears ' lineup , although Mike Tomczak remained the starter for the game . The Buccaneers took a 20 ? 0 lead and dominated the game for three quarters . Late in the third quarter , McMahon came off the bench and sparked the Bears to a 27 ? 26 win , their biggest comeback in team history . Two weeks later , Tampa Bay had a 28 ? 3 fourth quarter lead over the St. Louis Cardinals . In what is now the third @-@ biggest comeback in NFL history , the Cardinals scored 4 touchdowns to win the game . The Buccaneers did not win again for the rest of the season . It was rare for an NFL team to fall into a season @-@ long losing streak following such a defensive collapse . Once the Buccaneers were out of the playoff picture , Perkins began to prepare Testaverde for the next season . Testaverde 's first start came on December 6 against the New Orleans Saints . His 369 yards on 22 completions set a record for an NFL debut , but his two early fumbles set up a Saints lead that the Buccaneers were not able to overcome . Tackle Ron Heller , dispirited by Coach Perkins ' confrontational attitude and three @-@ a @-@ day practices that he believed were causing unnecessary injuries to the players , got into a fight with Perkins at halftime of this game that led to his being traded to the Seattle Seahawks . In return , the Buccaneers received defensive lineman Randy Edwards and a 1989 6th @-@ round draft pick that was used to select linebacker Derrick Little . Neither made the Buccaneers ' squad . Heller went on to play seven more solid seasons . The Buccaneers finished the season with a 4 ? 11 record . Their 3 ? 4 division record placed them ahead of the 4 ? 11 Detroit Lions for fourth place in the NFC Central . Ron Holmes had eight quarterback sacks despite appearing in only ten games . Ervin Randle , who was named a UPI Second Team All @-@ NFC linebacker , was the only Buccaneer to

be singled out for postseason honors .

= = Offseason = =

= = = The Hiring of Ray Perkins = = =

Ray Perkins replaced Leeman Bennett as the third head coach in Buccaneers history . Expectations had been that owner Hugh Culverhouse would hire popular ex @-@ Tampa Bay Bandits coach Steve Spurrier , but Perkins was the only candidate interviewed . Perkins had been approached about the job two years earlier , but was not interested at the time . He was given the same title (Head Coach and Vice @-@ President of Football Operations) as the previous two coaches . He brought along seven of his Alabama assistants : linebackers coach Sylvester Croom , assistant coach John Bobo , running backs coach Rodney Stokes , defensive line coach Mike DuBose , strength coach Kent Johnston , head trainer Chris Smith , and defensive coordinator Joe Kines , who had previously been Charley Pell 's defensive coordinator with the Florida Gators . He rounded out his staff with Kansas City Chiefs secondary coach Doug Graber and receivers coach Richard Williamson , Buffalo Bills defensive coordinator Herb Pattera , SMU defensive coordinator Bill Clay , and Atlanta Falcons offensive line coach Larry Beightol . Perkins also overhauled the scouting staff , firing most of them (including Jim Gruden , father of future Buccaneers coach Jon Gruden) shortly after the draft . No reason was given , but some observers , most outspokenly Boston Globe columnist Will McDonough , felt that the Buccaneers ' office was staffed heavily with people whose main experience was in college football , and that the team suffered from a lack of NFL knowledge . Recently fired Falcons coach Dan Henning turned down the offensive coordinator position , as he had been trying to rebuild the Falcons and did not want to relive that experience with another team . Perkins had previously been hired as head coach of the New York Giants on the basis of his experience working with a losing franchise (the New England Patriots) that needed turning around . Perkins coached the Giants back to the playoffs , leaving four years later to succeed coaching legend Bear Bryant at the University of Alabama . Ironically , irritation over the 1982 players ' strike was a major factor in Perkins ' leaving the Giants , and became an issue he had to contend with again in 1987 . Frustration with what he saw as overregulation by the NCAA played a part in Perkins ' decision to return to the NFL . Along with \$ 750 @,@ 000 a year for five years , Perkins was given free rein to run the Buccaneers however he wanted . Some players were enthusiastic about the Perkins hire . " Coach Perkins will bring in a sense of pride here , and that 's something we 've been missing " , said tackle Ron Heller . Others were upset with Perkins ' military @-@ style manner , saying that he " made playing football a miserable experience " .

= = = NFL Draft = = =

= = = = Draft Trades = = = =

The Buccaneers received a 2nd- and a 4th @-@ round draft pick from the San Francisco 49ers in exchange for quarterback Steve Young , and a 2nd @-@ round pick from the New England Patriots in exchange for guard Sean Farrell . They swapped 2nd @-@ round picks with the Buffalo Bills , and also received a 4th @-@ round pick in return . The Buccaneers ' original 5th @-@ round pick had been traded to the Patriots for a 6th @-@ round pick the previous year . They received a 5th @-@ round pick from New England in exchange for a 4th @-@ round pick the following year , and a 5th @-@ round pick from the Washington Redskins in exchange for the rights to quarterback Doug Williams . The Buccaneers ' original 6th @-@ round pick was traded to the Pittsburgh Steelers in exchange for center Dan Turk , but they received a 6th @-@ round pick from the San Diego Chargers as part of an earlier deal for linebacker Andy Hawkins . The original 8th @-@ round pick was traded to the New York Jets in exchange for tackle Marvin Powell . Cornerback John Holt had

been traded to the Indianapolis Colts in 1986 for the Colts ' 1987 8th @-@ round pick . Linebacker Rick DiBernardo was traded to the St. Louis Cardinals for a 12th @-@ round pick . Dan Sileo was signed as a free agent after the NCAA ruled that he had used up his college eligibility , but the league voided the agreement and declared that he must enter a draft . A special draft was held in which the Buccaneers selected him with a 1988 third @-@ round pick .

= = = Vinny Testaverde = = =

Using the first selection in the 1987 draft , the Buccaneers selected quarterback Vinny Testaverde , who had led the Miami Hurricanes to a 21 ? 3 record in games he started . Looking to avoid a repeat of the previous year 's disastrous selection of Bo Jackson , the Buccaneers signed Testaverde 16 days before the draft began . Owner Hugh Culverhouse wanted to take one last shot at building the Buccaneers into a successful franchise , and made sure that money would not be an issue in signing Testaverde . In training camp , Testaverde failed to win the starting job over veteran Steve DeBerg , who coach Perkins felt gave the team a better chance to win . DeBerg was displaced for the fourth time , having played for the San Francisco 49ers when Joe Montana was drafted , the Denver Broncos when John Elway was traded for , and the Buccaneers when Steve Young was signed .

= = = Steve Young = = =

When the Buccaneers selected University of Miami quarterback Vinny Testaverde first overall in the 1987 NFL Draft , starting quarterback Steve Young became expendable . He was traded to the 49ers on April 24 , 1987 . The 49ers were concerned about the health of Joe Montana , and were preparing for the possibility that he might not recover from back surgery . The Buccaneers received 2nd and 4th round draft picks in the trade , picks 50 and 106 overall , which they used to draft University of Miami linebacker Winston Moss and Arizona State wide receiver Bruce Hill . They also received an unspecified amount of cash in the deal . Young would spend the final 13 years of his career with the 49ers , a stint which would help him secure a spot in the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 2005 .

= = = Other Attempted Deals = = =

Coach Perkins met for several hours with Oklahoma linebacker Brian Bosworth , who entered a supplemental draft after being kicked off of the Oklahoma team . Perkins and Bosworth were impressed with each other , but the rights to select were awarded lottery @-@ style , and the first selection went to the Seattle Seahawks . The Seahawks drafted Bosworth despite his having sent them a letter telling them not to bother . He expressed a preference to play for the Buccaneers . When the Indianapolis Colts failed to sign linebacker Cornelius Bennett , the second player selected in the draft (directly after Testaverde) , they attempted to trade him to Tampa Bay . Perkins had previously coached Bennett at Alabama , but the Colts , looking for extra draft picks to trade to the Los Angeles Rams to get running back Eric Dickerson , wanted two draft picks in return for Bennett . Perkins felt that this price was too steep . Perkins also attempted to persuade Bo Jackson , their first @-@ overall pick from the 1986 NFL Draft who had refused to sign with the Buccaneers , to change his mind and join the team .

= = Regular season = =

= = = 1987 Players ' Strike = = =

The NFL players went on strike during the third week of the 1987 season . Unlike in the 1982 season , in which play was suspended for the duration of the strike , the NFL continued to play a full

schedule . Games were cancelled in the third week , but returned in the fourth with rosters of replacement players . These ' scab ' players were in some cases regular players who crossed the picket line , but were usually players who had previously failed to make an NFL team . The Buccaneers ' replacement team was made up of a dozen of their training camp cuts , a dozen more players cut from other teams ' training camps , and 17 former players from the USFL 's Tampa Bay Bandits . The only regular Buccaneer to cross the picket line was center Dan Turk , although three inactive players crossed the picket line by receiving treatment for their injuries . There were a few notable names on the replacement roster . Former Bandits quarterback and Florida Gators standout John Reaves started the first two games , while former Seattle Seahawks and Winnipeg Blue Bombers quarterback Jim Zorn returned to the NFL to start for the Buccaneers in the final replacement game . Former Oklahoma and USFL standout Marcus Dupree tried out for the replacement squad , but was rejected due to health concerns . The replacement players finished with a 2 ? 1 record . Several of them , notably Zorn and kicker John Carney , went on to have successful careers as players and coaches . Three replacement Buccaneers , Brian Gant , Steve Holloway , and Paul Tripoli , remained with the team once regular play resumed . Figures later published in the Los Angeles Times showed that the strike cost owners more than \$ 108 million in potential income . All teams had less income in 1987 than in 1986 , and the Buccaneers lost money , although they were the closest to profitability of the 21 teams who lost money .

= = = Schedule = = =

= = = Standings = = =

= = = 1987 Roster = = =

= = = Coaching staff = = =

= = Game summaries = =

= = = Week 1 : vs Atlanta Falcons = = =

at Tampa Stadium , Tampa , Florida

The Buccaneers opened the Ray Perkins era by setting team records for points scored , total yardage , margin of victory , and touchdown passes thrown . Steve DeBerg was 24 of 34 for 333 yards and five touchdowns , throwing touchdowns on each of the Buccaneers ' first four possessions . DeBerg 's five touchdown passes still stands as a Buccaneers record , having been tied by Brad Johnson in 2002 . Perkins , who had played with Joe Namath in college and Johnny Unitas in the pros , and drafted Phil Simms with the Giants , said that DeBerg had one of the best games of any quarterback with whom he had been associated . In a completely dominating performance , the Buccaneers controlled the ball for 38 minutes , allowed no sacks , and converted 14 of 16 third @-@ down attempts . Meanwhile , the Buccaneers defense had four sacks and three turnovers . DeBerg did throw one interception , but on the very next play cornerback Bobby Futrell intercepted David Archer 's overthrow of tight end Ken Whisenhunt .

= = = Week 2 : at Chicago Bears = = =

at Soldier Field , Chicago , Illinois

The Buccaneers forced four turnovers and held Bears running back Walter Payton to 24 yards on

15 carries , but the offense , who also committed four turnovers , was ineffective . One of Payton 's runs was a 1 @-@ yard touchdown that broke Jim Brown 's all @-@ time record of 106 touchdowns . Payton also caught a 9 @-@ yard touchdown pass that clinched the game with 3 : 20 remaining . The Buccaneers had only a field goal to show for four possessions inside the Bears ' 30 @-@ yard line . Vinny Testaverde made his NFL debut after Steve DeBerg left the game in the fourth quarter with a sprained medial collateral ligament .

= = = Week 3 : vs Green Bay Packers , Cancelled = = =

The players went out on strike in week 3 . The main demand was free agency for all players with at least four years of service . The weekend 's games were cancelled as the owners prepared teams of replacement players . According to owner Hugh Culverhouse , it would not be feasible to make up the cancelled games , with the TV networks already having their schedules set for the open weekend following the season .

= = = Week 4 : at Detroit Lions = = =

at Pontiac Silverdome , Pontiac , Michigan

Despite advance sales of 40 @,@ 000 tickets , only 4 @,@ 919 fans showed up to the first strike game played by replacement players . Neither team had any of its regular players on the roster . Detroit punter Mike Black 's 3rd @-@ quarter fumble on the 3 @-@ yard line set up Harold Ricks ' game @-@ winning touchdown run . The Buccaneers ' three second @-@ quarter touchdowns overcame the Lions ' early 17 @-@ point lead . 17 of the Buccaneers ' points resulted from Lions turnovers . Around 1 @,@ 000 union members , including UAW president Owen Bieber , joined the Lions on the picket lines . Attendance was also likely influenced by a baseball game taking place the same day , in which the Detroit Tigers defeated the Toronto Blue Jays to win the A.L. East Championship .

= = = Week 5 : vs San Diego Chargers = = =

at Tampa Stadium , Tampa , Florida

Rick Neuheisel came off the bench to lead the Chargers to three second @-@ half scores . Partly based on this performance , the Buccaneers later signed Neuheisel as a backup quarterback . Although many veteran NFL players crossed the picket line during the week , the Buccaneers were one of only six teams to have no players cross . More than 1 @,@ 000 area union members joined the Buccaneers regulars in picketing the game , with some fans tearing up their tickets and joining them .

= = = Week 6 : vs Minnesota Vikings = = =

at Tampa Stadium , Tampa , Florida

The final replacement game featured a Vikings team with none of its regular players , facing a Buccaneers team with only center Dan Turk crossing the picket line . Tampa Bay took a 17 ? 10 lead in the third quarter , after Kevin Walker 's 30 @-@ yard interception return and Arthur Wells ' end @-@ zone fumble recovery . The Buccaneers ' offensive output was limited to two field goals . Jim Zorn had been signed to replace the struggling John Reaves . Zorn also struggled , committing three early turnovers , but got his bearings and wound up 20 ? 36 for 199 yards . The week was marked by sluggish work during practices . The players , some of whom were facing pressure to return to their regular jobs , were uncertain over whether they would have a game to play in by the time Sunday arrived .

= = = Week 7 : vs Chicago Bears = = =

at Tampa Stadium , Tampa , Florida

Chicago Bears quarterback Jim McMahon , on the active roster for the first time in the season , came off the bench in the third quarter to rally the Bears past the Buccaneers . He scored a touchdown on a quarterback sneak with six minutes to go , and tied the game with a touchdown pass to Neal Anderson with 1 : 28 to go . The Buccaneers allowed seven sacks , but led for most of the game . The Bears were aided by the Buccaneers ' poor clock management and their reliance on a conservative offense in the fourth quarter . Perkins denied accusations that they went to a prevent defense and a three @-@ man rush , but admitted that they played too conservatively on defense at the end . Steve DeBerg threw touchdown passes to Calvin Magee and Jeff Smith on the Buccaneers ' first two possessions . On the Bears ' next possession , Ron Holmes ' hit on Mike Tomczak forced a fumble that was recovered in the end zone by Winston Moss to give the Buccaneers a 20 ? 0 lead . The Bears scored two quick touchdowns in the second quarter , but the Buccaneers extended their lead with two Donald Igwebuike field goals . With the Bears struggling on offense , McMahon was inserted into the game . McMahon was 12 of 14 for 144 yards and led the Bears to 156 yards of offense in the last two drives , compared with 142 in the first 50 minutes of the game . A win would have tied the Buccaneers with the Bears for first place in the NFC Central .

= = = Week 8 : at Green Bay Packers = = =

at Lambeau Field , Green Bay , Wisconsin

Steve DeBerg opened the second half with an 84 @-@ yard drive ending in a touchdown , and followed that with a touchdown pass to Gerald Carter a minute later . The game nearly became a repeat of the previous week , as the Packers replaced quarterback Don Majkowski with Randy Wright . Wright 's two fourth @-@ quarter touchdowns cut into Tampa Bay 's 23 ? 3 lead , but this time the offense was able to hold on to the ball . Two Calvin Magee catches for first downs sealed the victory . The Buccaneers ' 17 second @-@ half points are credited to the coaching staff 's adjustment to the Packers ' man @-@ to @-@ man defense . The Buccaneers and Packers both had the same amount of net yards (279) , passing yards (190) , and rushing yards (89) . Donald Igwebuike 's three field goals broke Bill Capece 's Buccaneer career record . The victory left the Buccaneers in second place in the NFC Central division . This led to speculation as to whether coach Perkins , who had been able to lead the New York Giants to the playoffs in three years as their coach , would be able to repeat the feat in a single year with Tampa Bay .

= = = Week 9 : at St. Louis Cardinals = = =

at Busch Memorial Stadium , St. Louis , Missouri

With the Cardinals down by 25 points in the fourth quarter , quarterback Neil Lomax threw for three touchdowns in a come @-@ from @-@ behind win . One of the touchdowns was to tight end Robert Awalt , the other two to league reception leader J.T. Smith . Donald Igwebuike 's potential game @-@ tying 53 @-@ yard field goal attempt bounced off the crossbar as time ran out . The Cardinals came in on a three @-@ game losing streak , while the Buccaneers entered the game leading the league in takeaways . The attendance of 22 @,@ 449 was the Cardinals ' lowest in four years , the team having announced the previous week their plans to move to another city . Detectives were assigned to guard Cardinals owner Bill Bidwill due to death threats . Irritation over DeBerg 's celebrations after his three touchdown passes provided inspiration to some of the Cardinals , who commented , " he 's going to lose his job to Vinny Testaverde in a couple of weeks anyway " . Awalt caught nine passes for 124 yards , while Smith caught eight passes for 96 yards . Said coach Perkins of his team 's performance , " ... they whipped us in every phase of the game . Even down 28 ? 3 , they were playing better football than we were " . After the Buccaneers turned three consecutive potential blowout wins into nail @-@ biters , safety Rick Woods said that the team seemed to be playing not to lose instead of playing to win . As an example , he noted that many players turned to see how much time was left on the clock after Cardinals linebacker Niko Noga returned a James Wilder fumble for a touchdown . The next week , Woods was demoted to the taxi

squad . Offensive tackle Rob Taylor suffered a strained medial collateral ligament , and center Randy Grimes was also out for the fourth quarter with a hyperextended knee . " We should have gotten a lot more hurt " , Perkins said , and accused his players of allowing positive press coverage to inflate their egos and cloud their judgments . The 25 @-@ point lead , if it had held , would have represented the largest margin of victory in a Buccaneers road win . Instead , it became the largest fourth @-@ quarter comeback in NFL history .

= = = Week 10 : at Minnesota Vikings = = =

at Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome , Minneapolis , Minnesota

The Rob Taylor injury from the previous week became a factor as Steve DeBerg was sacked four times , two resulting in fumbles . Perkins expressed dissatisfaction with Taylor 's replacements , saying " I 'm looking for a left tackle " . Both fumbles were caused by Chris Doleman and recovered by Keith Millard , and both led to scores , including Tommy Kramer 's first touchdown pass since the previous Dec. 14 . Several players were injured , including Vikings first @-@ round draft pick D.J. Dozier . The Buccaneers threw forty @-@ one times , while rushing for a team @-@ low nine attempts . They still had a chance at victory , until Minnesota cornerback Wymon Henderson intercepted a DeBerg pass . He returned the interception 17 yards before fumbling , but the officials ruled him to have been down before the fumble occurred . The instant replay official overturned their call , but the field officials said that they could not return the ball to Tampa because the play had already been whistled dead . This outraged Buccaneer players , who claimed that no whistle had been blown . The Vikings proceeded to run out the clock . The Buccaneers had entered the game with the lead spot in the wild @-@ card playoff race .

= = = Week 11 : vs San Francisco 49ers = = =

at Tampa Stadium , Tampa , Florida

Joe Montana completed 29 of 45 passes for 304 yards , and Jerry Rice caught 7 passes for 103 yards and three touchdowns . Quarterbacks Montana and Steve DeBerg entered the game as the number one- and two @-@ rated passers in the NFC , respectively , but DeBerg was held to 205 yards passing . 2nd @-@ year cornerback Rod Jones was victimized on two of Rice 's touchdown receptions . On one of these , Rice found Jones in single coverage , and took the ball 42 yards by simply outrunning him . James Wilder carried the ball 11 times for 48 yards , and scored his first touchdown of the year on a screen pass . Two Buccaneer fourth quarter scoring opportunities ended in turnovers .

= = = Week 12 : at Los Angeles Rams = = =

at Anaheim Stadium , Anaheim , California

Rams running back Charles White rushed for 137 yards and two touchdowns , while quarterback Jim Everett threw for 208 yards and another two touchdowns . The Buccaneers only entered Rams territory twice . According to coach Perkins , " The only guy who played with guts was Steve DeBerg " . With two starting defensive linemen injured , the Buccaneers were forced to use three rookies , two of whom were making their NFL debuts . Early in the second quarter , a Mel Owens interception return set the Rams up for their second score , a run by White . White scored the Rams ' third touchdown shortly afterward . After a Donald Igwebuike field goal early in the second half , the Buccaneers attempted an onside kick , but failed to gain possession . They never again crossed midfield . Sacked three times , DeBerg suffered a hyperextended back that resulted in his being replaced by Vinny Testaverde with 10 : 44 to play . " Beginning next week , we 'll start making preparations for next year " , Perkins said following the loss .

= = = Week 13 : at New Orleans Saints = = =

at Louisiana Superdome , New Orleans , Louisiana

The Saints , having achieved their first winning record in team history , clinched their first @-@ ever playoff spot by defeating the Buccaneers 44 ? 34 . The Saints led the game for good after two early Vinny Testaverde fumbles deep in Buccaneer territory . Testaverde was given the starting job over Steve DeBerg , a change that was not revealed until gametime . " (Perkins) didn 't want to give the Saints time to prepare for anything new " , said Testaverde . In the second half , Testaverde made the Saints nervous by rallying the Buccaneers to score on four consecutive possessions . Mark Carrier 's 212 yards on eight receptions set a team record , and Bruce Hill contributed 73 yards on five receptions . The rally lifted team spirits . " There 's definitely some light at the end of the tunnel , and it 's not a train " , said Perkins . The rally came after a turbulent halftime , in which Ron Heller urged his teammates not to quit . Ray Perkins , hearing only the word " quit " , punched Heller in the head , breaking his thumb on Heller 's helmet . The Saints ' first playoff @-@ clinching win came on the tenth anniversary of the Buccaneers ' first victory in franchise history , also a road game against the Saints .

= = = Week 14 : vs Detroit Lions = = =

at Tampa Stadium , Tampa , Florida

The Lions rushed for 190 yards , while holding the Buccaneers to 47 . Lions quarterback Chuck Long was 12 of 23 for 108 yards and a touchdown , while Testaverde was 20 ? 39 for 262 yards and a touchdown . The Lions intercepted Testaverde once and sacked him four times , as they broke a four @-@ game losing streak . Testaverde was lucky that it was not worse , as three of his potential turnovers were called back due to Lions penalties . On another two occasions , balls that bounced off of his receivers ' fingertips wound up caught by other Buccaneer receivers .

= = = Week 15 : vs St. Louis Cardinals = = =

at Tampa Stadium , Tampa , Florida

Tampa Bay led early , but Cardinal defensive back Cedric Mack recovered two Buccaneer fumbles that led to 10 Cardinal points . Neil Lomax tied a team record with 12 straight completions , completing 22 ? 29 passes for 233 yards and three touchdowns . With Buc starting cornerback Rod Jones injured , Lomax exploited Bobby Futrell throughout the game . Stump Mitchell rushed for 101 yards and a touchdown .

= = = Week 16 : at Indianapolis Colts = = =

at Indianapolis Hoosierdome , Indianapolis , Indiana

The Colts ' 24 ? 6 victory over the Buccaneers clinched their first playoff berth in 10 years , and their first winning record since 1977 . Although Pro Bowl linebacker Duane Bickett did not play , the Colts ' defense did not allow the Buccaneers inside the 20 @-@ yard line . Eric Dickerson ran 33 times for 196 yards and two touchdowns . Colts quarterback Jack Trudeau was 17 of 27 for 426 yards .