

= Terrible Towel =

The Terrible Towel is a rally towel associated with the Pittsburgh Steelers , an American football team in the National Football League (NFL) . The Terrible Towel has spread in popularity ; for example , fans take their Towel to famous sites while on vacation . The Towel has been taken to the peak of Mount Everest , and even into space on the International Space Station . It is widely recognized as a symbol of the Steelers and the city of Pittsburgh .

Proceeds from sales of the Towel have raised over US \$ 3 million for Allegheny Valley School , which cares for people with mental disabilities and physical disabilities . The Terrible Towel is credited with being the first " rally towel " and its success has given rise to similar products promoting other teams .

Numerous versions have been produced ; almost all are black and gold in color with the words " Myron Cope 's Official The Terrible Towel " printed on the front . In October 2009 a pink Terrible Towel was introduced to promote Breast Cancer Awareness .

= = Origin = =

In 1975 the Steelers won the AFC Central title and qualified for the playoffs . WTAE was the team 's flagship radio station . Two weeks prior to the Steelers ' first playoff game , WTAE 's Vice President and General Manager , Ted J. Atkins , and President of Sales , Larry Garrett , said that they needed the assistance of Myron Cope , the Steelers radio broadcaster , in inventing a " gimmick " which would attract sponsors to his daily commentaries and talk show . Initially , Cope did not want to participate , saying " I am not a gimmick guy , never have been a gimmick guy . " However , after Garrett 's suggestion that a successful gimmick would be good leverage for a raise in Cope 's upcoming contract renewal , Cope replied , " I 'm a gimmick guy . "

The three men , along with other radio station advertising personnel , began brainstorming ideas . One idea , a black mask including coach Chuck Noll 's motto " Whatever it takes " , was deemed too expensive . Cope said the gimmick should be something " lightweight and portable and already owned by just about every fan . " Garrett suggested using towels . Cope agreed , suggesting the words " The Terrible Towel " be printed on the front . It was agreed that the towels would be gold or yellow , with the writing in black ? the colors of the Steelers . Franklin C. Snyder , who was head of WTAE 's radio and television stations , held the final approval of the idea . He approved the idea on the stipulation that black towels would also be allowed , in order to avoid accusations of racism from the FCC ; Cope and Garrett agreed .

In the weeks leading up to the game , Cope advertised the idea of the towel to fans on the radio and evening television news , using the phrase " The Terrible Towel is poised to strike ! " However , Atkins grew nervous that fans would think the towel was a jinx if the Steelers lost the game . Cope agreed to poll players on their view of the towel . Linebacker Jack Ham told Cope , " I think your idea stinks " ; Ernie " Fats " Holmes was also against the idea . Also against the idea of the Towel was Andy Russell , who mirrored Cope 's original thoughts , " We 're not a gimmick team . We 've never been a gimmick team . " Cope simply replied , " Russell , you 're sick . " Growing nervous about the negative feedback , Cope , who had already advertised the towel on the news multiple times , polled the rest of the players with a " banana @-@ republic vote " .

The Towel made its debut on December 27 , 1975 , in a playoff game against the Baltimore Colts . Prior to the game , Cope , whose idea had been mocked by the local Pittsburgh Post @-@ Gazette , watched the gathering fans through his binoculars from the broadcast booth . He saw less than a dozen towels while players were going through pre @-@ game warm @-@ ups . Cope recalls , " Nearing kickoff , the Steelers gathered in their tunnel for introductions , whereupon the crowd exploded ? and suddenly , by my estimation , 30 @,@ 000 Terrible Towels twirled from the fists of fans around the stadium ! " The Steelers went on to defeat the Colts 28 ? 10 . In the following weeks , the team defeated the Oakland Raiders and Dallas Cowboys , to capture the franchise 's second consecutive Super Bowl victory . Even while the Steelers struggled through the 1980s , the Towel remained a large part of the franchise . During the Towel 's debut game Andy Russell , who had

opposed the idea of the Towel , returned a fumble 93 ? yards for a touchdown . The play inspired local fan Lisa Benz to write about the Towel , which she later sent to Cope . In part , her poem read :

= = Appearance = =

The Towel has been redesigned multiple times , as well as spawning its own line of paraphernalia . The line , known as " Terrible Stuff " , includes T @-@ shirts , license plates , pillows , earrings , and beach towels ; all include The Terrible Towel logo . When originally released , the towel was available in gold and black , was a simple design and had the words " the terrible towel " printed on the front . The current version of the Towel , introduced in 1998 , adds the words " Myron Cope 's Official " on the top and " A Pittsburgh Original " at the bottom and are of a Gold color . Towels with a plethora of variations are also in production ; such variations include Towels featuring the Steelers logo , embroidered lettering , and towels with reversed colors featuring yellow writing on a black towel . Throughout the years there have also been many special edition Towels . After the Steelers won Super Bowl XL in 2005 , a Towel with the words " Super Bowl XL Champions " , the date , final score , and Super Bowl XL logo was released . The victory also spawned the production of a Towel featuring the logos of the six Super Bowls that the franchise has won . During the Steelers ' 75th anniversary season in 2007 , a special edition Towel with the logo of the Steelers ' benchmark season was added to the line @-@ up of Towels . The original 1975 ? 1997 Terrible Towel is sold as a throwback on the Steelers official website . A giant Terrible Towel measuring 54 ' x 90 ' was introduced at the 2014 home opener at Heinz Field and was " waved " by the 144 fans holding it .

= = Rights , marketing and proceeds = =

Upon the sudden popularity of the Terrible Towel , Pittsburgh @-@ area department stores sold out all gold and black hand towels . Because the hand towels were often sold as a set , with matching bath towels , stores were left with un @-@ even sets . In the fall of 1978 , Bernard Pollock , divisional marketing manager of Gimbel 's Department Store came up with the idea of putting a Terrible Towel logo on hand towels and sold the idea to Cope . The first Terrible Towels hit the marketplace on December 20 , 1978 at \$ 6 apiece . Gimbel 's could not stock them fast enough . Gimbel 's has since gone out of business . The original version of The Terrible Towel was manufactured by Fieldcrest and distributed by St. Mary 's Inc. of New York and was available in two colors : Gold and Black . The current manufacturer of the Towel is Little Earth Productions , Inc. of Pittsburgh , who took over from McArthur Towel & Sports Co. of Baraboo , Wisconsin in 2013 . The current cost of a towel is approximately \$ 10 .

In 1996 , Cope gave the rights to The Terrible Towel to the Allegheny Valley School in Coraopolis , Pennsylvania . The school provides care for more than 900 people with mental retardation and physical disabilities , including Cope 's autistic son , Danny . Proceeds from the Terrible Towel have helped raise more than \$ 2 @.@ 2 million for the school . During the 2005 season , when the Steelers won their fifth Super Bowl , more than 1 million Towels were sold ; some fans bought 200 Towels at a time .

= = Widespread recognition = =

Upon its invention , Cope commented on the multi @-@ functional ability of The Terrible Towel , " I 'll tell ' em they can use the towel to wipe their seats clean . They can use it as a muffler against the cold . They can drape it over their heads if it rains . " However , the towel is often used by fans who do not attend games . Fans often drape the towel over their radios or television sets ; some even dress their pets or babies with it .

It has become a tradition for Steelers fans to take Terrible Towels on vacation , taking pictures next to well @-@ known tourist destinations . Fans have taken the Towel to locations such as the Great Wall of China , the South Pole , Vatican City , and to the top of Mount Kilimanjaro . Hampton native

Kevin Cherilla took his Terrible Towel during his climb to the peak of Mount Everest .

Military personnel have taken pictures with the Towel while stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan as part of the War on Terrorism . Fans waved Terrible Towels at the gold medal match for Women 's beach volleyball at the 2008 Olympic Games . Prior to the 2008 AFC Championship Game astronaut Colonel Mike Fincke , a Pittsburgh Native , waved the Terrible Towel from the International Space Station . The Terrible Towel is seen in the Scrubs season five episode " My Bright Idea " , hanging on the cork board of Carla and Turk 's apartment as she comes out of the bathroom after performing what she believes to be another unsuccessful pregnancy test . During her campaign for the 2008 Presidential Election , Hillary Clinton received a Terrible Towel during a visit to Pittsburgh . During the 2009 G @-@ 20 Pittsburgh summit , visiting dignitaries received Terrible Towels in gift bags from the city . The Terrible Towel is displayed prominently and waved by Rapper Wiz Khalifa in the music video for his song Black and Yellow , which debuted during the 2010 NFL season . The Terrible Towel made an episode in season 12 of Dancing with the Stars on March 21 , 2011 . After Hines Ward danced , Hall of Fame Pittsburgh Steelers running back Franco Harris is seen twirling the towel .

= = = Honoring Cope = = =

In 2005 , Cope retired after 35 years as the Steelers radio announcer ? the longest tenure of any broadcaster with a single team in NFL history . Cope was honored by the Steelers with the release of a limited special edition Towel , featuring his name and catch phrases . Cope was made an honorary co @-@ captain for the Steelers for a Monday night game against the Baltimore Ravens . Cope led the fans in a towel wave at half time ; the Towel that Cope used is now in the Pro Football Hall of Fame .

In response to how he would like to be remembered , Cope responded , " When I kick the bucket , there 'll be a little story that 'll say , ' Creator of Towel Dead ' " . On February 27 , 2008 , Cope died of respiratory failure in Pittsburgh . The following day , an article from the Associated Press concerning Cope 's death was entitled " Former Steelers broadcaster , Terrible Towel creator Cope dies " . Upon Cope 's death , over 350 fans gathered downtown Pittsburgh in snowy weather for a tribute to the inventor . The ceremony concluded with one minute of silent Towel waving . Days later , Saturday Night Live cast member Seth Meyers waved a Terrible Towel on Saturday Night Live , in tribute to Cope .

When Mr. Cope died in 2008 , his daughter draped his coffin with a quilt made from Terrible Towels that were sewn together by a fan . She chose the quilt because it represents the many different people who touched their lives .

= = = Opposition = = =

Before a 1994 playoff game against the Steelers ' long @-@ time rival Cleveland Browns , Steelers defensive tackle Brentson Buckner accidentally dropped a Towel that he was waving during the player introductions . Browns running back Earnest Byner stepped on the Towel yelling , " We don 't care about your towel . We 're going to beat you this time . " This act " provok [ed] other Steelers and Browns to mingle . Not affectionately . " The Steelers won the game 29 ? 9 .

During a December 4 , 2005 , game at Heinz Field , T. J. Houshmandzadeh of the Cincinnati Bengals wiped his feet on a Towel after he scored a touchdown . Although the Bengals managed a 7 @-@ point victory in that regular season game , the Steelers came back to defeat them 31 ? 17 in the playoffs , on their way to a victory in Super Bowl XL . The Bengals did not reach the playoffs again until the 2009 @-@ 10 season , after Houshmandzadeh had left the team .

Before the September 29 , 2008 , Steelers game at Heinz Field , Baltimore Ravens wide receiver Derrick Mason stomped on a Terrible Towel . The Ravens then went on to lose all three of their 2008 season games against the Steelers , including the 2008 AFC Championship Game .

On October 8 , 2008 , the Steelers played the Jacksonville Jaguars at Jacksonville Municipal Stadium . At that point of their season , the Jaguars were 2 @-@ 2 @-@ 0 , and feeling very

hopeful for the season following a defeat at home of their division rival Colts . The game was very close going into the second half , and the Steelers were still stinging from a Mathis interception and runback for a touchdown . Shortly after the start of the third quarter , Jaguars mascot Jaxson de Ville stood alongside some cheerleaders , and produced a Terrible Towel , which he used to rub his armpits and buttocks . Shortly after that , the Steelers ran away with the game and the Jaguars lost 26 @-@ 21 . The Jaguars went on to lose eight of their remaining eleven games in the season .

On December 21 , 2008 , LenDale White and Keith Bulluck of the Tennessee Titans stepped on a Terrible Towel after the Titans 's 31 ? 14 victory . Pittsburgh 's Larry Foote responded , " They deserved to do that , they whooped us , they deserve to celebrate and , hopefully , we 'll see them again . " While Hines Ward said , " [T. J. Houshmandzadeh] did kind of the same thing and you see where they went . " Former Steelers head coach Bill Cowher , by this point working for CBS as an analyst on The NFL Today , mentioned on The NFL Today that such antics can come back to haunt teams . Tennessee was the top seed in the playoffs , however following the incident the Titans proceeded to lose eight consecutive games , including an ' 08 divisional playoff game and their ' 09 Week 1 game against the Steelers , 13 @-@ 10 . After the Titan 's 8th consecutive loss ? a 59 @-@ 0 blowout to the New England Patriots , the Titans worst loss ever ? Titans coach Jeff Fisher expressed regret for his team 's behavior towards the Towel , and a number of Titans players autographed a Terrible Towel and mailed it to Allegheny Valley School ? the Pittsburgh charity that now owns the trademark . The Titans won their next 5 games .

On January 27 , 2009 , at a public sendoff in Phoenix for the Arizona Cardinals before they faced the Steelers in Super Bowl XLIII , Phoenix Mayor Phil Gordon produced a towel and called the Cardinals mascot , Big Red to the stage , where he used the towel to wipe his armpits . Gordon then blew his nose on the towel . The Cardinals then proceeded to lose the Super Bowl to the Steelers , 27 @-@ 23 .

On October 11 , 2009 , the Pittsburgh Steelers played the Detroit Lions at Ford Field . Nearing the end of the fourth quarter the Steelers were up by 8 points and the Lions were marching down the field . At this time the Lions mascot Roary The Lion , stepped on , bit and ripped apart a Terrible Towel . Following this the Lions suffered three straight sacks to put them in a long fourth and twenty @-@ eight situation . The Lions did not convert and the Steelers won the game 28 @-@ 20 .

Several Blue and White " Terrific Towels " were made for the Indianapolis Colts ' in the 2009 season playoffs , one of which received some airtime during their AFC championship victory . The Colts subsequently lost Super Bowl XLIV to the New Orleans Saints .

After a 13 @-@ 10 Ravens win in Pittsburgh on November 18 , 2012 Ray Rice walked off the field waving a Terrible Towel over his head and singing Steelers rally song " Renegade " with teammates . Rice publicly stated after the game that no disrespect was intended . Two weeks later on December 2 , the Ravens lost to the Steelers 23 @-@ 20 despite being at home and facing Pittsburgh 's third @-@ string quarterback , Charlie Batch . Losing 4 of their last 5 games notwithstanding , Baltimore would go on to win the AFC North and follow that with a playoff run to become Super Bowl XLVII Champions , giving them the distinction of being the first and only team in NFL history to have shown disrespect toward the Terrible Towel and win the Super Bowl . However , prior to the 2014 season , Ray Rice was suspended due to a domestic violence incident in the offseason and was subsequently released and has not been signed by another team since .

On an October 5 , 2014 game between the Steelers and the Jacksonville Jaguars at EverBank Field , in which the Steelers won 17 @-@ 9 , Jaguars mascot Jaxson de Ville was seen holding a Terrible Towel on one hand and a handwritten sign that reads " Towels Carry Ebola " on the other hand , mentioning the deadly outbreak that started in West Africa . The next day , the Jaguars issued an apology for the incident , but would go on to lose 13 of their next 17 games .

On February 7 , 2016 , the Florida Panthers ' mascot , Stanley C Panther , blew his nose into a Terrible Towel , with the Pittsburgh Penguins down 0 @-@ 2 with around 6 mins left in the 3rd period . After this , the Penguins then tied the game in regulation , and won it in overtime . According to Elias Sports Bureau , this was the first time in Pittsburgh Penguins franchise history that they have overcome a 2 @-@ 0 deficit to win with 6 mins left in the game . Kris Letang scored the OT winner , and Sidney Crosby tied the game with the goaltender pulled late in regulation . Including the

game against the Penguins , the Panthers are 1 @-@ 4 since the incident .

= = Similar gimmicks = =

During his coaching career from 1922 to 1964 , E. A. Diddle of Western Kentucky University began carrying a red towel with him during the basketball games he coached . Diddle would wave and throw the towel during games , and the concept was adopted by fans of the college . It became an official part of the school logo in 1971 . Fans of the undefeated 1972 Miami Dolphins cheered the team by waving the " Horrible Hanky " ? white handkerchiefs . However , the handkerchiefs were deemed " too dainty " for football , and the tradition faded . " Hate the Yankees Hankies " , in reference to the franchise 's rivalry with the New York Yankees , were handkerchiefs distributed to Cleveland Indians fans in September 1977 in a promotion .

The Terrible Towel is traditionally known as the first " rally towel " ; its popularity has spawned similar traditions for other teams . Fans of the Minnesota Twins cheer the team with the " Homer Hanky " during the playoffs . The Philadelphia Phillies have distributed white towels to fans during home games . During a 2006 playoff game against the Steelers , the Indianapolis Colts handed out blue towels to rally fans , however , Pittsburgh went on to win the game . In a 2000 preseason game , played in Mexico City , many fans that filled the 100 @,@ 000 seat Aztec Stadium waved Towels . Cope , glad that the Allegheny Valley School would receive a sizable donation from the proceeds , was later disappointed to learn the towels waved by the fans were " knockoffs " made by local artists , and therefore no proceeds would go to the school . In 2008 , the NFL approved a white towel entitled the Trophy Towel , which will be sold to fans and given to the winning team of Super Bowl XLIII . Members of the Steelers criticized the idea , broadcaster Bill Hillgrove ? who worked with Cope ? called the idea " a cheap imitation . " Steelers player Aaron Smith stated , " It started here , so why would anyone else want to have a towel ? Why not kazoos ? " During the 2010 Memorial Cup the host committee made up 8 @,@ 000 yellow towels to represent the host team , the Brandon Wheat Kings , who played the Moncton Wildcats . Many fans brought the towels back for games after that .