

= 1979 Tampa Bay Buccaneers season =

The 1979 Tampa Bay Buccaneers season was the team 's fourth in the National Football League . After having won just seven games in the previous three seasons combined , the 1979 Buccaneers won ten games making this their first winning season . They finished as NFC Central division champions , and won the first playoff game in franchise history .

The Buccaneers added offensive threats to complement their solid defense ; a healthy Doug Williams played his first full season and Ricky Bell became the team 's first 1 @, @ 000 @-@ yard back , rushing for a career @-@ high 1 @, @ 263 yards .

The 1979 team not only posted their first winning record , but earned a playoff spot by winning the NFC Central division title . The playoff spot was secured in the final week in a rain @-@ sodden game against the Kansas City Chiefs , with the only score being a 19 @-@ yard field goal by Neil O 'Donoghue . They then recorded their first @-@ ever playoff win by defeating the Philadelphia Eagles behind Bell 's 142 yards rushing . Tampa Bay hosted the 1979 NFC Championship Game the following week , but lost 9 ? 0 to the Los Angeles Rams .

= = Offseason = =

= = = NFL Draft = = =

= = = = Draft @-@ Pick trades = = = =

The Buccaneers had no selection in the first round , that pick having been traded to the Chicago Bears for defensive end Wally Chambers (the Bears used the pick to select Dan Hampton) . The Buccaneers had extra picks in the second and third rounds in return for trading nose tackle Dave Pear to the Oakland Raiders . They also had extra third and fifth round picks from the Houston Oilers , as part of the 1978 trade for the Buccaneers ' first overall pick . They received a third @-@ round pick from the Baltimore Colts in return for running back Dan Hardeman . The Buccaneers ' own third @-@ round pick went to the Miami Dolphins as NFL @-@ ordered compensation for signing Randy Crowder . Defensive end Council Rudolph was traded to the Dolphins in return for an eighth @-@ round pick . Other picks were traded as follows : round 4 to the Detroit Lions for Rockne Freitas , round 5 to the Seattle Seahawks , round six to Oakland for Rik Bonness , round seven to the Washington Redskins for Frank Grant , round eight to the New York Jets for Darrell Austin , and round ten to the San Francisco 49ers for Jim Obradovich .

= = = = Draft selections = = = =

The Buccaneers doubled the size of their scouting staff from two to four , hoping to get more mileage out of the later rounds of the draft . Greg Roberts was the 1978 Outland Trophy winner , and blocked for 1978 Heisman Trophy winner Billy Sims . The Buccaneers had him rated as the best lineman in the draft , and expected him to have been selected long before the second round , where the Buccaneers had their highest selection . He is believed to have fallen to the second round due to an inability to pass @-@ block , having played at the run @-@ heavy University of Oklahoma . This resulted in a poor performance at the Senior Bowl . Gordon Jones , with a 4 @. @ 59 time in the 40 @-@ yard dash , drew pre @-@ draft comparisons to Lynn Swann , but dropped to the second round due to concerns over his speed . He was the third receiver selected overall . Roberts and Jones both left the Buccaneers after four seasons . Jerry Eckwood and Rick Berns were selected to address injury problems at running back . Eckwood had been second in the nation in rushing (behind Ricky Bell) before being injured in 1975 . Berns was at the time the leading rusher in Nebraska history . Eckwood and Berns impressed McKay enough in mini @-@ camp that he traded Louis Carter away . Gene Sanders played for several seasons , after successfully converting

to offensive tackle . Twelfth @-@ round selection Dave Logan , the lowest @-@ round draft selection to stick with the team , went on to become one of the Buccaneers ' best and most popular players .

= = = Preseason = = =

= = = Offseason personnel changes = = =

Dave Pear , the Buccaneers ' first Pro Bowl selection and most popular player , was traded to the Oakland Raiders for two draft picks . This was partly to get extra help in what was expected to be a strong offensive draft , but also because Pear had requested that he be traded if his contract could not be renegotiated . Dave Green , the punter and kicker through the first three seasons , had to be replaced when he tore his achilles tendon stepping over a tackling dummy in training camp .

= = = Cancellation of Dolphins scrimmage = = =

Miami Dolphins owner Joe Robbie canceled the yearly preseason matchup in Tampa , claiming that the Buccaneers approached the matchup with excessive intensity , resulting in Dolphin injuries . A dispute with Buccaneers owner Hugh Culverhouse was also a factor , as Culverhouse was promoting a proposed rule to ban NFL owners and their families from holding controlling interest in other sports teams . Robbie 's wife Elizabeth was the owner of the NASL Ft . Lauderdale Strikers .

= = 1979 Roster = =

= = Coaching staff = =

= = Regular season = =

The Buccaneers surprised the NFL by reeling off wins in their first five games , an accomplishment that left them as the season 's last undefeated team and landed them on the cover of Sports Illustrated . It also put them in first place for good in the NFC Central . The team 's youth became an issue later on , as they went into a late @-@ season losing streak on the verge of earning their first playoff spot . It was felt that more veteran leadership would have helped the team during the stretch run . Linebacker Dave Lewis publicly stated that the team was " choking " , while Selmon compared the difficulty of getting the playoff @-@ clinching win to the difficulty of getting the expansion team 's first win . After dropping three games in a row , of which winning any of the three would have clinched the division , McKay launched into an obscenity @-@ laced tirade against reporters who called the team a " laughingstock " and " Chokeneers " . Even against a schedule that featured only two opponents with winning records it took until the final game of the season for the Buccaneers to win their tenth game . A better conference record gave the Buccaneers the division win over the also @-@ 10 @-@ 6 Chicago Bears . Of all NFC Central teams other than the Vikings , the Buccaneers became only the second to win the division since 1970 , and the only one to advance in the playoffs . The Buccaneers were considered by many to be an unworthy division champion , even called " cheesecake champions " by opponents , until they advanced to the NFC Championship with a 24 ? 17 victory over the Philadelphia Eagles . There , with several key players injured , they held the Los Angeles Rams to nine points , but were held scoreless on offense to end their season one game short of the Super Bowl .

= = = Schedule = = =

Tan indicates game was on Saturday

===== Game 1 : vs. Detroit Lions =====

September 1 , 1979 at Tampa Stadium , Tampa , Florida

Rookie running back Jerry Eckwood rushed for a team record 121 yards , and the overall total of 229 yards rushing also set a team record . Lions quarterback Joe Reed was knocked out of the game in the third quarter with a groin injury . When Wally Chambers forced the Lions ' Horace King to fumble in the first quarter , Lee Roy Selmon returned the ball 29 yards for a touchdown . A 62 @-@ yard drive led to a touchdown by Ricky Bell , followed by a 66 @-@ yard touchdown pass from Doug Williams to Jimmie Giles . The Buccaneers then ate up 8 ½ minutes of the third quarter , finishing off with a touchdown pass to Jim Obradovich .

===== Game 2 : at Baltimore Colts =====

September 9 , 1979 at Memorial Stadium , Baltimore , Maryland

The Buccaneers overcame a shaky start in which they were penalized for 80 yards in the first quarter . Then , later , they had to overcome a fourth @-@ quarter collapse in which they allowed the Colts to score 9 points that sent the Buccaneers into their first overtime game . Doug Williams ' first pass of the day was intercepted by Norman Thompson , but it took the Colts , hampered by the loss of quarterback Bert Jones and running back Joe Washington , 9 plays to get to the end zone from the Buccaneers ' 23 @-@ yard line . Lee Roy Selmon blocked an extra @-@ point attempt in the fourth quarter that preserved the tie and led to the overtime period . The Buccaneers ' ten sacks of Colts quarterback Greg Landry set a new team record . After Randy Crowder stripped the ball from Landry 1 : 31 into the overtime period , Neil O 'Donoghue was immediately sent in to kick the game @-@ winning 31 @-@ yard field goal . McKay pointed to the now @-@ stable lineup as a factor in the team 's improvement , saying that previously , you couldn 't call an audible because " one of the guys just got here Tuesday " .

===== Game 3 : at Green Bay =====

September 16 , 1979 at Lambeau Field , Green Bay , Wisconsin

After spending the first quarter making futile attempts at running through the middle of the Packer defense , the Buccaneers sent Jerry Eckwood around the left end for a 40 @-@ yard touchdown run . Eckwood ran for 99 yards , while Ricky Bell added another 97 on the way to a team @-@ record 235 rushing yards .

===== Game 4 : vs. Los Angeles Rams =====

September 23 , 1979 at Tampa Stadium , Tampa , Florida

Jim Youngblood , who had been in on the sack that broke Doug Williams ' jaw the previous season , returned an early interception for a touchdown and a 6 ? 0 lead . Shortly thereafter , Bill Kollar recovered a Lawrence McCutcheon fumble at the Rams 27 @-@ yard line , leading to a 15 @-@ yard touchdown reception by Larry Mucker . Neil O 'Donoghue 's extra point gave the Buccaneers the lead for good . The Buccaneers further added a 5 @-@ yard touchdown run by Ricky Bell and a 29 @-@ yard scoring pass to Jimmie Giles , all before the end of the second quarter . The Rams failed to cross midfield at all in the second half , and were held to only 97 yards passing on 35 attempts . McKay , familiar with Rams quarterback Pat Haden from having coached him at USC , tailored the defensive gameplan towards him .

===== Game 5 : at Chicago Bears =====

September 30 , 1979 at Soldier Field , Chicago , Illinois

A 65 @-@ yard screen pass from Vince Evans to Walter Payton gave the Bears a 13 ? 10 lead . The Buccaneers answered that with a drive that ended with an eight @-@ yard touchdown reception by Isaac Hagins . This score , with 5 : 08 left in the game , put the Buccaneers ahead of the Bears and left them as the only remaining undefeated team in the league . It was the third consecutive loss for the Bears . Jerry Eckwood also contributed a 61 @-@ yard touchdown run , the longest running play in Buccaneers history to that point . A broken wrist suffered in this game would contribute to Eckwood 's diminished performance later in the season .

= = = = Game 6 : at New York Giants = = = =

October 7 , 1979 at Giants Stadium , East Rutherford , New Jersey

The undefeated Buccaneers lost on the road to the winless New York Giants . Giants quarterback Phil Simms , in his first NFL start , went 6 ? 12 for 37 yards . Billy Taylor , also making his first start , became the first Giant to rush for over 100 yards in a game this season , running for 148 yards and two touchdowns on 33 carries . Doug Williams threw touchdown passes to Larry Mucker and Jimmie Giles , but also threw three interceptions and numerous incompletions .

= = = = Game 7 : vs. New Orleans Saints = = = =

October 14 , 1979 at Tampa Stadium , Tampa , Florida

Archie Manning , who entered the game leading the NFL in passing yardage , went 11 of 14 with a touchdown each rushing and passing . Mike Strachan rushed for two touchdowns .

= = = = Game 8 : vs. Green Bay Packers = = = =

October 21 , 1979 at Tampa Stadium , Tampa , Florida

The Buccaneers broke their two @-@ game losing streak as Ricky Bell set a club record with 167 rushing yards , while Doug Williams threw for two touchdowns and rushed for a third . The total of 228 rushing yards was 7 yards shy of the team record set in the previous game against the Packers , and left the Buccaneers as the only team with two rushers on pace to break the 1 @,@ 000 @-@ yard mark . Packers quarterback David Whitehurst threw for a career @-@ best 261 yards , although the Packers never entered the end zone . Jeris White intercepted a potential touchdown pass that slipped out of James Lofton 's hands . The win left the Buccaneers at midseason having already achieved their highest win total ever .

= = = = Game 9 : at Minnesota Vikings = = = =

October 28 , 1979 at Metropolitan Stadium , Bloomington , Minnesota

A strong game by Doug Williams carried the Buccaneers despite an anemic rushing attack . Both teams later complained about officiating errors and the malfunctioning game clock . The Metropolitan Stadium 30 @-@ second clock failed for the second week in a row , as did both regulation clocks . The Buccaneers survived a last @-@ minute drive by the Vikings in which quarterback Tommy Kramer was penalized for throwing a pass from beyond the line of scrimmage , which helped to keep the Vikings out of field goal range . Curtis Jordan sealed the victory by deflecting Kramer 's last @-@ second Hail Mary pass . Kramer later admitted to being aware of having crossed the line of scrimmage , but had hoped that the officials would miss it as they had missed so many other penalties in the game .

= = = = Game 10 : at Atlanta Falcons = = = =

November 4 , 1979 at Atlanta @-@ Fulton County Stadium , Atlanta , Georgia

The Falcons controlled the ball for 41 of 60 minutes . An inability to complete long passes , combined with fumbles , prevented the Buccaneers from taking what could have been a large early

lead . Isaac Hagins ' fumble to Atlanta 's Tom Pridemore set up a 31 @-@ yard field goal . The Buccaneers maintained a halftime lead , despite having held the ball for only six minutes and 18 seconds in the first half . Falcon blitzing disrupted Doug Williams ' passing , and Ricky Bell and Jerry Eckwood were held to 72 yards rushing . Eckwood 's fumble led to Atlanta 's go @-@ ahead touchdown with 11 : 10 remaining . Bubba Bean 's 60 @-@ yard run with 1 : 22 remaining clinched the game for the Falcons . A 69 @-@ yard Williams @-@ led drive brought the Buccaneers to within three points with 28 seconds left , but the Buccaneers failed to recover the ensuing onside kick .

= = = = Game 11 : at Detroit Lions = = = =

November 11 , 1979 at Pontiac Silverdome , Pontiac , Michigan

The Buccaneers scored 10 points and recovered two fumbles , all in the last four minutes , to pass the Lions and maintain their two @-@ game division lead over the Chicago Bears . This was the Buccaneers ' sixth come @-@ from @-@ behind win of the season and they finished with a 4 @-@ 0 road record against division opponents . After Neil O 'Donoghue 's fourth @-@ quarter field goal , Dewey Selmon forced a Detroit fumble that was recovered by Dana Nafziger at the Lions ' 23 @-@ yard line . Doug Williams followed this with a 23 @-@ yard touchdown pass to Larry Mucker . Mucker , who earlier had been fined for missing the team bus to the stadium , beat close coverage from Walt Williams to make the catch . The Buccaneers ' error @-@ prone play , of which McKay said " we didn 't play with very much intelligence " , required a late comeback to defeat the 1 ? 10 Lions .

= = = = Game 12 : vs. New York Giants = = = =

November 18 , 1979 at Tampa Stadium , Tampa , Florida

The Buccaneers routed a Giants team that came in having won 5 of their past 6 games . Giants quarterback Phil Simms was sacked 5 times for 75 yards , intercepted twice , and gave up two fumbles . One Cecil Johnson @-@ caused fumble was picked up by Dave Lewis and returned 39 yards for a touchdown . Both sides denied running up the score during either of the season 's matchups , though the Tampa players were said to have approached this game as a grudge match . The game was mostly devoid of the trash @-@ talking that had characterized the previous meeting , the Giants having little room for words . The Giants ' 3 points was the lowest score allowed by the Buccaneers , and the Buccaneers had their second @-@ highest point total with 31 . The Buccaneers used a two @-@ tight end set , providing additional blocking that helped spring Ricky Bell for 152 yards in three quarters of play . Bell spent the fourth quarter holding an ice pack " ... to keep Ricky from getting a swollen head " , joked coach McKay . The win left the Buccaneers with an NFC @-@ best 9 ? 3 record .

= = = = Game 13 : vs. Minnesota Vikings = = = =

November 25 , 1979 at Tampa Stadium , Tampa , Florida

In a game that would have clinched the Buccaneers ' first playoff berth , coach McKay instead wound up being booed after a one @-@ point loss in which three kick attempts were blocked . A touchdown drive by Doug Williams in which he ran the ball into the end zone with 19 seconds remaining turned out to be futile , as Wally Hilgenberg 's blocked extra point left the Buccaneers one point short of tying the game . Various special teams miscues erased a good offensive day , in which Williams went 19 of 38 for 252 yards (including 5 of 7 for 52 yards and 25 yards rushing on the final drive) , and Ricky Bell 's 101 yards rushing put him over 1 @, @ 000 for the season . The Buccaneers ' 182 yards team rushing moved them into first place overall in the NFC . McKay had to issue a public apology after shouting an obscenity at the end zone stands , saying later that he was angry over racist statements being made from that direction . This was the first game that Pat Summerall and John Madden announced together .

===== Game 14 : vs. Chicago Bears =====

December 2 , 1979 at Tampa Stadium , Tampa , Florida

Doug Williams completed only 5 of 19 passes for 60 yards with four interceptions before being pulled in favor of Mike Rae . Bears quarterback Mike Phipps completed six passes , all to Dave Williams . The Bears scored on one of those receptions , and on a Walter Payton run . The Buccaneers ' Williams was nearly ejected from the game after throwing Bears lineman Mike Hartenstine to the ground by his face mask after a Gary Fencik interception . The Bears ' five interceptions were their most against the Buccaneers . The Buccaneers ' play was later described as " flat " by Bears players . Wally Chambers dismissed talk of the team 's inexperience , noting the intensity with which the team had played against the Giants two weeks prior . The last time the Buccaneers had been shut out previous to this game was the last game of their 0 ? 26 losing streak in 1977 , also against the Bears .

===== Game 15 : at San Francisco 49ers =====

December 9 , 1979 at Candlestick Park , San Francisco , California

Still needing only one victory to clinch the division , the Buccaneers lost to the San Francisco 49ers in O.J. Simpson 's final home game . It was the second year in a row that the Buccaneers lost to a 49ers team that entered the game with a 1 ? 13 record . The 49ers scored first , as Jeris White slipped while covering receiver Mike Shumann , leaving Shumann open for a 19 @-@ yard touchdown reception . The offense 's single touchdown , a 19 @-@ yard pass from Doug Williams to Jimmie Giles , was a season low , while injuries to Mike Washington and Cedric Brown left the Buccaneers ' secondary vulnerable . Mike Rae again saw duty at quarterback in the fourth quarter , with the game out of hand . Williams , who tearfully accepted blame for the loss , threw five interceptions that left McKay considering either benching him or avoiding pass plays . McKay also criticized the offensive line 's blocking , saying that he " saw (Ricky) Bell make some long runs , maybe two or three inches " . Under pressure of needing to win one game , the Buccaneers ' tension (" state of shock " , according to McKay) was noticeable to 49ers players . The loss dropped the Buccaneers into a 1st @-@ place tie with the surging Chicago Bears in the NFC Central .

===== Game 16 : vs. Kansas City Chiefs =====

December 16 , 1979 at Tampa Stadium , Tampa , Florida

The Rain Bowl

Playing in a torrential downpour , the Buccaneers scored the first shutout in franchise history to clinch their first playoff berth and the NFC Central title . The Chiefs were held to a franchise @-@ low 80 yards of total offense . Despite the rain , Ricky Bell claimed that the field had better traction than the dry field they had played on the week previously in San Francisco . Bell carried the ball 39 times for 137 yards in such bad weather that the game had to be played under lights . The Buccaneers lost four previous scoring opportunities to a fumble , two interceptions , and a fumbled snap on a field goal attempt . Shut out of the end zone on three tries with first @-@ and @-@ goal from the 9 @-@ yard line , the Buccaneers brought Neil O 'Donoghue in to kick what would be the winning field goal with 8 : 50 remaining . Tampa Bay would hold the ball for all but four plays for the rest of the game . The Chiefs players gave the Buccaneers little credit after the victory , saying that the AFC was superior to the NFC and that the Buccaneers would never have won the AFC West .

===== Standings =====

===== Playoffs =====

= = = NFC Divisional Playoff : vs. Philadelphia Eagles = = =

Tampa Bay Buccaneers 24 , Philadelphia Eagles 17
at Tampa Stadium , Tampa , Florida
TV : CBS

The Buccaneers won their first playoff game in team history by holding the Eagles to 48 rushing yards , while running back Ricky Bell recorded 142 rushing yards and 2 touchdowns . Bell 's 38 rushing attempts set a playoff record , tied later by John Riggins in Super Bowl XVII , while the Eagles ' Wilbert Montgomery was held to 35 yards on 12 attempts . The Buccaneers ' opening drive resulted in a Bell touchdown , and a Neil O 'Donoghue field goal gave the Buccaneers an early 10 ? 0 lead . Wally Chambers forced a Montgomery fumble that was recovered by Randy Crowder on the 4 @-@ yard line and led to Bell 's second touchdown run , giving the Buccaneers a 17 ? 0 second @-@ quarter lead . Trying to extend that lead before halftime , Doug Williams hurried a pass that wound up in the hands of Eagles linebacker Jerry Robinson at the Tampa Bay 11 @-@ yard line . This set up Ron Jaworski 's touchdown pass to Charles Smith . After the Eagles narrowed the gap to 17 ? 10 on a Tony Franklin field goal , a series of Lee Roy Selmon sacks of Jaworski killed the Eagles ' rally . A 9 @-@ yard touchdown pass to Jimmie Giles completed the Buccaneers ' scoring . It was only in the final minutes of the game that the Eagles were able to put together a long drive , ending in a touchdown pass to Harold Carmichael . The Buccaneers held the ball for over 36 minutes of the game . The Buccaneers ' defensive strategy revolved around stopping Carmichael and Montgomery . At one point , when Leroy Harris was gang @-@ tackled following a short reception , the entire Buccaneer defense was penalized for unnecessary roughing . The Buccaneers ' hard @-@ hitting play intimidated the Eagles ' receivers into dropping 10 passes . Going into the matchup , the Eagles were expected to have edges in playoff and quarterback experience . Jaworski was the third @-@ rated quarterback in the NFC , while Williams had the lowest rating of all NFC starting quarterbacks . The game represented a rematch of old coaching rivals , McKay of USC and Dick Vermeil of UCLA . The game was the Buccaneers ' first on national television . Word of the upset spread as far as Iran , where the hostages were surprised to learn of the Buccaneers ' contention for the Super Bowl .

= = = NFC Championship Game : vs. Los Angeles Rams = = =

Los Angeles Rams 9 , Tampa Bay Buccaneers 0
at Tampa Stadium , Tampa , Florida
TV announcers (CBS) : Pat Summerall and Tom Brookshier
Referee : Pat Haggerty

The Los Angeles Rams , who had been hobbled by injuries much of the season , entered the playoffs with the worst record (9 ? 7) of the six division winners . Rams defensive end Jack Youngblood played the game with a hairline fracture of his left leg , and Vince Ferragamo continued to start in place of the injured Pat Haden . On the other side of the ball , the Buccaneers lost Lee Roy Selmon and Cecil Johnson with ankle injuries , Doug Williams with a torn bicep , and Wally Chambers with a knee injury . Mike Washington and Dave Lewis also missed part of the game with injuries . The game was the Rams ' second consecutive playoff win against a team that had beaten them decisively during the regular season . Each team had a touchdown called back due to a penalty . The Rams also had a touchdown called back when it was ruled that receiver Preston Dennard did not maintain possession of the ball . The Rams offensive line was intact , unlike in the regular @-@ season matchup . This provided for 216 yards rushing and gave Ferragamo much time to complete passes . Another change from the earlier game was that Wendell Tyler had become the starting halfback for the Rams . With Tyler 's speed enabling the Rams to run outside , the Buccaneers were no longer able to clog the inside lanes with defenders and put the linebackers into coverage on passing downs . The Buc defense 's focus on Tyler freed Cullen Bryant to run for 106 yards on 18 carries . Meanwhile , Buc quarterbacks Williams and Mike Rae were 4 ? 26 on pass attempts . It took until the third quarter for the Buccaneers to even pass midfield , on a halfback

option pass from Jerry Eckwood to Larry Mucker .

= = Awards and honors = =

Lee Roy Selmon , National Football League Defensive Player of the Year Award

Lee Roy Selmon , NFL Defensive Lineman of the Year

Lee Roy Selmon , Pro Bowl selection

Lee Roy Selmon , Associated Press , Pro Football Weekly , Newspaper Enterprise Association ,
Pro Football Writers Association All @-@ Pro First Team selection

Lee Roy Selmon , Pro Football Weekly , The Sporting News , UPI First Team All @-@ NFC

Dave Lewis , UPI First Team All @-@ NFC , Second Team All @-@ NFL

Dewey Selmon , Associated Press Second Team All @-@ NFL

Greg Roberts , NFL All @-@ Rookie team

Ricky Bell , team MVP

John McKay , Football News Coach of the Year

The entire offensive line was honored by the National Football League Players Association as a
symbol of unity in strength , for leading the NFL in fewest sacks allowed (12)