

Get Up Off The Turf: The Doug Williams Story

by

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From the air we see it's an SRO crowd.

SUPER: JANUARY 31, 1988 - SUPER BOWL XXII

Washington Redskins vs. Denver Broncos

FIELD

During warm-ups, Denver Broncos players MARK JACKSON, RICKY NATTIEL and VANCE JOHNSON claw the turf with their cleats.

JACKSON

Look at this. It's an ACL tear waiting to happen.

JOHNSON

Like I need that on top of my groin pull. Too loose.

NATTIEL

Way too fucking loose.

JACKSON

Think the Redskins will notice?

NATTIEL

I'm sure as hell not telling them.

BRONCOS' SIDELINE

All three change to longer cleats. TEAMMATES do likewise.

INT. WASHINGTON REDSKINS LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Coach JOE GIBBS confers with offensive line coach JOE BUGLE and offensive coordinator DON BREAUX.

GIBBS

We'll announce George Rogers in the player intros but go with Timmy Smith.

Bugle and BreauX are about to object.

GIBBS (CONT'D)

I know. He only ran for 126 yards this whole season and he's a rookie. But the Broncos will pinch inside. Our offensive line will open the holes and with Timmy's burst, he'll get through. Rogers got us here but he's too beat up.

BUGLE

When do we let Smith know?

BREAUX

Right before kick-off. That way he doesn't have time to get nervous. I'll tell him we want him in there for five or six plays early.

BUGLE

I like it. That way, he won't throw up in the locker room, like we'd have to toss a smoke bomb in there to get him out on the field.

INT. DENVER BRONCOS LOCKER ROOM - DAY

COACH DAN REEVES finishes up his talk.

REEVES

With a defense as strong as Washington's, the last thing we want, and I mean the very last thing we want, is to get in a scoring match with them.

INT. ABC BROADCAST BOOTH

Calling the game are FRANK GIFFORD, AL MICHAELS and DAN DIERDORF.

FRANK GIFFORD

We are live from San Diego, California on a spectacularly beautiful day for football. And the two teams about ready to take the field. First up, the National Football conference champion Washington Redskins and their quarterback Doug Williams. Williams only started or played in a total of five games this season.

AL MICHAELS

And last year, his first as a backup, he threw one pass - an incomplection.

INT. STADIUM TUNNEL

Coach Breaux pulls rookie running back TIMMY SMITH aside.

BREAUX

Rogers isn't a hundred per cent. So you won't hear your name announced but you'll be in for those early possessions.

Immediately the "X's" and "O's" in Smith's head literally fall to the floor. But he nods 'okay.'

Seeing that blank look on Smith's face, quarterback DOUG WILLIAMS grabs him.

DOUG
This is my first Super Bowl. If you
fuck it up, I'm gonna kick your ass.

INT. JACK MURPHY STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

Redskins PLAYERS and STAFF gather on the sidelines. The crowd cheers.

FRANK GIFFORD (V.O.)
Welcome to all of you who are watching
from overseas and a very special
welcome to all our service men and
service women around the world. The
hooplah and media hype have died
down. The players have been in their
locker rooms for the past two hours,
no doubt with some cotton in their
mouths and butterflies in their
stomachs. But with the first contact,
all of that will disappear. Right
now, the Denver Broncos are about to
take the field. Here's my colleague,
Al Michaels.

AL MICHAELS (V.O.)
Frank, the Broncos are making their
second consecutive Super Bowl
appearance with John Elway, American
Football Conference MVP under center.

Denver Broncos PLAYERS and STAFF arrive at their sideline to
louder cheers than the Redskins received.

AL MICHAELS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And so it's finally here. We are set
for the kick-off of Super Bowl Twenty-
Two. Washington has won the toss and
they've elected to receive. So Bronco
Rich Karlis will kick off.

KARLIS signals he's ready and boots the ball deep to RICKY
SANDERS at the one yard line. Sanders races up field past
the ten and is thrown out of bounds at the seventeen, knocking
down an official in the process.

AL MICHAELS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
An historic moment as Doug Williams
comes out to run the offense from
the seventeen.

DIERDORF (V.O.)

And a long overdue one.

REDSKINS' HUDDLE

DOUG

Forty lead nose.

TIMMY SMITH and CLINT DIDIER are in the backfield. Doug hands off to Smith for a five yard gain.

Second down: another hand-off to Smith but the Broncos close ranks. No gain. Third and five.

Broncos' RICH DENNISON blitzes forcing Doug to throw early. He gets the pass off but takes a hit. GARY CLARK'S wide open but drops it, forcing a fourth down.

MICHAELS (V.O.)

That's something you see about as often as surfing in the Arctic Ocean.

Redskins' STEVE COX punts but it's no help to the Redskins' cause since Denver starts on their own 44, nearly mid-field. Redskins defense takes the field for the first time opposite quarterback JOHN ELWAY'S offensive unit. They huddle up.

From the shotgun, Elway takes the snap, drops back and heaves a bomb down field to wide receiver Ricky Nattiel. Making the catch at the 8 yard line, he outruns Redskin cornerback BARRY WILBURN, burning him for a touchdown on the Broncos' first play. Free safety TODD BOWLES never helps Wilburn with coverage. Cornerback DARRELL GREEN runs over to Wilburn.

GREEN

Hey, man. Forget that play. A bomb like that? Not typical. Just keep doing what we've done all season.

The point after is good. The game isn't two minutes old.

Denver 7, Washington 0.

REDSKINS' SIDELINE

A concerned Gibbs talks to his coaching staff via headset.

GIBBS

Oh, my gosh. Here we go again.

BRONCOS' SIDELINE

Elway's congratulated by offensive coordinator MIKE SHANAHAN.

SHANAHAN

We're on them early. Exactly what we want. Play our best football for sixty minutes and we're champs.

REDSKINS' SIDELINE

Pissed off, Wilburn immediately goes to Coach Breaux.

WILBURN

They caught me sleeping. I'm wide awake now.

Broncos' Karlis again kicks off, with Ricky Sanders catching it and getting no better field position than before.

Doug's hand-off to Smith gets them close to a first down before he's tackled.

Second down has Smith run to the 30. First and ten. Smith takes it to the 34 on a third hand-off.

Doug's throw is batted down at the line, incomplete. Third down and six. Williams fires to Clark but the sideline pass is incomplete again. Kicking team takes the field.

AL MICHAELS (V.O.)

Washington goes three and out on their first two possessions.

DIERDORF (V.O.)

Not exactly firing on all cylinders.

Cox punts. Bronco KEVIN CLARK is taken down at the 31.

From the shotgun, Elway throws a long pass to MARK JACKSON, but it's incomplete thanks to Darrell Green's defense.

Second Down: Elway connects with Jackson for a thirty-two yard pick-up. First and ten at Redskins 36.

Elway tosses it to wide receiver STEVE SEWELL who throws it back to Elway for a twenty-three yard gain.

GIFFORD (V.O.)

More confusion from the Redskins' defense.

Ball on the Redskins 12. A Broncos' draw play gains only a yard by SAMMY WINDER. Elway throws to Sewell, who steps out of bounds at the 6.

His receivers covered, Elway's run is stopped by DAVE BUTZ.

Fourth down: Reeves sends in kicker Rich Karlis rather than test the Redskins' defensive line. The kick is up. It's good.

Denver 10, Washington 0.

BRONCOS' SIDELINE

Linebacker SIMON FLETCHER pumps up his guys.

FLETCHER

No slacking off. This is when we amp it up. Play like we're behind.

INT. PRESS BOX - CONTINUOUS

REDSKINS MEDIA REP

The Redskins are switching to longer cleats.

Some reporters snicker.

REPORTER

Does that include Williams?

REDSKINS MEDIA REP

No word of any changes at this time.

FIRST QUARTER - NINE MINUTES REMAIN

Denver kicks off to Washington. Sanders catches it only to fumble after being hit by Denver's KLOSTERMAN. An intense scrum follows but the Redskins' KEN BELL recovers.

AL MICHAELS (V.O.)

No team has won a Super Bowl after trailing by more than 7 points at any time during the game. They've never even caught up.

First Down: Doug hands off to Smith. It's a 3 yard loss.

Second down: Doug's hand-off to Kelvin Bryant picks up a few.

Third and sixteen from the 12. Doug hits ART MONK for the Redskins' longest gain so far - 40 yards. Ball on 49 1/2. Redskins' fans cheer.

Another hand-off, this time to Sanders. Looks to be a throw/reverse but loss of a couple on a Broncos' tackle.

Second and fourteen. Williams to Bryant is incomplete as the ball hits the ground. Crowd groans.

Third and fourteen. Throw tipped by Robbins and incomplete. Redskins punt for the third time. More disappointment.

FIRST QUARTER - 6:18 LEFT

From the 28, Elway hands to LANG, takes it to 39. First down. Elway pitches to Lang again; another first down, across the 50 to the 48.

Elway passes to Nattiel. Incomplete. Elway tosses a shovel pass to Sewell; first down.

Second down: Another incomplete pass, almost intercepted by Wilburn.

Third and ten. Elway drops back with four receivers downfield only to be sacked by ALVIN WALTON. Loss of 18 yards. Broncos' punt is marked out at 16 yard line.

GIFFORD (V.O.)

For the fourth time, Washington starts from almost exactly the same field position.

DIERDORF (V.O.)

Like Yogi said, "It's deja vu all over again."

Doug's throw to Sanders picks up 8 yards. A hand off to Smith gains 26 yards. But there's a penalty.

On second down, Doug throws short to Sanders but it's dropped.

GIFFORD (V.O.)

Redskins call a time out.

REDSKINS' SIDELINE

Redskins offense aka "The Hogs," come off the field. Their frustration doesn't just bubble to the surface, it's volcanic.

JOE JACOBY

What the fuck!

RALEIGH MCKENZIE

We look like goddamn amateurs.

BOSTIC

Don't even fucking think like that.

GIBBS

What the hell happened to their 3-4 defense? We designed everything around that.

Gibbs goes up to "The Hogs."

GIBBS (CONT'D)

What's going on up front?

Center Jeff Bostic grabs a dry-erase board and sketches out Denver's unexpected 46-style defensive alignment. Gibbs' legendary ability to adapt shifts into overdrive.

GIBBS (CONT'D)

Okay, here's what we're going to do. We're going to run a hitch, get some momentum. Then we're going to run the 40/50 Gut. After we run the Gut, we'll run counter, ball 'em up inside.

Third and 12 at the 15. Doug throws to Kelvin Bryant. First and ten at the 35 - finally. Things start to click.

Doug drops back to pass. But that newly sodded turf causes his left leg to slide out from under him, twisting awkwardly. He crumples to the ground. The ball comes loose. Bronco RULON JONES recovers.

As replay runs:

DAN DIERDORF (V.O.)

Denver should have gotten a fumble recovery right then as the ball came out and Rulon Jones recovered for what would have been a near certain TD. But referees blew the play dead prematurely.

In the stands, Doug's FAMILY and Redskins' fans hold their collective breath. Then, equally collective relief when Doug gets up and joins the huddle - only to collapse again.

TRAINERS BUBBA TYER AND KIYOKI run out. Doug is clearly in severe pain. Now there is serious concern.

TRAINER KIYOKI (V.O.)

Doug, can you get up?

As Kiyoki's voice echoes in Doug's head, we

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ZACHARY, LOUISIANA FIELD - A FRIDAY NIGHT

SUPER: 1964 ZACHARY, LOUISIANA

Total darkness - until a fifteen-foot cross explodes in flames, lighting up the night sky. KLANSMEN surround it.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WILLIAMS' HOME - ZACHARY, LOUISIANA - EARLY MORNING

We hear Doug's oldest brother ROBERT WILLIAMS JR., 24.

ROBERT JR. (O.S.)

Doug, c'mon. You've got to get up.

INT. WILLIAMS' HOME - BOYS' BEDROOM

Nine-year-old Doug barely stirs in his bed.

Ten by ten, the two sets of bunk beds barely have a foot between them. Brothers LARRY, MANZIE and MICHAEL are still asleep. Robert Jr. jostles Doug in the room they all share.

DOUG

It's Saturday. No school. I don't have to get up early.

As if to emphasize that, he rolls over, facing the wall.

ROBERT JR.

It's your turn.

Doug reluctantly gets himself out of bed.

ROBERT JR. (CONT'D)

Remember what I told you about carrying it.

DOUG

You don't have to tell me twice. I'm not getting splashed again.

ROBERT JR.

Yeah, that was funny.

DOUG

No, it wasn't. There wasn't anything funny about being hosed down.

ROBERT JR.

We sure weren't going to let you in the house smelling like that.

Walking quietly so as not to wake sisters JACKIE, BARBARA JEAN and JOSEPHINE in an adjacent bedroom as well as parents ROBERT SR. and LAURA (aka M'Dear - short for Mother Dear) in the third bedroom, Doug locates the slop jar near the back door. He lifts it carefully.

EXT. WILLIAMS' BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Completely focused on the unpleasant task at hand, Doug carries the slop jar at arm's length, walking slowly and deliberately towards the family's outhouse. His arm quivers from the weight of the contents but remains fully extended.

INT. OUTHOUSE

Doug empties the slop jar's contents, wincing at the stench.

INT. WILLIAMS' HOME - LATER

The family of ten gathers around the table for breakfast.

ROBERT SR.

Miss Jeanette tells me you're running some errands for her.

DOUG

I am. I promised Mr. Will I'd pick up cat food for him, too. Oh, and Mr. Harry asked me to help out with his gardening. He said his hip is bothering him again.

ROBERT SR.

What about your homework? Helping our neighbors is good. Education is better.

DOUG

All done.

M'DEAR

Isn't Ole Miss playing at LSU today?

DOUG

Yes, M'Dear.

M'DEAR

Be back before those people drive through town.

DOUG

I'll stay away from anyone waving a confederate flag.

MICHAEL
 Isn't that every white person around
 here?

ROBERT SR.
 They're not always so obvious. You
 listen to your mother.

INT. LOCAL STORE - LATER

Doug stares up at the Coca Cola clock. All those errands
 have taken more time than he thought.

EXT. LEMON ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Carrying a full bag of items, Doug walks briskly. When a
 charter bus full of white Ole Miss STUDENTS waving Confederate
 flags slows at the intersection, he's got nowhere to run.

Doug quickens his pace, avoiding any eye contact. Then,
 something hurled from the bus hits him square in the face.
 It's a vanilla milkshake. Students laugh. The bus drives on.
 Doug wipes his face on his arm.

INT. WILLIAMS' HOME - LATER

Doug arrives home, caked with dried milkshake.

M'DEAR
 My God. Did you see who did this?

She wets a dish towel and wipes his face.

DOUG
 Even if I did, would it matter?

M'DEAR
 Let's get you out of those clothes.

Doug heads down the hall to change.

ROBERT SR.
 It could have been worse. A whole
 lot worse. Wash up. Things down by
 the creek'll be a whole lot quieter.

EXT. RIVER - FISHING

With makeshift poles, Doug and Robert Sr. fish in silence.

ROBERT SR.
 You doing okay over there?

DOUG

I can still taste the vanilla ice cream from that shake.

ROBERT SR.

Don't get used to it. You listen to your mother and me about these things. We want you safe.

DOUG

I thought we only had to stay in on Friday nights 'cause of the cross-burnings. Am I supposed to stay inside during the day, too? Why do they hate us so much? We didn't do anything to them.

ROBERT SR.

You're right. Mostly, they resent us for wanting equal treatment. Even after being injured at Pearl Harbor. Even after working construction. It doesn't seem to matter.

(beat)

It's not all of them. It only seems that way.

Doug takes that in, refocusing on the fishing. Still nothing - until he's pulled face-first into the water.

ROBERT SR. (CONT'D)

Get up, son! You've got him.

Doug fights to get back on his feet.

DOUG

You sure? I think *he's* got *me*.

Doug recovers and proudly hauls in a largemouth bass.

DOUG (CONT'D)

Will this even fit in a frying pan?

EXT. ZACHARY LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD - ANOTHER DAY

M'Dear and Robert Sr. watch this scoreless game between the all black Zachary Indians and the all black Baker Beasts.

Bases are loaded in the fifth and final inning. Doug's coach, MILTON LEE, makes a pitching change.

COACH LEE

Williams, you're in for Gundy.