

dallas cowboys history of quarterbacks

The Dallas Cowboys' history of quarterbacks is a rich tapestry woven with moments of triumph, heartbreak, and legendary performances. Established in 1960, the Dallas Cowboys have become one of the most recognizable franchises in the National Football League (NFL). Their success on the field has often been driven by the talent and leadership of their quarterbacks. From the early days of the franchise to the modern era, the quarterback position has been pivotal in shaping the Cowboys' legacy. This article will explore the historical significance of the Cowboys' quarterbacks, key figures, memorable seasons, and the evolution of the position within the organization.

Early Years: The Formation of a Franchise

The Dallas Cowboys were founded in 1960, and their early years were characterized by struggles as the team sought to establish itself in the competitive landscape of professional football.

Don Meredith: The First Star

- Tenure: 1960-1968
- Impact: Don Meredith became the first quarterback in Cowboys history and quickly became a fan favorite. Known for his charismatic personality and strong arm, Meredith guided the Cowboys through their formative years.
- Achievements: He led the team to its first playoff appearance in 1966 and was a three-time Pro Bowl selection. Meredith's ability to connect with fans and players alike solidified his status as a Cowboys legend.

Craig Morton: The Next Generation

- Tenure: 1965-1971
- Impact: After Meredith's departure, Craig Morton took the reins as the starting quarterback. Morton's tenure was marked by significant growth for the franchise.
- Achievements: He led the Cowboys to Super Bowl V, although they lost to the Baltimore Colts. Morton was known for his strong passing ability and leadership on the field.

The Landry Era: Dominance in the 1970s

With Tom Landry at the helm as head coach, the Cowboys experienced a period of sustained success in the 1970s, culminating in multiple Super Bowl appearances.

Roger Staubach: The Iconic Leader

- Tenure: 1969-1979
- Impact: Roger Staubach is perhaps the most iconic quarterback in Cowboys history. He took over the starting role in 1971 and became synonymous with the team's success during this era.
- Achievements:
 - Two-time Super Bowl champion (VI, XII).
 - Named Super Bowl MVP in 1971.
 - Six-time Pro Bowl selection.
- Renowned for his ability to perform in clutch situations, "Captain Comeback" led the Cowboys to numerous late-game victories.

Other Notable Quarterbacks of the Era

- Danny White: Served as Staubach's backup and took over as the starter in the early 1980s. White led the Cowboys to three consecutive NFC Championship games but fell short of winning a Super Bowl.
- Gary Hogeboom: Played for the Cowboys during the early 1980s, contributing to the team's depth at quarterback.

The 1990s: A Resurgence of Glory

The 1990s marked a renaissance for the Cowboys, who returned to prominence with a new generation of talent.

Troy Aikman: The Hall of Famer

- Tenure: 1989-2000
- Impact: Troy Aikman's arrival transformed the Cowboys into a powerhouse. Aikman was the first overall pick in the 1989 NFL Draft and became the face of the franchise throughout the 1990s.
- Achievements:
 - Three-time Super Bowl champion (XXVII, XXVIII, XXX).
 - Super Bowl MVP in 1992.
 - Six-time Pro Bowl selection.
- Inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 2006.
- Legacy: Aikman's leadership, poise, and accuracy made him a quintessential quarterback of his era. He formed a formidable trio with running back Emmitt Smith and wide receiver Michael Irvin, leading the Cowboys to an era of dominance.

Other Impactful Quarterbacks

- Jason Garrett: Played as a backup quarterback during the 1990s and later became the head coach of the Cowboys. His understanding of the team's culture and history influenced his coaching philosophy.
- Randall Cunningham: Although he spent only a brief time with the Cowboys, his experience and skills contributed to the team's depth during the late 1990s.

The 2000s: Transition and Challenges

As the new millennium approached, the Cowboys faced challenges in finding consistent quarterback play.

Quincy Carter: The First Round Pick

- Tenure: 2001-2003
- Impact: Quincy Carter was selected in the second round of the 2001 NFL Draft and was the first quarterback drafted by the Cowboys in the 21st century.
- Achievements: Carter helped the Cowboys reach the playoffs in 2003, but inconsistency plagued his tenure, and he eventually lost his starting job.

Vinny Testaverde: The Veteran Presence

- Tenure: 2004-2006
- Impact: Vinny Testaverde brought veteran experience to the quarterback position, providing stability in a transitional period for the franchise.
- Achievements: He led the Cowboys to the playoffs in 2005, showcasing his ability to manage games effectively.

Tony Romo: The Underdog Turned Star

- Tenure: 2003-2016
- Impact: Tony Romo's journey from undrafted free agent to starting quarterback is one of the most compelling stories in Cowboys history. He became the starter in 2006 and quickly made a name for himself.
- Achievements:
 - Four-time Pro Bowl selection.
 - Known for his impressive passing statistics and ability to lead the team in high-pressure situations.
 - Holds several franchise records, including career passing yards and touchdowns.
- Legacy: Romo's tenure was marked by highs and lows, including multiple playoff appearances but struggles to advance deep into the postseason. Despite the challenges,

his talent and competitive spirit endeared him to fans.

The Current Era: Looking Ahead

With Romo's retirement in 2016, the Cowboys entered a new era at the quarterback position.

Dak Prescott: The Future of the Franchise

- Tenure: 2016-Present
- Impact: Dak Prescott was selected in the fourth round of the 2016 NFL Draft and quickly became the team's starting quarterback after an injury to Tony Romo. His leadership and performance earned him immediate recognition.
- Achievements:
 - NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year in 2016.
 - Two-time Pro Bowl selection.
 - Led the Cowboys to the playoffs multiple times.
- Legacy: Prescott's dual-threat ability and poise under pressure have made him a fan favorite and a key figure in the Cowboys' quest for another championship.

Current Challenges and Future Prospects

- The Cowboys continue to face challenges in the highly competitive NFC East, with the goal of returning to Super Bowl contention.
- The team's ability to surround Prescott with talent will be crucial as they look to build on recent successes and make a deeper playoff run.

Conclusion: A Legacy of Greatness

The history of quarterbacks for the Dallas Cowboys is filled with remarkable achievements, unforgettable moments, and legendary figures. From Don Meredith to Dak Prescott, each quarterback has left an indelible mark on the franchise's legacy. The Cowboys' success has often been intertwined with the performance of their quarterbacks, and as the team looks to the future, the quarterback position remains central to their aspirations. With a storied past and promising present, the Dallas Cowboys will continue to strive for greatness, fueled by the legacy of their quarterbacks.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who was the first starting quarterback for the Dallas Cowboys?

The first starting quarterback for the Dallas Cowboys was Don Meredith, who played for the team from 1960 to 1968.

Which Dallas Cowboys quarterback led the team to their first Super Bowl victory?

Roger Staubach led the Dallas Cowboys to their first Super Bowl victory in Super Bowl VI, which took place in 1972.

What notable achievement did Troy Aikman accomplish during his career with the Cowboys?

Troy Aikman, who played for the Cowboys from 1989 to 2000, is a three-time Super Bowl champion and was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 2006.

Who holds the record for most passing yards in a single season for the Dallas Cowboys?

Tony Romo holds the record for the most passing yards in a single season for the Dallas Cowboys, with 4,903 yards in 2012.

How many quarterbacks have started in a game for the Dallas Cowboys since their inception?

Since their inception in 1960, over 30 different quarterbacks have started in a game for the Dallas Cowboys.

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