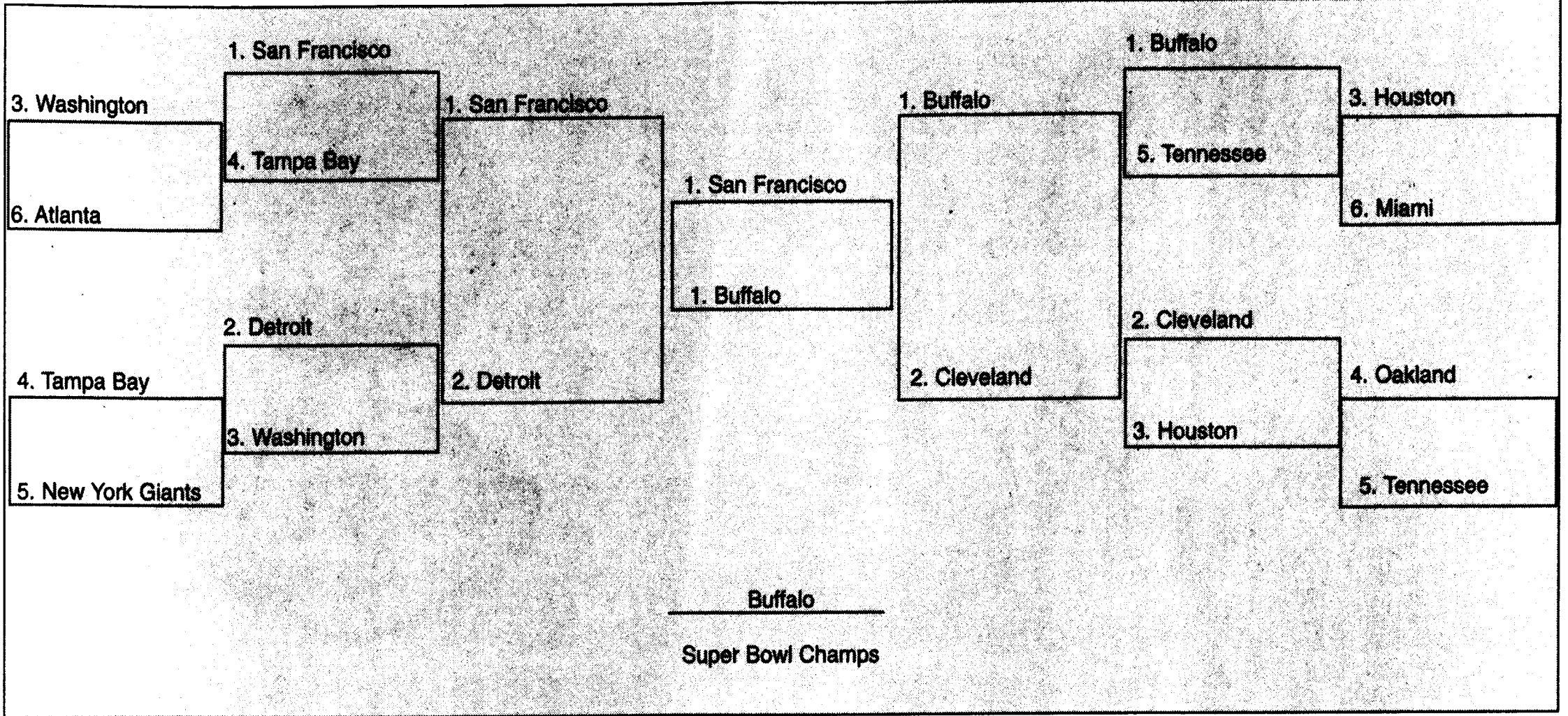


SPORTS

Sport Staff's NFL Predictions



NFC Wildcard.
 3. Washington vs. 6. Atlanta
 The back field tandem of Ladell Betts and Clinton Portis dog out a win against the Falcons rushing for a combined 206 yards and three touchdowns. Jason Campbell leads the Redskins potent offense to a decisive victory. **Washington 31 Atlanta 17**

4. Tampa Bay vs. 5. New York Giants.
 Eli Manning continues to play like, well, Eli Manning, completeing a miserable 12 for 32 completions and throwing two interceptions against the suffocating Bucs defense. To add to the Giants woes runningback Brandon Jacobs rushes for a season high 27 yards. The G-Men wish they still had Tiki. **Tampa Bay 27 New York 24**

NFC Divisional
 4. Tampa Bay vs. 1. San Francisco
 In the battle of the Alex Smith's the quarterback prevails passing for 248 yards and two touchdowns. Runningback Michael Robinson rushes for two touchdowns. **San Francisco 28 Tampa Bay 24**

3. Washington vs. 2. Detroit
 Quarterback Jon Kitna goes down early in the first quarter with a terrible case of frostbite. Luckily for the Lions, UConn standout Dan Orlovsky jumps in to lead the team in a shootout. First rounders Roy Williams and Calvin Johnson combine for five touchdowns. After the game General Manager Mark Millen recieves compliments from the press. Naturally, he's unsure how to respond. **Detroit 41 Washington 38**

NFC Championship
 2. Detroit vs 1. San Francisco
 In this low scoring battle between two defensive juggernauts, the young squad from the city by the bay squeaks out the victory. Alex Smith has a stellar afternoon passing for 173 yards and two touchdowns catapulting the 49er's back towards the glory nearly a decade removed from the iconic franchise. **San Francisco 14 Detroit 10.**

AFC Wildcard Matchups
 3. Houston vs. 6. Miami
 Texans forget about passing on Reggie Bush with Ahmed Green's 155-yard performance. Matt Schaub's two touchdown passes to tight end Owen Daniels gave the Texans an edge over the Dolphins. **Houston 17 Miami 14**

4. Oakland vs. 5. Tennessee
 Titans Vince Young rushes for 182 yards and passes for 72 yards in their victory. Raiders rookie quarterback JaMarcus Russell tosses five interceptions in his losing effort. **Tennessee 27 Oakland 13**

AFC Divisional Matchups
 1. Buffalo vs. 5. Tennessee
 The Bills do it again, coming back from a 38-3 halftime deficit. Backup quarterback Trent Edwards comes in for the injured J.P. Losman and throws five touchdowns in the second half, including one with only 38 seconds left in the game. **Buffalo 41 Tennessee 38**

2. Cleveland vs. 3. Houston
 The Browns keep using their three quarterback system and have them combined for two touchdowns and one pick. The Browns also hold the Texans to 50 yards total offense. **Cleveland 24 Houston 10**

AFC Conference Championship
 1. Buffalo vs. 2. Cleveland
 The Bills hang on in a nail-biter in Buffalo. Brady Quinn throws a late pick to seal the victory for the mighty Bills. **Buffalo 31 Cleveland 28**

Super Bowl
 Buffalo vs. San Francisco
 The Bills finally do the impossible and win their first Super Bowl. Rookie Linebacker Paul Pousluzny wins the MVP award, with 14 tackles and one interception.
Buffalo 26 San Francisco 13

Steelers look to improve on last season's setback

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On Sunday the Pittsburgh Steelers will kickoff at Cleveland Browns stadium for the start of their 2007 season and Mike Tomlin's first regular season game as head coach of the Steelers. The team has a lot to prove this year, but they certainly have the means to do so.

After a faulty .500 season in 2006, ending with a record of 8-8, and the announcement of head coach Bill Cowher's retirement, the Steelers are leaving their old habits and multiple mistakes in the past and looking towards the 2007-08 season with plenty of optimism, starting with a few new faces and on

top of that, a healthy quarterback.

Beginning last season recovering from a near fatal motorcycle accident, an emergency appendectomy, and multiple concussions throughout the year, Ben Roethlisberger says he is feeling "happy and healthy" this year. After experiencing the frustrations of watching Big Ben throw pass after pass into the hands of the opposition (making him the leader in interceptions last season), Pittsburgh Steeler fans have high expectations for the young quarterback.

One of the Steelers biggest challenges at the start of this season will be to get people to forget last year. With new faces on the coaching end as well as on the field, the team is headed in the right direction. New names on the coaching side include head coach Mike Tomlin, Minnesota Vikings defensive coordinator in 2006, and Bruce Arians who was

promoted from wide receiver coach for the Steelers last season to offensive coordinator, replacing Ken Whisenhunt for the 2007 season. Tomlin is just the third head coach for the Steelers since 1969.

The main focus on the offense this season will be running back Willie Parker. Parker scored 13 touchdowns and ran for 1,494 yards last year. The defense should remain solid with returning players like linebackers James Farrior, Clark Haggans and Larry Foote, along with (arguably) Pittsburgh's most feared player on the defense, safety Troy Polamalu. Polamalu signed a contract over the summer with the Steelers, guaranteeing his commitment to the team for another four years.

While on the topic of contracts, offensive lineman Alan Faneca has made Steeler fans a little weary. After a contract dispute between him and Steelers

management, Faneca has made it clear that this will be his last season as a Pittsburgh Steeler and cannot guarantee how much focus he will be able to bring to the team this year.

In order to stand a chance in the post-season, the Steelers need to start off the first half of their season with a winning record, opposite of last years 2-6 first half record. Starting the season against the Cleveland Browns should help; the Steelers have won 13 of the last 14 games against the Browns and have gone 6-0 at Cleveland. On Sunday, the Steelers will look to make it seven.

So get your cuzzies ready and put your jerseys on, fill your beer mugs up and brush the dust off that Terrible Towel because the Pittsburgh Steelers are going to give you something to cheer about this season.