

SPORTS

Steelers prepare for Super Bowl XLIII

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On Feb. 1, 2009, the Pittsburgh Steelers will set out to do what no other team has done in NFL history. Win a sixth Super Bowl title.

The Steelers are currently in a three-way tie for most championships won by a franchise. The record is five held by the Steelers (1974, '75, '78, '79, 2005), the Dallas Cowboys (1971, '77, '92, '93, '95) and the San Francisco 49ers (1981, '84, '88, '89, '94).

This past season was a tough one for the Black and Gold, as they went up against one of the toughest schedules in the league.

The Steelers finished with an overall record of 12-4 and won the AFC North division, as well as the AFC which put them in the Super Bowl.

The trademark of Pittsburgh's success this season was their "steel curtain" defense. The Steelers have always been known for their strong defense. This sea-

son was no different, but it may be one of the greatest the franchise has even seen.

"Without a doubt this is the best defense that I've ever played on," safety Troy Polamalu said. "This team had to rely more on defense."

Polamalu himself has been a major contributor to his team's success this season, and his teammates are expect him to have a big game.

"Troy does some things that you wouldn't expect," wide receiver Nate Washington said. "Troy is a great competitor. He plays with a passion for this game. There are a lot of guys in this league that you might question why they are here. Troy is not one of those guys. He plays with fire. He plays with his heart. That's what makes him a great leader on this team and a great player in the NFL."

The offense of the Black and Gold struggled early on in the season, and it put a lot more pressure on the defense to play well, and with intensity.

The Steelers' defense this year ranked number one in the league giving up only 237.2 yards per game, and was a major reason that they will be playing in the Super Bowl.

In Super Bowl XLIII, the Steelers will have the daunting task of covering one of the game's best receivers in the Arizona Cardinals' Larry Fitzgerald.

"I hope we can stop him," NFL Defensive MVP James Harrison said. "We're sure going to try. He's got every weapon at his disposal. He has speed. He has great hands and can jump out of the gym. We're just going to hope we can contain him."

Pittsburgh head coach Mike Tomlin also knows that Fitzgerald will be a tough job.

"If you get down the field one-on-one with him, he's going to come back with the football," said Tomlin. "He's the best in the world at that, bar none."

The Steelers' offense, on the other hand, was not their strong suit in the regular season, ranking 22nd in the league. They averaged only 206.3 passing yards per game (17th) and 105.6 rushing yards per game (23rd).

The offense has come around for Pittsburgh, when it really counts, in the playoffs.

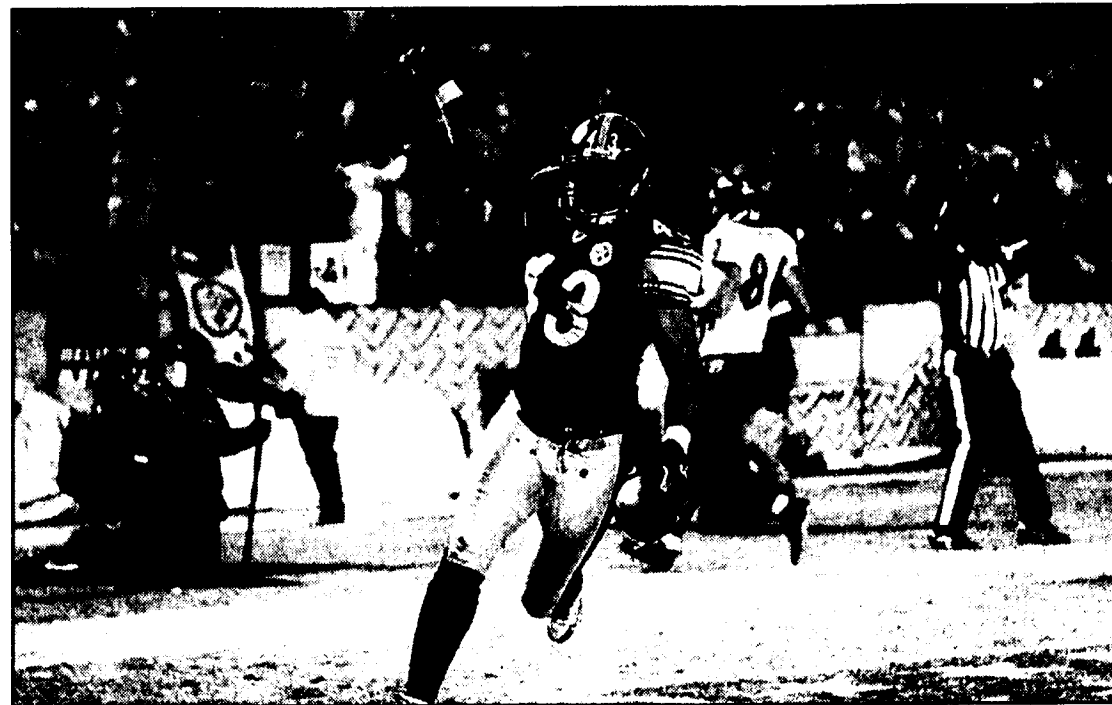
Quarterback Ben Roethlisberger was sacked an astounding 47 times in the regular season, but thanks to a step up in the offensive line, he was sacked only 5 times in the postseason.

The offensive line for the Steelers have suffered some injuries and have been labeled as one of the weaker offensive lines in the league. They have been able to push through it though.

"They've been underdogs all year and I think they like that," Roethlisberger said. "They thrive on that adversity."

Roethlisberger has also stepped up his play in the postseason. He threw 15 interceptions in the regular season and had a quarterback rating of 80.1. In the postseason he has thrown no interceptions and his quarterback rating has improved to 90.8.

Roethlisberger is without a doubt playing his best football of the season and he doesn't want to treat this Super Bowl like he



Steelers' safety Troy Polamalu celebrates a touchdown scored on an interception

treated it in 2005.

"I'm treating it more like game. Yeah, it's a Super Bowl, and we have an opponent, but it's just about having fun," said Roethlisberger. "I treated it like a big game the first time and it didn't work out so well for me. I'm going to try and treat it like it's a normal game. You know what's going on and you know it's more than that, but I'm just going to come out here and have fun on Sunday."

A concern facing the the Black and Gold on the offensive side of the ball was the condition of wide receiver Hines Ward. Ward injured his knee in the first quarter of the AFC Championship game against the Baltimore Ravens.

Last Thursday, Ward let Steelers' fans breathe a collective sigh of relief when he announced that he would play in the Super Bowl.

"I am putting in 24 hours of treatment," Ward said. "I am getting treatment at 1 a.m., 4 a.m., 7 a.m. and all day through the work day. I will play, I will definitely play."

No matter what has happened, the Steelers have forgotten the past and are going to focus on the task at hand. Both sides of the ball will have to play their best football of the season. The Pittsburgh defense and offense will both have to be on the top of their game to get past a surging Cardinals team.

Editorial: Cocky Steelers fans have another thing coming

By Chris Alphen
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"The greatest franchise in sports." "The most dominate team in history." "The juggernaut of the National Football League." These are some of the ways Steeler fans at Penn State Erie, the Behrend College describe their favorite team.

"The Steelers are the greatest thing to grace this green earth," Pittsburgh native Thomas Wotherspoon says.

The cockiness, the confidence, and the volume of Steeler fans on the Behrend campus is more evident than ever this week leading up to Super Bowl XLIII.

However, at Penn State Behrend on Super Bowl Sunday, there will be joyfulness and gloominess no matter which team is holding the Lombardi Trophy at the end of the game.

A majority of on campus fans are Steelers fans, followed by Browns fans; Bills fans are quietly represented, and the small rest of us are fans of a spread of teams, including my team, the New England Patriots.

It is easy to say that all of us non-Steelers fans will be Cardinals fans on Super Bowl Sunday.

We will be Cardinals fans not because we are jealous, or because we don't respect the Pittsburgh Steelers. We will be Cardinals fans because it is the fans less than two hours south of Erie that we do not respect.

Steeler fans walk around campus in their black and gold, thinking their team's players are the Greek gods of the current day.

"The Steelers have the most successful franchise in the NFL, hands down," Archie Isherwood, a sophomore and an avid Steeler fan explains to me.

We, other fans, will be rooting for the Cardinals for the way you disrespectfully look down on Browns fans.

The way you talk about the past when the present looks bad, or the way you love to talk loud about the present when it is good.

We will all be rooting for against the Steelers on Sunday for all those excuses you make when your team loses and how it's every ones but your own team's fault when things are bad.

We will be rooting against the Steelers because you guys still constantly talk about Super Bowl wins you weren't even alive for. We are not rooting against

Pittsburgh because we are jealous. As a Patriots fan I have nothing to be jealous about; I've seen my team in the Super Bowl a few times (five). We are rooting against them so that you might realize how mortal the Pittsburgh Steelers really are.

"No doubt the Steelers win. It won't even be worth watching. It's going to be a blow out," Danielle Zamick tells me.

Steelers fans throughout campus seem pretty confident about their chances in Sunday's game. Pretty confident for a team that won five of their twelve regular season games by only seven points or less.

"The outcome of Sunday's game will read Steelers 24, Cardinals 13, Pittsburgh native Adam Clements explains to me. "The Cardinals haven't faced a [defense] like ours all season."

Behrend Steeler fans are pretty confident going against a team with an explosive offense, headed by an experienced quarterback and a couple of great wide receivers.

"The steel curtain will be too much for the Cards to handle and Willie Parker is going to run all over the Cardinals defense," says Isherwood.

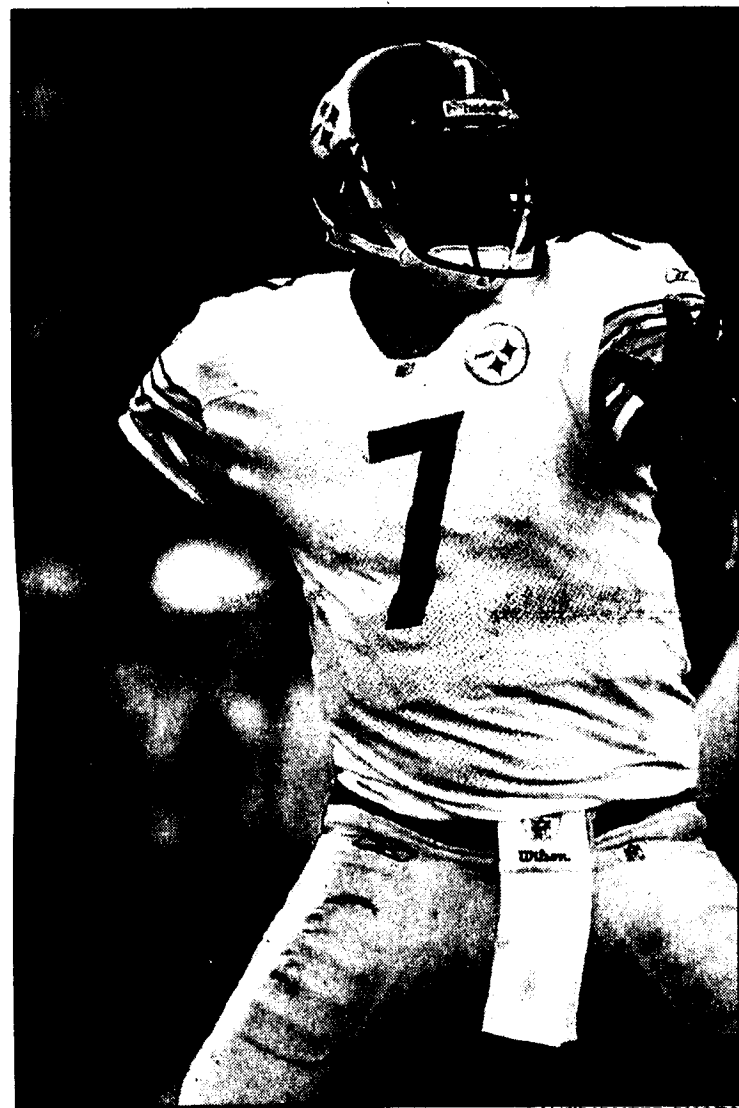
Sophomore Dale Edwards confidently tells me that the Steelers on Super Bowl Sunday will have "a strong pass rush, meaning blitzing the slow, older Warner all day."

Pittsburgh natives do not say we non-Steeler fans aren't classy or aren't tasteful for rooting against a team in a game that our respective teams are not even in. As a New England native I remember a game a year ago where all Pittsburgh fans wore Giants blue for a day.

So as you're waving your terrible towel that you never wash, just remember all the rest of us without a towel will be rooting against you.

Just remember: when the Arizona Cardinals accept the Lombardi trophy for the first time, no one will care about the five times the Steelers did.

Just remember: when the final seconds run off that clock and the Cardinals began their celebration, all of us non-Steelers fans will not scream or holler, as you might do, we will just quietly crack a smile



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Ben Roethlisberger prepares to fire a pass downfield.

Beat The Experts

The standings reami- an close two weeks into the semester. Will Rachel be able to hold her place on top? Will Matt claw his way out of last?

Want to play?

Email cen5056@psu.edu for a list of next week's games to see if you can "beat the experts."

	Connor	Matt	Rachel	Christine	Nick
NCAA MEN'S BASKETBALL					
Valparaiso @ #13 Butler	Butler	Butler	Butler	Butler	Butler
Providence @ #2 Connecticut	UConn.	UConn.	UConn.	UConn.	UConn.
#1 Wake Forest @ Georgia Tech	Wake	Wake	Wake	Wake	Wake
Penn State @ #9 Michigan State	Mich.St.	Mich.St.	Mich.St.	Mich.St.	Mich.St.
Iowa @ #20 Illinois	Illinois	Illinois	Illinois	Illinois	Illinois
#17 Purdue @ Ohio State	Purdue	Purdue	Purdue	Purdue	Purdue
Lake Erie College @ S. Dakota	Lake Erie	S.Dakota	Lake Erie	S.Dakota	Lake Erie
Campbell @ Mercer	Mercer	Campbell	Mercer	Mercer	Mercer
Pennsylvania @ Harvard	Penn.	Harvard	Penn.	Harvard	Penn.
NCAA WOMEN'S BASKETBALL					
#1 UConn. @ Georgetown	UConn.	UConn.	UConn.	UConn.	UConn.
#9 Stanford @ UCLA	Stanford	Stanford	Stanford	Stanford	Stanford
#4 Baylor @ #16 Texas	Baylor	Baylor	Baylor	Baylor	Baylor
#14 Kansas St. @ #22 Iowa St.	Kansas St.	Kansas St.	Kansas St.	Kansas St.	Kans. St.
#6 Louisville @ Providence	Louis.	Louis.	Louis.	Louis.	Louis.
Towson @ Delaware	Delaware	Towson	Delaware	Delaware	Delaware
Longwood @ Virginia	Virginia	Long.	Long.	Virginia	Virginia
Rider @ Canisius	Canisius	Canisius	Canisius	Rider	Canisius
Hawaii @ Utah State	Hawaii	Hawaii	Hawaii	Utah St.	Hawaii
Season Totals:	22-13	19-16	24-11	20-15	23-12