THE FORGOTTEN HISTORY OF THE NFL'S SINGLETON

WHEN MISCUES, LUCK, AND IMPROVISATIONAL SKILL TURNED EXTRA POINTS INTO FOOTBALL MAGIC

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

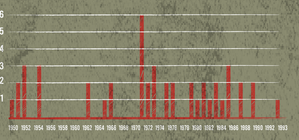
A "SINGLETON" IS A 1-POINT CONVERSION SCORED BY A RUN OR PASS.

OUR TIMEFRAME COVERS THE **1950 – 1993** NFL SEASONS.

LEGENDARY ANNOUNCER PAT SUMMERALL CALLED SUCH A PLAY A "SINGLETON" DURING A 1972 HIGHLIGHT VIDEO.

THE SINGLETON ARCHIVE:

Before the NFL introduced the two-point conversion in 1994, running or passing plays on extra points were never planned.



45 REMARKABLE SCORES FROM 1950–1993

THE SINGLETONIANS

THE FRATERNITY OF "SINGLETONIANS" INCLUDES 49 PLAYERS WHO RAN, CAUGHT OR THREW FOR A SINGLETON. BELOW ARE SOME OF THE NOTABLE MEMBERS, RANGING FROM HALL OF FAMERS TO FORGOTTEN NAMES.

GRIDIRON UNICORNS

COMPARING THE NFL'S RAREST SPECIAL-TEAMS SCORING PLAYS

Like blocked field-goal and punt returns, singletons are volatile, boom-and-bust plays driven by three elements

BREAKDOWN: Initiated by a special teams failure.

BOUNCE: Reliant on a lucky bounce

IMPROVISATION: Players turn an error into scoring chance.

When compared as a percent of attempts, singletons live in the same statistical neighborhood as these familiar plays, just slightly rarer.

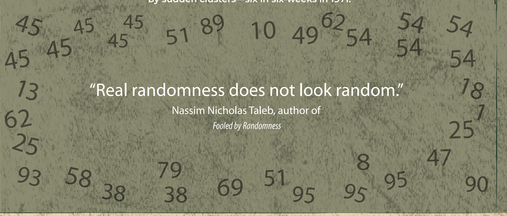
FREQUENCY OF RARE SPECIAL-TEAMS SCORING PLAYS

1950–1993	SINGLETONS	BLOCKED PUNT RETURNS	BLOCKED FG RETURNS
TOTAL OCCURRENCES	45	51	121
AVERAGE PER SEASON	1.02	1.16	2.75
PERCENT OF ATTEMPTS	0.13%	0.20%	0.18%

DROUGHTS & DELUGES

THE RANDOMNESS OF THE SINGLETON

Singletons averaged about one per season, but they rarely followed an orderly timeline. Multi-year droughts were followed by sudden clusters—six in six-weeks in 1971.

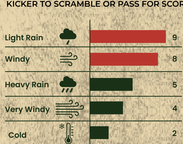


"Real randomness does not look random."

Nassim Nicholas Taleb, author of *Fooled by Randomness*

THE METEOROLOGICAL GOLDILOCKS ZONE

THE ZONE OF WEATHER THAT IS JUST BAD ENOUGH TO CAUSE A BAD SNAP OR DROP, BUT MILD ENOUGH TO ALLOW THE HOLDER OR KICKER TO SCRAMBLE OR PASS FOR SCORE.

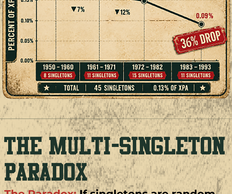


THE TURF TWIST

Singletons were not confined to torn-up, muddy grass fields. Artificial turf actually provided a better environment for singletons.

SPECIAL TEAMS EVOLUTION

THE DRASTIC DROP OF SINGLETONS AS A PERCENTAGE OF EXTRA POINTS ATTEMPTED (XPA) IN 1983-1993 MIRRORS THE RISE OF MODERN SPECIAL TEAMS



THE RISE OF THE THIRD PHASE

1950: Unlimited substitution opens door to greater specialization

1950s: Roster limits keep kicking specialists scarce

1960s: Soccer-style kicking revolution begins

1970s: Kickers and punters evolve into nearly exclusive specialists

1978: Roster sizes expanded to 45 for remainder of era.

1983–1993: Dedicated special teams coaching takes hold

FROM 1950 TO 1993, SPECIAL TEAMS SLOWLY EVOLVED FROM AN AFTERTHOUGHT TO A TACTICAL PRIORITY.

THE MULTI-SINGLETON PARADOX

The Paradox: If singletons are random, why did just eight players score 40% of them?

While execution failures create the opportunity, capitalizing on that chaos multiple times requires a player with a unique set of physical and mental skills.

"It was lucky, sure, but you have to do the right thing even when you get lucky."

BOBBY DOUGLASS
QB and three-time Singletonian

EXPLORE THE COMPLETE STORY

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Project created and developed by Tim Castelli