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cided before halftime. On their first offensive snap, the Oilers ran the same play that Earl Campbell used to gain 10 yards during the teams' meeting in the Astrodome one month before. This time, Jack Ham stuffed it for a 2-yard loss, and it was the start of a day when he was the best player in a Steelers uniform.

Ham accounted for three turnovers that led to 17 points, and he finished with four tackles, a forced fumble, a sack, one interception and two fumble recoveries. The perception today is that the Steelers offense was dominant in what turned out to be a 34-5 win, but Noll's appraisal at the time was the opposite.

"I'll tell you one thing — our defense does a helluva job whenever our offense makes a mistake," said Noll. "This defense has had an attitude over the years that when it goes on the field, no matter where it goes in on the field, it will get the football back. That's allowed us to do the things we've done over the years.

"Our football team wanted an unconditional surrender today ... And we got it."

The Steelers were headed to their third Super Bowl in five seasons, and Dallas was headed to its fourth. The winner of Super Bowl XIII would make NFL history as the first team to win three Lombardi trophies, and the game itself was a rematch of Super Bowl X. Both franchises believed they were the best in the NFL, and this matchup allowed it to be settled on the field.

There were a couple of weeks of hype to really rev the engine, and in Pittsburgh Lambert was one of the first to weigh in with an opinion.

"I think we're the best team in football. The difference is that we have the confidence back."

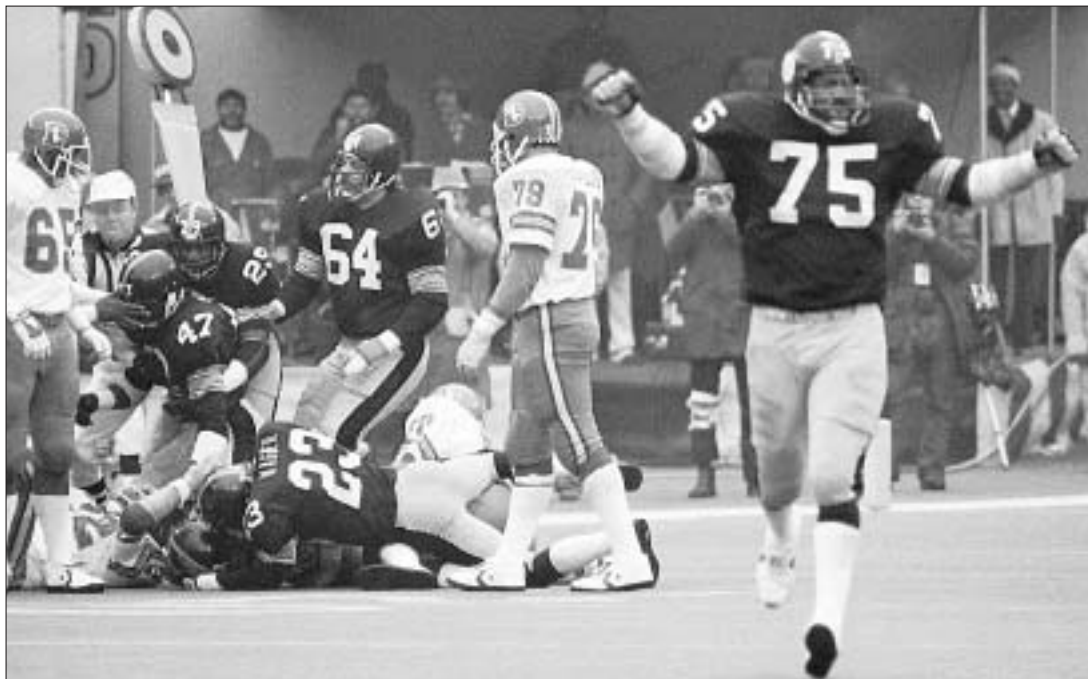
One of the things that made Noll so successful in Super Bowls was the way he approached the hype. While so many coaches gritted their teeth at everything they viewed as a distraction, Noll believed the Super Bowl was to be enjoyed.

"It's a fun week," said Noll, who always installed his game plan before the team left for the site of the game. "No other week in the season is like it. We don't view this as a distraction. The distractions keep you from being there. Now you're there. We have some guys who want some exposure, and they should enjoy it."

One of the guys Noll was talking about was Bradshaw, who craved recognition as a great player and who had a history of playing better when he was enjoying himself.

Bob Adams, a tight end who would be waived before the start of the 1972 season, had said about Bradshaw: "Watching Terry Bradshaw play quarterback is like watching a rose bloom in slow motion." In 1978, the rose had bloomed.

Bradshaw was named the MVP of the NFL, and the way the Cowboys were trying to get into his head simply proved how valuable he was. This was the Super Bowl where Thomas "Hollywood" Henderson uttered his infamous "Bradshaw is so stupid he couldn't spell c-a-t if you spotted him the 'c' and the 'a' " line was born. While Henderson was working on Bradshaw, other Cowboys players promised this outcome would be different than Super Bowl X be-



**Joe Greene (75) celebrates his block of a Denver field goal attempt, which was one of the biggest plays in the Steelers' 33-10 rout in the first round of the 1978 playoffs.**

cause that Dallas team was loaded with inexperienced players.

"Some of the Cowboys seem to think they were a young ballclub then," said Greene.

"They're publicizing the fact they had 14 rookies, but they didn't play except on special teams.

"I wish I had the courage to talk like that. There's been a lot of talk about the rookies they had ... about how good they are in all areas — scouting, drafting, coaching, management. They are good, but our ballclub is in the same class. We don't say we're the best. We do whatever is necessary to get the job done.

"I enjoy this game because it ends all the talk."

As the game drew closer, everyone tired of the hype.

Grouched Lambert about Henderson's "Hollywood" persona, "Even a chimpanzee can get attention down here."

The game was a classic, and Bradshaw was at the center of it all. He passed for 317 yards on just 17 completions, and four went for touchdowns. His fumble was returned 37 yards by Mike Hegman in the second quarter to give the Cowboys a 14-7 lead. Swann and Stallworth each had a 100-yard receiving day, and the Steelers put the game away with a 14-point blitz within a minute midway through the fourth quarter. Dallas scored twice in the final 2:27 to make it close, 35-31.

But what was truly special was Bradshaw's command of the game — he called all of his own plays while Roger Staubach executed what was sent in from the sideline — and a prime example was his play-calling on the first of those two critical fourth-quarter touchdowns.

On third-and-4 from the Dallas 17-yard line, the Steelers were flagged for delay of game just before the snap, but Henderson took advantage of the situation to take a free shot at Bradshaw. Harris was livid, and Bradshaw noticed; he called a tackle-trap on third-and-9 with the

Cowboys blitzing in anticipation of a pass. Harris exploded for the 22 yards and the touchdown.

"I know I'm playing better than I ever did before, but I don't know why," said Bradshaw after the game. "I can't put my finger on it. This has been my luckiest year, I know that. Lynn Swann and those guys are scoring touchdowns with passes that shouldn't even be caught. They help a guy's confidence."

Then came his parting shot: "Go ask Henderson how smart he thinks I am now."

The Steelers' performance in the playoffs was representative of their performance throughout the season. They played three games and scored more than 30 points in each; Bradshaw passed for eight touchdowns and had a rating of 104.1; the offense scored 13 touchdowns; and the defense recorded 16 sacks and forced 14 turnovers.

Afterward it was vintage Noll, refusing to appear impressed, when he said during his postgame remarks that the Steelers hadn't "peaked" yet. Cracked Ham, "I thought we were coming in for practice on Tuesday."

But once the team returned to Pittsburgh, Noll reflected on what was accomplished. "In every area, this football team has proved itself. Our victory was manifested through action, not words. A lot of people think they can win football games through legislation. The rules changes helped us offensively, and defensively we got ball reaction in the secondary."

In Dallas, when the Cowboys got home, there was a lot of complaining about a pass interference penalty called on Bennie Barnes that was a big play on the touchdown drive that gave the Steelers a 28-17 lead. The whining irked Noll because it implied his team's victory somehow was tainted, and he eventually responded.

When the Steelers were presented with their rings for winning Super Bowl XIII, Noll complimented the design and then added, "And if you push this little button on the side, you can hear Landry bitching."