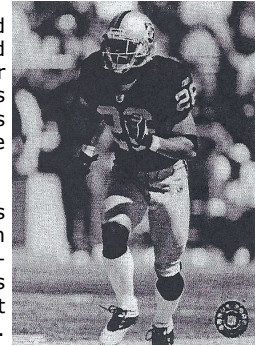




# HONOR ROLL



July 27, 2004 marked the end of the career of one of the all-time greats in the NFL. Rod Woodson's playing career ended as an NFL player at the age of 39 as the NFL's all-time record holder with 12 interceptions returned for touchdowns, interception return yards and is tied for the record for most fumble recoveries in a game with 3. Woodson's stats were staggering in his 17 year NFL career: 71 interceptions, 1483 interception yards, 2362 punt return yards as well as 15 total touchdowns. Add to that his three Super Bowl appearances with Pittsburgh, Baltimore and Oakland and 11 Pro-Bowl selections and you have a career that most players only dream of.



Rewind 24 years before Woodson's final day as an NFL player. This is a time before the success of the NFL. This is even before the legendary performances for the Boilermakers when Woodson was a high school athlete at R. Nelson Snider High School in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Woodson began his high school as a sophomore, as Snider did not have a freshman class in those days. His athletic ability was well known by then to Coach Mike Hawley and his coaching staff, but he spent a majority of the season on the JV squad perfecting his skills and learning the Snider system. During that sophomore season he received a couple of varsity call ups but had limited playing time.

Woodson really began to show his greatness during his junior season. That year the Panthers were undefeated before falling to Carmel in the state championship game. Woodson never came off the field playing free safety, slot back and returning punts and kicks. For his efforts he amassed huge numbers that season including 1200 all-purpose yards. On offense, Woodson was able to use his speed and toughness carrying the ball 92 times averaging 5 yards per carry as well as catching the ball for 161 yards. On special teams he returned punts at an average of 9.6 yards and kicks at 16.1 yards per return.

It was on defense, however, that Woodson really made his mark. While defensive stats aren't still available from his high school playing days, he was a two time all-state selection at defensive back. "His speed was unbelievable at free safety," said Woodson's high school coach and former Snider athletic director Mike Hawley. Hawley continued, "He was versatile and durable with a great vertical. He could deliver a blow. He also had a ton of interceptions for us."

Woodson's success carried over to his senior year where he racked up over 1400 all-purpose yards including an increase to an average of 11 yards per carry from his slot back position, scored over 90 total points and increased his kick return averages to 18 and 12 yards per return respectively. "It would have been fun to see Rod at tailback," remarked Hawley, "but we had an all state tailback in John Ramsey and it was best for the team that we have them in the backfield at the same time."

Even with the offensive success it was still defense that Woodson was known for. He received his second all state selection at Slot Back as well as being chosen to the Parade Magazine, National High School Football Coaches Association and Gatorade All American teams following his senior season. He also became one of the most sought after recruits in the nation.

The recruiting trail for Woodson took him around the country including trips to UCLA, Arizona, Hawaii and Wisconsin among others. His heart was in Indiana though and his first choice had always been Purdue. When the Boilers came calling with a full scholarship offer Woodson signed.

Woodson's Purdue career was very successful as well. At one time he held or was tied for 7 different Boilermaker records. Those records included career interceptions, interception touchdowns, career fumble recoveries, season kick off returns, season kickoff return yards, career combined return yards and the longest play from scrimmage: a 100 yard INT return against Iowa in a 1986 game. Since then, some of these records have been broken, but Woodson's college career included several honors including being chosen for the All Big Ten team in 1984, 85 and 86, Team MVP in 1986 and garnering All American honors in 1986 and 86.

His college career ended and just like at the end of his high school career when colleges were scrambling for Woodson's services, NFL and USFL teams too notice of the abilities. Rod was chosen in the first round of both league drafts being chosen in the USFL by the Jacksonville Sharks with the 9th pick and in the NFL by the Pittsburgh Steelers with the 10th pick overall.

He chose to head to Pittsburgh where he spent a majority of his pro career (from 1987-1996). During his time with the Steelers collected 379 tackles, 13.5 sacks, 38 interceptions for 770 yards and 5 touchdowns. Woodson was also chosen as the AP and UPI Defensive Players for the year in 1993. Rod's time in Pittsburgh included a trip to the Super Bowl.

1997 saw Woodson head to San Francisco for one year before inking a deal in 1998 to play for the Baltimore Ravens. His addition to an already powerful Ravens defense cemented Baltimore's legacy of one of the best defensive teams of the 90's and early in the new millennium. The Baltimore years were some of the best of his career with his total stats for four years in the Charm City nearly equaling his total numbers from the decade in Pittsburgh. He was also able to win his first championship at any level with the 34-7 win in Super Bowl XXXV over the New York Giants.

Woodson's career wound down with the Oakland Raiders beginning in 2002. His first year with the team ended with the third Super Bowl appearance of his NFL career and a loss to Tampa Bay. He played one more year for the Raiders before his sure-fire Hall of Fame career ended on that mid summer day. His play in the NFL earned him spots on the NFL's 1990's All Decade team as well as the NFL's 75th Anniversary All-Time team (he was the only active player chosen) and was chosen by The Sporting News as one of the 100 best football players of all time.

Rod was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in the summer of 2009 as one of the most decorated defensive players in the history of the NFL. He is currently coaching the defensive backs for the Oakland Raiders