

The Evolution of the Black Quarterback

(by Camara Mcketty, The Black World Today, Aug. 16, 2005)

Feb. 2, 2005, Donovan McNabb became the 3rd Black quarterback to play in the Super Bowl following Steve McNair and Doug Williams. Like McNair, McNabb was unable to land the victory on the field but he became a part of the evolution of the Black Quarterback.

The evolution began in 1968 where with the Denver Broncos' Marlin Briscoe became the first Black Quarterback to start in the NFL. His performance on the field included fourteen touchdown passes in eleven games. Though Briscoe set the record for touchdowns for a rookie he was unable to further his career at quarterback and was moved to wide receiver. He continued his career with the Buffalo Bills and the Miami Dolphins.

While a member of the Bills, Briscoe became an all-pro before finishing his career in Miami earning two Super Bowl Rings and playing on the only undefeated team in history. Though Briscoe never played another down at quarterback he will forever be known as the man that became the first Black quarterback to start in the NFL. Briscoe has set the bar for all quarterbacks that followed in his path.

He set the path for quarterbacks such as Doug Williams who in 1986 was traded to the Washington Redskins and two years later in 1988 became the first Black quarterback to win a Super Bowl leading the Washington Redskins to victory over the Denver Broncos (Marlon Briscoe's first team).

In that game Williams set numerous records throwing for three hundred and forty yards with four touchdowns. After the victory, Williams was quoted as saying "The Redskins didn't bring me here to become the first Black quarterback in the Super Bowl, they brought me here to be the quarterback of a Super Bowl team. The Evolution of the Black Quarterback was in full motion with the play of Briscoe and Williams."

As the years went by, the number of starting Black Quarterbacks continued to reach new levels with the emergence of Warren Moon and Randall Cunningham. Moon who started for then Houston Oilers and ended it with the Kansas City Chiefs set many records in long career, becoming the only quarterback to throw for four thousand yards in back-to-back seasons with two different teams. He also had nine Pro-Bowl appearances and went to eight straight Pro-Bowls the most by any quarterback.

Cunningham throughout his career was one of the leaders of the Philadelphia Eagles leading them to a 36-20 victory over the New Orleans Saints in the 1992 NFC wild-card game, which was also the first time the Eagles had won a playoff game on the road since 1949. Throughout his career he played for the Philadelphia Eagles in 1996 the Minnesota Vikings in 1997, the Dallas Cowboys in 2001 and ended his career as a part of the Baltimore Ravens in 2001.

In the end it is difficult to think what would have happened if in 1968 Marlin Briscoe hadn't become the first Black quarterback to start in a time where it was believed that a Black couldn't lead a team, or if Doug Williams was never traded to the Washington Redskins. Or if they never decided to form the Field Generals and teach the youth the struggles of their career and why today's Black athletes have an equal opportunity to earn the starting spot on their team.

That is not what we have to think of as we have The Field Generals who consist of Marlon Briscoe, Doug Williams, Warren Moon, Randall Cunningham, James Harris and Vince Evans. Their goal is to preserve the history of the African American Quarterbacks and teach the youth lessons of life and the evolution of The Black Quarterback.

More: www.tbwt.org

See also:

- "Quarterback Draw" (by Jacob L. Vigdor, The American Prospect, Oct. 7, 2003) -- "Media executives want Black quarterbacks to succeed because of ratings, not 'social concern.'..."

- "Four Black QB Pioneers You Should Know" (by Ray Holloman, AOL BlackVoices) -- "No matter what Nike tells you, Black quarterbacks didn't start with Michael Vick. Former NFL legend and Field Generals founding member Warren Moon tells Black Voices Sports the four quarterbacks everybody should know...."