

## **It's a Shame the NFL Doesn't Recognize an MVP for the Entire Playoffs**

Written

by

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The NHL hands out the Conn Smythe Trophy, an award that is given to the MVP of the entire playoffs. Baseball recognizes an MVP for each playoff round (i.e. Divisional, NLCS, and World Series). The NBA only hands out an MVP trophy for the NBA finals. The NFL hands out an MVP for the Super Bowl, which can be argued at times. Anyone can have a good game at any given time. Some examples are Dexter Jackson and Mark Rypien, just to name a couple. Let's face it! They are professionals. However, performing at such a high level that raises the play of your teammates tremendously as well as contributing to the team constantly, things that stats can't even define, is valuable and one deserves to be honored. His name... Bob Sanders of the Indianapolis Colts.

Let's face it! Even Ray and Stevie could see that the Colts defense was horrendous throughout the regular season. Teams averaged 173 yards a game against them on the ground (last in the NFL). They allowed opponents to score 22.5 a game (23<sup>rd</sup> in the NFL). And, finally, they allowed 332 yards per game (21<sup>st</sup> in the NFL). Let's not forget about those hideous games down the stretch, which included losses to the Jags, Titans, and Texans. The Colts Defense was without Sanders for 12 regular season games. Two games into this season he was sidelined after arthroscopic knee surgery. He played in only two regular season games after that, one of them being a Nov. 5 victory at New England. In that 27-20 victory at New England, Sanders had 11 tackles to go along with an interception off the great Tom Brady. The Colts were 3-1 with Sanders this season. The Colts wouldn't realize his impact until their first playoff game.

The Colts drew the Kansas City Chiefs in the opening round of the playoffs. Many people predicted another early exit for Manning and the Horseshoes from Indy. Some experts predicted Larry Johnson and the Chiefs would run right through the Colts D. Larry Johnson ran for damn near 1800 yards and broke Jamal Anderson's NFL record for most carries in a single season with 416. The Chiefs love to run the ball and, let's be honest, they were going up against a team that couldn't stop a turtle...and LJ doesn't run like any turtle. The Colts came into the playoffs as the only NFL team to allow each of its 16 regular-season opponents to run for at least 100 yards a game. If you plug the numbers into the equation, LJ was supposed to run through the Colts like bullets through flesh. People who thought the Colts would be "one and done" didn't add the most valuable piece to the equation... Bob Sanders. He would make his return to the team against KC. Not only was his play amazing, it seemed like he made his teammates better. Sanders made a defense that looked like pretenders into contenders.

They held LJ to 32 yards on the ground. Not only did their run defense improve, but also their overall defense looked like it was finally ready to play with the big boys.

The Colts Defense would shut down the Ravens and were on their way to play the Pats. Granted, the Colts D didn't play their best game. However, they made stops when their backs were up against the wall, including a game ending interception off of the great Tom Brady. Finally, they got over the hump and reached the Super Bowl. This game is not even worth discussion, but I will mention the Colts D showed up. Sure, Peyton was driving the Colts up and down the field, but the offense was not coming away with touchdowns. At the end of the day, Peyton Manning was named the Super Bowl MVP. The unsung hero, in my opinion, who truly deserves to be recognized and is the first winner of the Matthew Merz NFL playoff MVP is... Bob Sanders.

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