Colts of '81: Dark horses or mystery?

Bills may tell if they're real

By Sam Lacy

Either of two categories can find a place for the 1981 Baltimore Colts.

They may be looked upon by some along about mid-season as the true "dark horses" of the National Football League. And most certainly they open the schedule as a mystery, even to themselves.

Of course, that goes for all the rival teams as well. None seems to know where each is going.

Last week is a fine example. The Colts who had not won a game — and even looked pathetic in pre-season — completely outplayed the New England Patriots who had swept aside all opposition in their prep campaign.

A better assessment of Baltimore should be in order after Sunday's game against a rugged Buffalo Bills aggregation.

The AFRO looks for some real surprises from the young Colts. That may also be a surprise to the readers here, since this desk has shown no mercy in its past pre-season evaluations of the team.

No titles are promised. No titles are even contemplated here.

But there is no doubt that this 1981 Colt collection is going to be a highly competitive one.

Sufficiently so, to win back many of the fans that have fled Memorial Stadium in recent years, driven away by an unthinking management and unexciting performance.

This view is taken despite the fact the Colts have one of the toughest schedules in the NFL, if in fact it isn't the hardest facing any teams.

Among their opponents are four teams — Buffalo, Cleveland, San Diego and Philadelphia — which won their division titles in 1980. Two — Miami and Denver — finished at .500.

The strong feeling for the Colts is inspired by the superb blend of talented veterans and eager rookies.

When quarterback Bert Jones is healthy there is no better field general in the NFL. Praise is constantly heard of QB's like Philadelphia's Ron Jaworski, Cleveland's Brian Sipe, Houston's Ken Stabler and New England's Steve Grogan. But the odds here are laid that coach Mike McCormack would not trade for any one of them so long as Bert is physically fit.

The running game is in capable hands with a healthy Curtis Dickey and ebulliant Randy McMillan. Backed by Cleveland Franklin and Marvin Sims, this is probably the most explosive foursome the Colts have had in fold in their history.

The Lennie Moore - Allan Ameche punch of the fifties were a proven duo which even Dickey and McMillan may not match. But Lennie and Alan had no such strong reinforcements as are at hand today.

Jones has the reliable Don McCauley, the "third down" superstar to run or catch. And the scintillating Roger Carr and Ray Butler for the game - breaking receptions.

Be sure the victory over New England is not totally reliable as a barometer.

The Patriots were unable to accept the upstart, winless Colts as worthy opponents. When they did, it was too late.

HOSS PIONEER — For the first time in history of the franchise Baltimore professional football has a black coaching assistant. Clyde Powers is in his second year on special assignments.

How the NFL finished '80

AMERICAN CONFERENCE

Eastern Division

	W	L	T	Pct.
Buffalo	11	5	0	.688
New England	10	6	0	.625
Miami	8	8	0	.500
Baltimore	7	9	0	.438
N. Y. Jets	4	12	0	.250

Central Division

	W	L	T	Pct.
Cleveland	11	5	0	.688
Houston	11	5	0	.688
Pittsburgh	9	7	0	.563
Cincinnati	6	10	0	.375

Western Division

	W	L	T	Pct.
San Diego	11	5	0	.688
Oakland	11	5	0	.688
Kansas City	8	8	0	.500
Denver	8	8	0	.500
Seattle	4	12	0	.250

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Eastern Divison

	W	L	T	Pct.
Philadelphia	12	4	.0	.750
Dallas	12	4	0	.750
Washington	6	10	0	375
St. Louis	5	11	0	.313
N.Y. Giants	4	12	0	.250

Central Division

	W	L	T	Pct.
Minnesota	9	7	0	.563
Detroit	9	7	0	.563
Chicago	7	9	0	.438
Tampa Bay	5	10	1	.344
Green Bay	5	10	1	.344

Western Division

	W	L	T	Pct.
Atlanta	12	4	0	.750
Los Angeles	11	5	0	.688
San Francisco	6	10	0	.375
New Orleans	1	15	0	.063

SUPER BOWL

Oakland 27, Philadelphia 10

NOW APPEARING
In the New
Exciting, Fabulous
Billie Holiday Room
at
GATSBY'S
THE FOCAL POINT OF ENTERTAINMENT
1817 N. Charles St.

RUBY GLOVER
AND TRIO
EVERY WEDNESDAY IN SEPTEMBER

O'Donel Levy
EVERY FRIDAY AND SATURDAY
IN SEPTEMBER

Century 21

We Salute
THE
COLTS
AS THEY START AN
EXCITING '81-'82 SEASON

ASSOCIATED
Real Estate, Inc.

7027 LIBERTY RD. BALT., MD. 21207
944-2300

'Hot Dog' Jones a c-ɔ-o-l cat

Come to Memorial Stadium any Sunday afternoon and be witness to a broad clash of views on Bert Jones, the quarterback of the home - standing Baltimore Colts.

Pro - Jones forces cheer his every move, especially when he hits favorite target Roger Carr with a long bullet - like pass. They'll also exchange back - slaps when the shuffling 30 - year - old from Louisiana State scrambles out of trouble and runs to a hook slide at the feet of an enemy linebacker

But, then there are others.

They are the anti - Jones people who constantly rake him for his aggressive attitude in resenting tacklers This group also includes the fans who condemn him for his apparent abuse of officials.

Despite the fact that Jones, who celebrated his birthday with little fanfare after guiding the Colts to the surprising opening game win over the Patriots, is a winner, he has as many critics as he has admirers.

But, criticism or admiration, neither takes away the fact that Bert Jones wins.

When he is at the controls, the Colts win; when he isn't they lose.

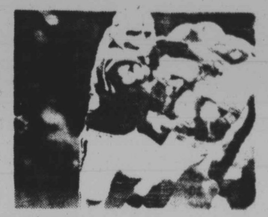
Bert, now in his 9th season, has been plagued by shoulder problems. Here are some highlights of his 9 - year career:

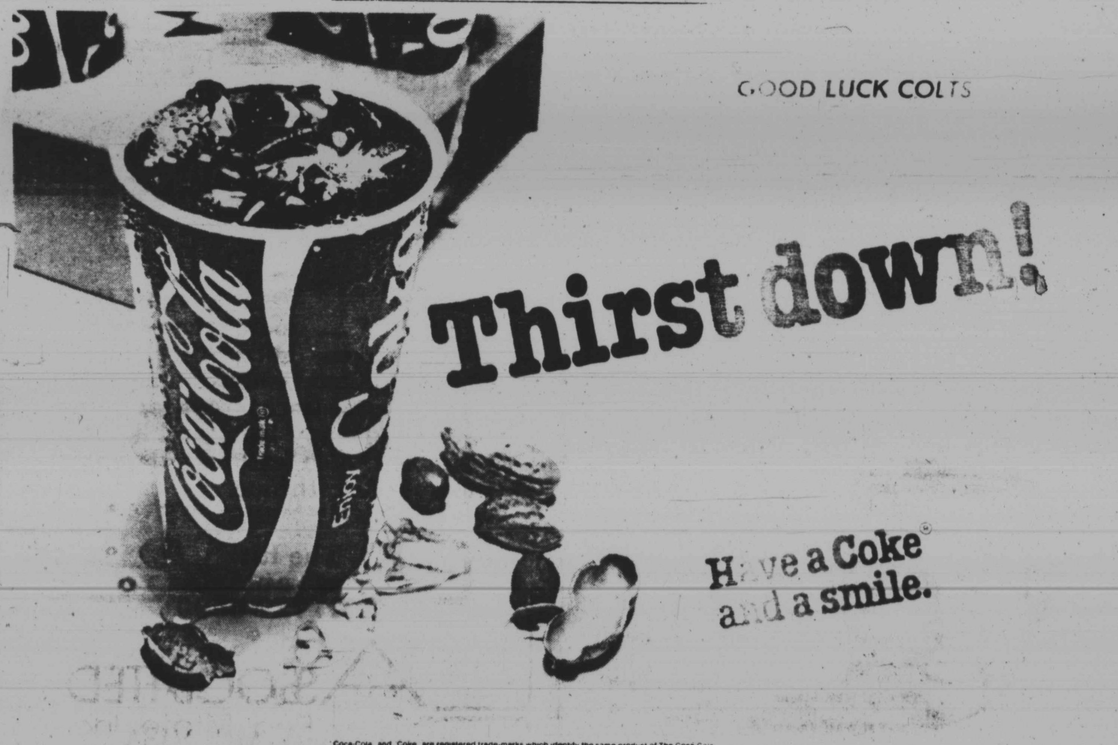
1980: Started in 15 games . . . Missed Buffalo (11 - 30) game with a shoulder injury incurred in second quarter of New

(Continued on Page 10)

CONTROVERSIAL ENGINEER — Quarterback Bert Jones is the man at the controls as Baltimore's NFL entry opens the home season against a Buffalo Bills team th[illegible] tradition of outstanding defensive play

56 ED SIMONINI LB
BALTIMORE COLTS





Coca-Cola and Coke are registered trade-marks which identify the same product of The Coca-Cola

Bottled under the authority of The Coca-Cola Company by Mid-Atlantic Coca-Cola Bottling Co., Inc