

SPORTING LEGENDS: JERRY RICE

SPORT: AMERICAN FOOTBALL

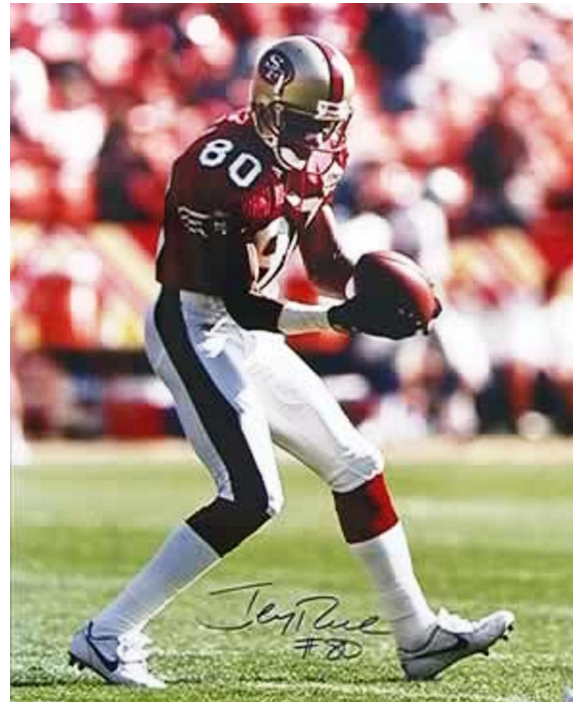
COMPETITIVE ERA: 1985 - 2005

Jerry Lee Rice (born October 13, 1962 in Starkville, Mississippi) is a former American football wide receiver in the NFL, widely regarded as the best receiver to ever play the game, and arguably the greatest football player ever.

He captured three Super Bowl rings as a wideout for the San Francisco 49ers, and also played for the Oakland Raiders and Seattle Seahawks. He made the Denver Broncos roster in the summer of 2005, but he hung up his shoes shortly before the 2005 season even began.

He is the holder of 38 NFL records, a record in itself. Rice has scored the most touchdowns in NFL history, and holds virtually every significant career record for receivers, including receptions (1,549), yards receiving (22,895), all-purpose yards (23,540), touchdown receptions (197), and consecutive games with at least one catch (274).

In most cases, the next most prolific player isn't close; for example, he's 67 receiving touchdowns ahead of second place Cris Carter, who is also retired. He is the only one of the top 25 scorers in NFL history who didn't kick the football.



Jerry Rice grew up in Crawford, Mississippi, the son of a brick mason. He developed his hands while working for his father by catching bricks that his brothers threw at him. Rice later recalled that working for his father also taught him "the meaning of hard work." His speed also helped him excel in football in high school.

Rice attended Mississippi Valley State University, becoming a standout on the football team. He acquired the nickname World, because there wasn't a ball in the world he couldn't catch.

In college, he had a total of 51 touchdown catches and averaged 10 catches per game in 1984, when Mississippi Valley State averaged over 59 points per game.

SPORTING LEGENDS: JERRY RICE



With Joe Montana's bullet passes, Jerry Rice always applied the killer touchdown finish!

That season he was named an AP All-American. The school later named its football stadium Rice-Totten Stadium in honor of Rice and quarterback Willie Totten who threw Rice his many touchdown passes at Mississippi Valley State.

Despite attending an NCAA Division III school, 49ers headcoach Bill Walsh noticed Rice's potential and extreme work ethic and drafted him as the 16th pick in the first round of the 1985 NFL draft, dismissing scouting reports that his prospect was too slow to play the pro game.

Rice struggled early in his rookie season with the 49ers as he learned their innovative West Coast system, but in the 1986 season, he caught 86 passes and led the league in receiving yards (1,570) and receiving touchdowns (15).

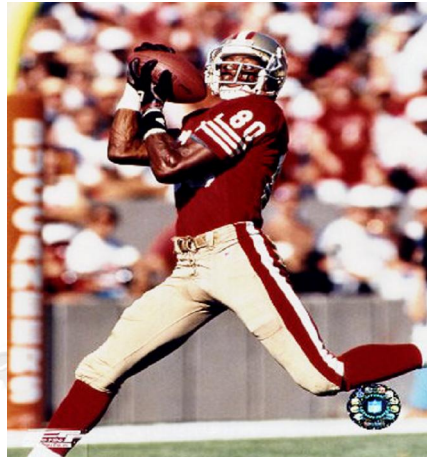
The next season, he set the NFL record for touchdown receptions with 22, a feat even more astonishing considering the season was shortened due to a players' strike. By the late 1980's, Rice had become one of the biggest receiving threats in the NFL, teaming with quarterback Joe Montana and later his successor Steve Young. Those tandems led the 49ers to three championships in Super Bowls XXIII, XXIV and XXIX.

Following 11 consecutive Pro Bowl, 1,000-yard receiving seasons, Rice missed virtually the entire 1997 NFL season after he sustained a torn ACL in the 49ers' opening game.

Rice returned to Pro Bowl form in 1998, but then endured two modest years in 1999 and 2000, the 49ers' only losing seasons during Rice's tenure, as teammate Terrell Owens emerged as the team's top receiver.

In 2001, the 49ers released Rice because of salary cap problems and he was quickly picked up by the Oakland Raiders.

SPORTING LEGENDS: JERRY RICE



Blinding pace, aggression and pure athleticism were all integral parts of Rice's game.

Rice, even at the age of 39, continued to excel, having his 13th and 14th 1,000-yard receiving seasons and scoring his 200th touchdown in 2002.

He and Tim Brown formed a fearsome, if aged, tandem, eventually occupying the top two spots on the NFL's career receiving yardage list. Rice played in his fourth Super Bowl in January 2003, though the Raiders lost badly in a blowout to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

By 2004, Rice's role with the Raiders had diminished as the team became focused on developing their younger receivers. Rice only caught five passes for 67 yards without a touchdown in the first six games of the season, and his streak of consecutive games with a catch ended on September 19, 2004 against the Buffalo Bills.

He requested a trade to a team that would give him a more significant playing role and on October 18, 2004, Rice was traded to the Seattle Seahawks for a conditional seventh-round draft pick. Seattle concluded the season with a playoff loss to the St. Louis Rams, becoming the first team to lose a playoff game to an 8-8 team. Rice did not catch a pass in the game, the first time he failed to do so in his record 29 game post-season career.

Rice won the NFL Most Valuable Player Award in 1987 and was Super Bowl MVP in Super Bowl XXIII. He was also selected for the Pro Bowl 13 times.

Rice's work ethic kept him in a state of sustained physical fitness unattainable for players with less discipline.

His offseason workout regimen is renowned throughout the NFL, and often exceeded the abilities of those that tried to train with him, most notably Barry Sanders.

SPORTING LEGENDS: JERRY RICE



Scott Burton's Final Thought

I think it's fair to say that Jerry Rice is the finest wide receiver in the history of NFL football, bar none.

The incredibly athletic Rice scored the most touchdowns in NFL history, plus he holds virtually every career record for receptions, yards receiving, all-purpose yards, touchdown receptions and yards from scrimmage, and most most consecutive games with at least one catch!

The son of a brick mason, Rice was celebrated for having developed strong, reliable hands by catching bricks that his brothers threw to him while working for their father.

Rice thrived in San Francisco head coach Bill Walsh's West Coast offense, which relied on a large number of short, quick passes by the quarterback and precise route running by the receivers.

Standing 6 feet 2 inches (1.9 metres) tall, Rice was larger than the typical NFL wide receiver, and he used his size and strength to overmatch defenders. He was also an exceptional runner after making a catch.

I believe Jerry Rice is a true sporting legend, both in terms of his achievements and his longevity within the sport of American Football.

For 49ers quarterbacks Joe Montana and Steve Young, having a wide receiver like Jerry Rice on the team ensured that all their Super Bowl appearances ended in victory.



The number 80 is synonymous with Jerry Rice's NFL tremendous NFL legacy.