

colts starting qb history

colts starting qb history traces the evolution of one of the National Football League's most storied franchises through the lens of its quarterbacks. From the early days of the Baltimore Colts to the modern Indianapolis Colts, the team has seen a variety of starting quarterbacks who have shaped its identity and success. This article explores the key figures in the Colts' quarterback lineage, highlighting their contributions, playing styles, and impact on the franchise's fortunes. The journey includes legendary Hall of Famers, franchise record-setters, and notable transitional players who bridged eras. By examining the Colts starting QB history, readers gain insight into how quarterback play has influenced the team's strategies and achievements over the decades. The following sections provide a detailed overview of the most influential quarterbacks, their eras, and the legacy they have left behind.

- Early Years and Foundational Quarterbacks
- Johnny Unitas Era
- Post-Unitas Transitional Quarterbacks
- Peyton Manning Era
- Post-Manning Quarterbacks and Recent History

Early Years and Foundational Quarterbacks

The Indianapolis Colts franchise originated as the Baltimore Colts in 1953. The early years of colts starting qb history were marked by experimentation and the search for a reliable leader under center. Initial quarterbacks laid the foundation for the team's offensive style and competitive aspirations.

Founding QBs and Initial Challenges

During the initial seasons, the Colts relied on several quarterbacks as they sought consistency. Players such as George Shaw, the team's first starting quarterback, faced the challenge of establishing an effective passing attack in a league still dominated by the running game. The early years were characterized by modest success and significant roster turnover at the quarterback position.

Transition to Stability

Before the arrival of the franchise's icon, the Colts experimented with quarterbacks like Earl Morrall, who provided some stability and veteran leadership. Morrall's tenure set the

stage for the franchise's next defining era, blending experience with the promise of emerging talent.

Johnny Unitas Era

The Johnny Unitas era revolutionized the Colts franchise and left an indelible mark on NFL history. Often regarded as one of the greatest quarterbacks of all time, Unitas defined the golden age of Colts football with his exceptional leadership and passing prowess.

Unitas' Arrival and Impact

Drafted in 1955, Johnny Unitas quickly became the starting quarterback and transformed the Colts into perennial contenders. His ability to read defenses, combined with a strong arm and clutch performance in critical moments, made him a cornerstone of the franchise. Unitas led the Colts to multiple NFL Championships and was instrumental in popularizing the passing game.

Career Highlights and Records

Throughout his tenure, Unitas earned numerous accolades, including several MVP awards and Pro Bowl selections. He set then-records for consecutive games with touchdown passes and career passing yards. His leadership culminated in victories such as the famous 1958 NFL Championship, often labeled "The Greatest Game Ever Played."

Post-Unitas Transitional Quarterbacks

Following Johnny Unitas' retirement, the Colts experienced a period of quarterback instability. This era of Colts starting qb history was marked by frequent changes and efforts to identify a successor capable of replicating Unitas's impact.

Key Quarterbacks in the Transition

Quarterbacks such as Bert Jones and Mike Pagel served as primary starters during the 1970s and 1980s. Bert Jones, in particular, showed flashes of brilliance and was recognized as an NFL MVP, but injuries and team challenges limited sustained success. The Colts struggled to maintain consistent offensive production, which affected the franchise's competitiveness.

Challenges and Team Performance

This transitional period was characterized by fluctuating team performance, with the quarterback position often cited as a key area needing improvement. The Colts underwent coaching changes and roster rebuilds, reflecting the ongoing search for a franchise

quarterback.

Peyton Manning Era

The arrival of Peyton Manning in 1998 marked a new chapter in colts starting qb history, restoring the franchise to elite status. Manning became synonymous with the Colts' offensive identity for nearly two decades, setting new standards for quarterback excellence.

Manning's Draft and Immediate Impact

Selected as the first overall pick in the 1998 NFL Draft, Peyton Manning quickly established himself as a franchise cornerstone. His intelligence, work ethic, and precision passing redefined the Colts' offense, enabling them to become consistent playoff contenders.

Achievements and Legacy

Manning's career with the Colts includes multiple MVP awards, a Super Bowl victory, and numerous NFL records. He is widely regarded as one of the greatest quarterbacks in NFL history. Under Manning's leadership, the Colts developed a dynamic passing attack featuring prolific receivers and innovative offensive schemes.

Supporting Cast and Offensive Strategy

The Colts' success during this era was bolstered by key players such as Marvin Harrison and Reggie Wayne, who complemented Manning's passing skills. The team's offensive strategy emphasized quick decision-making, route precision, and adaptability, hallmarks of Manning's play style.

Post-Manning Quarterbacks and Recent History

After Peyton Manning's departure in 2012, the Colts faced the challenge of finding a new franchise quarterback to maintain their competitive edge. This phase of colts starting qb history reflects both transitions and attempts to recapture past successes.

Andrew Luck Era

Andrew Luck was selected as the first overall pick in the 2012 NFL Draft and quickly became the Colts' starting quarterback. Known for his strong arm and mobility, Luck revitalized the team, leading them to multiple playoff appearances and earning Pro Bowl selections. His unexpected retirement in 2019 left a significant void.

Recent Quarterbacks and Future Prospects

Following Luck's retirement, the Colts have seen several quarterbacks take the helm, including Jacoby Brissett, Philip Rivers, and more recently, younger talents like Carson Wentz and Matt Ryan. The franchise continues to evaluate options to establish long-term stability at the quarterback position.

Key Factors in Quarterback Development

The Colts have invested in coaching, scouting, and offensive innovation to support their quarterbacks. Player health, adaptability to modern offensive schemes, and leadership qualities remain critical factors in determining the success of current and future starters.

- George Shaw
- Earl Morrall
- Johnny Unitas
- Bert Jones
- Peyton Manning
- Andrew Luck
- Jacoby Brissett
- Philip Rivers
- Carson Wentz
- Matt Ryan

Frequently Asked Questions

Who was the first starting quarterback for the Indianapolis Colts?

The first starting quarterback for the Indianapolis Colts was Johnny Unitas, who began playing for the team in 1956.

Which Colts quarterback holds the franchise record for

most passing yards?

Peyton Manning holds the franchise record for most passing yards in Colts history.

Who succeeded Peyton Manning as the Colts' starting quarterback?

Andrew Luck succeeded Peyton Manning as the starting quarterback for the Indianapolis Colts.

How many Super Bowl wins do Colts starting quarterbacks have?

Colts starting quarterbacks have won two Super Bowls: Johnny Unitas in Super Bowl V and Peyton Manning in Super Bowl XLI.

Which Colts starting quarterback was known for winning the MVP award multiple times?

Peyton Manning won the NFL MVP award multiple times while playing as the Colts' starting quarterback.

Who was the Colts' starting quarterback before Andrew Luck was drafted?

Before Andrew Luck was drafted, the Colts' starting quarterback was Curtis Painter and also briefly Kerry Collins.

Additional Resources

1. Colts Quarterbacks: The Evolution of a Franchise Leader

This book explores the rich history of starting quarterbacks for the Indianapolis Colts, tracing their impact from the team's early days to the modern era. It provides detailed profiles, career highlights, and the challenges each QB faced. Readers gain insight into how these players shaped the franchise's identity and success.

2. The Manning Legacy: Peyton and Eli's Colts Connection

Focusing on the legendary Manning family, this book delves into Peyton Manning's transformative years as the Colts' starting quarterback. It covers his record-breaking performances, leadership qualities, and the lasting imprint he left on the franchise. The narrative also touches on the broader Manning legacy within the NFL quarterback landscape.

3. From Uncertainty to Super Bowl: The Colts' QB Journey

This book chronicles the tumultuous quarterback history of the Colts leading up to and after their Super Bowl victories. It highlights the struggles, breakthroughs, and pivotal moments that defined the starting QBs' careers. The story offers a comprehensive look at

how the Colts found stability and success under center.

4. *Behind the Helmet: Colts Quarterbacks Who Made History*

Offering an in-depth look at the most influential Colts quarterbacks, this book profiles athletes who changed the game for the franchise. It includes anecdotes, interviews, and game analyses that showcase their skills and leadership. The narrative honors both well-known stars and underrated players who contributed to the team's legacy.

5. *Passing the Torch: Colts QBs Across Generations*

This title examines the transition periods between starting quarterbacks in Colts history. It explores how each quarterback succeeded the previous one, the challenges of adapting to new leadership, and the evolution of playing styles. The book captures the continuity and change that shaped the Colts' quarterback position.

6. *Colts QB Playbook: Strategies and Stories from the Sidelines*

Focusing on the strategic side of quarterback play, this book provides a tactical overview of how Colts QBs executed game plans through the decades. It features play breakdowns, coaching philosophies, and quarterback decision-making processes. Readers gain an appreciation for the complexities behind the Colts' quarterback successes.

7. *Sunday Heroes: Iconic Colts Quarterbacks of the NFL*

Highlighting standout performances and memorable games, this book celebrates Colts quarterbacks who rose to the occasion on football's biggest stages. It recounts thrilling moments, clutch plays, and defining seasons that elevated these QBs to hero status. The book offers fans a nostalgic journey through the franchise's proudest quarterback moments.

8. *The Rise and Fall of Colts QBs: Triumphs and Trials*

This book provides a candid look at the highs and lows experienced by the Colts' starting quarterbacks throughout the franchise's history. It discusses injuries, controversies, comebacks, and career-defining decisions. The narrative paints a realistic portrait of the pressures and unpredictability inherent in the QB role.

9. *Colts Quarterbacks: Building a Franchise Through Leadership*

Examining the leadership qualities that Colts quarterbacks brought to the team, this book underscores the importance of character and resilience. Through stories of mentorship, locker room dynamics, and on-field command, it reveals how QBs influenced not just games but the franchise culture. The book serves as a tribute to the leaders who helped build the Colts' legacy.

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