

Bradshaw Gets New Hope From The 'Scope

The Miracle Machine recharged the arm of Terry Bradshaw, who juiced up the Steelers' playoff prospects. By JILL LIEBER

Art Rooney, the 82-year-old owner of the Pittsburgh Steelers, toddled into the training room at Three Rivers Stadium recently to see for himself what all the commotion was about. At one end of the room sat an 18X12X4-inch metal box with a pencil-like device dangling from it on a cord. The box was blinking and beeping, doing all sorts of space-age stuff.

"What do we have here?" Rooney said, poking his way through a crowd of players. "Somebody from the circus?"

"No, Boss," replied Terry Bradshaw, the Steeler quarterback who missed Pittsburgh's first 14 games this season with an ailing throwing arm, "it's the Miracle Machine."

"Hmmm. Miracle Machine?" Rooney said with a laugh. "Let me try." He held out his arthritic right hand. Terry Eberhardt, a physical therapist from Shreveport, La., ran the "pencil" over Rooney's hand. The pain vanished. Rooney stared at his hand. And stared. And stared. He jumped up and bounced down the hall, stopping everybody he saw. "Look at this!" he exclaimed, making a fist for the first time in almost two years.

"Isn't it amazing?" Bradshaw said. "I just love this thing!"

And no wonder. The Miracle Machine, a.k.a. Acuscope, had given the 35 year-old Bradshaw new life, and in the process it gave a big boost to the Steelers' playoff prospects.

Bradshaw's right arm was so sore from off-season elbow surgery and a strained triceps that it was virtually useless. After having used that arm to throw for 27,912 yards and 210 touchdowns in his 14-year NFL career, Bradshaw had become almost completely a lefthander. "Just squeezing something brought him to his knees in pain," Eberhardt said. But on Nov. 19, Bradshaw began to undergoing daily treatments on the Miracle Machine and, well... Do you believe in miracles?

At Shea Stadium, Bionic Bradshaw took the field with his Miracle Machine Arm and picked apart the New York Jets. He hadn't taken a snap from center in an NFL game since Jan. 9, but on the Steelers' second series, with Jet Defensive End Mark Gastineau dancing in his face, Bradshaw tossed a 17-yard touchdown pass to Greg Garrity. He came back early in the second quarter to hit Calvin Sweeney over the middle with a 10-yard scoring throw for a 14-0 lead. "I was nervous," Bradshaw said afterward, "but once I got on the field it was like a duck taking to water."

After his second touchdown pass, Bradshaw had to leave the game. He'd bruised his right elbow, having hit it on a Jet's helmet on one play and fallen on it on another. He'd completed five of eight passes for 77 yards, and later, in the locker room, he vowed he'd be back for the playoffs.

Going into the game against New York, Pittsburgh badly needed to be energized. It had lost three straight after a 9-2 start, and in those three defeats, Bradshaw's backup, Cliff Stoudt, had been inept, completing only 30 of 74 passes (40.5%) for 339 yards, with six interceptions and just two TDs.

"Terry sent waves of confidence through the entire team," Steeler Coach Chuck Noll said. Indeed, Pittsburgh beat the Jets easily, 34-7, and that win, coupled with Cleveland's 34-27 loss to Houston on Sunday, gave the Steelers the AFC Central title. All of which meant Pittsburgh could rest Bradshaw until its first playoff game, on New Year's Eve or New Year's Day.

There were times during the last eight months when Bradshaw didn't know what the next week - or even the next day - would bring. He'd strained his elbow severely in the '82 training camp and got through last season on weekly cortisone shots. Even before last season, a Shreveport orthopedic surgeon, Dr. Bill Bundrick, had diagnosed the ailment as "reverse tennis elbow" - microtears of the flexor pronator muscle, which is located over the inside of the elbow - and on March 3 of this year he removed the damaged tissue and reattached the muscle to the humerus near the elbow. Bradshaw was told not to throw until July. But by Pittsburgh's May minicamp Bradshaw was feeling like his old self. He began throwing and tore more tissue in his elbow, which ballooned to the size of a softball. Bundrick told Bradshaw not to even think of playing before September. "I felt like scolding him," the doctor says. "But he can't help it. He's Terry Bradshaw."

By September the swelling and pain hadn't subsided, so the Steelers sent Bradshaw to physical therapists in Pittsburgh. He subsequently made a trip to Shreveport to see Bundrick and while there tested a new gadget the doctor had just bought - the Acuscope, which simulates the effects of acupuncture by increasing the electrical activity of cells, thereby promoting healing. Bradshaw used it just once and was a changed man. He began lobbing balls 30 to 40 yards. By late October he was itching to play. He threw and he threw and he threw - up to three hours and 1,500 balls a day. Soon he had a strained triceps. "It was a totally different injury," Bundrick says. "One from sheer overuse."

Out of frustration, Bradshaw and Noll began exchanging words in the newspapers. Bradshaw charged that Noll didn't care about him; Noll suggested that perhaps Bradshaw was ready for his "lifes's work," that maybe he ought to retire.

Bradshaw fled to Shreveport and the Acuscope. After one treatment he had 60% relief from the pain and swelling of the strained triceps; the next day, he had 80% relief. Ten days later, on the Monday following Thanksgiving, Bradshaw went back to Pittsburgh, this time with the Acuscope following close behind. He promised that a miracle had been performed. Noll was skeptical. But after seeing Bradshaw work out, Noll realized he had his old quarterback back. "I believe in miracles," he says now.

In the meantime half the Steelers have started using the Acuscope, and Rooney is ready to shell out \$6,000 for the team's very own machine.

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