

Pro Football Hall of Fame Class of 2004

Barry Sanders

One of the game's most electrifying runners, Barry Sanders rushed for more than 1,000 yards in each of his 10 seasons with the Detroit Lions (1989-1998). He was the first running back ever to do so. The 1988 Heisman Trophy winner was also just the third person to gain more than 2,000 yards in a season, a feat he accomplished in 1997.

Sanders, after forgoing his senior season at Oklahoma State, made his pro debut just three days after signing with the Lions, who had made him their first-round pick and the third overall pick in the 1989 draft. He absolutely dazzled a Pontiac Silverdome crowd when he dashed for an 18-yard gain on his first carry as an NFL running back. But that was just the beginning. His 1,470 yards rushing that season, a-then Lions record, fell just 10 yards short of the league's best for the year.

In 1990, Sanders, with 1,304 yards rushing, topped all ground gainers, something he would do again in 1994 (1,883 yards) and in 1996 (1,553 yards). His 44 receptions for 283 yards in 1994 gave him a combined 2,166 yards from scrimmage. The most impressive feat of his remarkable career, however, came in 1997, when he rushed for a league-best 2,053 yards and gained another 305 yards on 33 catches for an amazing 2,358 combined yards gained. That year, Sanders, who was named league Most Valuable Player, gained more than 100 yards rushing in an NFL record 14 consecutive regular season games.

Though not big by most standards, Sanders capitalized on his size by running low to the ground making him less of a target for would-be tacklers. His elusiveness and ability to reverse direction seemingly at will, often left defensive players grasping at air. "He makes you miss so bad, you kind of look up in the stands and wonder if anybody's looking at you," Atlanta Falcons cornerback D.J. Johnson once remarked. "You've got 60,000 people in there and you wonder if anyone saw you miss that tackle."

A first-or second-team All-Pro ten consecutive seasons, Sanders became the first NFL running back to record five 1,500-yard rushing seasons, in addition to being the only back to do so in four consecutive seasons (1994-1997).

Selected to play in the Pro Bowl each of his 10 NFL seasons, Sanders held nearly every Lions' rushing record and numerous all-time NFL records, at the time of his retirement.

Barry David Sanders
Running Back 5-8, 203 Oklahoma State
Born July 16, 1968, in Wichita, Kansas.
1989-1998 Detroit Lions

Detroit's first-round draft pick, 1989. . .Electrifying running style. . .First player to rush for 1,000 yards his first 10 seasons. . .Led NFL in rushing four times. . .NFL's MVP, 1997. . .Gained 2,053 yards including record 14 straight 100-yard games, 1997. . .Career rushing record: 15,269 yards, 99 TDs. . .First- or second-team All-NFL each of his 10 seasons. . .Selected to 10 Pro Bowls.