

Franco Harris, an NFL Hall of Famer & 4X Super Bowl Champ for the Steelers Dies at 72



Miguel Costa
VladTV Staff Writer

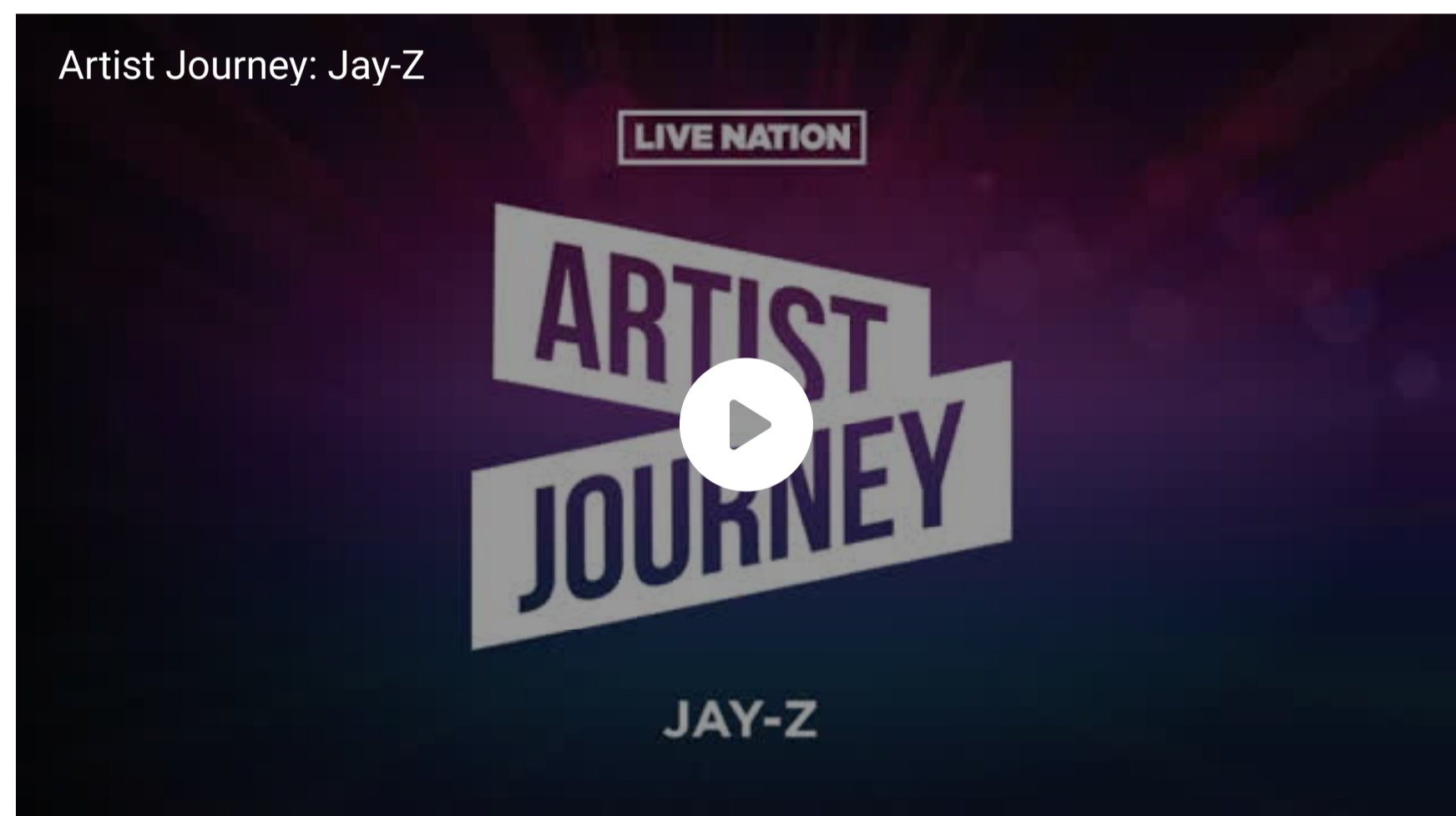
Dec 21, 2022 2:12 PM



From Bo Jackson's flukish career-ending injury in a 1991 playoff game during the prime of his career to the infamous "Tuck Rule Game" that yielded one of the most questionable calls in post-season history, nearly one decade later, the Raiders have often been the recipients of bad luck and unfortunate timing; despite having won three Super Bowls. One of the men largely responsible for setting them on the path toward misfortune is Hall of Famer Franco Harris. The Pittsburgh Steelers drafted the highly touted running back with the 13th overall pick in the 1972 NFL draft. He made the Pro Bowl that year en route to leading his team to the playoffs—a feat that the Steelers had accomplished just once up until that point. The team clinched a bye and faced the Oakland Raiders in a classic Divisional round game in the Winter. Franco Harris rushed for 65 yards and caught five receptions for 95 yards. His most impactful play came in the final moments of the game when the Raiders forced the Steelers to 4th down and ten yards to go from their 40-yard line with 22 seconds left in regulation.

The Steelers were in a passing-only situation, meaning all the Raiders had to do was deflect the pass, and the game would be over, giving them a 7-6 victory. Shortly after the ball got snapped to Terry Bradshaw, the Steelers' future Hall of Fame quarterback threw up a desperate heave to the team's halfback John "Frenchy" Fuqua but the Raider's defensive backs knocked the ball down...or so they thought. Much to the surprise of everyone, Franco Harris caught the deflected pass just before it hit the ground and ran down the field for the game-winning touchdown as time expired. The crowd went wild, and the Raiders players, coaches, and owner, Al Davis, protested the play, claiming that the deflected pass touched the ground before Franco Harris caught it. Nevertheless, the Steelers won the contest before advancing to the AFC Championship game against the Miami Dolphins. The defining moment of the Pittsburgh Steelers' first-ever playoff win later became known as the "Immaculate Reception" and it is recognized as the most famous on-field occurrence in NFL history.

Artist Journey: Jay-Z



The iconic playoff game between the Pittsburgh Steelers and Oakland Raiders took place on December 23, 1972, which was nearly 50 years ago to this very day. Two years after the "Immaculate Reception," Pittsburgh Steelers would win the first of four Super Bowls with Franco Harris as their lead running back. Meanwhile, the Oakland Raiders claimed their only Super Bowl of that decade in 1976. The week of Christmas will always be a memorable time for Franco Harris, and his family members largely became of what he accomplished on that faithful Saturday in 1972. Sadly, the legendary football player passed away yesterday at the age of 72, just three days away from the 50th anniversary of the "Immaculate Reception." As of now, the cause of his death is unknown, but what is peculiar about the incident is that he seemed to be in high spirits and good health the day before when he appeared as a guest on [Chris "Mad Dog" Russo's](#) radio show.

Franco remains the Steelers' all-time leading rusher with 11,950 yards. His nine Pro Bowl selections rank #2 all-time behind [Barry Sanders](#), who made the prestigious squad ten times during his playing career. Prior to Franco's passing, the team announced their plans to retire his #32 jersey this coming Saturday when they face the Raiders at home.