



Tom Dempsey

Tom Dempsey will forever be remembered for a remarkable, record-shattering play on November 8, 1970. The New Orleans Saints kicker booted a 63 yard field goal with two seconds left in the game to defeat the Detroit Lions. That record distance still has not been broken more than 40 years later – it has been tied 3 times, but still not broken. Consider that Roger Maris beat Babe Ruth's home run record for a single season "only" 34 years after the Babe set the standard at 60. That demonstrates how unbelievable Tom's kick was.

Prior to 1974 in the NFL, the goal posts were on the goal lines instead of the end lines. With time running out in the game, the Tom kicked from his own 37-yard line. The boot shattered the previous record distance of 56-yards – a distance of 12.5% further than the previous best-ever kick!!!

Dempsey was born without toes on his right foot and no fingers on his right arm. He wore a modified shoe with a flattened and enlarged toe surface. Scientists later determined that the modified shoe gave Dempsey no advantage.

Thanks to the kick, Dempsey is a famous name. Tom states that while standing on the sidelines with the coaches before the play, he told the coaches "I can kick it." At the time, he didn't know how far the kick was. "If I'd known it was 63 yards, I might have messed it up," he says. He tried to remember what kicking great Lou "The Toe" Groza had once told him: "Keep your head down and follow through." He did, in that straight, head-on way, unlike all the soccer-style kickers of today. And the rest is history.

In his career, Tom played for the Saints, Philadelphia Eagles, Los Angeles Rams, Houston Oilers and Buffalo Bills. He was a First-Team All-Pro in his rookie season of 1969 and also played in the Pro Bowl that same season.

How many athletes with a physical disability ever climb to the pinnacle of their sport for a day let alone for 11 years? Sadly, Tom's family home was flooded by Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and he had another challenge to overcome. Like always, he has.

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