



Lem Barney

Flamboyant, exuberant, friendly, talented and little-known, Lem Barney, "The Supernatural", took the National Football League by storm when he joined the Detroit Lions as their second-round draft choice in 1967. In the 1967 season opener against the Super Bowl champion Green Bay Packers, he intercepted the first pass the veteran Bart Starr threw into his territory, did a somersault, regained his footing and traipsed 24 yards for a touchdown. Lem wound up his rookie season tied for the NFL interception championship with 10. Three of his interceptions were returned for touchdowns, a rookie feat matched by only one other player in history. Lem permitted only one touchdown in the entire season. In a runaway vote, he was named the Associated Press defensive rookie of the year.

Lem was destined to play with distinction for 10 more seasons with the Lions before his retirement following the 1977 campaign. He decisively proved that he was one of history's premier cornerbacks and he also excelled as a punt and kickoff return specialist who made it impossible for opposing defenses ever to relax whenever Lem Barney was on the field. Lem was named to the all-pro team in 1968, 1969, and 1972 and played in 10 Pro Bowls. During his career, he intercepted 56 passes and scored 8 touchdowns; he returned 143 punts for 1,312 yards and 2 touchdowns; and he had 50 kickoff returns for 1,274 yards and 1 touchdown. He also punted 113 times for a 35.5-yard average. As the ultimate tribute to his sensational NFL career, in 1992 Lem was selected for his sport's highest honor, membership in the Pro Football Hall of Fame. He became only the fifth cornerback in history to enter the Hall.



Lem is now an excellent motivational speaker. He has many stories of his days spent hanging out and even singing with his dear late friend, the legendary Motown artist, Marvin Gaye.

Sports Celebrity Marketing S.C.M. Inc.
13332 Tenth Line,
Georgetown, ON L7G4S8 Canada
Phone: 647-221-8405

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