

WHAT HAS GOD GOT TO DO WITH SPORTS?



It is cold once again and the proliferation of sports of all types seem to have its overlapping congruity filling the various arenas, stadia, TV screens and various electronic devices to the delight of the sports fanatics in our athletic minded citizenry.

One thing that always seems to be a point of sarcastic remarks by sports announcer of a particular contest is when an athlete scores a goal they point their hands and fingers to the heavens and say "Thanks" to God for such an important achievement, like scoring a touchdown in football.

Sports announcers upon seeing athletes point to the heavens to give thanks to God, always make this sarcastic comments, "What has God got to do with sports?"

Actually, the answer to this is, "A lot! He actually decides which team will win!" Really?

Yes! And God has His favorite teams too! What?! You kidding me?

No kidding here! God really decides which team should win. His favorite teams are always (no question about it) are those teams from cities with high density of Catholics!



So we researched what we have felt all along that God has His favorite teams winning the most championships in professional sports. Here is the best listing we got.

The Top 15 Cities with The Most Championships¹ and The Their Catholic Densities in Percentage

15. Baltimore-Columbia-Towson, MD 56%

Total professional sports championships: 9

Total NFL championships: 5

Total NBA championships: 1

Total MLB championships: 3

Total NHL championships: 0

Total MLS championships: 0

Most recent championship: 2012

14. Cleveland-Elyria, OH 23%

Total professional sports championships: 9

Total NFL championships: 6

Total NBA championships: 1

Total MLB championships: 2

Total NHL championships: 0

Total MLS championships: 0

Most recent championship: 2015

13. Green Bay 45.1% - Milwaukee, WI 26%

Total professional sports championships: 15

Total NFL championships: 13

Total NBA championships: 2

Total MLB championships: 0

Total NHL championships: 0

Total MLS championships: 0

Most recent championship: 2010

12. Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV 19%

Total professional sports championships: 13

Total NFL championships: 5

Total NBA championships: 1

Total MLB championships: 2

Total NHL championships: 1

Total MLS championships: 4

Most recent championship: 2019

11. St. Louis, MO-IL 25%

Total professional sports championships: 14

Total NFL championships: 1

¹ <https://hotdog.com/blog/cities-sports-championships/>

Total NBA championships: 1
Total MLB championships: 11
Total NHL championships: 1
Total MLS championships: 0
Most recent championship: 2018

10. Pittsburgh, PA **36%**

Total professional sports championships: 16

Total NFL championships: 6
Total NBA championships: 0
Total MLB championships: 5
Total NHL championships: 5
Total MLS championships: 0
Most recent championship: 2016

9. Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD **33%**

Total professional sports championships: 17

Total NFL championships: 4
Total NBA championships: 4
Total MLB championships: 7
Total NHL championships: 2
Total MLS championships: 0
Most recent championship: 2017

8. Toronto, ON **33.19%**

Total professional sports championships: 17

Total NFL championships: 0
Total NBA championships: 1
Total MLB championships: 2
Total NHL championships: 13
Total MLS championships: 1
Most recent championship: 2018

7. San Francisco-Oakland-Berkeley, CA **26%**

Total professional sports championships: 18

Total NFL championships: 7
Total NBA championships: 4
Total MLB championships: 7
Total NHL championships: 0
Total MLS championships: 0
Most recent championship: 2017

6. Detroit-Warren-Dearborn, MI **23%**

Total professional sports championships: 22

Total NFL championships: 4
Total NBA championships: 3
Total MLB championships: 4
Total NHL championships: 11

The numbers speak for themselves. Need we say anymore?

Total MLS championships: 0
Most recent championship: 2007

5. Montreal, QC **77.69%**

Total professional sports championships: 25

Total NFL championships: 0
Total NBA championships: 0
Total MLB championships: 0
Total NHL championships: 25
Total MLS championships: 0
Most recent championship: 1992

4. Chicago-Naperville-Elgin, IL-IN-WI **33%**

Total professional sports championships: 30

Total NFL championships: 11
Total NBA championships: 6
Total MLB championships: 6
Total NHL championships: 6
Total MLS championships: 1
Most recent championship: 2016

3. Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA **31%**

Total professional sports championships: 30

Total NFL championships: 3
Total NBA championships: 12
Total MLB championships: 7
Total NHL championships: 3
Total MLS championships: 5
Most recent championship: 2021

2. Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA-NH **36%**

Total professional sports championships: 39

Total NFL championships: 6
Total NBA championships: 17
Total MLB championships: 10
Total NHL championships: 6
Total MLS championships: 0
Most recent championship: 2018

1. New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA **36%**

Total professional sports championships: 58

Total NFL championships: 9
Total NBA championships: 2
Total MLB championships: 35
Total NHL championships: 11
Total MLS championships: 1
Most recent championship: 2021

OUR BLESSED VIRGIN MOTHER AND PROFESSIONAL SPORTS

References to our Blessed Mother also have been used in professional sports specially in professional football. Fifty years ago, yesterday, December 23, 1972, she became famous in the final play of the NFL playoff game between the Oakland Raiders and the Pittsburgh Steelers.

THE IMMACULATE RECEPTION²

The **Immaculate Reception** is one of the most famous plays in the history of American football. It occurred in the AFC divisional playoff game of the National Football League (NFL), between the Pittsburgh Steelers and the then-Oakland Raiders (now Las Vegas Raiders) at Three Rivers Stadium in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on December 23, 1972. With the Steelers trailing on fourth down with 22 seconds left in the game, Pittsburgh quarterback Terry Bradshaw threw a pass targeting John Fuqua. The ball bounced off the helmet of Raiders safety Jack Tatum. Steelers fullback Franco Harris caught it just before it hit the ground and ran for a **game-winning touchdown**. (The video link of the play: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dHIXFKrrUhA>)

NFL Films has chosen it as the greatest play of all time, as well as the most controversial. The play was also selected as the Greatest Play in NFL History in the NFL Network's 100 series. **The play was a turning point for the Steelers, who reversed four decades of futility with their first playoff win ever, and went on to win four Super Bowls by the end of the 1970s.**

The play's name was initially a pun derived from the Immaculate Conception, a dogma in the Catholic Church. The phrase was first used on air by Myron Cope, a Pittsburgh sportscaster who was reporting on the Steelers' victory. A Pittsburgh woman, Sharon Levosky, called Cope before his 11:00 p.m. sports broadcast that night of December 23 and suggested the name, which was coined by her friend Michael Ord. Cope used the term on television and the phrase stuck. The phrase was apparently meant **to imply that the play was miraculous in nature.**

N.B. The use of the term '**Immaculate Reception**' apparently blessed the Steelers team for they had become a powerhouse team today with a total of 6 NFL championships tied with the New England Patriots. It is also noteworthy to mention that the Rooneys, the owners of the Pittsburgh Steelers are Catholics too!

THE HAIL MARY PASS³

A **Hail Mary pass** is a very long forward pass in American football, typically made in desperation, with an exceptionally small chance of achieving a completion. Due to the difficulty of a completion with this pass, it makes reference to the Catholic "Hail Mary" prayer for strength and help.

The expression goes back at least to the 1930s, when it was used publicly by Elmer Layden and Jim Crowley, two former members of the Notre Dame Fighting Irish's Four Horsemen. Originally meaning any sort of desperation play, a Hail Mary pass gradually came to denote a long, low-probability pass, typically of the "alley-oop" variety, attempted at the end of a half when a team is too far from the end zone to execute a more conventional play, implying that it would take a miracle for the play to succeed. For more than 40 years, use of the term was **largely confined to Notre Dame and other Catholic universities.**



ROGER STAUBACH

The term **became widespread** after an NFL playoff game between the Dallas Cowboys and the Minnesota Vikings on **December 28, 1975**, when Cowboys quarterback Roger Staubach said about his game-winning touchdown pass to wide receiver Drew Pearson, **"I closed my eyes and said a Hail Mary."** Roger Staubach is a Catholic too.

(The video link of the play: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KqMYRodkkQw>)

N.B. Since then, **the Hail Mary Pass/Play** became regular parlance for a **game winning** play in sports, amateur or professional. Though it would seem blasphemous to use our Blessed Mother's name in sports, but the fact that fans associate **a miraculous winning turn** of a game to her is suitable enough for this writer and I believe to her too, because they at least remember **her powerful intercession.**

REFERENCES:

1. What Are the Most Catholic Cities in US? (voanews.com)
2. Canada, Statistics by Province, by Catholic Population [Catholic-Hierarchy]
3. Religion in Green Bay, Wisconsin (bestplaces.net)

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immaculate_Reception

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hail_Mary_pass