

THE RECORD
16,743 (and counting)

“It was very important to me to break
the record at Texas Stadium
because this is where it all began.”

— Emmitt Smith



“I wanted to jump around and celebrate a lot more, but we had a game to win and I needed to compose myself long enough to get focused on the Seahawks.”

— Emmitt Smith

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Michael Irvin was the first to actually see it written down. “Become the NFL’s all-time rushing leader.” Of course, the act would be more difficult than any of us will ever realize.

Irvin read those words in 1990 before Emmitt, fresh off the campus of the University of Florida, had ever taken a handoff in the NFL.

“Yeah, I thought he was kidding,” remembers Irvin, the Cowboys former Pro Bowl wide receiver. “But when I said something to him about it, he looked as serious as he does on game day. He really believes in himself and he’s made it happen.”

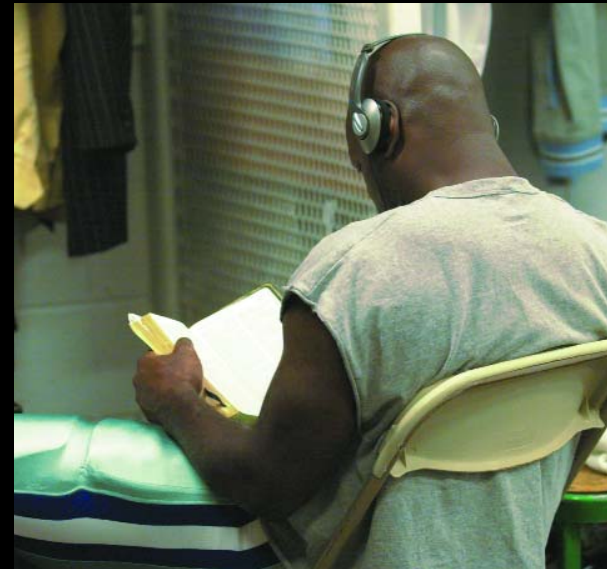
Thirteen seasons of determination followed that simple sentence; and now, Emmitt Smith is the NFL’s all-time rushing leader, supplanting his idol, Walter Payton. Emmitt is at the top of a list that includes such luminaries as Jim Brown, Gale Sayers, Barry Sanders, Earl Campbell, Marcus Allen, John Riggins, and Eric Dickerson. Amazingly, Emmitt Smith looks up at none of them.

The record-breaking run against the Seattle

Seahawks on October 27, 2002, in Texas Stadium was truly a special moment and will never be forgotten. It will be played and replayed on NFL Films indefinitely.

The title came on a play designated as 15 Lead, which resulted in an 11-yard gain on 2nd and 7 from the Cowboys 30-yard line with 9:10 left in the fourth quarter. Of course, the actual run was nothing out of the ordinary for Emmitt Smith. Like the thousands before it, Emmitt took the handoff, read the defense before taking his first step and hit the hole before it actually appeared.

Later in that same drive, Smith scored his 150th career touchdown on a signature one-yard hurdle over the pile. When he came to the Dallas sideline, he was greeted by one of his best friends, Michael Irvin, who was there with a giant hug. Most members of his family were there along with Daryl “Moose” Johnston, Emmitt’s former leading blocker. Johnston, Fox’s color analyst, gave him a hug and Emmitt couldn’t contain himself any longer. The tears came without warning.



Emmitt’s game day routine before entering Texas Stadium.