

# The Philadelphia Inquirer

## sports

### Computer whiz figures Steelers have edge

MIAMI BEACH — You walk into Bud Goode's hotel room and you have this strange sensation that you've just been called in by the IRS for a tax audit.

Sheaves of charts, graphs and thick stacks of computer printouts litter the floor, the beds, the chairs, spilling out onto the patio. Goode is a trim, pleasant 55-year-old who has overcome hepatitis, open-heart surgery and the public's inherent suspicion and distrust of numbers and computers.

Bud Goode is a sports computer



By BILL LYON

analyst who now has 16 NFL teams, including the Eagles, as clients. Every week during the season he sends each of them a massive statistical compilation that averages 60

pages. The reports are crammed with variables, percentages, trends and tendencies, which become a building block for their weekly game plans.

Goode sits in front of his console, a UTS 400 terminal, which is hooked up, by phone, to his main computer in Los Angeles, and he begins pressing buttons like a pianist hurrying through a recital and a maze of statistics flash up on the screen.

Predicting, Goode explains patiently, really is not his bag. But people are enamored with predict-

tions. And so, back in July, Goode and his computer undertook the high-risk task of picking the outcome of every game in the NFL this season. He ended up with a won-lost record of 66 percent. He thinks his nose is slightly disgust at his record.

"A bad year," he said. "In a good year I'll pick with 78 percent accuracy. But I did get 8 of the 10 teams that made the playoffs, and I picked 7 of the 8 playoff games correct, against the line.

"I don't like to predict because I



Associated Press

Bud Goode sits next to his sports computer in his Miami hotel room; the computer figures Pittsburgh as a 4-point favorite.

### Computer whiz gives Steelers edge

LYON, From I-C don't like to incite to gamble. It's not that I'm a bluenose. It's just that you'll never make a living gambling into the line, whether it's the stock market, casinos or football, whether you've got a computer or you use a Ouija board."

OK, with all the disclaimers out of the way, Bud, let's get down to the real nitty-gritty. Ask the computer the biggie: Who's going to win the Super Bowl?

"Well, I'm already on record for that," he said. "Pittsburgh, by 4 points. Something like a final score the last time they played each other in the Super Bowl—21-17."

And then he punches awhile on the computer, and up on the screen comes a power rating for every team in the NFL. Dallas is first at 1.85, Pittsburgh, second at 1.83, Cincinnati, third at 1.83, Houston, fourth at 1.83, and so on. "Well, I'm already on record for that," he said. "Pittsburgh, by 4 points. Something like a final score the last time they played each other in the Super Bowl—21-17."

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the last half of the season. If you looked at the two teams just over their last eight games, say, the computer might give the edge to Dallas. But that's why I expect this to be the best Super Bowl ever. Not only do you have two great teams, but they're almost evenly matched in every area."

Goode has selected 40 variables for judging between the Cowboys and the Steelers. According to his research, the single most important statistic this past season was the number of opponent rushes allowed per game.

"If a team runs on you 40 times a game or more, you've had it," he says flatly. "A strong team will allow 30 rushes a game. Obviously, a team that runs more will control the clock. That's why, though I know numbers and not football, I regard defensive linemen and linebackers as the keys to a team."

The biggest statistical discrepancy between Pittsburgh and Dallas is in yards gained per rush. The Steelers averaged 3.58 during the season, the Cowboys 4.45.

"But Pittsburgh makes up for that by running more times a game (40) than Dallas (39)," he said. "I realize that one rush per game is very slight. One running play may not seem like much, but it may be the

one that a Franco Harris breaks all the way.

"Also, Pittsburgh has a lower run-pass ratio than Dallas, averages more in yards per pass attempt. Pittsburgh has given up fewer touchdown passes than Dallas and has thrown for more touchdowns. I think this will be the winning statistic. One team will score two touchdowns passing, the other one. If it goes to form, that team with two, by passing, will be Pittsburgh. I also give Pittsburgh an edge in the special teams."

Finally, Goode and his computer expect both teams to go away from their habits, to deviate, however slightly from their normal tendencies in the Super Bowl, to run in situations where they have passed before and vice-versa.

Oh, he's got more. Tons more. A dazzling, bewildering, head-spinning array of stats. The computer is indelible.

Ah, but how accurate is it? Well, when Goode picked the outcome of every game for Sports Illustrated last summer, he determined that Dallas would represent the NFC in the Super Bowl and that Miami would represent the AFC. Pittsburgh was his second choice in the AFC.

The year before, before the season ever started, he correctly picked Dallas and Denver as the Super Bowl

participants. Getting Dallas may not have been so tough, but nobody else was picking the Broncos that far back. Such success has helped Goode make a breakthrough.

"Yeah, I'm an overnight success," he laughed. "It only took me 12 years to catch on."

Actually, he had his system and his numbers down pat back in 1965 and tried selling the idea of computer-dependent analysts to TV sportsmen. He broke through by getting a couple of teams as clients. Now he works for NBC and does another show on a CBS station in Los Angeles.

"When I was with Art Linkletter, he gave me some very good advice. He said, 'Bud, pick something you like so much you'd do it for nothing, and pretty soon you'll be so good at it that they'll pay you.' He was right. All I'm selling is objectivity. My opinion isn't worth a damn."

"When I've got two teams that are clients playing each other, like Atlanta and Philadelphia in the playoffs, I weep for the loser. When one of them makes a mistake, I throw the car at the TV set. But as for this Super Bowl, well, my intuition, and my computer, tell me this is not a game to bet but just one to watch and enjoy."