

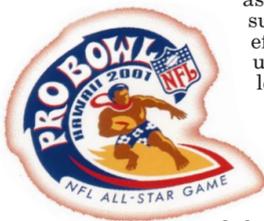
# Liberty Call

# 2001 PRO BOWL

AFC 38

NFC 17

Story by PH2 Chad McNealey  
Hawaii Navy News



To make an event such as Sunday's Pro Bowl successful, it takes the efforts of countless volunteers on numerous levels above and beyond the employees working behind the scenes. That's why the National Football League (NFL) called upon Oahu-based Sailors to get involved in Pro Bowl events.

Sailors took part in various aspects of the game. They were part of the joint color guard, they unfurled the National Ensign during the singing of the National Anthem and even helped set up the stage and entertainment for the halftime show.

And while more than 50,000 people attended the game at Aloha Stadium and hundreds of thousands more watched on national TV, it's safe to say that those people wouldn't have been half as entertained on game day without the involvement of those Sailors.

To officially open the game, the all-girl pop group Dream offered up their a capella version of the Star Spangled Banner, while Sailors from numerous Hawaii-based commands manned the reins on a huge, field covering National Ensign. As the singers neared the end of the anthem, a thunderous roar of five Navy F/A-18 Hornets from VFA-125 stationed in Lemoore, Calif., provided the anthem's climax as they flew overhead.

"[It] was pretty cool and it made me feel proud about what I'm doing for my country," said Interior Communications Electrician 3rd Class Chuck Mackenzie from USS Russell (DDG 59) about performing in front of the crowd of thousands.

Aviation Machinist's Mate 2nd Class Russell Oliver and Aviation Maintenance Administrationman 2nd Class Michael Flater, both from Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron (Light) (HSL) 37, were given the honor of running a pair of American Football Conference (AFC) and National Football League (NFL) flags across an end zone after each AFC score.

Given the tone of the game early on, Oliver and Flater were very busy. The AFC had managed to rack up 17 points on 14 first downs and 231 yards of total offense only two minutes into the second quarter.

Starting quarterback Rich Gannon from the Oakland Raiders, who was playing with a partially separated left shoulder, led his conference out of the gates in a hurry. In the two series that he played, Gannon threw 12 of 14 passes for 160 yards with two touchdowns. That early effort proved to be too much for the National Football Conference (NFC) all-stars to overcome. In the end, Gannon was named the game's Most Outstanding Player for his brief, but effective appearance in the game.

The NFC tried to get its engines started by cutting into the AFC lead with a 48-yard field goal by Tampa Bay Buccaneer kicker Martin Gramatica, cutting the lead to 17-3 early in the second quarter. But after a brief break, Oliver and Flater were again called upon to perform their flag duties. With only 54 seconds left in the half, the AFC took a three-touchdown lead on a two-yard pass from Indianapolis Colts quarterback Peyton Manning to Jacksonville Jaguar wide receiver Jimmy Smith.

After the remaining 54 seconds had elapsed, a significant naval presence took the field to help set up for the halftime show. Operations Specialist 3rd Class (Surface Warfare) Justin Anderson from USS Russell and Yeoman Seaman Rhojohn Simmons stationed on USS Buffalo (SSN 715) were among the 87 Sailors and Marines who helped roll out the stage and set up confetti shooters used during the show, which featured the pop singing group 98 Degrees.

"I felt completely energized! I thought it was great!" said Electronics Technician 3rd Class Alexander Fiato, Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard/IMF, one of the 67 Sailors who helped set up for the half time show. "The fact that they allowed us in the Navy to do it was awesome. It just shows that they trusted in us that we could get the work done," said, said Fiato.

During the second half, after they had completed their assigned tasks, the more than 200 Sailors who participated in the game day events were able to sit back, relax and watch the show - compliments of the NFL.

Mess Management Specialist Chief Ferdinandnestor Frando from Naval Station Pearl Harbor, swelled with pride, seemed to sum up the experience best, "It's an honor to be a part of it. It's my first time seeing a live football game and its just one way to be in it."

The final score was AFC - 38, NFC - 17. Either way, for the Oahu-based Sailors who participated, it was a winning experience!

## Sailors take part in Pro Bowl events



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(Above) Sailors from various Oahu-based commands helped unfurl and keep the flag flying during the pregame events at the Pro Bowl. (Left) Minnesota Viking, All Pro wide receiver Cris Carter was the principal speaker at the annual prayer breakfast.



JOSN Tim Walsh photo



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(Left) OSSN Van Vernon, from USS Hopper (DDG 70), competes in one of the many events held during the NFL Military Challenge at the NFL Experience outside Aloha Stadium on Feb. 2. The competition pitted the Navy against the other three service branches and the Coast Guard.

(Above) AD2 Russell Oliver and AZ2 Michael Flater, both from Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron (Light) (HSL) 37 relay two flags across the AFC endzone after a score.

(Below) Indianapolis Colt quarterback Peyton Manning attempts a pass under pressure from Detroit Lion defensive tackle Luther Elliss.



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