

AAFC CHRONOLOGY

1944

June 4: The first meeting was called by Arch Ward (organizer of the Conference) in St. Louis, Missouri. Attendees: Sam Cordovano (Buffalo), John Keeshin (Chicago), Christy Walsh (Los Angeles, representing Don Ameche), Ray Ryan (New York), Anthony J. Morabito (San Francisco), Lawrence T. 'Buck' Shaw (San Francisco), Arch Ward (Power of Attorney for Arthur B. McBride of Cleveland). The name of the Conference was called All-America. The value of the franchises was set at \$10,000 each. The Conference would consist of eight to ten teams.

September 2: The second meeting of the Conference was held in Chicago. The same representatives were present, but Gene Tunney (Baltimore) was also present. Franchise applications were accepted from Detroit, Boston and Philadelphia. Ray Ryan (New York) announced the signing of Glenn Dobbs, Bill Daley, Jack Russell and Martin Ruby.

September 3: Lawrence T. 'Buck' Shaw was announced as head coach of the San Francisco 49ers.

November 22: James Crowley was named the Commissioner of the Conference.

December 8-10: Third meeting held in New York. Ray Ryan withdrew from Conference due to business obligations. Gene Tunney agreed to move his franchise from Baltimore to New York. Harvey Hester was accepted as owner of the Miami franchise. Gene Tunney withdrew his franchise after being called into duty in the Pacific. Conference secured rights to play at Tri-Borough Stadium. Discussions were underway to obtain rights to play at Ebbets Field.

December 23: Jack Meagher signed a two-year contract to coach the Miami Seahawks.

1945

February 13: Paul Brown accepted a five-year contract (\$25,000 per year) to coach the Cleveland Browns. John Keeshin announced the signing of a ten-year lease to play at Soldier Field.

February 28: Dick Hanley signed a three-year contract to coach the Chicago Rockets. Ernie Nevers resigned as assistant.

April 20: Fourth meeting held in Chicago. Eleanor Gehrig, who withdrew as part-owner of the New York Franchise when Ray Ryan left, was approved as Conference secretary. Sam Cordovano was named treasurer. The following clubs were officially admitted: Buffalo (Jim Breuil and Sam Cordovano), Chicago (John Keeshin), Cleveland (Arthur McBride), Miami (Harvey Hester), Los Angeles (Don Ameche), San Francisco (A.J. Morabito). An application for a franchise by Kansas City was considered. Conference rules and regulations were approved and uniform player contract was adopted. It was agreed that each visiting team would receive 40% of gross receipts with minimum guarantee of \$15,000. Christy Walsh, chairman of the meeting, appointed John Keeshin and Paul Brown to confer with NFL Commissioner Elmer Layden,

regarding working agreements on players' draft, players' salary limits, schedules, inter-league games, anti-raiding policy, etc. Layden was quoted in the press as saying, "There is nothing...to talk about until someone gets a football and plays a game." Later efforts to establish working agreements also met with rebuffs. Present in Chicago, but not attending the meetings, was Tom Gallery, general manager of the NFL Brooklyn Tigers and assistant to Larry MacPhail, president of the New York Yankees baseball club. He expressed interest in having Dan Topping bring the Tigers into the Conference.

May 31: Chicago Rockets announced the signing of Billy Hillenbrand, Don Griffin and Norman Verry.

August 31: The fifth Conference meeting was held in Chicago. Jim Crowley was named President and Commissioner. Eleanor Gehrig was named Treasurer and Secretary. Crowley announced the signing of 150 players, including Bob Steuber of the Bears and Lou Rymkus of the Redskins, following the NFL's refusal to discuss working agreements. An Executive Committee was formed: John Keeshin (chairman), William D. Cox, Harvey Hester. Application of Baltimore group headed by Edward Neilson discussed.

October 16: It was announced that William D. Cox's franchise would operate in Ebbets Field as the Brooklyn Dodgers. Players signed by Ray Ryan awarded to William Cox.

October 23: Christy Walsh withdrew from the Los Angeles group. A corporation, headed by Don Ameche, purchased the franchise. New owners: Benjamin F. Lindheimer, Louis B. Mayer, Bing Crosby, Loyd Wright, Pat O'Brien, Leo Spitz, Norman W. Church and Daniel F. Rice.

December 5: Dan Topping announced that he was transferring his NFL franchise to the AAFC. The owners of the seven franchises agreed to give Topping \$75,000, plus \$25,000 to come out of the first years gate receipts.

December 19: Edward 'Slip' Madigan named general manager of the Los Angeles Dons.

1946

January 4: The sixth Conference meeting was held in Chicago. Edward Neilson announced that because of delay in getting a stadium lease, Baltimore would not operate in 1946. It was agreed that eight clubs would play the 1946 season: Brooklyn, Buffalo, Chicago, Cleveland, Miami, Los Angeles, New York and San Francisco. Requests for 1947 franchises by two groups in New Orleans and Kansas City considered. The New York Yankees took approximately half of the players coming to them under the December 5, 1945 agreement and turned over reserve list for draft by all clubs.

January 10: New York announced the signing of Frank Sinkwich.

January 12: Cleveland Rams, NFL Champions in 1945, announce moving their franchise to Los Angeles.

January 20: Dudley DeGroot, whose Washington Redskins had won 1945 Eastern division title in NFL, named coach of Los Angeles Dons. Ray Flaherty, also former Redskins coach, named coach of the New York Yankees.

February 20: Jim Crowley announced that 400 players were under contract. AAFC challenged the NFL to a series of eight preseason games for charity, with the NFL to name the games, opponents and sites. The NFL declined.

March 3: Jim Crowley said he approached Bert Bell regarding agreement on players who had signed 1946 contracts in both leagues. Bell did not return Crowley's call.

April 7-12: The seventh Conference meeting was held (three days in San Francisco and three days in Los Angeles). The 1946 schedule was approved, but not announced due to pending minor changes.

April 28: At the NFL meeting in New York, owners of New York, Boston and Detroit clubs were quoted as being opposed to entering any agreement of any kind with the Conference.

May 20: Conference club representatives met with American Association clubs regarding possibility of putting AAFC minor league clubs in Association parks. It was decided that plenty of players were available from the AAFC roster of 500+, but that it was too late to establish front offices for 1946.

May 22: The Boston Yankees announce the signing of Notre Dame Angelo Bertelli, who had previously signed a contract with the Los Angeles Dons. The Dons threatened a lawsuit.

May 28: Sam Cordovano announced his resignation as part-owner and coach of the Buffalo Bisons, in order to focus his efforts on his construction company.

May 29: Lowell 'Red' Dawson signed a three-year contract to be the coach of the Buffalo Bisons.

June 5: Wholesale litigation was started against NFL players and owners for violation of 1946 AAFC contracts. Temporary restraining order issued to prevent Angelo Bertelli from playing for anyone except the Los Angeles Dons.

August 18: In the first exhibition game, the Brooklyn Dodgers and Chicago Rockets battled to a 14-14 tie in front of 20,000 fans.

August 20-22: The eighth and final organizational meeting was held in Chicago. Eleanor Gehrig resigned as secretary and treasurer, and was elected vice-president of the Conference. Louis F. Carroll was elected secretary and William D. Cox was elected treasurer.

September 6: The Cleveland Browns beat the Miami Seahawks 44-0 in the first regular season game.

September 13: Angelo Bertelli was enjoined from playing with anyone but the Los Angeles Dons. The decision of Superior Court Judge Felix Forte upheld the equity petition of the Dons and established legality of the AAFC uniform player contract, including the reserve clause.

September 26: Coach Dick Hanley of the Chicago Rockets was replaced by a player-coach group consisting of Bob Dove, Wilbur Wilkin and Ned Mathews.

October 22: Jack Meagher resigned as coach of the Miami Seahawks and was replaced by Hamp Pool.

October 25: Dr. Marvin Stevens resigned as coach of the Brooklyn Dodgers. He was replaced by Cliff Battles on November 1.

October 29: Pat Boland replaced three player-coaches as head coach of the Chicago Rockets.

December 14: John Keeshin resigned as chairman of the Executive Committee. He was replaced by Benjamin Lindheimer.

December 20: The Miami Seahawks were expelled from the AAFC for failure to meet contractual obligations.

December 22: The Cleveland Browns defeated the New York Yankees 14-9 to win the first Conference Championship.

December 28: Franchise awarded to Robert R. Rodenberg and four associates, to operate in 1947 in Baltimore Municipal stadium.

December 30: Control of Chicago Rockets turned over to group headed by James Crowley, who became General Manager, Executive Vice-President, and Coach, resigning from Conference Commissionership.

1947

January 28: Resignation of Jim Crowley formally accepted. Benjamin Lindheimer named Chairman of Executive Committee, with Dan Topping and Anthony Morabito as members. Linheimer was appointed Acting Commissioner and Dan Topping named Acting President.

February 10: Cecil Isbell signed a 5-year contract to coach the Baltimore Colts.

February 26: Jonas Ingram named Commissioner.

March 19: Oliver O. Kessing named Deputy Commissioner.

June 16: Buffalo changed their name from "Bisons" to "Bills."

June 25: Offset goal posts named mandatory, blocked kick for point after touchdown declared dead ball to lessen danger of injury.

August 25: Commissioner Ingram issues challenge to NFL for a championship game between the leagues. The challenge was never accepted.

1948

January 2: Branch Rickey announced that the Brooklyn Baseball organization would operate the Brooklyn Football Dodgers in Ebbets field in 1948.

January 21: Carl Voyles of Auburn was named coach of the Brooklyn Dodgers.

January 25: Ed McKeever of San Francisco University named Chicago Rockets' coach.

March 15: James Phelan of St. Mary's named coach of the Los Angeles Dons.

April 28: New ownership of Baltimore Colts, civic group headed by Robert Embry, announced.

May 20: New ownership of Chicago Rockets, civic group headed by R. Edward Garn, announced.

September 18: Norman 'Red' Strader replaced Ray Flaherty as New York coach.

December 20: Committees from the AAFC and the NFL met in Philadelphia by mutual agreement for a discussion of mutual problems and to devise means of ending the so called "pro football war." While no solution was reached, it was the first official recognition of the AAFC by the NFL, and was consistent with the AAFC desire, first expressed April 20, 1945, for working agreements to insure the stability and growth of major league football.

1949

January 20: Announcement was made that the Brooklyn and New York Franchises would be amalgamated for 1949. Later announcement was made of Dan Topping as president and Branch Rickey as chairman of the board for the Brooklyn-New York club.

January 22: Resignation of Commissioner Jonas Ingram accepted. Deputy Commissioner O.O. Kessing named Commissioner. Player limit cut from 35 to 32.

January 29: Ray Flaherty named coach of the Chicago club.

February 1: Announcement made that Chicago group headed by James C. Thompson and including Lee A. Freeman and Irvin Rooks had purchased Chicago franchise and had changed name from "Rockets" to "Hornets." Six former Brooklyn players assigned to Brooklyn-New York and rest of Dodgers squad assigned to Chicago.

February 24: Walter S. Driskill named president and general manager of Baltimore Colts, with Robert Embry becoming vice-chariman of the board.