

DAYTON PLAYED LARGE FOUNDING ROLE IN NFL

By Ritter Collett and Steve Presar

Originally published in the Dayton Daily News

The enthusiasm of Dayton football fans is split between the Cleveland Browns and Cincinnati Bengals. But if you turn the clock back 70 football seasons, our town had a pro team before Paul Brown established either current franchise.

The Dayton Triangles of long ago were a charter member of the grouping that became the National Football League. The first league game was played here and Lou Partlow of the Triangles scored the NFL's first touchdown.

The roots of pro football are firmly embedded in Ohio, although Dayton's role is generally less recognized than that of the northeastern area of the state.

In the 1913-20 era, immediately before the founding of the NFL, semi-pro teams were organized around neighborhoods or athletic clubs in this part of the country. The players worked at their regular jobs during the week and usually practiced two or three evenings before picking up extra income by playing weekend games.

Much has been written about early semi-pro teams in Canton, Massillon and Akron. But there was a team developing along those same lines in southwest Ohio. It became very successful and played a role in establishing what is now the NFL.

By 1910, there were a number of semi-pro and amateur teams competing against each other in Dayton. The Dayton Daily News of that period refers to Wolverines, Miamis, McKinleys, Westwoods, Oxfords, Republics and Nationals who played in parks around the city, most of which are now gone.

Played as school and club

Out of this backdrop, Dayton's most successful football operation emerged in 1913. The organizers had already made their mark in basketball at St. Marys Institute, now the University of Dayton. Playing as both a school and a club team, the St. Marys Cadets laid claim to a national basketball championship by virtue of a victory over the Buffalo Germans, a club team that was recognized as the best in the land.

The St. Marys basketball standouts included captain Al Schumacher (who later became a priest) Al Mahrt, Hugh and Norb Sacksteder, George (Babe) Zimmerman, Diddle Baker, Martin Kuntz and Dick Pflaum.

In the fall of 1913 they formed a football team under the same name, the St. Marys Cadets, and rolled to a 7-0 season. Al Mahrt, the quarterback, was captain and the coach was Lou (Foose) Clark, who also coached the college team to a 4-1-1 mark that season.

Only Mahrt, the Sacksteder brothers and Babe Zimmerman played on the CAdepts football team. The most notable addition to the team was Carl (Scummy) Storck. The coach was Harry Solimano, who also coached and played on the Cadets basketball team.

St. Marys won the city championship with a 26-21 victory over Oakwood and the southern Ohio title with a 27-0 victory over the Cincinnati Celts in a game played in Redland Park in Cincinnati, presumed to be the home of the Cincinnati Reds, which later became Crosley Field.

The Cadets repeated their city championship the next season and in 1915 changed their name to the Dayton Gym-Cadets, sponsored by the club that still exists on Wayne Avenue. Quarterback Al Mahrt took over the coaching duties.

An addition to the team was George (Hobby) Kinderdine, a standout center, who later became sheriff of Montgomery County.

THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 12, No. 1 (1990)

In 1916, F.B. McNab, a patent attorney for the Dayton Engineering Laboratories Company (Delco) began organizing recreational football among employees of three downtown Dayton plants. In addition to Delco, the plants were Dayton Metal Products and Domestic Engineering Company, later known as Delco-Light.

All three were founded and operated by Col. Edward A. Deeds and Charles F. Kettering, two civic and industrial giants in Dayton's history.

Storck, who had played at Stivers High School and with the Cadets, was almost certainly one of the first men in America to envision a future professional league. McNab recognized his enthusiasm and hired him to help organize the team, the nucleus of which was the Cadets.

Nelson (Bud) Talbott, a Walter Camp All-American selection as a tackle at Yale in 1913 and an Oakwood resident, was named coach. The team manager was Mike Redelle, who handled scheduling and travel arrangements. The secretary-treasurer was A.O. Davidson. The games were still played at Westwood Park.

The Triangles' first game under that name (in 1916) was a 72-0 slaughter of the Cincinnati Northerns, getting the Daytonians off to a good start toward a 9-1 season. Teams from Detroit, Toledo and Pittsburgh also were on the schedule.

That year the Canton Bulldogs with the legendary Jim Thorpe claimed the world championship with a victory over the Massillon Tigers. The Dayton team challenged them for a game-but nothing came of it.

That same year, Deeds and Kettering purchased a sizable plot of land at the confluence of the Great Miami and Stillwater rivers to be used as a recreational park for employees of their companies. The park had a triangular shape and a committee picked the name Triangle Park.

The park was eventually turned over to the city and it still represents a major portion of Dayton's recreational area for baseball, softball, tennis, soccer and general recreational use.

Triangle Park opened in May 1917 and that fall the football team used the Ridge Avenue portion, now the Howell Field baseball park, as its home base for a successful 6-0-2 season.

The Triangles improved their record to 8-0 in 1918, a season in which World War I conditions restricted travel. Redelle, who later managed the Victory Theater for many years, enlisted in the army and Storck replaced him as business manager.

That put Storck in a position to represent Dayton in the historic 1920 meeting in Ralph Hay's Hupmobile Agency in Canton. Joe Carr represented the Columbus Panhandles and the Ohioan who would become the long-time league president, an office he held from 1921 until his death in 1939.

The league's first president was Thorpe, but he was president in name only as the teams hoped to capitalize on his reputation.

Partlow scored first TD

Out of that meeting, with representatives from the Ohio cities of Akron, Canton, Columbus and Dayton along with Rochester, N.Y., the framework for the APFA (American Professional Football Association) was formed.

The new league's first season was 1920, by which time an unwieldy collection of 14 teams were involved. None of the 14 paid the original \$100 franchise fee. One of them, the Muncie Flyers, lasted only one game.

On September 26, the first APFA team to play was the Rock Island, Illinois Independents who defeated the St. Paul Ideals, 48-0, before 800 fans.

The first meeting of two league teams found Dayton defeating Columbus, 14-0, at Triangle Park on October 3, 1920. Lou Partlow scored the first touchdown and Francis Bacon the other. Kinderdine, who was to play with the Dayton team for its duration in the league, kicked both extra points.

In newspaper accounts of the time, Partlow's unique method of training was featured. He would run through heavily wooded country along the Miami River near his home in West Carrollton. He would run close to the trees, as if picking a hole, and occasionally run full tilt into one of them to toughen up his shoulder for blocking.

THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 12, No. 1 (1990)

The Triangles had a 5-2-2 record, both losses coming late in the season to Akron, the team that beat out the Decatur (Illinois) Staleys for the championship. The Staleys became the Chicago Bears in 1922.

The high point of the season was a 20-20 tie with Thorpe and the Bulldogs at Triangle Park. No team had scored three touchdowns against the Canton team since 1915. Olympic hero Thorpe drop-kicked two field goals late in the game to earn the tie.

The names of 26 Triangle players appeared in newspaper lineups. The starting backfield usually consisted of Al Mahrt, Francis Bacon, Partlow and George Roudebush with Norb Sacksteder and Fred Slackford in reserve.

Linemen included Dave Reese, Dick Abrell, Foose Clark, Lee Fenner, Carl (Dutch) Thiele, Earl Hauser, Harry Cutler, Glenn Tidd, Russ Hathaway, Ed Sauer, Ed Davis, Dan O'Connor, Larry Dellinger, John Turner, Guy Early, Charles Winston and Hobby Kinderdine.

At the league meeting April 30, 1921, Joe Carr was elected president and moved the league headquarters to Columbus. Dayton's Storck became secretary-treasurer and the two held those position until Carr's death.

Storck became acting president until Elmer Layden, one of Notre Dame's fabled Four Horsemen, became the first commissioner in 1941. With the league office moving to Chicago and Dayton no longer in the league, Storck submitted his resignation and is one of the forgotten pioneers of the league.

In 1921, the Triangles finished with a 4-4-1 record. Coach Talbott brought in an assistant, Frank Hinkey, a Yale standout who was named an All-American four years by Walter Camp (1891- 94). It turned out to be Talbott's last year as coach. Business pressures caused him to resign and Storck took over the coaching duties in 1922.

That was the year the APFA changed its name to the National Football League. The record of the first two seasons under the APFA banner are recognized now as part of the NFL records.

The 1922 season was a turning point in the fortunes of the Dayton franchise. The team posted a 4-3-1 record and that was to be its last winning season.

Under George Halas and Curly Lambeau, the Chicago Bears and Green Bay Packers were out signing top college talent while many of the early franchises, including the Triangles, were still playing mostly with hometown talent.

The capacity of Dayton's home field was 5,000, but the team rarely had capacity crowds. Admission was \$1 but the Triangles were unable to attract top teams to come here, forcing the team to play more games on the road.

Nonetheless, the Triangles held on through the 1929 season, but they didn't win a game, going 0-7 and 0-6 the last two years.

The inevitable end after the 1929 season was not widely mourned in Dayton because the team had won only two games in the last five seasons.

But the Triangles were a charter member of the NFL.

Dayton pro football team records

<u>Name</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>L</u>	<u>T</u>	<u>Award</u>
Cadets	1913	7	0	0	City champs
	1914	5	4	0	City Champs
Gym-Cadets	1915	7	1	1	City champs
Triangles	1916	9	1	0	
	1917	6	0	2	
	1918	8	0	0	
	1919	5	2	1	
Triangles-APFA	1920	5	2	2	
	1921	4	4	1	
Triangles-NFL	1922	4	3	1	
	1923	1	6	1	
	1924	2	6	0	
	1925	0	7	1	
	1926	1	4	1	
	1927	1	6	1	
	1928	0	7	0	
	1929	0	6	0	

About the author

Computer analyst Steve Presar was looking for an interesting topic for his major presentation as a member of the Toastmasters Club last summer. He had heard of the Dayton Triangles, the long-gone National Football League team, and decided to tackle that as his topic.

But he discovered there was no comprehensive material on the triangles in the Montgomery county Library or anywhere else. His curiosity roused, Lima native Presar decided to research a history himself. His efforts, achieved over a six week period in August and September, resulted in a history of the team in its 14 seasons, 10 of them as an NFL entry.

The complete material will be donated to the Montgomery County Historical Society and will appear in the next edition of the semi-annual Miami Valley Chronicles this spring. A slightly shortened version of Presar's report appears here, edited by Sports Editor Ritter Collett.