

Elias Answers

By Bob Carroll

When a “civilian” discovers a possible error in the official record, there’s an unfortunate tendency among some to take on a “gotcha” stance. That’s a normal human failing – something to do with our instinctive rebellion against authority. If you’re about to be locked up and remind your lawyer of *Jimcrack vs. Whohaw*, and that gets you a walk, you may feel superior to your mouthpiece. But, pardon me, if the next time I’m about to be jailed, I prefer to call a lawyer. You may know one little wrinkle, but my Perry Mason still knows a whole lot more.

Anyhow, when the article on Alworth’s streak arrived, I immediately called the Elias Sports Bureau. See, I know that they’d rather get it right than win the lottery. That’s practically a religion with Elias.

Now, had the article said something like, “I know he played in another game ‘cause I saw it,” the Elias crowd wouldn’t stop the presses. Memories are unreliable. But the fact that author Lovett had actually done his homework got their attention.

Steve Hirdt and John Carson both assured me they’d look into it. Steve pointed out that Elias didn’t start keeping the American Football League’s stats until 1967 and prior to that the AFL game sheets were not reliable as far as who played in each game. That makes tracing one game’s details difficult, but my guess is Elias will do it.

A few weeks earlier, I got a letter that caused me to call Elias.

The letter came from Pete Emelianchik. He informed me that his name and record were missing from *Total Football II*, a book I’m pleased to have been able to work on. Pete said he played one game for the Philadelphia Eagles in 1967.

Now, you have to understand that I get phone calls and letters all the time about people who supposedly played in the NFL. The most common type is “My new boyfriend says he used to play for the Baltimore Colts (or whoever) and I was wondering” Apparently, claiming to be an ex-NFL player is a great way to get chicks. Not one of these has ever worked out to be true. Once I got a letter from a guy whose late father had claimed to be an NFL player. I tapdanced around this with a lot of smoke about the difficulty in finding information and yahtadah-yahtadah. I couldn’t bring myself to tell the guy his old man was full of hockey pucks.

Every once in a while, I come across an obituary in which the deceased is referred to as a “former NFL player.” Maybe the obituary writer got confused. However, I hardly think that was the case with the fellow who “started two years at guard for the Chicago Cardinals” or the college president who supposedly spent three seasons with two different teams – who never heard of him.

The second most common “I played” letter I get is from actual football players. They did indeed play – but only in pre-season or, as they used to call them, “exhibition” games. To them, I carefully explain that *Total Football II* lists only players who appeared in official league games.

So, when I got the letter from Pete Emelianchik, I was dead sure he had played in a pre-season game only, thinking it was the Eagles’ first official game. I wrote him a nice note to that effect.

Oops!

Pete wrote back that he played in the last game of 1967, listing the opponent and place. Naturally, he didn’t have a game sheet, but he did photocopy a page from the Eagles’ 1968 media guide which listed tight end Peter A. Emelianchik among the Eagles’ players. The most significant part of the write-up stated “Was activated for finale vs. Cleveland, but saw only specialty team duty.”

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I've found errors in media guides, but this sounded pretty convincing. I immediately e-mailed John Carson at Elias and told him the story.

The next thing I knew, John was back with an answer. It turned out that Elias had Emelianchik in its computer along with all the pertinent information. Somehow in the conversion to the *Total Football II* files, he got dropped. They didn't even have to haul out the game sheet to check.

I called Pete and told him the good news – that in *Total Football III* a couple of years from now, he and his record will be listed. He was pleased, but probably not as much as Elias or I was to take one more small step toward perfection. (Actually, I have a couple of giant steps and several humongus leaps to go, but every little bit helps.)

And while this little incident may prove that even Elias (or their computer) can make a mistake, they will move quickly to right any wrong if given a good reason to double-check. Thanks, John.

However, if your new girl friend says she used to play for the Baltimore Colts (or whatever), don't call me.

For the record:

PETE EMELIANCHIK E
Emelianchik, Peter Adam 6'2", 213
Col: Dodge City JC (KS); Richmond
HS: Abraham Lincoln [Brooklyn, NY]
1967 Phi 1 G.

Now, if you'll excuse me, I have to go attend a Colts Alumni meeting.