

## PFRA-ternizing

### HAY AND ROSS AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED

**John Gunn** and **Chris Willis** have been named winners of PFRA's annual achievement awards.

**John Gunn** is the foremost historian on armed service teams and has written two books on U.S. Marine football. He has been named the 2005 winner of PFRA's **Ralph Hay Award**, given for lifetime achievement in pro football research and historiography.

#### Past Hay Award Winners

2004	Jeff Miller
2003	John Hogrogian
2002	Ken Pullis
2001	Tod Maher
2000	Mel "Buck" Bashore
1999	Dr. Stan Grosshandler
1998	Seymour Siwoff
1997	Total Sports
1996	Don Smith
1995	John Hogrogian
1994	Jim Campbell
1993	Robert Van Atta
1992	Richard Cohen
1991	Joe Horrigan
1990	Bob Gill
1989	Joe Plack
1988	David Neft

For his *Old Leather: An Oral History Of Early Pro Football in Ohio, 1920-1935*, **Chris Willis** is the recipient of the 2005 **Nelson Ross Award** given to a PFRA member for recent achievement in pro football research and historiography.

#### Past Ross Award Winners

2004	Michael MacCambridge
2003	Mark Ford
2002	Bob Gill, Steve Brainerd, Tod Maher
2001	Bill Ryczek
2000	Paul Reeths
1999	Joe Ziemba
1998	Keith McClellan
1997	Tod Maher & Bob Gill
1996	John Hogrogian
1995	Phil Dietrich
1994	Rick Korch
1993	Jack Smith
1992	John M. Carroll
1991	Tod Maher
1990	Pearce Johnson
1989	Bob Gill
1988	Bob Braunwart

## **COMMITTEES**

Tim Brulia is interested in forming two PFRA research committees:

1. A committee dedicated to radio and tv commentators. Tim would like to chronicle each NFL team's, AAFC team's and AFL team's radio commentator history from the beginning of each team's existence, or in the case of the older teams, from their first season using the medium to date, or in the case of defunct teams, their last season.

Also, the desire of the committee would be to chronicle the TV voices for each NFL and AFL regular and post season game ever televised.

2. A committee dedicated to each team's uniform designs and colors for each season since 1933 and beyond, if possible. This would include helmets, jerseys, pants and socks. The long-term goals for this committee is to document each design for each team on an annual basis. A prime example of this is a similar site dedicated to hockey, [www.nhluniforms.com](http://www.nhluniforms.com). and to possibly document the jersey colors worn by each team for each game since 1933.

# WHEN HAVING THE BEST RECORD DIDN'T MEAN HOME FIELD ADVANTAGE

By Andy Piascik

The wisdom of awarding home field advantage in the postseason on the basis of regular season performance is such an integral part of modern day football, not to mention most every other sport, that it is difficult to believe that this has not always been the case. Until 1975, however, home field advantage in postseason football rarely had anything to do with which of the teams involved did better in the regular season.

Where a game was played was mostly the luck of the draw. From 1933 to 1969, in fact, there were only two exceptions.\* In the pre-Super Bowl era of 1933-65 in particular, teams that did better in the regular season had to play on the road at about the same frequency as they got to play at home.

Perhaps patterning itself after the baseball World Series, the NFL instituted a rotation system when it began postseason play in 1933. The winner of the West hosted the Championship Game one year, the East the next, and so on, with no regard for regular season records. When the AAFC and the AFL were formed, both followed suit. It took over four decades and a series of bad situations in the early 1970's, most notably in 1974, before the far better format in use today was implemented.\*\*

In baseball, a rotation system was a sensible choice in the era before interleague play. Teams from the two baseball leagues did not play each other during the regular season so it wouldn't necessarily have made sense to base home field advantage in the World Series on the records of the two pennant winners. In addition, the World Series is precisely that, a series of games, and each team is assured of at least two home games.

Postseason football, on the other hand, is not a series of games between two teams but a one shot deal. The importance of home field advantage is thus magnified greatly. Considering the vast difference in December/January weather between California and Florida on the one hand and Wisconsin, Ohio, and Michigan on the other, where games are played takes on even greater importance.

In addition, unlike baseball, teams from different conferences in football *always* played each other during the regular season right from the 1933 re-alignment. The number of interconference games was regularly as high as 33%-40% in the NFL, and even reached 50% in one season. AAFC teams actually played the *majority* of their games against teams from the other conference, as did teams in the AFL for eight of that league's ten seasons.

With that kind of mixture of games on the schedule, it never made sense for pro football to rotate home field in Championship Games. With so much interconference activity, a fairer system would have automatically awarded home field advantage to the team with the best regular season record.

Part of the thinking behind the rotation plan was undoubtedly to avoid having the same team host the Championship Game again and again. The rotation plan ensured that the title game would be spread around in the event a team had a number of seasons with the best regular season record, either consecutively or concentrated in a short time.

As it turned out, there wasn't much to worry about. In the entire 86 year history of the NFL, no team has finished with the best overall record more than three times in succession or more than five times in any eight year span.

Whether it was part of the logic, there was one other point that supports the choice that was made. It was reasonable to expect that there would be seasons like 1935 when the Eastern champion Giants finished with the best record, but the West had a substantial advantage in interconference games. Awarding the Giants home field in the title game would have been fair in one sense, but unfair in that their record was partly a result of weak competition within the conference.

However, most of the biggest advantages for one conference or the other came in the very period when interconference games made up the highest percentage of the schedule. 1935 was one of those seasons with

## THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 28, No. 1 (2006)

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38%. So even in a season like that the issue is not so clear-cut. If one conference has a big advantage, does that really trump a team from the other conference with the best record if everybody plays very similar schedules?

Looking at the 1933-65 period as a whole, the conferences were fairly balanced most of the time, with differences of two or fewer wins predominating. More importantly, the number of times when the difference was significant is far smaller than the occasions when the team with the best record had to go on the road for the Championship Game. For that reason, awarding home field advantage to the team with the best record would have led to far fewer problems.

The best argument against the rotation system came right in the second year of Championship Game play. In fact, that year revealed that the rotation rule opened the door for the worst of all possible scenarios. The 13-0 Bears finished with a far better record than the 8-5 Giants, the West had an overwhelming 15-4 interconference edge, *and* Chicago was 2-0 against the Giants during the season. Yet because it was the East's turn to host the title game, the Bears had to play the title game in New York. They lost. \*\*\*

In all, there were 43 league Championship Games played in the NFL, AAFC, and AFL from 1933-65. In three - the NFL in 1958 and the AFL in 1960 and 1962 - the two combatants had the same record, while the 1936 game was played on a neutral field. In the other 39 games, the team with the best regular season record had to play on the road 19 times, or almost exactly half the time. With a rotation system, that's just about what would be expected.

Here are those 19 teams, their regular season records, their opponents, the regular season records of their opponents, and how the team with the better record fared:

**1934 Bears (13-0) at Giants (8-5) lost 30-13**  
**1935 Giants (9-3) at Lions (7-3-2) lost 26-7**  
**1939 Giants (9-1-1) at Packers (9-2) lost 27-0**  
**1942 Bears (11-0) at Redskins (10-1) lost 14-6**  
**1946 Bears (8-2-1) at Giants (7-3-1) won 24-14**  
**1947 Browns (12-1-1) at Yankees (11-2-1) won 14-3**  
**1948 Cardinals (11-1) at Eagles (9-2-1) lost 7-0**  
**1949 Eagles (11-1) at Rams (8-2-2) won 14-0**  
**1951 Browns (11-1) at Rams (8-4) lost 24-17**  
**1952 Lions (9-3) at Browns (8-4) won 17-7**  
**1953 Browns (11-1) at Lions (10-2) lost 17-16**  
**1954 Lions (9-2-1) at Browns (9-3) lost 56-10**  
**1955 Browns (9-2-1) at Rams (8-3-1) won 38-14**  
**1956 Bears (9-2-1) at Giants (8-3-1) lost 47-7**  
**1957 Browns (9-2-1) at Lions (8-4) lost 59-14**  
**1959 Giants (10-2) at Colts (9-3) lost 31-16**  
**1962 Packers (13-1) at Giants (12-2) won 16-7**  
**1964 Colts (12-2) at Browns (10-3-1) lost 27-0**  
**1965 Browns (11-3) at Packers (10-3-1) lost 23-12**

Here are the teams that had to play on the road despite having the best record, the number of times, and the years:

<b>Browns</b>	<b>6 (1947, 1951, 1953, 1955, 1957, 1965)</b>
<b>Bears</b>	<b>4 (1934, 1942, 1946, 1956)</b>
<b>Giants</b>	<b>3 (1935, 1939, 1959)</b>
<b>Lions</b>	<b>2 (1952, 1954)</b>
<b>Packers</b>	<b>1 (1962)</b>
<b>Colts</b>	<b>1 (1964)</b>
<b>Cardinals</b>	<b>1 (1948)</b>
<b>Eagles</b>	<b>1 (1949)</b>

The striking thing about the Browns being at the top of the list is that they didn't even begin play until almost halfway through the 1933-65 period. Over a span of 20 seasons, Cleveland was in this situation about once every three years. All but one of the other teams on the list, on the other hand, go back to 1933. The Bears' second highest total of four in the 33 years, in contrast to Cleveland's, occurred at intervals of about once every eight years.

What is really the crux of the matter, though, is not all of the 19 games, but those cases where the team with the

## THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 28, No. 1 (2006)

---

best record had to play on the road and lost. In the games where they won anyway, there is really nothing to speculate about. In winning, those teams persevered against an unfair rule and proved themselves superior.

Where there is room for debate is in the other games, 13 in all, where a team had to go on the road despite having the best record and lost. Here are the teams that were negatively impacted, as it were, and the number of times and seasons:

**Browns** 4 (1951, 1953, 1957, 1965)  
**Bears** 3 (1934, 1942, 1956)  
**Giants** 3 (1935, 1939, 1959)  
**Colts** 1 (1964)  
**Cardinals** 1 (1948)  
**Lions** 1 (1954)

And here are the teams that could be said to have benefited from the rule and the number of times and seasons (that is, the teams that got to play at home despite having an inferior record and won):

**Lions** 3 (1935, 1953, 1957)  
**Packers** 2 (1939, 1965)  
**Giants** 2 (1934, 1956)  
**Browns** 2 (1954, 1964)  
**Rams** 1 (1951)  
**Eagles** 1 (1948)  
**Redskins** 1 (1942)  
**Colts** 1 (1959)

If the results of the two charts are combined, the Lions and Packers are the biggest overall beneficiaries. Both won two more games that they got to play at home despite having an inferior record than they lost on the road when they had a better record. The Bears were most adversely impacted in that they lost three times on the road in years when they had the best record, but never played at home when they had an inferior record. Here is the overall plus/minus tally:

### BENEFICIARIES

**Lions +2**  
**Packers +2**  
**Rams +1**  
**Eagles +1**  
**Redskins +1**

### ADVERSELY IMPACTED

**Bears -3**  
**Browns -2**  
**Cardinals -1**  
**Giants -1**

**Colts even**

In some of the 13 instances when the team with the best record had to play on the road and lost, the difference in the records of the two teams was quite dramatic. In addition to the aforementioned 1934 season, the most noteworthy example was in 1951 when the 11-1 Browns had to go on the road and were defeated by the 8-4 Rams. All told, there were five instances where a team with a record that was at least 1 1/2 games better than their opponent had to go on the road and lost: the 1934 Bears, the 1948 Cardinals, the 1951 and 1957 Browns, and the 1964 Colts.

In no way does this mean that any of these 13 teams lost *because* they had to play on the road. Football is a far more unpredictable proposition than that. However, any game, even games that were extremely one-sided like those in 1954, 1956, and 1957, may have been impacted, the difference between home and the road is so great.

That difference is most evident in the fact that teams do win more frequently at home. In postseason football, no matter the era, the home team wins *far more frequently*. In the 1933-65 era, for example, the home team was 29-13 (.690) in Championship Games. But even that dominant record does not accurately reflect the true advantage that is applicable here, since what is really at issue is how home teams did when they had the better record. In those 20 games, home teams were 15-5 (.750).

The 6-13 record that teams with the best record posted when having to play on the road, by contrast, translates to a .316 winning percentage. Perhaps more than any other set of numbers, the difference between .750 and .316 reveals the impact the rule had on a team's chances for victory. If the teams with the best record had won those

## THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 28, No. 1 (2006)

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19 games at a rate of .750 instead of .316, they would have gone 14-5 instead of 6-13.

In the cases of the Bears and Browns, the two teams most adversely impacted, the numbers are far more dramatic. In fact, the difference between how those teams did at home and away when they had the best record compared to how everybody else did is off the charts:

	<b>Record at home w/best record</b>	<b>Record on road w/best record</b>	<b>Difference</b>
<b>Browns</b>	<b>1.000 (4-0)</b>	<b>.333 (2-4)</b>	<b>.667</b>
<b>Bears</b>	<b>.800 (4-1)</b>	<b>.250 (1-3)</b>	<b>.550</b>
<b>Everybody else</b>	<b>.636 (7-4)</b>	<b>.400 (4-6)</b>	<b>.236</b>

Had the Bears and Browns played those ten combined road games at home instead and won at the same home rate, they would have gone a combined 9-1 instead of 3-7.

Assuming that the closer games would have been the most likely to have gone differently had home and road been reversed, 7 of the 13 warrant special attention. Those games could be categorized as very close throughout (1948, 1951, 1953), relatively close throughout (1942, 1965), and very close until the home team pulled away late (1934, 1959).

Again, there is no way to know how any of those games would have gone had they been played in the visiting team's stadium. But things ranging from climate, travel, and a supportive versus hostile crowd all come into play. Except in the case of losing teams unpopular at home, virtually every player and coach who ever expressed an opinion on the matter has emphatically preferred to play at home.

Most teams were concentrated in the Northeast in 1933-65 and warm versus cold venues was not as big an issue as it became later. The one game where a huge difference was involved, however, was the Browns-Rams game in 1951 because of the late December weather differences between Los Angeles and Cleveland.

That game also stands out because the Rams didn't win a postseason road game at a cold weather site until their 44<sup>th</sup> season in Los Angeles. In that stretch, they were 0-9 in such games including two losses in their great years of the early 1950's. They lost in Cleveland the year before 1951 and in Detroit the year after.

There were instances in the other 12 games when the weather was an important factor, most notably in 1934, 1948, and 1965. It is common wisdom that the worse the playing conditions, the better the chances an inferior team has against a superior one. Whether or not the '48 Cardinals and '65 Browns, like the '34 Bears, were better than the teams they lost to, the weather-induced playing conditions had an extremely negative impact on each. Not only were they playing in a hostile stadium, they did so in conditions that were the worst possible for the kind of team each was.

Perhaps more important than looking at anyone game in detail is what happens if the .750 winning percentage for teams with the best record playing at home in Championship Games is applied to the 13 games. In that scenario, ten would have had different outcomes. Considering that we're talking about a sample of only 39 games in a span of 33 seasons, ten is a significant number.

Given the magnitude and frequency of the problem, it is surprising that nothing was done about it until 1975. Since evidence of a problem arose in the second and third Championship Games, there was very clear indication that something was amiss very early on.\*\*\*\* Beginning in 1946, it practically became an annual event.

Compounding matters, the NFL stuck with the same flawed system when the playoffs first expanded in the 1960's. Then after the 1970 realignment created a still larger playoff field, problems literally became a yearly occurrence. It was only after the debacle of 1974 that a seeding method that should have been in place all along was finally adopted.

\* - The two exceptions were in the AAFC in 1949 and the first round in the AFL in 1969.

\*\* - Oakland and Miami would have hosted home games in the first round as the number one and two seeds had the current system been in place in 1974. Instead the two played each other while Pittsburgh, which would have been the three seed, got a home game against the wildcard Bills, the four seed and by far the weakest of the four teams.

\*\*\* - Three of the four teams with perfect regular season records in history had to play on the road in the postseason: the '34 Bears, the '42 Bears, and the '72 Dolphins.

## **THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 28, No. 1 (2006)**

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\*\*\*\* - It could even be said to have happened again the fourth year when 10-1-1 Green Bay met 7-5 Washington. Although the game was played at the Polo Grounds, ostensibly a neutral site, it was a site selected by the Redskins. In many ways, especially the travel involved, it was a road game for the Packers.

## August "Gus" Cifelli:

### Notre Dame, the Detroit Lions, and Pro Football in the Early 1950s

By: Jim Sargent

August Blaze "Gus" Cifelli, who never played in a losing game for the University of Notre Dame from 1946 through 1949, became a stellar tackle for the Detroit Lions during the team's early championship years. Traded to the Green Bay Packers in 1953, Cifelli started one season for the Packers before playing his final NFL year for the Pittsburgh Steelers in 1954.

The tough tackle, who won Notre Dame's heavyweight boxing crown in 1950, spent two years in the Marine Corps during World War II. Stationed in the Western Pacific, Gus served as a machine gunner and also a boxing instructor. The big Marine served aboard the carrier *U. S. S. Intrepid*. The ship was hit several times by kamikaze pilots and once by a Japanese torpedo. Cifelli recalled the torpedo caused so much damage that it took two months of repair work before the *Intrepid* was ready to return to action.

A Catholic of Italian descent, the second oldest of four sons of August and Angelina Cifelli, Gus was born on February 3, 1925. The father was a city policeman, and the boys grew up in a working-class section of Philadelphia. Brothers Joseph, the oldest, Aloysius, and George all attended Northeast Catholic High School.

But Gus received a full scholarship to attend La Salle Prep School, where he played football and basketball. The sports-minded youth saw little of his brothers in his high school years, because he had to ride two buses and the subway just to get to school each day. An excellent athlete, he dreamed of playing football at Notre Dame. He realized his dream after the World War ended.

When he visited St. Edwards Hall on Notre Dame's campus in the spring of 1946, Cifelli was still wearing the green uniform of the U.S. Marines. Looking for his friend, John Sinkovitz (who was at football practice), the Philadelphia native, who stood 6'4" and weighted 250 pounds, looked like a giant. Later, Joe Doyle, a sportswriter for the *South Bend Tribune* and a Notre Dame graduate, remembered how Cifelli "just about filled the doorway at old Saint Ed's."

Cifelli trimmed his weight down to around 230 during his playing days at Notre Dame. As was true of most collegiate athletic teams in the postwar era, the Irish gridiron squad was made up of many veterans. Coached by Frank Leahy, Notre Dame fashioned a remarkable four-year unbeaten record of 36-0-2. When Leahy retired after the 1953 season, his teams had compiled an overall ledger of 107 wins, 13 losses, and nine ties. At Notre Dame, his record was 87-11-9.

After graduating in 1932, Leahy got the job as line coach for another Notre Dame alum, "Sleepy Jim" Crowley, head coach at Fordham University. By 1937, Leahy built Fordham's most famous line, the "Seven Blocks of Granite." After two years as head coach at Boston College, where he compiled a 19-1 record and saw his team beat Tennessee in the 1941 Sugar Bowl, Leahy came "home" to South Bend coach Notre Dame.

By the time Cifelli arrived on campus, Coach Frank Leahy had returned from two years in the Navy. Starting with the 1941 season, Leahy's first three Notre Dame teams were 24-3-3. An Irish alumnus who played tackle in 1929 and 1930, Leahy suffered a knee injury and missed the 1931 season.

Gus, an agile athlete who showed good speed running downfield to block, never became famous on the Irish gridiron. He did not make Notre Dame's Athletic Hall of Fame. Cifelli played four seasons for the Irish, backing up standouts like George Connor and Ralph McGehee before starting at tackle in 1948 and 1949. Cifelli was a team player who did his job well, winning the coveted ND monogram in his last three seasons. Line coach Moose Krause said, "Gus is just a gentle giant. He just blocks and tackles and does his job for the team."

In 2005, when Cifelli, a retired Michigan District Court judge, was named as Notre Dame's Man of the Year, John Affleck-Graves, vice president of the university, observed about Gus: "He epitomizes what Notre Dame is all about—developing great leaders for our society."

## THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 28, No. 1 (2006)

---

Cifelli's Class of 1950, famed for not losing a single football game, included at least a dozen players who competed on all four undefeated Notre Dame elevens. Three later made the College Football Hall of Fame: end Leon Hart, the Heisman Trophy winner in 1949; end and tackle Jim Martin; and halfback Emil "Red" Sitko. Before the two-platoon system arrived in 1949, college and pro football meant playing both ways. Hart and Martin enjoyed impressive pro football careers, both with the Lions, and sometimes they played both ways. "When you play on both offense and defense," Leon Hart used to say, "you are a complete player."

Drafted in the nineteenth round by the Lions in 1950, Cifelli looked forward to playing professionally. Talking about his career in a 2005 interview, the Michigan judge recalled:

"The All America Football Conference was still going in 1949, and the two leagues caused the salaries to increase. But the All-America Conference disbanded in 1950, and we had to take what was offered. I was a holdout in my rookie year, because the Lions offered \$4500. I wouldn't sign, and I played in all six exhibition games, but we didn't get paid for those.

"I remember three or four days before the first league game, Coach Bo McMillin called me into his office and said, 'Gus, I can't play you if you don't sign that contract. The league rules won't allow me to play you.'

"I said, 'Coach, I can't sign that contract. The amount isn't worth my value.'

"He said, 'Gus, you're getting one of the higher salaries of linemen on our team. I can't do anything about that. It is up to the general manager to do something about that.'

"I thought he was fooling me, but in any event, I reluctantly signed that contract for \$4500 one day before our first league game."

Reflecting on the difference between playing for the highly structured Notre Dame program and the more freewheeling NFL, Cifelli remembered, "In my first season with Detroit, football got as little more pleasurable for me. In my four years at Notre Dame, everything was so strict. We couldn't fool around. We couldn't laugh and joke in practice. We had to do everything exactly the way the coaches taught us. In terms of blocking, we had to block a certain way, with your elbows out and your head held up.

"I remember one time I was playing left offensive tackle, and I blocked my man, and the halfback came right off my left shoulder and picked up 35 or 40 yards. On the next practice day, we were all together watching the game film and I was waiting for the man at the projector to come to that one play. I thought, 'Finally, I'm going to get some praise.'

"I heard Coach Leahy say, 'Moose, run that play again.' They ran that play again and saw me blocking the tackle and creating the space for the back to go through. The coach said, 'Moose, stop the projector.' In his loud voice, Coach Leahy said, 'August, who taught you to block that way?' He criticized the way I blocked, because I didn't step with my right foot and put my left shoulder into the pit of the defensive tackle's body. So we went over the way he wanted his tackles to block, despite the fact our back made 35 yards on the play!

"In professional football, the attitude of the coaches was you have certain things you have to do to make the team. If you've got somebody to block, you block that person any way you can. So football was more pleasurable. I didn't have to worry about whether I started with my right foot or used my left shoulder, as long as we got the job done."

In 1950, Detroit fielded a strong team under Bo McMillin, now serving his third year as head coach. But despite the influx of talented players, the Lions finished with a 6-6 record. Detroit's new quarterback was Bobby Layne, obtained in a deal with the New York Bulldogs (the Yanks in 1950-51) of the NFL. Layne, who went on to a Pro Football Hall of Fame career, lacked good protection from his offensive line in New York. That was less of a problem with the Lions.

Cifelli, an easy-going but hard-working rookie, started at right tackle. Looking to strengthen the line, McMillin had drafted several linemen from the college ranks. The right guard-who played tackle in college-was rookie Lou Creekmur, who moved to left tackle in 1953. A 6'4" 250-pounder like Cifelli, Creekmur had been a stellar performer at William and Mary College. Chet Bulger, a 6'3" 260-pound veteran of eight seasons for the Chicago Cardinals, played left tackle. A fine athlete from Auburn University, Bulger was, like Cifelli, an excellent blocker.

The team's other tackles were John Prchlik, a 6'4" 235-pound Yale graduate in his second season for the Lions;

## THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 28, No. 1 (2006)

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Thurman "Fum" McGraw," a 230-pound rookie from Colorado A&M who was one of Detroit's two 6'5" linemen (the other was Leon Hart); and rookie Floyd Jaszewski, a Minnesota alum who was 6'4" and 230 pounds. All three played defense.

"Gus was a tremendous blocker, technique-wise," Chet Bulger recalled in a 2005 interview. "We didn't work much on technique with the Lions, because Gus already knew how to block. His guard was big Lou Creekmur. The two of 'em could open up a hole you wouldn't believe!"

After two losing seasons under McMillin (2-10 in 1948 and 4-8 in 1949), Detroit started strong in 1950. Featuring a new backfield, including Bobby Layne at quarterback, versatile Bob Hoernschemeyer at one halfback, and Heisman Trophy winner Doak Walker of Southern Methodist at the other halfback, the Lions opened on September 17 with a 45-7 thrashing of the Green Bay Packers. The following weekend, Detroit edged the Pittsburgh Steelers, 10-7. After absorbing a 44-21 beating from the upstart New York Yanks, the Lions improved to 3-1 with a 24-7 win over the San Francisco Forty-Niners at Briggs Stadium.

But on October 15, the powerhouse Los Angeles Rams came to Detroit and outlasted the Lions, 30-28. Breaks decided the game. With Detroit nursing a 28-27 lead, the Lions recovered a fumble on the Detroit 15-yard line. But four plays later, a Los Angeles lineman blocked Doak Walker's fourth-down punt, and the Rams recovered on Detroit's 7. Three running plays advanced the pigskin five yards. With one minute remaining, quarterback Bob Waterfield booted a 10yard field goal, and LA's defense sealed the victory.

Detroit lost to the Forty-Niners a week later when Bobby Layne (kicker Doak Walker had left the game with an ankle injury) missed the extra point try after Detroit pulled to within one point, 28-27. Layne, who fumbled six times in the first half, led Detroit from a 21o deficit. But his kick went wide to the right, and San Francisco won for the first time in six games.

In game seven at the Los Angeles Coliseum, the Rams ripped the Lions, 65-24. One week later, the Chicago Bears dumped Detroit, 35-24, and questions began to appear in local newspapers about McMillin's future as coach. But Detroit beat the Packers, the Yanks, and the Baltimore Colts, before suffering a 6-3 season-ending road loss to the Bears.

Regarding the head coach, Cifelli recollected, "He didn't have too much of an impact as a coach. i don't think there was a very good relationship between Bo McMillin and the assistant coaches. The assistant coaches had the 'ear of the owners' more than Bo McMillin did, and I think they, or one of the assistant coaches, undermined Bo in our rookie season. At the end of the season, he was gone. But I didn't see anything wrong with Bo's system of offense."

On December 19, 1950, just days after the season ended, Detroit's board of directors virtually forced McMillin to resign. Bo was soon replaced by assistant coach Raymond "Buddy" Parker.

"When Buddy Parker became head coach, that was a big change. Buddy Parker had an offensive system that he called the 'short list' of plays. I think he may have started that throughout the whole league. Buddy and his coaches would analyze the opponent for the next week, and he would decide certain running and passing plays would probably be the most effective during the game. He would have 4 to 6 to 8 running plays and the same with the passing plays. During practices that week, we would concentrate on the 'short list' of plays, along with our other plays. I think that change led to Detroit being successful during those years. We would go over that 'short list' and write it down in our notebooks the first practice after game day."

Detroit's talent and Parker's coaching produced a strong season in 1951, as the Lions and Forty-Niners tied for second in the NFL's National Division with 7-41 marks, half a game behind the 8-4 Rams. On the offensive line, Detroit usually started Dome Dibble at left end, Floyd Jaszewski at left tackle, Creekmur at left guard, LaVern Torgeson at center, Dan Rogas at right guard, Cifelli at right tackle, and Leon Hart at right end. On defense, John Prchlik replaced Cifelli at right tackle, while Jaszewski alternated with Thurman McGraw. In the backfield, Layne, Bob Hoernschemeyer, Doak Walker, and fullback Pat Harder were the regulars.

Again Detroit got off to a good start, opening at Briggs Stadium with wins over the Washington Redskins, 35-17, and the New York Yanks, 37-10. After a 27-21 loss to Los Angeles, also at home, the Lions tied the Yanks, 24-24. Detroit then fell to the visiting Bears, 28-23, leaving Parker's club with a 2-2-1 mark after five straight home games.

But the Lions won three straight on the road, defeating the Packers, 24-17, the Bears, 41-28, and the American Conference's Philadelphia Eagles, 28-10. At Briggs Stadium on Thanksgiving Day, the Lions belted the Packers,

## THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 28, No. 1 (2006)

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52-35, for the team's fourth straight victory. But Detroit lost two out of three to the West Coast teams. The Lions lost to the Forty-Niners at home, 20-10, beat the first-place Rams in Los Angeles, 24-22, but fell to the Forty-Niners at Kezar Stadium, 21-17.

"In 1951," Cifelli recalled, "we needed to beat Los Angeles near the end of the season, and we did. We players felt like we needed to beat San Francisco in the last game to win the championship. For some reason, we didn't have it. Who knows what happens from one game to another? I felt we were better than the final score indicated that day, but for some reason, we didn't produce. We wanted to win. We had the enthusiasm. But it seems like none of it worked well enough for us to win that game."

The game could have gone either way, but Bobby Layne, who completed 13 of 35 passes, had four intercepted. After San Francisco scored on YA Tittle's sneak to go ahead 21-17 with three and a half minutes to play, the Lions downed the final kickoff on their 17yard line. Lane led a march that reached the FortyNiners' 39. At that point, Veri Lillywhite, a halfback from Southern California, picked off a Layne aerial, allowing the Forty-Niners to run out the clock.

Reflecting on Layne's leadership, Cifelli said, "Bobby Layne was a good quarterback and a good leader. He had the right combination of skills and good players to make Detroit into a winning team. At Detroit we all played together, and we had a great deal of talent. But Layne had less success in Pittsburgh, because he didn't have the right mix of talented players.

"In Detroit, we had the talent and we played together, but we were two separate factions away from the game. One faction was those fellows who went along with Bobby Layne, that dined with him, that drank with him, and whatever else they did together, and those of us that did not do those things. The groups were divided about equally. But when we went to practice and when we went out to the games, we all played together. "

In 1952, Parker and the Lions jelled, producing a 9-3 season and tying the Rams for first place. Detroit defeated Los Angeles in a playoff, 31-21. In the NFL title game, Detroit defeated the American Conference champion Cleveland Browns, 17-7, giving the Lions their first championship since 1935.

Detroit's offensive line in 1952 featured Cloyce Box, the receiving star of Detroit's 1950 season, at left end; Lou Creekmur at left tackle; Jim Martin at left guard; Vic Banonis at center; rookie Dick Stanfel at right guard; Cifelli at right tackle; and Leon Hart at right end. Layne led the backfield of Hoernschemeyer, Harder, and Walker, except that Jug Girard filled in when the Doaker was injured partway through the season.

After the first three games, few people were ready to predict the Lions might win the division. Detroit started the season on the West Coast, losing to quarterback YA Tittle and the Forty-Niners in the opener, 17-3, but slipping by the Rams, 17-14. When San Francisco came to Briggs Stadium, Tittle enjoyed a great day and the Forty-Niners whipped the Lions, 28-0. Needing a turnaround, the Lions got it the following week against the Rams, winning 24-18.

Detroit only lost one more time in 1952, 24-23, to the Bears in Chicago. Winning nine of the last ten contests, Detroit tied Los Angeles with a 9-3 record. But the Lions won the playoff by 10 points, advanced to the championship game, and began a mastery over the Browns-except for one notable loss in 1954-that lasted through the 1957 season.

At Notre Dame in 1948, Cifelli had married a South Bend girl, Marguerite Varga, who used to be director of the student newspaper. During their Detroit years, Gus and Marguerite lived in an apartment downtown near Grand Boulevard and the Lodge Expressway, behind Henry Ford Hospital. Life was good in the Motor City. But at contract time in 1953, Gus held out for a \$500 raise. Tight-fisted general manager Nick Kerbawy would not authorize the increase, and he told Cifelli he would not play if he didn't sign his contract.

Instead, four days before the first league game in 1953, Detroit traded Cifelli to Green Bay:

"Buddy Parker was friends with Green Bay's coach, Gene Ronzani, and the Lions must have thought I was expendable. At Green Bay, Coach Ronzani said they would eventually put me in when I was ready.

"I said, 'I can play in your first game.'

"He said, 'Oh, that's impossible. You don't know the system.'

## THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 28, No. 1 (2006)

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"I said, 'I can learn the system before the game. Coach, will you pay me \$500 if I start and play every game as your starting offensive right tackle?'"

"Maybe he said 'Yes' to get me out of his office. So I sat down with the line coach, Chuck Drulis. They gave me the playbook, and I figured out their system. You know, the nomenclature is different from team to team. I got the 'keys' of their system, what constituted off tackle to the right, or what was required on around end to the left, and how they named their system.

"I remember being on the train from Green Bay to Milwaukee, and I sat down with the line coach, went over the playbook again, and convinced him I could play. They had me start that game, and I played every game after that."

Gus rented an apartment in Green Bay, and Marguerite returned to South Bend and stayed with an aunt while her husband played football. The Packers endured a losing season. The franchise's executive committee replaced the head coach after a Thanksgiving Day loss to the Lions, and the Packers finished fifth (last) in the renamed Western Division with a 2-9-1 record.

"With a couple of games to go in the season, the Packers fired Gene Ronzani, and I thought, 'There goes my \$500!' The day after the last game of the season, I got to talk with the general manager. I explained my deal with the head coach, saying I was promised \$500 if I started the first game at right tackle and started every game thereafter. When I got through, he got up and left the room, returned a few minutes later, sat down, and said, 'Here, son, take this,' and he handed me a \$500 check. It convinced me that if you have enthusiasm and sincerity in life, you can convince a lot of people about a lot of things. When I got home, I showed my wife the check. It was like a fortune to us!"

But Green Bay was rebuilding again, and the Packers traded Cifelli to the Philadelphia Eagles in the summer of 1954. He went to camp, became a regular at right tackle, and started all six exhibition games. A few days before the first league game, the Eagles traded him to the Steelers. Gene Ronzani came to the Steelers as an assistant coach, and they needed an offensive tackle.

Gus said, "Pittsburgh had a lot of active players who were injured in 1954. I was amazed at how many players were receiving help in their training room. It seemed like 6-8 players were being treated, so the rest filled in at different spots. I played a little defense with Pittsburgh as a result."

During offseasons in Detroit, Cifelli had worked in labor relations for the Ford Motor Company. He had to be excused for four months to play for the Lions. But after his seasons for the Packers and Steelers, he didn't think Ford would let him take time off for football. Also, his wife was quite ill at that time. Gus had to live in Pittsburgh during the 1954 season, and he didn't like being away from his wife, who lived in South Bend while he played football. On February 18, 1956, she passed away following heart surgery.

Cifelli worked for Ford until 1958, when he began working for an insurance agency. Keeping himself in good physical condition, he served as player-coach of the Detroit-Port Huron Raiders of the Ontario Rugby League from 1958 through 1961. During those years he completed a law degree in night school at the University of Detroit.

Gus also returned to South Bend each August in order to work out and play in the Old-timers game against the varsity. After three years as an Old-Timer, Gus was made captain of the former players' squad. For the 1963 season, Notre Dame's head coach Hugh Devore, a former Green Bay assistant, hired Cifelli as line coach. Gus also married Gladys, a widow, and adopted her three children.

Cifelli's longtime dream was to become a judge. His experience in labor relations was similar to that of a judge: he resolved various controversies in different Ford plants. His law degree and reputation as a community leader led to his career as a Michigan district judge in the Detroit area, beginning in 1972. He served in that capacity for 28 years, before semiretiring. District judges remain on call to fill in for judges who cannot sit on the bench for health or other reasons, so as of 2005, the Notre Dame alum remains active.

Concerning differences between pro football of the early 1950s and today's game, Cifelli recalled, "Teams would use the biggest fellows in goal-line defenses, and we played on the punting teams and the kickoff teams, and the punt receiving and the kickoff receiving teams. I always played right tackle on all those teams. We never heard the term 'special teams.' We had no 'specialist' for punter. The kicker was usually a back, or maybe another position player."

The longtime public servant enjoyed a good football career. A starter for all five of his pro seasons, Gus was an important part of Detroit's 1952 NFL championship team. Along with a championship ring, he has good memories

from football.

"I was impressed with the teamwork we had with the Lions on the field, even though we had two different groups in the locker room. We really enjoyed being with other on the practice field, in the locker room, and during the games. My closest friend on the team was Leon Hart, and we lived just a few blocks apart in Detroit. We were like brothers. When he died, it was like one of my brothers dying.

"Leon was an outstanding, amazing player. He had so many strengths, so many skills. He was so big and so strong. He was a gentle man, like a gentle giant."

A five-year NFL starter at tackle who never made either All-American in college or the Pro Bowl, Gus Cifelli contributed to some great teams. The comments he made about Leon Hart could very well be used to describe Cifelli-an outstanding football player and a fine person.

## The Complete History of African-American Quarterbacks in the National Football League (NFL) - Part 2

By Lloyd Vance,

editor of BQB\_Site ([http://www.geocities.com/bqb\\_site](http://www.geocities.com/bqb_site)). Website dedicated to the History, News, and Accomplishments of African American Quarterbacks.

### Opportunistic Years (1980 -1990)

The NFL in the 1980's was continuing to flourish from decisions made by Commissioner Pete Rozelle. The league had another great TV package and teams were getting international attention playing pre-season games abroad. The league was also changing their view of the role and model for quarterbacks. Now quarterbacks black or white were now asked to be more athletic to avoid speedier defenses. The statuesque "pocket" passer was now being swarmed by blitzes and better athletes on defense who were capitalizing on stationary targets. Also the emergence of the "West Coast" offense with its quick reads and moving pocket was more conducive to athletic quarterbacks. Coaches looking for mobility were looking at more African American Quarterbacks that were similar to past and present athletic white quarterbacks (Fran Tarkenton, Roger Staubach, Joe Montana, Steve Young, etc).

The league did have its challenges during this time including the United States Football League (USFL), which was a startup rival league in 1983. The league originally started as a Spring League back by ABC, ESPN, and large investors like Donald Trump (NJ Generals). The league enticed players away from the NFL and College including Steve Young, Jim Kelly and Heisman Trophy winners Herschel Walker and Doug Flutie, which helped ratings. The USFL gave the chance for several African American Quarterbacks to play professionally including Walter Lewis (Memphis Showboats), Doug Williams (Oklahoma/Arizona Outlaws), Joe Gilliam (Washington Federals), Reggie Collier (Birmingham Stallions), John Walton (Boston/New Orleans Breakers) and Vince Evans (Chicago Blitz and Denver Gold). Eventually the USFL after their third season devised an ill-fated plan to go head to head with the NFL in the fall of 1986, which caused the league to never play the 1986 season and eventually fold. The league was eventually awarded \$3.00 dollars in damages in a 1986 lawsuit claiming a monopoly by the NFL.

The NFL also had labor strife in 1982 and 1987. The 1987 strike really gave the league a black eye, because they chose to play three "Scab" games rather than cancel games. "Real" NFL Players were on the picket lines while "Scabs" played to almost empty stadiums. Television unfortunately had to live up to their deal and televised these awful games. Eventually the league and the players came together for the betterment of the league and ended the strike to save the season. One of the subplots of the "scab" games was it gave an opportunity for several African American Quarterbacks to play in the NFL even if most people were not watching. Quarterbacks included: Walter Briggs from Montclair (New York Jets 1987), Homer Jordan from Clemson (Cleveland Browns 1987), Ed Blount from Washington State (San Francisco 49ers 1987), Mark Stevens from Utah (San Francisco 49ers 1987), Larry Miller from Northern Iowa (Minnesota Vikings 1987), Willie Gillis from Norfolk State (Green Bay Packers 1987), Tony Adams from Utah State (KC Chiefs 1987), Reggie Collier from South Mississippi (Pittsburgh 1987) Bernard Quarles from Hawaii (LA Rams 1987), Tony Robinson from Tennessee (Washington Redskins 1987), Greg Tipton from Hawaii (St. Louis Cardinals 1987), Vince Evans from USC (Raiders 1987) and Willie Totten from Mississippi Valley State (Buffalo Bills 1987). Two of the better stories from this group were Ed Blount and Willie Totten. Blount was home in 1987 after not having gotten an opportunity to play professionally after graduating from Washington St, when Bill Walsh of the San Francisco 49ers called asking him to join his replacement team. Walsh knowing that other teams would not have a lot of time to prepare for games installed an option attack featuring Blount and Mark Stevens that thoroughly confused the other teams. The 49ers went on to win all three games and made it to the Divisional Playoffs thanks to Blount and Steven's "Option Wizardry". Willie Totten was also a story during this time, because he

## THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 28, No. 1 (2006)

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returned to the United States from the CFL and finally got his chance to play in the NFL. Totten had been one half of the greatest quarterback / wide receiver combinations in NCAA history with Jerry Rice at Mississippi Valley State. Totten had thrown 139 touchdown passes in 40 career games at MSVU, but went undrafted in the 1986 NFL Draft. He went to the CFL, but was mired on the bench and took his chance with the 1987 Bills strike team. He appeared in 2 games, but did not have the same magic and never appeared in another NFL game.

The '80's also brought a new wave of African American Quarterbacks to the forefront in college football. African American Quarterbacks had been fully integrated into all NCAA conferences including Southern predominantly white universities and were more accepted than in the past. During this time you even saw African American Quarterbacks competing and winning National Championships and Major Awards. Quarterbacks who excelled during this time included: Randall Cunningham from UNLV 1982-1984 (Also an All American as a Punter), Rodney Peete from USC 1985 - 1989 (Finished 2nd in 1988 Heisman Trophy Balloting), Walter Lewis from Alabama 1980 - 1983 (First African American QB at Alabama), Danny Bradley from Oklahoma 1981 -1984, Jamelle Holieway also from Oklahoma 1985 - 1988 (Led Oklahoma to National Championship in 1986 Orange Bowl), Steve Taylor from Nebraska 1985 - 1988, Turner Gill also from Nebraska 1983 - 1985 (Won several Big Eight Titles Remembered for game against Miami in 1985 Orange Bowl), Major Harris from West Virginia 1987 - 1989 (Finished 5th in 1988 Heisman Balloting as a Sophomore and 3rd in 1989 as a Junior), Tracy Ham from Georgia Southern (Led GSU to several D1AA Championships), Tory Crawford from the US Military Academy 1984 -1987 (Top 5 All Time Rushing QB), Shawn Moore from Virginia 1988-1991 (Led Virginia to an almost undefeated season his senior year), Damon Allen from Cal State Fullerton 1981 -1984 (Brother of Hall of Fame Running Back Marcus Allen, who later won several Grey Cups in the CFL), Stacey Robinson from Northern Illinois 1988-1990 (Held many QB Rushing Records),

**Tony Rice** from Notre Dame 1986 - 1989 (Led Notre Dame to National Championship in the 1988 Fiesta Bowl) and many others.

A major breakthrough in College Football came during this time when Quarterback **Andre Ware** of Houston was named the 1989 Winner of the Heisman Trophy. Ware became the first African American Quarterback to win the award after others had contended, but were passed over. Ware broke almost every major college record for passing while leading the Houston Cougars "Run and Shoot" explosive offense. In his Heisman Trophy winning junior season he threw for 4,699 yards and 46 TO's and led the Cougars to a 9-2 record. He later spent four years with Detroit after being drafted in the 1<sup>st</sup> Round in, 11<sup>th</sup> overall in the 1990 NFL Draft. He battled injuries and competition from Erik Kramer and Rodney Peete, playing in 14 games, while starting 6 of them for the Lions. He also spent time in the CFL with Ottawa in 1995 and Toronto (Backup on Grey Cup Champion 1997 team). He attempted one last comeback to the NFL in 2001 playing for the Berlin Thunder of NFL Europe after being allocated by the Oakland Raiders. He fractured his shoulder in the fifth game of the NFL season and was cut in training camp by the Oakland Raiders. After being cut Ware retired and returned to the Houston area, starting his own computer consulting business. Ware unfortunately never made the impact that was thought of him after winning the Heisman.

During this era the African American Quarterback experiencing the entire cycle of the "black" quarterback experience was **Doug Williams**. He experienced the extreme highs and lows, going from an Unwanted High School QB to College All American to Professional Starter to Vilified Holdout to the USFL to Unwanted Free Agent to Super Bowl Hero to "Black balled" Outcast in his professional career that spanned from 1978 to 1989. Williams from Louisiana started off as a High School Quarterback, whose raw skills were waiting to explode. Being from the South, Williams was not offered a chance to play quarterback and went pretty much unnoticed during recruiting. He chose to go to historically black college Grambling and learn under the guidance of the Legendary Head Coach Eddie Robinson. Williams was a record setting quarterback at Grambling, finishing in 1977 with a NCAA Record 93 Touchdowns and 8,411 yards passing. During his stay there, Williams followed in the footsteps of his "Big Brother" James Harris. Harris had already blazed the trail of an African American quarterback going from Grambling to the NFL. Harris had experienced racism on and off of the football field and gave Williams first hand knowledge of what to expect in the NFL. Williams had the size of Harris at 6'3, 210 lbs, but he could move around better than Harris. Before the draft

Coach Robinson and Harris advised Williams about how the draft usually treated African American Quarterbacks, but to everyone's surprise the former expansion Tampa Bay Buccaneers selected Williams in the 1<sup>st</sup> Round, 17<sup>th</sup> overall of the 1978 NFL Draft. Williams became the first African-American quarterback drafted in the first round since the 1970 merger and he would not be asked to convert to another position unlike Eldridge Dickey before him. Coach John McKay believed in Williams and thought he was the Buccaneers quarterback of the future. Williams held out for 1 wee~ against Owner Hugh Culverhouse, who was known for his mismanagement and unwillingness to pay players. Williams soon learned how a high-profile African American Quarterback was treated in the South when he didn't follow the program. He received hate mail and harsh criticism from fans and the media. After signing he appeared in 10 games, throwing for 1170 yards and 7 TO's, plus 1 rushing

touchdown. The following season in 1979 - 1980, Williams established himself as a player on the rise. He threw for 2448 yards and 18 TO's and ran for additional 2 touchdowns leading the Buccaneers to NFC Central Division title and a playoff victory over the Eagles, losing to the Rams in the NFC Championship. He again led the Buccaneers in the playoffs in 1980-1981 and 1981-1982, where they lost to Dallas each year. The Buccaneers shortcomings in the playoffs were due to a lack of a running game and a porous defense, but Williams was blamed by the Tampa Bay area. Williams soon became a target of vandalism to his home and vile hate mail filled with racial epithets.

When Williams held out against Culverhouse again in 1983, things really got ugly between Williams and the fans and media. Williams believed that he was grossly underpaid and in his biography Quarterblack: Shattering the NFL Myth he stated, "Then after five years and two division titles, I was only the 43rd-highest-paid quarterback in the league. I held out again, and eventually went to the USFL. My wife had just died of a brain tumor. There was a three-month-old baby girl to take care of. You couldn't believe some of the letters I'd gotten in Tampa. Everyone heard about the package I got with the watermelon inside and the note, 'Throw this, (n-word). They might be able to catch it.' It got so that every time I got a letter with no return address, I wouldn't open it." Unable to work out a deal with the Buccaneers and without takers in the rest of the NFL, Williams signed with Oklahoma Outlaws of the USFL. Williams had thought that things would be better in the USFL, but he joined at a time when the league was struggling. The Outlaws had trouble making payroll and moved to Arizona after 1 season. They played one more year and the league folded soon after. Williams finished his USFL career with 6757 yards passing with 36 TO's and 4 TO's Rushing. Once the USFL closed down, Williams was unable to find a job in the NFL due to his outspokenness and took a job at Southern University working with the receivers.

While not coaching, he was home figuring that his career was over when Joe Gibbs looking for a veteran backup signed him in 1987. Williams played off and on during the season as starter Jay Schroeder struggled with injuries and effectiveness. Joe Gibbs decided to bench Schroeder for the playoffs and started Williams in his place. It was widely known around the league that most of the Redskins locker room was firmly behind Williams and believed he was the better leader and could take the team further. Williams responded by beating Chicago and Minnesota to get to Super Bowl XXII against the Denver Broncos and making him the first African American Quarterback to start in the Super Bowl. Leading up to the game, the Redskins were underdogs (3 ~ points) and everyone expected John Elway to win the game. Elway was cast as the "Golden Boy" and Williams as the villain by the media. The media continued to hound Williams with questions about him being the first black to start in a Super Bowl game and one member asked him the galling question "So how long have you been a black quarterback?", which he did not answer. usually In the game Williams twisted his knee in the first quarter and the Broncos jumped out to a 10-0 lead. Williams was taken out of the game for a few plays, but responded in the second quarter with a Super Bowl record 228 yards passing with four touchdowns, in what some call the greatest performance by a quarterback in a quarter. He finished the game With Super Bowl record 340 yards and 4 TO's in the 42-10 triumph and was named the MVP. His victory was hailed as defining moment for African American Quarterbacks and future African American Quarterbacks always state the significance of the accomplishment and name Williams as a life-long hero. Ray Didinger from NFL Films and a member of the Pro Football Hall of Fame as a writer in a recent interview that I conducted marveled at how Williams was able to focus on the game and put aside all of the "Pioneer" talk that was circulating before the game. He felt that Williams and other African American Quarterbacks like James Harris, Warren Moon and Randall Cunningham by

## THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 28, No. 1 (2006)

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1988 had already proven themselves as capable quarterbacks and that the "Pioneer" talk put on Williams was a lot. He said "Williams excelled in the Super Bowl against pressure and media coverage that is difficult on all quarterbacks and sometimes causes some of them to fail. He was able to deal with it and that shows the type of "Competitor Williams was".

Ironically before the 1988-1989 NFL season again Williams had to fight for a better contract. This time the Redskins gave in to pressure and signed him to a lucrative deal. Williams responded with a season of 2609 yards and 15 TO's in only 11 games. In 1989 - 1990 season Williams only played in 4 games and the Redskins released him. Williams was unable to find any positions in the NFL even after being a Super Bowl MVP. Around NFL he had been "Black Balled" for his outspokenness and there was a definite bias held by NFL Personnel men and an attitude to get him out of the game. Having no takers and not wanting to go to the CFL, Williams left the game at 32 years old after playing in 88 games, leaving with 16,998 yards and 100 TO's passing and 15 rushing TO's. Shortly after leaving the game, he wrote a "Tell All" book about his journey as an African American Quarterback, the book called "Quarterback: Shattering the NFL Myth" was very informative, opinionated, and ticked off the NFL establishment. Williams was never called by any NFL people and was "Blackballed" for good. He later became a successful Head Coach at Morehouse College and Grambling where he replaced Robinson. Williams is now a key member in the Tampa Bay Buccaneers personnel department. He will not make the Hall of Fame with his career numbers, but his impact will far exceed his numbers, because he led the way for future African American Quarterbacks. By winning the Super Bowl and being named the MVP he opened "backward" eyes that did not want to see.

Regular starters during this time included: Warren Moon (Houston Oilers), Rodney Peete (Detroit) and Randall Cunningham (Philadelphia Eagles)

Other African American Quarterbacks at this time that played in the NFL in mostly backup roles included: Don McPherson from Syracuse (Philadelphia Eagles and Houston Oilers), Reggie Slack from Auburn (Houston Oilers 1990), Brian Ransom from Tennessee State (Houston Oilers 1983-1985), Reggie Collier (Dallas Cowboys), Shawn Moore from Virginia (Denver Broncos) and Vince Evans from USC (Chicago Bears and Oakland Raiders) and others.

### **Headway Years (1990 -1999)**

After Williams victory and with the need for non-traditional quarterbacks with the ability to move away from pressure, run, and pass on the move increasing more teams and colleges in the '90's gave opportunities to African American Quarterbacks than ever. Guys usually with the skill had the opportunity to play the position. Some of the successful college quarterbacks of this era included: Darian Hagan from Colorado 1988 to 1992 (Led Colorado to Co-National Championship in 1991), **Shawn Jones** from Georgia Tech 1989 to 1992 (Led Georgia Tech to Co-National Championship in 1991), Charlie Ward from Florida State 1991 to 1993 (Led FSU to National Championship in 1993 and 2<sup>nd</sup> African American QB to win Heisman Trophy also in 1993), Michael Bishop from Kansas State in 1997-1998 (Finished 2<sup>nd</sup> in 1998 Heisman Trophy balloting), Tommie Frazier from Nebraska 1992 -1995 (Two time National Championship QB in 1994 & 1995), Chris McCoy from the US Naval Academy 1995 -1997 (Top 5 All Time Rushing QB), Kardell Stewart from Colorado 1992-1994 (Record Setting Passer in Big 8), James Brown from Texas (Led his team to the Big 12 Title) and many others.

In the NFL, the first two legitimate Pro Bowl African American Quarterbacks/Stars were taking flight in the late 1980's and early 1990's. The first was the previously discussed Warren Moon of the Houston Oilers and the second was Randall Cunningham of the Philadelphia Eagles and later the Minnesota Vikings, Dallas Cowboys, and Baltimore Ravens. Cunningham like Moon was also a Southern California native growing up in Santa Barbara. He learned the game from his brother Sam "Barn" Cunningham, who was a star player for USC and later the New England Patriots. Cunningham had to battle through the loss of his Father at an early age and sports were his outlet. He excelled at track (high jump) and football, where he was all state as a punter and quarterback. When it came time for

## THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 28, No. 1 (2006)

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Cunningham to select a school to play for many of the larger schools including USC, wanted him at other positions. Cunningham accepted a scholarship to UNLV, which promised to give him the opportunity to play quarterback. Battling through the loss of his mother during college, Cunningham excelled at a college off of the national radar leading his conference in total yards and in punting average. In his Senior season in 1984, Cunningham led UNLV to the California Bowl beating Toledo 30-13. That year he also threw for 2,628 yards with 24 touchdowns and had an amazing average of 47.5 yards per punt. His career numbers at UNLV were 57.9 Completion Percentage, 8290 Yards Passing with 60 TO's and a Punting Average of 45.2 yards. Cunningham had his coming out party at the East - West Shrine game after the season. He threw a touchdown, caught a touchdown on a fake play and was named the game's MVP. Even with his performance and amazing college stats, potential questions were still raised by NFL Personnel men. Cunningham was labeled a good fit for the CFL and compared to Reggie Collier and Walter Lewis, two past African American Quarterbacks that were known more for their athleticism and ended up playing in the USFL.

The Philadelphia Eagles however were in a rebuilding mode after Dick Vermeil retired. Head Marion Campbell didn't listen to the critics and picked Cunningham in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Round of the 1985 Draft. When he was drafted the fans and media focused more on the selection of disappointing offensive lineman Kevin Allen with their 1st Round pick. Cunningham in the preseason of 1985 showed his escapability and flare for making plays out of nothing. He soon was playing at the end of the Eagles first game in a 21-0 loss to the New York Giants. Campbell scrambling to help a sputtering offense name Randall in the 2<sup>nd</sup> week in a 17-6 loss to the Los Angeles Rams. He threw for 211 yards and ran for 90 yards, but threw 4 interceptions. He however was regulated to the bench in favor of Ron Jaworski and the Eagles finished with a record of 7-9, with Cunningham finishing with 534 Yards Passing, 1 Touchdown, and 205 Yards Rushing. Campbell was fired after the

1985-1986 and the Eagles hired Buddy Ryan. Ryan named Jaworski the starter, but came up with a plan to use Cunningham, who was 3<sup>rd</sup> string at the time on 3<sup>rd</sup> downs. He eventually was part of a revolving door rotation with Matt Cavanaugh and Ron Jaworski finishing with 5 starts, 1,391 Yards Passing with 8 TO's, and a 2<sup>nd</sup> on the team 540 yards rushing. In 1987 Cunningham was finally installed as the full time starter, but the 1987 Strike limited the opportunities for the Eagles, who didn't field a quality "Strike Team" and had 3 losses finishing with a record of 7-9. Cunningham however flourished under the coaching of friend and mentor Quarterbacks Coach Doug Scovil. Cunningham finished with 2,786 Yards Passing with 23 Touchdowns and 505 Yards rushing with 3 TO's. Cunningham was named to his first Pro Bowl joining James Harris and Warren Moon as the only African Americans Quarterbacks to receive the honor. In the 1988-1989 Cunningham was a one-man gang on offense leading the team in rushing (624 Yards) and passing (3,808 Yards with 24 TO's). He and a stifling defense led by Reggie White led the team to a 10-6 record and won the NFC East division for the first time since Dick Vermeil left. Their season however ended in the playoffs against the Chicago Bears in the "Fog Bowl", Cunningham however was recognized being named to his 2<sup>nd</sup> Pro Bowl and finished 2<sup>nd</sup> to Boomer Esiason in AP MVP Voting. At the start of the 1989-1990 season Cunningham and the Eagles renegotiated Cunningham's contract making him one of the highest paid players in the NFL (3 Year, 4 Million Dollar Contract). He was anointed the "NFL's Ultimate Weapon" by Sports Illustrated and led the Eagles back to the playoffs again. In the playoffs the Eagles lost to the Rams 21-7 and he shouldered most of the blame. Cunningham finished with 3,400 Yards Passing with 21 TO's and 621 Yards Rushing and led his team in rushing for the 3<sup>rd</sup> straight year. He was named an alternate to the Pro Bowl. In 1990 the Eagles knew that they had to save the position of Head Coach Buddy Ryan and Cunningham responded with an MVP season rushing for 942 Yards with 5 TO's and 3,466 Yards Passing with 30 TO's. He was named to his 3<sup>rd</sup> straight Pro Bowl. He however had to fight for his starting position with Jim McMahon in the shadows. In the playoff loss to the Redskins, Cunningham was replaced for a series by McMahon and was not happy with the organization. Ryan was shortly fired and Cunningham was said to be part of the movement to have him removed. Cunningham was poised for another big year in 1991, but was hurt in the first game of the season when Bryce Paup tackled him tearing his ACL and ending his season. The ironic part of the injury was Cunningham was in the pocket and not running around when he got hurt. Cunningham returned in 1992 throwing for 2775 yards with 19 TO's and running for 549 Yards and 5 TO's, but never seemed his self in Richie Kotite's offense and was very erratic as the Eagles finally win a playoff game

## THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 28, No. 1 (2006)

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against the New Orleans Saints 36-20, but lose in the Divisional Round to the Dallas Cowboys 34-10. In 1993 the injury bug (Broken Leg) ended Cunningham's season in the 4<sup>th</sup> game. This marked the end basically of his Eagles career as he struggled in 1994 in a part time role and losing his starting job to Rodney Peete in 1995. He finished his Eagle career in a playoff game losing to Dallas when he had to enter the game for an injured Peete, but struggled due to him leaving the team to tend to his pregnant wife during the preparation for the game.

Cunningham had a brief "Retirement" in 1996, but returned in 1997 with the Minnesota Vikings. Cunningham immediately returned to his old form forming a deadly combination with Randy Moss and Cris Carter and led the Vikings to the divisional playoffs in 1997. In 1998 Cunningham and the Vikings were unstoppable going 15-1. Cunningham finished with 3704 Yards Passing and 34 TO's, plus 127 yards rushing. The Vikings stormed into the playoffs and missed the Super Bowl by the slightest of margins losing to the Atlanta Falcons 30-27. In 1999 Cunningham struggled and was benched again and moved into the backup role that he ended his career doing finishing with the Dallas Cowboys in 2000 and Baltimore Ravens in 2001. Cunningham finished his career with 29979 yards passing with 207 yards and 4928 yards Rushing with 35 TO's; his rushing total is a NFL Record for quarterbacks. Cunningham was known for his spectacular play on the field, but was unable to get to the big game like Williams and injuries precluded him during some of his best chances. Cunningham was known as a spectacular player, but football is a team game and he was said to have an aloofness that rubbed fans and some teammates the wrong way. He was the first run/pass threat African American to make it in the NFL. He had a long and distinguished 16-year career that may end in the Hall of Fame.

Another African American Quarterback that established himself as premier starter at this time was **Steve McNair** of the Tennessee Titans. McNair began his rise to the top at Alcorn State a Historically Black College in Mississippi. At Alcorn State he followed in his brother Fred's footsteps by also attaining the nickname "Air" McNair for his passing exploits. He became a legitimate Heisman Trophy candidate even though he was playing at a ~ivision 1 AA school. His incredible college numbers include the only player in NCAA history to gain over 16,000 yards (16,823) in total offense during his college career. He set collegiate record by averaging 400.55 yards in total offense per game and became only the third player in Division **I-M** to throw for 100 TO's in a career (119). He finished with 928 completions in 1,673 attempts (55.5%) for 14,496 yards passing with 119 TO's and added 2,327 yards and 33 TD's.

He was the 2nd African American Quarterback drafted in the 1<sup>st</sup> Round, third overall player (Highest at the time) selected in 1995 NFL draft. After being drafted McNair had to prove that he was capable of performing on the larger stage coming from a small school. He led the Titans from being a displaced franchise (Houston Oilers) to a perennial AFC Title contender. McNair is a double threat, can give opposing defenses headaches with strong arm in air or explosive running ability on ground, excellent pocket passer. He led all quarterbacks in rushing yards with 674 in 1997 and 559 in 1998). His 1997 total was the third-highest rushing total by a quarterback in NFL history at the time behind Randall Cunningham (942 yards in 1990) and Bobby Douglas (968 yards in 1972). McNair proved that he was up to the task of leading the Titans to Super Bowl XXXIV in 1999 and became the second African American Quarterback to start the game. In the game the Titans lost to the St. Louis Rams by a score of 23-16 and came up a yard short of tying the game in the final moments, but McNair proved that he was a winner. McNair continues to play for the Titans as of 9/2005 and is still chasing his elusive Super Bowl Victory. He is known for playing through injuries and his toughness and leadership should get him strong consideration for the Hall of Fame when he is through playing. He also has the numbers and winning percentage to back him up his intangibles.

During this time another notable African American Quarterback was **Kordell Stewart** of the Pittsburgh Steelers. Stewart came to the Steelers as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Draft pick in 1994 out of Colorado. Stewart left Colorado with almost every passing record, but he could not lead the Buffs to National Championship contention. College highlights included: Holding school all-time records with 456 completions on 785 passes with 7,770 yards in total offense. Also holds school's all-time records for average yards per completion (13.8), yards in total offense per game (235.5) and yards per offensive play (6.36). Threw for 300 yards 6 times and had only 2.4% of his passes intercepted. As a senior, Stewart was named to the All-American 2nd team selection by AP and made the play of the year with a "Hail Mary" to

beat Michigan on national TV. Scouts when evaluating Stewart were intrigued by his raw passing skills and speed. During his rookie year, Stewart was nicknamed "Slash" by head coach Bill Cowher, because he played QB, WR and RB. Stewart took this role, because Neil O'Donnell was entrenched as the starter. Stewart played 30 snaps at quarterback including the postseason and in Super Bowl XXII against the Dallas Cowboys. The "Slash" role was a blessing and a curse for Stewart, it showed he was a "Team Player" willing to help out on the field, but he probably digressed as a pure quarterback by switching between positions. The "Slash" transition experiment appeared to be an early success for Stewart, when was selected to the Pro Bowl in 1997. That season Stewart showed he could play the quarterback position. Stewart started in all 16 regular-season and both postseason contests. Stewart had an outstanding first season as a QB, becoming only the fourth player in Steelers history to surpass 3,000 passing yards. He was selected as an alternate to the Pro Bowl and finished the season with 3,020 passing yards, completed 236 of 440 pass attempts, 21 touchdowns and 17 interceptions for a 75.2 pass rating. He also was the team's second-leading rusher, gaining 476 yards on 88 carries. He also had a long run of 74 yards versus Baltimore (10/5), which is the third-longest TO run by a quarterback in NFL history. He also became the first quarterback in the NFL to throw 20 or more TO passes and rush for 10 or more TO's. He set an NFL mark as the only player to have two games with at least two rushing TO's and three passing TO's in a game. However his development with the Steelers was also stunted by having different coordinators (Gailey, Lewis, Gilbride, and Mularkey) every season and the Steelers losing in the AFC Championship Game at home twice under him. Stewart continues to play today (As of 9/2005) on as a "journeyman" backup with the Baltimore Ravens, but he will always be "Slash" to the public. Stewart was a vanguard in that he had many assets to help his team win. The "Slash" role definitely confused defenses and made offensive coordinators want to have their own "Slash". In the future teams used other Quarterbacks in this role trying to imitate Stewart including Antwaan Randle El, Troy Woodbury, Ronald Curry, Hines Ward and others.

During this timeframe a study made by Doug Williams in his book Quarterblack: Shattering the NFL Myth, was changing. In the book he theorized, "NFL Personnel Managers would only accept Starting Black Quarterbacks and not backup/developmental type Black Quarterbacks. No Blacks carrying clipboards". African American Quarterbacks were now allowed to flourish as 1<sup>st</sup> String to 4<sup>th</sup> String Developmental Types on team's Practice Squads and in NFL Europe. The idea that a young African American Quarterback could learn a system and flourish within a team was enhanced by Steve McNair and veterans like Rodney Peete showed that African American Quarterbacks could also be valuable backups coming off the bench and leading their teams. Some of the backup or developmental quarterbacks that played during this time were **Dameyune Craig** (Auburn) for the Carolina Panthers, **Tony Banks** (Michigan State) for St. Louis Rams, **Wally Richardson** (Penn State) for Baltimore Ravens, **Ted White** (Howard) for Kansas City, **Michael Bishop** (Kansas State) for New England Patriots, **Jay Walker** (Howard) for Minnesota Vikings, and many others. Dameyune Craig in a NFL Europe game in 1999 playing for the Scottish Claymores passed for a record 611 yards and five touchdowns on only 27 pass completions in a 42-35 victory over the Frankfurt Galaxy. His uniform from that game now resides in the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

In 1997 there were six starting quarterbacks for NFL teams, more than at any time. Starters included Randall Cunningham for Minnesota Vikings, Warren Moon for the Seattle Seahawks, Kordell Stewart for the Pittsburgh Steelers, Jeff Blake for the Cincinnati Bengals, Steve McNair for the Tennessee Titans, and Charlie Batch for the Detroit Lions.

### Explosion Years (1999 to the Present)

This period has been highlighted by African American Quarterbacks that have played the position exclusively since their playing days in Pop Warner. Many were recruited to play the position by Coaches that no longer bought into the "Athlete" (black) versus "Pocket" (white) quarterback myths and stereotypes that led to position profiling in the past. Players now could choose to play the position and usually would receive an equal opportunity to prove that their skill, leadership, arm, mind, etc was just as good as their counterparts. Players from this era tend to look at themselves as a Quarterback first and an African American second. In 2003, **Chris Leak** from Independence High School in North Carolina was the Number 1 rated Quarterback in High School football after having set several national passing records and leading his team to 3 state titles. Every team in the country was looking to sign him as a quarterback and

many of them had little or no African American Quarterbacks in the past. Leak was asked if past racial treatment of African American Quarterbacks at some predominantly white universities would sway his college decision. Leak like **Vincent Young** (High school star from 2002, who chose Texas) before him said that race would not effect his college decision and that he was just another player picking a school. He picked Southeastern Conference (SEC) power Florida, because of their passing reputation and wide open offense. Leak and Young pick schools, because of their choices and they did not care about the school's and conference's history regarding African American Quarterbacks. This showed a big step forward in attitudes on both sides Players and Coaches.

Many personnel evaluators and coaches were now looking at players that started playing the position after Doug Williams' monumental Super Bowl victory in 1988, which unfortunately after years of waiting was one of the proving points to some that African Americans could play the position. Now it was more common to see African American Quarterbacks winning state titles in High School, National Championships in College, and playing at a Pro Bowl level in the pros and these individuals served as role models for future players. Also in the NFL, NCAA Division 1-A, CFL, XFL, and Arena Football it was not uncommon to see multiple African

American Quarterbacks on rosters smashing a quota system that had previously existed, where a team could have only one African American Quarterback. Quarterbacks that succeeded in College Football at this time included: **Antwaan Randle El** from Indiana (Top 5 Total Offense Leader), **Woodrow Dantzler** from Clemson (2,000 Yard Passer and 1,000 Yard Rusher in the Same Season), **Byron Leftwich** from Marshall (Record Setting MAC Passer), **Michael Vick** from Virginia Tech (Finished 3rd in 1999 Heisman balloting), and many others.

Unfortunately this time period was not without the usual overt and covert racial discriminatory incidents that have plagued African American Quarterbacks throughout their experience. African American Quarterbacks Professionally and at the Collegiate level were still receiving some pieces of vicious hate mail filled with epithets blaming them for team loses, Talk Radio/Internet Message Boards gave a forum to some hosts and fans that could not move forward from their backward ways, and some small towns were torn apart over whether their High School should have a "Black" or "White starting Quarterback. Some African American Quarterbacks were still only being compared only to other African American Quarterbacks or labeled as a CFL player without a chance. One the bigger media situations that brought the plight of the African American Quarterback back to the public forefront were racially shaded statements made by Conservative Television and Radio personality Rush Limbaugh in October of 2003 on ESPN's NFL Countdown Television show to a national audience. Limbaugh stated on the air when talking about Philadelphia Eagles Quarterback Donovan McNabb, "I think what we've had here is a little social concern in the NFL. The media has been very desirous that a black quarterback do well," and "There is a little hope invested in McNabb, and he got a lot of credit for the performance of this team that he didn't deserve. The defense carried the team. His comments devalued McNabb as a player and suggested that any accolades and successes were overblown by the media and public. He also intimated that because McNabb was a "black" quarterback and "black" was "in" that the NFL and football televising networks could benefit monetarily from a hip-hop crazed society looking for a black quarterback to succeed. Limbaugh denied that his comments on the show were racially motivated but resigned in a "firestorm" of pressure. He returned to his usual conservative radio audience, but left America to debate the issue around water coolers, on talk radio, and message boards. In the end, most people agreed that Limbaugh was wrong and that McNabb and all other quarterbacks black or white should be judged by their play on the field.

Some of the major highlights from this period include:

\*\* The monumental 1999 NFL Draft where Donovan McNabb of Syracuse was picked by the Philadelphia Eagles in the 1<sup>st</sup> Round with the second pick overall, which at the time was the highest draft pick ever for an African-American quarterback. Also in the draft, McNabb was joined by several other African-American quarterbacks, including Akili Smith of Oregon selected third overall by the Cincinnati Bengals, Daunte Culpepper of Central Florida selected eleventh overall by the Minnesota Vikings, Shaun King of Tulane selected on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Round by Tampa Bay, and Aaron Brooks of Virginia selected on the 4<sup>th</sup> Round by the Green Bay Packers.

\*\* The previously mentioned Super Bowl XXXIV, which ended the 1999-2000 NFL season and in the game Steve McNair of the Tennessee Titans became the second African American to start in the Super Bowl in the 23-16 loss to the St. Louis Rams.

\*\* In the 2001 NFL Draft the electrifying Michael Vick was selected as the Number 1 overall pick by the Atlanta Falcons. Vick had the rare ability to run a 4.2 40 Yard Time and have a cannon for an arm. Vick was selected after leaving Virginia Tech as a redshirt sophomore and almost winning the National Championship in the 2000 Sugar Bowl as a Redshirt Freshman. This marked the first time that an African American player was selected as the top pick and marked the end of questions of whether an African American Quarterback could be considered top player in the draft and a "franchise" player. Vick went on to post numbers of 785 passing yards with two touchdowns and 300 yards rushing with 1 TO in limited action.

\*\* In the 2005 season, Michael Vick (Falcons) and Donovan McNabb (Eagles) met in the NFC title game and it was the first time two African American quarterbacks started in a conference championship game against each other. Ray Didingier when speaking about this NFC Championship Game said "It spoke volumes of how far the NFL and society have come that two African American Quarterbacks were opposing each other and little was made of it. No USA Today Cover Story or other fanfare". The Eagles and McNabb won the NFC Championship and McNabb became the third African American Quarterback to start the Super Bowl in a 24-21 loss to the New England Patriots. McNabb threw for 357 yards with three touchdowns, but also had three interceptions in the game.

•• Also in 2005 the Pro Bowl also marked some history, when Donovan McNabb led a NFC Quarterback group of Daunte Culpepper and Michael Vick into the Pro Bowl. It is the first time that all 3 QB's elected for the NFC or AFC were African Americans.

As of August of 2005 Current African American Quarterbacks in the NFL include: Starters - Donovan McNabb of the Philadelphia Eagles, Michael Vick of the Atlanta Falcons, Daunte Culpepper of the Minnesota Vikings, Byron Leftwich of the Jacksonville Jaguars, Aaron Brooks of the New Orleans Saints, and Steve McNair of the Tennessee Titans. Backups - Tony Banks of the Houston Texans, Charlie Batch of the Pittsburgh Steelers, Jeff Blake of the Chicago Bears, Shane Boyd of the Tennessee Titans, Bryan Randall of the Atlanta Falcons, Cleo Lemon of the San Diego Chargers, Darian Durant of the Baltimore Ravens, Anthony Wright of the Baltimore Ravens, Kardell Stewart of the Baltimore Ravens, Chris Lewis of the Arizona Cardinals, David Garrard of the Jacksonville Jaguars, Tory Woodbury of the Buffalo Bills, Jason Campbell of the Washington Redskins, Adrian McPherson of the New Orleans Saints, Marcus Randall of Tennessee Titans, Senneca Wallace of the Seattle Seahawks, Rod Rutherford of the Carolina Panthers, Josh Harris of the Cleveland Browns, and Quinn Gray of the Jacksonville Jaguars.

This research article has been one of my life long dreams. I was spurred by an incident in elementary school where I was told by a group of kids at recess that as an African American that I could not play quarterback and that there were no "Black" Quarterbacks in the NFL. I began my research that day and I returned the next day with my San Diego Chargers James Harris Football card. From that day I knew that the legacy of the African American Quarterback needed to be told. When I began my study I knew of Doug Williams, James Harris, and John Walton, but I soon found out so much more about the rich history of the game of football and the African American Quarterbacks throughout history that survived racial barriers to reach the point where in 2005 that almost any African American Quarterback is given a chance play the position and succeed or fail based on his play on the field. The "opportunity" was all men like Fritz Pollard, Willie Thrower, James Harris, and Doug Williams wanted for themselves and future African American football players. I also wrote this article so that the next time I see a young person with a "Throwback Jersey" of one of these men (Doug Williams, Randall Cunningham, Warren Moon, James Harris, etc) they can know the history behind the shirt.

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# JOHN RIGGINS

Powerful Running Back Doubled as a Premier Entertainer

By Michael Richman

RB, #44, Kansas  
NFL Career: 1971 -1979, 1981 -1985 (14 seasons)  
Redskin Years: 1975 -1979,1981 -1985  
HOF Induction: 1992  
Member of NFL 1980s All-Decade Team  
Born: Aug. 4, 1949 (Seneca, Kansas)

John Riggins was more than a football player. He was a pure entertainer who relished the spotlight.

Whether by graciously bowing to a cheering crowd at RFK Stadium after running for 185 yards in a playoff game, or by unexpectedly appearing in a tuxedo at a pre-Super Bowl party thrown by Redskins owner Jack Kent Cooke, or by captivating the masses with his wit, sarcasm, charm, self-deprecating humor and puckish smile - Riggins had a tremendous stage presence.

And he specialized in amusing off-the-cuff remarks, such as his unforgettable line upon returning to the Redskins after sitting out the 1980 season: "I'm bored, I'm broke and I'm back." Or the bold proclamation he made, "Ron may be president, but I'm the king," as President Reagan called to congratulate the Redskins for winning Super Bowl XVII, when Riggins earned MVP honors with a Super Bowl-record 166 yards rushing.

Some of Riggins' actions, though, angered Redskins management and coaches. He publicly admitted being a "baaadddd boy" after a 1985 offseason when he was arrested on a drunk-in-public charge and, apparently intoxicated at another event, he told Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor to "loosen up, Sandy baby" and fell asleep on the floor while Vice President George Bush was giving a speech.

All along, Riggins beat to his own drum, as the saying goes, and did whatever pleased him at that very moment, no matter how ridiculous or inappropriate it might seem. After all, he was just being John Riggins.

"Everything I have done has been in fun," Riggins, who has pursued stage acting and sports broadcasting careers in his postfootball life, once said. "I see myself as an entertainer, and the football field as my stage. If there wasn't anyone in the stadium, I wouldn't be there. What makes it fun is the cheering of the crowd, the fans." "He was somehow a New Yorker who grew up in Kansas," said long-time *Sports Illustrated* NFL beat writer Paul Zimmerman, referring to Riggins' glibness. "I don't know how God did that."

Riggins' eccentricities aside, he was all business on the field. The 6-2, 235-pounder, a rare combination of size, speed and power, proved to be one of the greatest backs in league history, his specialty being running between the tackles. He stood in the top five in all-time NFL rushing yards (11,352), carries (2,916) and touchdowns (104) by the time he retired in 1985 following a 14-year career.

Riggo spent his first five seasons with the New York Jets and his last nine in Washington, where he set a series of team records. They include a 7,472-yard rushing total that is in no danger of being broken anytime soon, the

## THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 28, No. 1 (2006)

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most carries in team history (1,988), and the most 1,000-yard seasons (four). "The Diesel" also pulled off the greatest play in Redskins history, a 43-yard scoring run on a fourth-and-one in the fourth quarter of Super Bowl XVII that gave the Redskins the lead for good in their 27-17 victory over Miami.

Amazingly, No. 44 rushed for more than half of his yards after turning 30, a time when most running backs are unable to produce at the pace they did in prior years.

"We had him toward the end of his career," Redskins coach Joe Gibbs said. "I would surely liked to have coached him at 25-26-27. Of course, he might not be able to walk today because he'd have gotten the ball so many times. He was a star and a hallmark of what we did and made a lot of great plays for us. When he got his jaw set, he was something special."

According to Ron Saul, a Redskins guard who played with Riggins for six seasons: "He was one of those old farm boys from Kansas. He was one of those guys you'd hit over the head with a two by four, and he'd say, 'Why'd you do that?' And you'd go, 'Oh God.' John was a tough, tough guy. We all knew that when they called number 44, no matter how slow he got up from the play before, he was going to give you everything he had. When his number was called, he was going to give you six seconds of some hellacious adrenaline no matter what. He never took a playoff. And if they asked him to block, he'd knock out a damn linebacker. He was the type of guy you wanted to be in a foxhole with."

John Riggins was also a super-talented athlete as a kid. Reared on a farm in Centralia, Kansas, a town of about 500 people, he starred in football at Centralia High School, playing running back and other positions, and finished as a two-time state 100-yard dash champion, showing 9.8 speed with his 215-pound frame. His father, Gene Riggins, felt he was best at basketball.

At the same time, Riggins exhibited the clownish behavior that would become his trademark in future years.

"I look back on those days," he said in *Sports Illustrated* on Sept. 1, 1983, "and I think of the real me as a kind of jerk. Kick the basketball around and run around the court trying to pull a guy's pants down, throw the ball at the guy's head and yell 'Catch!' as it hits him in the nose, hang around in the back of the huddle and chitchat, cause distractions, get my share of ... laughs. I'm still that way."

Riggins opted to play college football at the University of Kansas, where his mystique grew. He ran for 2,706 yards, including 1,131 as a senior; and topped most of school rushing records set earlier in the '60s by Gale Sayers, the "Kansas Comet" who went on to a Hall of Fame career with the Bears.

In the 1971 NFL draft, the Jets made Riggins their NO.1 pick and the sixth overall selection. He led the Jets in rushing and receiving as a rookie, although injuries slowed his progress in the coming years. But in 1975, he logged 1,005 yards rushing, caught 30 passes for 363 yards and made the Pro Bowl for the first and only time in his career. He also attracted attention with his unorthodox hairstyles, one year sporting an afro and the next a Mohawk with an arrow down the middle of his scalp.

"Initially, you knew he was a character just by the way he carried himself," said legendary Jets quarterback Joe Namath, a free spirit in his own right. "I remember John from his Mohawk days and his motorcycle. He painted his toenails before a game. I thought that was cute. Green, of course. He was eccentric, but as a teammate he was sensational. I never played a game with him when he wasn't prepared."

A free agent after the 1975 season, Riggins left New York and went south to the nation's capital, where Redskins coach George Allen signed him to a five-year, \$1.5 million deal, an extraordinary contract at the time in the NFL. Washington's running game was halfback-oriented, and Riggins, used as a blocking back in the 1formation, gained 775 yards over the next two seasons. He played in only five games in '77 due to a sprained knee.

Jack Pardee's entrance as Redskins coach in 1978 rejuvenated his career, and he posted 1,000-yard seasons in '78, when he was named NFL Comeback Player of the Year, and '79. In the last game of the 1979 season, Riggins outraced the entire Cowboys secondary for a career-long 66-yard touchdown run, though the Redskins fell in a 35-34 heartbreaker that destroyed their playoff hopes. "He was an incredibly fast man for his size," said Redskins quarterback Joe Theismann, who played with Riggo in his nine seasons in D.C.

Following the season, Riggins wanted to negotiate for more money with a year left on his contract. But the Redskins balked, and he retired from the game just before the 1980 campaign.

"I was tired and weary," Riggins told *Sports Illustrated* in 1983. "So why not pull your horns in? Why risk a broken neck? What was easy for everyone to understand was that here was Mr. Greedo asking for more money. Wants more, can't have it, must get out. I think now that what I was really doing was looking for an excuse to get out. If they'd said, 'OK, you win, here's the money you want,' I think I'd have said, 'Ooooh, wait a second.' "

Leaving football, however, stretched Riggins' pockets thin. And with the help of an offseason visit to his home in Kansas from new Redskins coach Joe Gibbs, he returned for the '81 season. He gained 714 yards that year while splitting duties with Joe Washington in Gibbs' single-back setup. But an injury to Washington in the '82 preseason left Riggins as the primary back.

He didn't disappoint, especially in the '82 postseason, when he pieced together a spectacular stretch. The workhorse carried 136 times for 610 yards and four touchdowns over four playoff games, a feat punctuated by his 166-yard performance in Super Bowl XVII. Iron man Riggins simply wore defenses down, gaining 253 of his yards in the fourth quarter, and earned the nickname "Mr. January."

"John was a horse," Theismann said. "His strength was his ability to get better and better with each game, with each carry."

As Saul put it: "He'd just keep coming and coming at the same speed. In the first half, the other guys would stop him for 35 yards. But every time they hit him, it hurt. So all at once, they couldn't take the shots and would start ducking their heads, and he'd just start running right through those shoulder pads. A lot of times, he'd get 35 yards in the first half and 80 in the second."

Riggins remained the engine of the Redskins' offense in the coming seasons, when he ran behind the squad's vaunted offensive line, the Hogs, and opposing defenses got a taste of "Rigginomics." He enjoyed a banner season in 1983, rushing for a career-high 1,347 yards and an all-time NFL record 24 touchdowns, a mark since broken. He went 685 carries without a fumble until Week 5 of the '83 season. His name appeared on the major NFL all-star teams, and he was named the league's Player of the Year.

Riggo topped the 1,000-yard mark for the fifth time in 1984 with 1,239. But his indestructible body began to deteriorate, and back problems curtailed his playing time in 1985. He reluctantly retired after the season and was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1992. He chose NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue, whom he barely knew, to present him in Canton.

As to why:

"When you're getting married, you get a priest; when you're getting inducted, you get a commissioner," he said, noting that pop star Madonna had a headache and couldn't make the ceremony.

Sounds so Riggin-esque.

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## CORNERBACK BY DARWIN

By Bob Carroll

I'm not an anthropologist. I've never even played one on television .. Forgive me if I get some words and terms wrong or say something really stupid. I'd like to discuss the elephant in the ' living room-- that big fact that everyone knows about but no one mentions.

African Americans make up only about fourteen percent of the U.S. population, yet two of every three players in the National Football League are African Americans. Another way to look at it,; about 1,700 guys play in the NFL each season. If all things were equal, give-or-take a linebacker,; 250 would be African Americans. In point of fact, the number is approximately 1,100. Obviously all things are not equal.

The "elephant" isn't those numbers. The NFL makes no secret of its high African American content. Even if pro players wore *burkas*, the fans could tell. The "elephant" that no one talks about is "why?" Why are the majority of our best football players African Americans? ..

Thirty or forty years ago when African Americans were just beginning to dominate in football, the PC explanation was that city kids were 'c more driven to find a way out of the slums and recognized athletics as a chance for The Good Life. Meanwhile, it was said, white athletes in the suburbs had many more opportunities to follow Shucks; instead of spending time improving their football abilities; white athletes could join the chess club after they got back from skiing in Vail.

In other words, it was said African American athletes wanted success in football more and so went to greater effort to earn it. Oddly it was about this time that the media always seemed to refer to black players as "natural athletes" and white players as "hard-working." No one seem to notice that the description of black players conflicted with the explanation of why there were so many of them.

I'm always leery of "wanting-it-more" explanations for success. I want Eli Manning's contract more than he does, but my only successful passes have been at bridge. At some point, I have to show them ability or they won't show the money.

Recently a coach was accused of racism because he said his team needed more black players. He meant to say his team needed more speed: Racism-schmasism! He was just calling things as they are. The only way he is going to get a crowd of fast players in his locker room is to bring in a crowd of African Americans. A whole lot more African Americans are fast, agile and jump better than all those pokey white athletes. Don't tell me you know a slowpoke African-American. I do too, but we're talking averages here. A much higher percentage of the U.S. population that is capable of playing NFL football is black ..

So let's go back to the elephant. Why are so many African-Americans quicker, faster, and more agile than those white men who can't jump?

Charles Darwin knew.

If you've forgotten your Darwin or live in Kansas, he was the guy who hypothesized that all organisms from flies to fellows develop traits which they pass on to the next generation through their genes. Some of those traits will help the organism survive, some won't. It stands to reason that the organisms with helpful traits will survive more often and naturally pass on their helpful-trait genes to the next generation. Not always, of course. Sometimes your father

was tall and you're a twerp. But there are millions and millions of generations; the good stuff moves on. Chuck Darwin called it "natural selection,"

People who we can actually recognize as people were living in Africa for at least two million years before anyone brought a slave to North America. Take a look at African geography below the Sahara Desert. Most of it is fairly flat with wide expanses of high grass and some areas of jungle. What kind of physical abilities would help someone living there?

Well, when you're chasing after a gnu or being chased by a rhinoceros, it's a good thing to be able to run fast. And to see over that tall grass to tell if an angry elephant is coming, it's great to be able to jump high into the air. Finally if you find yourself running through a jungle, being able to dodge around the trees may save your neck. The guys who were fast and agile lived longer in general, and Planned Parenthood being what it was, they had more kids than the guys who were eaten by lions or smashed silly by trees. And those kids inherited their fathers' speed and agility, Some even got speedier and more agile. And passed that on.

It's perfectly true that once in a while a slow guy who could neither jump nor dodge might live to a ripe old age, but we're talking about ten million generations of people passing on their genes to their offspring. You don't have to be a botanist to know that over such a period of time when the advantage is to the fast and agile, you're going to get a whole lot of spry and nimble. Or, to put it another way, if you had a couple of million years to develop great cornerbacks, you'd want to do the developing in Africa.

Of course there are fast and agile white men who *can* jump - just not a whole lot of them. That's because up in northern Europe where white folks spent their two million winters living in caves and shivering, the advantage went to those who avoided freezing to death. They were stocky and had a good amount of body fat to hold in warmth. Upper body strength was useful too because there was a lot of carrying to do. Sounds like a bunch of linemen to me.

Personally, I've got a lot of body fat making me slow, clumsy, and a poor jumper. I also have a weak back and get cold in the winter. God knows where my ancestors came from!

# Dave Smukler

By John Maxymuk

Adapted from *Eagles By the Numbers*, Camino Books, 2005

Dynamite Dave Smukler is proof that human nature does not change, that players of the "good old days" could be just as moody and unmanageable as contemporary players often are. His teammate Joe Carter told the story that once against the Redskins, the Eagles had reached the Washington 12-yard line. The play call was for fullback Smukler to fake a run and then pull up short and pass the ball. On the play, though, Dave saw a big hole and ran with the ball. He collided thunderously with the Redskins' enormous Hall of Fame tackle Turk Edwards near the goal line and bulled his way to the one. After the play, Smukler did not move but lay on the field apparently unconscious. Carter figured that Dave was faking so that he could be carried off the field on a stretcher as a fallen hero. Carter knelt beside him and whispered that Dave had "almost killed that Edwards elephant." With that, Smukler opened his eyes wide and jumped up, ready to push the ball into the end zone which he did on the next play.

Smukler was born in upstate New York and graduated high school in Newark, New Jersey, before enrolling at Temple University. At the time, Temple was a football powerhouse under the legendary coach Pop Warner. Dave's talent was undeniable; he was 6'2", 220 pounds and could run the 100 in 10.2 seconds, (a fast pace for the time). He was powerful runner and could pass, punt and kick. Warner was so enamored with Smukler's ability as a sophomore that he compared him to a pair of Hall of Famers Pop had coached in other places, "He is a better fullback now than Ernie Nevers was in Nevers' sophomore year. He may become the greatest fullback I have ever seen; a greater football player than Nevers or Jim Thorpe." In that sophomore season of 1934, Smukler took Temple to an undefeated 7-0-2 season and a berth in the very first Sugar Bowl, a game they lost to Tulane although Dave played well. His junior season was interrupted by injury, and he got angry that Temple would riot give him time off from classes for treatment. The next semester he dropped out of college to pursue a business position "too promising to refuse."

Smukler signed with the Eagles as a free agent in 1936. If this was the position he thought too promising to refuse, boy, was he mistaken. For their first three years under owner/coach Lud Wray, the Eagles had compiled a less-than-stellar 9-21-1 record. His partner Bert Bell bought out Wray and figured he could do a better job as head coach in 1936, but it did not workout that way. Coming off 1935's 2-9 record when the team finished last in the NFL in points with only 60, how could things get worse? A bad line got even worse with the loss of Jim Zyntell to the rival American Football League and Joe Kresky to retirement. Increased playing time for Swede Hanson and the addition of Dave Smukler helped the awful rushing attack move up from eighth to seventh in the nine-team league; but the passing offense went from sixth to last as Philadelphia passers only completed 22% of their passes. Carter and Manske were able ends, but no one could get them the ball in 1936. The result was that the Eagles scored only 51 points in 12 games. The team scored just six touchdowns for the entire season; center/kicker Hank Reese led the team in scoring with 9 points. Meanwhile, the defense also finished last by giving up 206 points for the year.

Eagle fans may have had their spirits raised by the opening day 10-7 victory over the Giants at home, but the team then went on an 11-game losing streak. They did not score another touchdown until the seventh game of the year. Along the way they were shutout by the Bears, Dodgers, Lions, and Pirates. After breaking out for 17 points in a 21-17 loss to the Giants in New York, the Eagles were shut out again by the Pirates and then by the Cardinals. The only games they lost by fewer than 10 points were the aforementioned loss in New York, a 6-0 loss to Pittsburgh and a 13-7 loss to Brooklyn. Their 1-11 record with its .083 winning percentage is the worst season in the inconsistent history of the Eagles, a team still carrying a cumulative losing record.

As for Dynamite Dave, he both showed promise and created problems as a rookie. He was second on the team in

## THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 28, No. 1 (2006)

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rushing with 321 yards, but also was suspended for one game due to a rules infraction. In 1937, Dave again finished second on the team in rushing with 247 yards as the team improved slightly to 2-8-1. In Smukler's third season, he led the team in rushing with 313 yards, returned a kickoff 101 yards for a touchdown and had the best passing performance of his career by completing 41 % of his passes for seven touchdowns and only eight interceptions. The Eagles improved to 5-6.

In 1939, everything fell apart. Dave still led the team in rushing with 218 yards but only played in four games before being suspended for breaking training. At that point, he told Bell that he was through with football. In the offseason, Bell traded Smukler to the Lions for two players, but Dave enlisted in the army instead. According to the *Washington Post*, he told Detroit coach Potsy Clark, "I got \$3,000 a year for playing football professionally. It was great during the season. Everybody shook your hand, slapped you on the back and told you what a swell fellow you were. But the rest of the time I couldn't get a job. Do you know that for four years between football seasons I had difficulty finding a job? It's a good thing I learned something about glove cutting when I was going to high school. But that wasn't steady either. I guess by and large working on piecework and with my football money I made no more than \$4,000 a year. It was enough to discourage any man, and I kept thinking about what I was going to do when I couldn't play football anymore. I sat down and figured it out and then decided the best bet was the Army."

Smukler served in the Army for four years before receiving a medical discharge in 1943. The Lions sold his rights to the Boston Yanks, and Smukler appeared in two games for them in 1944 before again being suspended by the team. His rights were transferred to the Steelers and then to the Rams, but he never appeared in the NFL again. He did some college coaching before settling in as a sales executive in the tire industry in California. He died in 1971 at the age of 57.

# THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 28, No. 1 (2006)

## 2005 PLAYER DEATHS

Player	Pos	College	Career	Birth	Death	Aq
Adduci, Nick	LB	Nebraska	1954-55 Was	07-12-1929, Chicago, IL	11-04-2005, Frankfort, IL	76
Agler, Bob	HB	Otterbein	1948-49 LARm	03-13-1924, Columbus, OH	09-16-2005, Westerville, OH	81
Artoe, Lee	T	Santa Clara, Cal	1940-48 ChiB, LA-A, BalA	03-02-1917, Tacoma, Was	04-01-2005, Wilmette, IL	89
Baisi, Al	G	West Virginia	1940-47 ChiB, Phi	09-06-1917, Norton, WV	04-15-2005, St. Paul, MN	87
Barrett, Emmett	C	Portland	1942 NYG	11-07-1916, Sioux City, IA	05-02-2005, Clackamas, OR	89
Belichick, Steve	FB	Case West.Res.	1941 Det	01-07-1919, Monesson, PA	11-19-2005, Annapolis, MD	86
Bell, Todd	DB	Ohio State	1981-89 ChiB, Phi	11-28-1958, Middletown, OH	03-09-2005, Reynoldsburg, OH	46
Berry, Rex	DB	BYU	1951-56 SF	09-09-1924, Moab, UT	07-02-2005, Provo, UT	80
Boatswain, Harry	OT	New Haven	1992-96 SF, Phi. NYJ	06-26-1969, Brooklyn, NY	08-08-2005, Brooklyn, NY	36
Boone, Dave	DE	Eastem Michigan	1974 Min	10-30-1951, Detroit, MI	01-08-2005, Port Roberts, CAN	53
Brim, Mike	DB	Virginia Union	1988-95 Pho,Det,Min,NYJ,Cin	01-23-1966, Danville, VA	04-19-2005, Richmond, VA	39
Brooks, Bud	G	Arkansas	1955 Det	09-06-1930, Wynne, AR	01-06-2005, Bauxite, AR	74
Bumgardner, Max	DE	Texas	1948 Det	05-13-1923, Wichita Falls, TX	04-12-2005, Greenville, TX	81
Campbell, Stan	G	Iowa State	1952-62 Det, Phi, Oak	08-26-1930, Hastings, NE	03-14-2005, Elgin, IL	75
Carpenter, Jack C.	T	Missouri, Mich.	1947-49 BufA	07-29-1923, Kansas City, MO	10-16-2005, Honolulu, HI	82
Cifers, Ed	E	Tennessee	1941-48 Was, ChiB	07-18-1916, Church Hill, TN	07-19-2005, Knoxville, TN	89
Clarke, Harry	HB	West Virginia	1940-48 ChiB, LA-A, Ch-A	12-01-1916, Cumberland, MD	12-31-2005, Morgantown, WV	89
Clay, Ozzie	WR	Iowa State	1964 Was	09-10-1941, Hickory, NC	03-08-2005, Washington, DC	62
Clemons, Ray	G	St. Mary's (CA)	1947 GB	04-02-1921, Roseville, CA	12-28-2005, Sacramento, CA	84
Cole, Terry	RB	Indiana	1968-71 Bal, Pit, Mia	07-07-1945, Dallas, TX	11-11-2005, Indianapolis, IN	60
Concannon, Jack	QS	Boston College	1964-75 Phi, ChiS, GS, Det	02-25-1943, Boston, MA	11-28-2005, Newton, MA	62
Conlee, Gerry	C-LB	St. Mary's (CA)	1938-47 Cle, Det, SF-A	08-22-1914, Porterville, CA	07-16-2005, El Cajon, CA	90
Conti, Ed	G	Ark., Bucknell	1941-45 Phi, Pit	02-15-1913, Naples, Italy	05-22-2005, Tallahassee, FL	92
Courseon, Steve	G	S.Carolina	1978-85 Pit, TB	10-01-1955, Philadelphia, PA	11-10-2005, Henry Clay Twp, PA	50
Crawford, Denny	G-T	Tennessee	1949 NY-A	06-16-1921, Kingsport, TN	08-14-2005, Knoxville, TN	84
Cudzik, Walt	C	Purdue	1954-64 Was, Bos, Buf	02-21-1932, Chicago, IL	12-11-2005, Gulf Shores, AL	73
Daukas, Lou	LB	Corneil	1947 BknA	07-04-1921, Nashua, NH	12-22-2005, Glastonbury, CT	84
Davis, Glenn	HB	Army	1950-51 LARm	12-26-1924, Burbank, CA	03-09-2005, La Quinta, CA	80
Dawson, Gib	HB	Texas	1953 GB	08-27-1930, Bisbee, AZ	07-30-2005, Phoenix, AZ	74
Deal, Rufus	FB	Auburn	1942 Was	12-07-1917, Moundsville, AL	03-14-2005, Tuscaloosa, AL	87
Dekdebrun, Al	TB	Columbia, Cornell	1946-48 BufA, ChiA, NY-A, Bos	05-11-1921, Buffalo, NY	03-29-2005, Cape Coral, FL	83
Douglas, John	DB	Texas Southern	1967-69 NO, Hou	01-12-1945, Ft. Worth, TX	04-05-2005, Hurst, TX	60
Druze, Johnny	E	Fordham	1938 Bkn	07-03-1914, Newark, NJ	12-27-2005, Scottsdale, AZ	91
Ebli, Ray	DE-OE	Notre Dame	1942-47 ChiC, BufA, ChiA	10-06-1919, Bessemer, MI	01-19-2005, Green Bay, WI	85
Elliott, Carl	E	Virginia	1951-54 GB	11-12-1927, Laurel, DE	07-18-2005, Garland, TX	77
Emmons, Frank	FB-HB	Oregon	1940 Phi	09-17-1918, Portland, OR	11-05-2005, Edmonds, WA	87
Epps, Tory	DT	Memphis	1990-95 ChiB, NO	05-28-1967, Uniontown, PA	06-01-2005, Uniontown, PA	38
Flagerman, Jack	G	St.Mary's (CA)	1948 LA-A	03-27-1922, San Francisco, CA	06-12-2005, Rohnert Park, CA	83
Fletcher, Arthur	OE	Washburn	1950 Bal	12-22-1924, Ft. Huachua, AZ	07-12-2005, Washington, DC	90
Ferguson, Howie	FB	No College	1953-60 GB, LAC	08-05-1930, New Iberia, LA	12-18-2005, New Iberia, LA	75
Frick, Ray	C-LB	Pennsylvania	1941 Bkn	01-16-1919, Bloomfield, NJ	03-02-2005, Flemington, NJ	86
Gage, Bobby	TB	Clemson	1949-50 Pit	01-15-1928, Chester, SC	04-19-2005, Greenville, SC	77
Gatski, Frank	C	Marshall, Auburn	1946-57 Cle, Det	03-18-1922, Farmington, WV	11-23-2005, Morgantown, WA	83
Gault, Prentice	HB-FB	Oklahoma	1960-67 Cle, StL	02-08-1938, Oklahoma City, OK	03-17-2005, Lawrence, KS	67
Grgich, Visco	G	Santa Clara	1946-52 SF	01-19-1923, Ziarin, Yugoslavia	12-26-2005, Modesto, CA	82
Griffin, Don	HB	Illinois	1946 ChiA	10-15-1922, Benton Harbor, MI	01-17-2005, Aurora, IL	82
Grimes, Billy	HB	Oklahoma State	1949-52 LA-A, GB	07-27-1927, County Line, OK	03-26-2005, Oklahoma City, OK	77
Gundlach, Herman	G	Harvard	1935 Bas	07-16-1913, Houghton, MI	05-05-2005, Rochester, MN	92
Hall, Parker	QB-HB	Mississippi	1939-42,1946 Cle, SF-A	12-10-1916, Tunica, MS	02-08-2005, Vicksburg, MS	88
Hill, Jack	WR-K	Utah State	1961 Den	10-17-1932, Ogden, UT	09-26-2005, Kaysville, UT	72
Hoffman, Bob	FB	USC	1940-49 Was, LARm, LA-A	12-13-1917, Star City, WV	04-13-2005, Kern, CA	88
Hubbell, Frank	E	Tennessee	1947-49 LARm	01-19-1922, Bridgeport, CT	04-09-2005, Knoxville, TN	83
Kahler, Royal	T	Nebraska	1941-42 Pit, GS	03-22-1918, Grand Island, NE	02-21-2005, Potter, TX	87
Kapter, Alex	G	Northwestern	1946 CleA	03-26-1922, Waukegan, IL	07-26-2005, Thousand Oaks, CA	83
Kodba, Joe	C	Purdue	1947 BalA	02-27-1922, Yugoslavia	09-07-2005, Swartz Creek, MI	77
Kutner, Mal	OE-DB	Texas	1946-50 ChiC	03-27-1921, Dallas, TX	02-04-2005, Tyler, Tx	83
Lang, David	RB	Northern Arizona	1991-95 LARm, Dal	03-28-1968, Lama Linda, CA	05-19-2005, Stone Mountain, GA	37
Lemek, Ray	OT -OG	Notre Dame	1957-65 Was, Pit	06-28-1934, Sioux City, IA	09-17-2005, Readfield, ME	72
Liles, Sonny	G	Oklahoma State	1943-45 Det, Cle	08-09-1919, Marlow, OK	07-25-2005, Aspen, CO	85
Little, David	LB	Florida	1981-92 Pit	01-03-1959, Miami, FL	03-17-2005, Miami, FL	46

# THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 28, No. 1 (2006)

Player	Pos	Colleae	Career	ABirth	Death	Ag
Long, Terry	OG	East Carolina	1984-91 Pit	07-21-1959, Columbia, SC	06-07-2005, Pittsburgh, PA	45
Lucas, Al	DT	Troy State	2000-01 Car	09-01-1978, Macon, GA	04-10-2005, Los Angeles, CA	27
Lunday, Kayo	G	NE Ok St, Ark.	1937-47 NYG	08-13-1912, Cleora, OK	07-13-2005, Durant, OK	92
Martin, Charles	NT-DE	West Alabama	1984-88 GB, Hou, All	08-31-1959, Canton, GA	01-23-2005, Houston, TX	45
McClure, Wayne	LB	Mississippi	1968,1970 Cin	07-02-1942, Merryville, YN	06-12-2005, Covington, LA	62
McCormick, Walt	C-LB	Wash., USC	1948 SF-A	09-04-1926, Visalia, CA	04-03-2005, Visalia, CA	78
McFadden, Banks	HB	Clemson	1940 Bkn	02-07-1917, Fort Lawn, SC	06-04-2005, Ormond Beach, SC	89
McPhail, Buck	FB-K	Oklahoma	1953 Bal	12-25-1929, Oklahoma City, OK	03-04-2005, Costa Mesa, CA	75
Melius, John	T	Villanova	1938-49 NYG,SF-A, BalA	06-16-1917, Plymouth, PA	11-28-2005, Plymouth, PA	88
Michel, Tom	HB	East Carolina	1964 Min	12-07-1940, Oakland, CA	03-21-2005, Greenville, NC	64
Miller, Tom	E	Hamp.-Sydney	1943-46 PhPt, Phi, Was, GB	05-23-1918, Milton, PA	12-02-2005, Green Bay, WI	87
Mills, Sam	LB	Montclair State	1986-97 NO, Car	06-03-1959, Neptune, NJ	04-18-2005, Charlotte, NC	46
Minisi, Skippy	HB	Navy, Penn	1948 NYG	09-18-1926, Newark, NJ	05-05-2005, Paoli, PA	79
Montort, Avery	WB	New Mexico	1941 ChiC	12-19-1918, Copan, OK	04-19-2005, Grass Valley, CA	86
Montgomery, Clift	TB	Columbia	1934 Bkn	09-17-1910, Pittsburgh, PA	04-21-2005, Mineola, NY	95
Negus, Fred	LB-C	Mich., Wise.	1947-50 ChiA, ChiB	11-07-1921, Colerain, OH	04-18-2005, Ft. Atkinson, WI	81
Nix, Emery	QB	TCU	1943-46 NYG	12-01-1919, Chillicothe, TX	12-06-2005, Blanco, TX	76
O'Brien, Bill	HB	None	1947 Det	08-25-1924, Detroit, MI	05-08-2005, Eastport, MI	80
Oldham, Ray	DB	Mid.Tenn.Sl.	1973-82 Bal, Pit, NYG, Det	02-23-1961, Gallatin, TN	07-23-2005, Chattanooga, TN	54
Ostendarp, Jim	HB	Bucknell	1950-51 NYG	02-15-1923, Baltimore, MD	12-15-2005, Holyoke, MA	82
Paftrath, Bob	HB	Minnesota	1946 BknA, MiaA	07-03-1918, Mankato, MN	05-21-2005, Beaverton, Or	86
Parker, Jim	OT-OG	Ohio State	1957-67 Bal	04-03-1934, Macon, GA	07-18-2005, Columbia, MD	71
Parmer, Jim	HB-FB	Tex.A&M; Ok.St	1948-56 Phi	04-15-1926, Dallas, TX	04-20-2005, Lubbock, TX	78
Pearcy, Jim	G	Marshall	1946-49 ChiA	07-26-1918, Harrisville, WV	03-15-2005, Hendersonville, NC	86
Piccolo, Bill	C-LB	Canisius	1943-45 NYG	05-01-1920, Buffalo, NY	02-23-2005, Ravenna, OH	84
Poole, Barney	E	N.Car;Army;Miss.	1949-54 NY-A,NYY,Dal,Bal,NYG	10-29-1923, Gloster, MS	04-12-2005, Jackson, MS	81
Popovich, Milt	FB	Montana	1938-42 ChiC	12-29-1913, Butte, MT	06-23-2005, Butte, MT	91
Ramsey, Knox	OG-LB	William & Mary	1948-53 LA-A, ChiC, Phi, Was	02-13-1926, Speed, IN	03-19-2005, Richmond, VA	79
Roby, Reggie	P	Iowa	1983-98 Mia,Was,TB,Hou,Ten,SF	07-30-1961, Waterloo, IA	02-22-2005, Nashville, TN	43
Russell, Darrell	DT	USC	1997-01 Oak	05-27 -1976, Pensacola, FL	12-15-2005, Los Angeles, CA	29
Sample, Johnny	DB-	Mary.E.Shore	1958-68 Bal, Pit, Was, NY J	06-15-1937, Cape Charles, VA	04-25-2005, Philadelphia, PA	67
Sampson, Clint	WE	San Diego St.	1983-86 Den	01-04-1961, Los Angeles, CA	12-25-2005, Los Angeles, CA	44
Schweder, John	OG-LB	Pennsylvania	1950-55 Bal, Pit	12-23-1927, Bethlehem, PA	06-09-2005, Muhlenberg, PA	77
Sensanbaugher,Dean	HB	Army, Ohio St.	1948-49 CleA, NYB	08-12-1925, Midvale, OH	11-08-2005, Lakeland, FL	79
Shakespeare, Stan	WR	Miami (FL)	1987 TB	02-05-1963, Auburn, NY	04-26-2005, Jupiter, FL	42
Smith, Ray Gene	HB	Midwestern Sl.	1954-57 ChiB	11-27-1928, Andarko, OK	08-16-2005, Garland, TX	77
Sparlis, Al	G	UCLA	1946 GB	05-20-1920, Los Angeles, CA	07-09-2005, Porterville, CA	85
Suminski, Dave	G	Wisconsin	1953 Was, ChiC	06-18-1931, Ashland, WI	09-22-2005, Ashland, WI	74
Taseft, Carl	DB-HB	John Carroll	1951-62 Cle, Bal, Phi, But	09-28-1928, Parma, OH	02-27-2005, Weston, FL	76
Tomaini, Army	T	Catawba	1945 NYG	02-05-1918, Long Branch, NJ	05-25-2005, Crawfordville, FL	87
Wagner, Lowell	DB	USC	1946-55 NY-A, SF	08-21-1923, Santa Monica, CA	09-26-2005, Kirkland, WA	86
West, Stan	DG	Oklahoma	1950-57 LARm, NYG, ChiC	09-22-1926, Weatherford, OK	01-19-2005, Norman, OK	78
Wilburn, Steve	DE	Illinois State	1987 NE	02-25-1961, Chicago, IL	06-08-2005, Schaumburg, IL	43
Williams, Johnny	DB	USC	1952-54 Was, SF	06-30-1927, Los Angeles, CA	02-26-2005, Dana Point, CA	77
Wilson, Jerrel	P-RB	So.Miss.	1963-78 KC, NE	10-04-1941, New Orleans, LA	04-09-2005, Bronson, TX	63
Woudenberg, John	T	Denver,St.Mary's	1940-49 Pit, SF-A	05-25-1918, Denver, CO	05-03-2005, Denver, CO	87

We would like to thank all those PFRA members who have sent us word of player deaths through the year.

## AWARDS

Votes for The Hall of Very Good and for the PFRA Writing Awards were still arriving as this Coffin Corner was being prepared. Although our schedule is loose and we can't give a deadline, it is likely that votes made now would still count.

Myron J. Smith has definitely retained his seat on the board, but the Hall of Very Good and the Writing Awards are too close to call. A few votes could make a difference.

--- Bob Carroll