IS THERE LIFE AFTER FOOTBALL?
DALE MEMMELAAR

By Bob Barnett and Bob Carroll

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Dale Memmelaar was a journeyman offensive lineman.

In this age of hyped stars, superstars, and megastars, when barely acceptable becomes "outstanding" and adequate translates into "great," to call a player a journeyman seems like damning him with faint praise. That's because the connotations of the term emphasize a "make do until someone better comes along" status. In truth, journeyman in an honorable old term:

JOUR * NEY * MAN - A mechanic who has learned his trade and who works at it for another.

Dale learned his trade and was good enough to play it for nine years in the National Football League for four different teams. Most of the players on any championship team are journeymen in the true sense of the word. They come in, do the job, help win the games, watch the stars get the headlines, and then move on. The stars move on to Canton; the journeymen go places like Washingtonville, New York.

Dale left New York in the mid-1950s to attend the University of Wyoming. There he earned his bachelor of science degree in education and a place on the All-Big Sky Conference first team as a senior. The NFL was only moderately impressed, and he was chosen on the 21st round of the 1959 draft by the then-Chicago Cardinals.

Despite being an unheralded rookie, Dale broke into the Cards' starting lineup, only to be sidelined when his army reserve unit was called to active duty during the Berlin Crisis. He played two more seasons with the Cardinals as a reserve lineman.

In 1962 he was traded to the end of the earth – Minnesota, then an expansion team in only its second season. Minnesota was the bottom rung on the NFL ladder. After two weeks even that was pulled out from under him when the Vikings returned him to the Cardinals who promptly put him on waivers.

Fortunately for Dale, the Cowboys bought his contract for the $100 waiver fee and gave him one more chance. He not only made the team but he was in the starting lineup at offensive guard for the 1962 season opener against the Washington Redskins.

"That was the game I remember as my best game ever," recalled Dale recently. "It was over 100 degrees in the Cotton Bowl. I had been traded from St. Louis to Dallas and really didn't know if I wanted to play pro football anymore. But I started that game and played across from an All-Pro, Bob Toneff. He didn't beat me once the whole game."

Typically for the Cowboys in that season, the game ended in a 35-35 tie. Dale recalls, "The Cowboys were building and Coach Landry alternated Eddie LeBaron and Dandy Don (Meredith) at quarterback. We had a tremendous offensive team – but no defense. We lost a lot of games by scores like 40-28."

Dale started the next season for the Cowboys and also served as the team barber. He wasn't totally inexperienced. As one of a family of eleven – nine brothers and a sister – he'd been cutting his siblings' hair for as long as he could remember. He said at the time that his wife would rather he cut her hair than a beautician. Certainly the price was right for the Cowboy players. The local barber shop charged two dollars; Dale charged nothing.

Going into the 1964 season, Dale was 27. A throat infection in June dulled his sharpness, and the presence of a couple of hot shot rookie guards meant his time was up with the building Cowboys. There were no recriminations on his part. He was grateful for the chance he'd received and for what he'd learned.

Being cut by Dallas actually turned out to be a good break. He signed on on as a free agent with Cleveland just in time to play for the Browns' championship team of 1964. The title game – in which Cleveland surprised favored Baltimore, 27-0 – ranks as his greatest thrill in football.

"Winning the championship is the greatest thrill a football player can have," Dale insists. "It is the end of the rainbow. The difference between the Cardinals, Cowboys, and Browns was the mental attitude. Dallas has grown to that attitude now, but in 1964 the Browns felt we could be 40 points behind and still win. We just had a winning attitude."

Dale played two more seasons with the Browns, but was traded to the Colts in 1966. "Being traded so often was tough," he admits. "You have to come in and prove yourself all over again. You have to beat out an established player, and he has friends. It is the loneliest feeling in the world. It is worse than being a rookie because they know you were acquired for a reason."

Dale continued with the Colts that season and played one more year for them before retiring at the end of 1967. "When I went to Cleveland, I learned how valuable I was because I could play every position in the offensive line," Dale added. "That helped me stay on with the Colts.

"I retired because I banged up my knee and couldn't control the line of scrimmage any longer. They wanted to operate and remove my kneecap, but I told them I would jost as leave keep it and retire."

Following his retirement from the NFL, Dale was hired as a teacher and assistant football coach at Newberg (NY) High School. "I had taught from January through June during the last six years I was in the NFL so I was pretty well acclimated to working. The only thing I had a little trouble getting used to that first year was not having that tremendous surge of adrenalin pumping every Sunday – like playing for the Browns in Municipal Stadium before 80,000 fans. In life you don't have those tremendous ups every week. It was just something I had to learn to live without."

The following year Dale moved as a teacher/assistant coach to Washingtonville (NY) High School. From 1970-74 he was the head football coach at Washingtonville, where he successfully installed the Cowboys' offense. "Obviously I had to water it down a little bit for high school kids, but the concepts were the same," he says. Dale was promoted to assistant principal in 1974, and from 1975 through 1982 he served as director of athletics at Washingtonville.

In 1983, however, Dale returned to fulltime teaching. "I am a born-again Christian and I do a lot of speaking to youth groups. Being athletic director involved too much supervision in the evenings and conflicted with my church work," Dale explains. "I am also attending Christian Faith Fellowship Bible College in Middletown, New York, working towards becoming an ordained minister.

"You bet there is life after pro football. In fact, it just opens up more. But you have to have a vision, a goal. I never used athletics as an end; I used it as a means to a goal. I knew I always wanted to teach, and now I'm looking to teach in a different way."

The distance between Goshen, where Dale Memmelaar played high school football, and Washingtonville is only 21 miles, but the return journey across the football fields of Wyoming, Chicago, St. Louis, Dallas, Cleveland and Baltimore taught him some valuable lessons. He learned and demonstrated the value of versatility and hard work. He always gave a full measure to the team he played for and later to the students and players he taught and coached. And now he's giving a full measure to God.

Such journeymen are always in demand.

DALE EDWARD MEMMELAAR

Born: January 15, 1938, at Goshen, NY
Hgt: 6-2   Wgt: 248   College: Wyoming
High School: Goshen, NY
Drafted: Chicago Cardinals, 1959 - 21st round

YEAR	TEAM	GM	TEAM REC.	FINISH
1959	Chicago Cardinals	12	2-10-0	6th NFL-East
1960	St. Louis Cardinals	12	6- 5-1	4th NFL-East
1961	St. Louis Cardinals	8	7- 7-0	4th NFL-East
1962	Dallas Cowboys	14	5- 8-1	5th NFL-East
1963	Dallas Cowboys	14	4-10-0	5th NFL-East
1964	Cleveland Browns	14	10- 3-1	NFL CHAMPIONS
1965	Cleveland Browns	14	11- 3-0	1st NFL-East
1966	Baltimore Colts	12	9- 5-0	2nd NFL-West
1967	Baltimore Colts	7	11- 1-2	2ndNFL-Coastal
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9 years		107		