

23 GUYS WITH HOBBIES

By L. Robert Davids

The decision by Bo Jackson, who played hit-or-miss baseball for the Kansas City Royals this summer, to play with the Los Angeles Raiders this fall, has been greeted with some skepticism. Well, it has been many years since an athlete has attempted this dual role in the same year.

The last time was in 1954 when Vic Janowicz, the only other Heisman Trophy winner to play major league baseball, was a substitute third baseman for the Pittsburgh Pirates. He batted only .151 in 41 games. He performed better as a halfback for the Washington Redskins, but certainly did not star that year.

Of the approximately 60 athletes who played both major league baseball and football since 1920, a surprising 23 did it in the same year. Almost all of these multiple efforts were made in the early decades when the baseball and football seasons did not overlap as much as they do now.

Also, several of the players made only token appearances in one of the sports, usually baseball. Tom Whelan and Red Smith played in only one game each, Jahn Scalzi in two, and John Mohardt in five. However, the latter had only one official at bat and collected a hit for a "lifetime" 1000 average!

Only one or two players performed reasonably well in both sports the same year. In 1926, Garland "Gob" Buckeye, the 260-pound southpaw hurler for the Cleveland Indians, had a fine 3.10 ERA in 166 innings in that heavy-hitting season. He also did some heavy hitting as a guard for the Chicago Bulls in the AFL that fall.

Walter French, the West Point All-America, was a little more spectacular in 1925. He batted .370 in 67 games for Connie Mack's Philadelphia Athletics and was the top pinch hitter in the majors. That fall, he was a pretty fair halfback for the Pottsville Maroons, who had a great 10-2 season. Of course, the real star of that team was Charlie Berry, the outstanding end who led the NFL in scoring. Ironically, French and Berry not only were teammates with Pottsville but also wore the Athletics' baseball uniforms a couple of months earlier. Berry, who spent eleven years as a major league catcher and then continued as an umpire, played only ten games with the A's in 1925.

Most of the double-duty athletes contributed very little in baseball; however, several did quite well that same year in football. Charlie Berry, already cited, was an All-Pro end for Pottsville in 1925. Ernie Nevers, a marginal hurler for the lowly St. Louis Browns in 1926 and 1927, was an All-Pro fullback for the Duluth Eskimos both seasons. Red Badgro batted only .239 for the Browns in 1930, but he did make second team All-Pro end for the New York Giants that fall.

Ace Parker, brought up from Duke by Connie Mack to play shortstop in 1937, hit a home run in his first trip to the plate, but didn't do much else on the diamond that season. It was November before Mack allowed him to play football, but he immediately sparked the listless Brooklyn Dodgers in a couple of strong games. The next year he was able to divide his baseball-football time more evenly and won the quarterback spot on the All-NFL team. Much later he would return to baseball, winning the Piedmont League batting title in 1946.

A new name was recently added to the club, although he played more than 60 years ago. A player listed for years in the [Macmillan Baseball Encyclopedia](#) as James Eldred Bedford, a Cleveland second baseman in '25, turned out to be Bill Bedford, a Rochester Jeffersons end in the same year.

At this stage we don't know how well Jackson will perform in pro football. In baseball, despite his many strikeouts, he's hit 20+ home runs, far more than any of the others on the accompanying list who played both sports in the same year.

[Editor's Note] Jim Thorpe did not play major league baseball in 1920; however, he did play in the majors in 1915, 1917, and 1919, years in which his Canton Bulldogs claimed the Professional

THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 9, No. 7 (1987)

Football Championship of the U.S. Additionally, most fans know that Christy Mathewson played fullback for the Pittsburgh Pros in 1902, a year in which they also claimed the title. Fred Crolius, an outfielder for the Pirates in 9 games in '02, was a regular halfback on the same Pittsburgh team. Pitcher Rube Waddell accompanied the Philadelphia A's football team in '02, but proof that he played is lacking.

* * * *

ATHLETES WHO PLAYED BOTH MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL AND FOOTBALL IN THE SAME SEASON

YEAR	PLAYER	BASEBALL			TOTAL	FOOTBALL			TOTAL
		POS	TEAM,	LG	ML BB YEARS	POS	TEAM,	LG	ML FB YEARS
1920	Al Pierotti	P	Boston	NL	2	C-Q	Cleveland	APFA	7
1920	Tom Whelan	1B	Boston	NL	1	E	Canton	APFA	2
1921	Joe "Nig" Berry	2B	New York	NL	2	HB	Rochester	APFA	1
1922	John Mohardt	2B	Detroit	AL	1	HB	Chi. Cards	NFL	5
1923	Dick Reichle	OF	Boston	AL	2	E	Milwaukee	NFL	1
1924	Hoge Workman	P	Boston	AL	1	HB	Cleveland	NFL	3
1925	Bill Bedford	2B	Cleveland	AL	1	E	Rochester,	NFL	1
1925	Charlie Berry	C	Philadelphia	AL	11	E	Pottsville	NFL	2
1925	Walter French	OF	Philadelphia	AL	6	HB	Pottsville	NFL	2
1925	Chuck Corgan	IF	Brooklyn	NL	-	E	Kans. City	NFL	-
1927	" "	"	"	"	2	E	N.Y.Giants	NFL	4
1925	Ernie Vick	C	St. Louis	NL	4	C	Detroit	NFL	3
1926	Garland Buckeye	P	Cleveland	AL	5	G	Chicago	AFL	6
1926	Ernie Nevers	P	St. Louis	AL	-	FB	Duluth	NFL	-
1927	" "	"	"	"	3	"	"	"	5
1927	Pid Purdy	OF	Chicago	AL	4	B	Green Bay	NFL	2
1927	Richard Smith	C	New York	NL	1	B	Green Bay	NFL	5
1928	Bruce Caldwell	OF	Cleveland	AL	2	HB	N.Y.Giants	NFL	1
1930	Red Badgro	OF	St. Louis	AL	2	E	N.Y.Giants	NFL	9
1931	John Scalzi	PH	Boston	NL	1	B	Brooklyn	NFL	1
1937	Ace Parker	SS	Philadelphia	AL	-	QB	Brooklyn	NFL	-
1938	" "	"	"	"	2	"	"	"	7
1943	Bert Kuczynski	P	Philadelphia	AL	1	E	Detroit	NFL	2
1945	Steve Filipowicz	OF	New York	NL	3	QB	N.Y.Giants	NFL	2
1948	Pete Layden	OF	St. Louis	AL	1	HB	New York	AAFC	3
1954	Vic Janowicz	3B	Pittsburgh	NL	2	HB	Washington	NFL	2