

AN ALL-TIME TEAM (Circa 1942)

MATCH THEM IF YOU CAN!

Hundreds of football greats have swept over National Football League gridirons since the inception of the pro loop 20 years ago, and with every man a star, the selection of an all-time, all-star pro team presents an unusually difficult question. However, even among a wide array of stellar performers, here are some who stand out above the rest -- and *The Sporting News* has invited league coaches to name their favorites. The result is the first all-time team chosen by a majority of these mentors, with Mel Hein, one of the greatest players of them all, also contributing his selections.

St. Louis, December 31, 1942

**Nagurski, Baugh, Hein and Hutson
Brightest Stars Since Organization
of Pro League 20 Years Ago**

**Battles and Clark Round Out Backfield; Thorpe, Pinckert, Friedman, Strong and Hinkle
Recognized, But Miss Out**

By Joe King
of the *New York World-Telegram*

What lineup would you pick to win one big game, if you had the choice of all the glittering stars ever to play in the National Football League?

Would you be satisfied with titanic Cal Hubbard and Turk Edwards at the tackles, or would you think along the same line as Coach Steve Owen of New York and vote for Link Lyman, one of the standouts in that great dynasty of Chicago Bear tackles? Or would you come out for Joy Stydahar, as does Coach Curly Lambeau of Green Bay? Would you stand by Cliff Battles of the Redskins, who once rushed 215 yards in a single game against the defense-minded Giants, for your breakaway back, or would you string along with Coach Walt Kiesling of the Pittsburgh Steelers and select the Bear wonder boy, George McAfee? Are you impressed by the rising star of Clyde (Bulldog) Turner, or would you follow the crowd and take Mel Hein at center?

It's a fascinating study, this attempt to determine the top men of the sport -- for the one big game. It is a great tribute to the players, a sort of all-time all-league recognition. But the primary idea here is to choose the eleven which would deliver in the "clutch." It would get just one try.

You see, any selection of an all-time team must be limited to a definite rule. For instance, an all-time ensemble might be named for consistent excellence over a long period of years. But for this "Climax" eleven, the stars naturally are picked off their peak performance, at the moment they reach their highest mastery of the science of football, and their length of service is not material. Of course, most of them are durable. Brilliance and stamina usually go together in the great player.

We asked six league coaches for their choices, to get a pretty good cross section of opinion, and added Hein, because he has viewed most of the best across the line of scrimmage in his 12 years of stellar professional action.

The consensus?

Sammy to Pass, Bronko to Plunge, Battles to Run

Well, for a backfield, how do you like Sammy Baugh, "the one-man ball club." to do the passing and kicking; Bronko Nagurski, "the unstoppable," to crack the line; Battles, who in 1937 averaged 4.9 yards

THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 10, No. 1 (1988)

even though he carried the ball more often than any one in history for a single season, to run the ends, and the "perfect quarterback," Earl (Dutch) Clark, to direct and assist this football demolition force?

Here's the complete lineup, with the votes for each in a total of seven:

Ends -- **Don Hutson**, Green Bay (7), and **Bill Hewitt**, Chicago Bears and Eagles (6).

Tackles -- **Cal Hubbard**, Green Bay and New York (6), and **Turk Edwards**, Boston and Washington (3).

Guards -- **Danny Fortmann**, Bears (5), and **Mike Michalske**, Green Bay (5).

Center -- **Mel Hein**, New York (6). (He did not vote for himself.)

Quarterback -- **Earl (Dutch) Clark**, Detroit and Portsmouth (3).

Halfbacks -- **Sammy Baugh**, Washington (6), and **Cliff Battles**, Boston and Washington (4).

Fullback -- **Bronko Nagurski**, Bears (6).

That is a dream outfit with a total of 45 places on the annual league all-star teams. That does not include this season, in which Baugh, Hutson and Fortmann are likely to do it again.

The poll includes the point of view of the player as well as the coach, and that of the relative newcomer in addition to that of the old-timer, with this array of selectors -- Lambeau, Owen; Kiesling, Hein, Clark, now coaching Cleveland; John (Bull) Karcis, head man in Detroit, and Mike Getto, Brooklyn's mentor.

Getto's team is one of the more interesting, even though he has been in the league only the past three years. He most nearly hits the consensus, failing only at one guard position, where he picks, singularly, his own tackle, Bruiser Kinard, in place of Michalske.

Getto Likes His Kinard Best of Any Player

Kinard (he was all-league the past two years) could be the most versatile man in the league," explains Getto. "He is the ideal football type, fast, rugged, of good size, but not bulky at 220, shrewd and with a burning competitive spirit. He could be a great all-round fullback, and playing guard would be easy for him. We did not treat him well this year because of limited manpower, and he had to play 60 minutes on an ankle hurt so badly that it would drive almost any other lineman to the bench."

Mike's team is significant -- aside from his loyal espousal of the staunch Kinard -- because it is not based on personal observation, as are the others, but is boiled down from hundreds of opinions the Brooklyn coach has had from the outstanding figures in the game.

Karcis limits himself to men he has seen. "I watched the pros play as early as 1926," the Detroit coach narrates, "and I have been connected with the league since 1932, as a player for eight of those years. I picked this all-time eleven from men I saw. The greatest for me is Dutch Clark, at his best while at Portsmouth."

Karcis departs from the consensus with Ed Widseth of the Giants, instead of Edwards, at tackle, and it is noteworthy that the all-league voting in 1938 gave the New Yorker a 46-23 advantage over Turk, and the highest total of any man on the team of that season. Karcis is the lone supporter of Ken Strong of the Giants, ignoring Battles. And he makes a controversy-stirring selection for the old-timers when he puts Benny Friedman ahead of Baugh. This is apparently a tough choice for those who have seen them both. Hein, too, had trouble naming Baugh because of Friedman, but went for Sam.

"Friedman is very close to Baugh in my mind," propounded the great center. "Very seldom have I ever seen Benny over or undershoot a receiver, and he had the knack of serving a soft ball, easy to handle. He was perfection in leading a receiver. But because of Baugh's unprecedented speed, combined with the highest accuracy, which permits him to hit a spot left uncovered for a fleeting instant, I must name Sam."

Is This Lese Majeste?

Lambeau Passes Up Hubbard!

Hein is partial to Ox Emerson, the Detroit all-leaguer of 1936, in Fortmann's berth and prefers Ernie Pinckert of the Redskins for quarter.

THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 10, No. 1 (1988)

"I must have a blocker for my quarterback," insists Owen, the defense maestro, "and I therefore select Nello Falaschi of the Giants over Red Dunn of the Packers, who was the best field general I ever saw and who led Green Bay to three titles."

Steve then departs from form to name another Giant, Dale Burnett, for "unvarying delivery of the goods at all times." He combines that pair with Baugh -- his "greatest ever" player -- and Nagurski, in the backfield. The Giant coach stands pat on the consensus line except to substitute Lyman, another of the Bear greats, for Edwards. Lyman was the true Iron Man; he had played 217 hours in 292 games, including his varsity career, before he gave way to Stydahar in 1935.

Lambeau, too, says Lyman belongs. But his most intriguing nomination is that of Stydahar in place of Hubbard, who played so long and so well for Curly. He, surprisingly, is the lone dissenter on mighty Cal. Is this another case of distance lending enchantment to the view?

The Packer coach, ignoring one of his men in the case of the tackles, then breaks away from the great Nagurski to pick one of his players for fullback, Clark Hinkle. The comparison of the figures on the Bronko and the Packer pile-driver, however, seem conclusive in Nagurski's favor. In eight seasons the Bear gained 3,947 yards in 856 attempts, for an average of 4.6 Hinkle, over ten years, traveled 3,860 yards from scrimmage in 1,171 tries, for an average of 3.2. But Curly here exercises his right to pick an athlete at his peak, and in 1936 Hinkle did have phenomenal success, with an average of 4.7 in 100 rushes.

Lambeau shuns Clark, too, in favor of Jim Thorpe, but does accept Battles and Baugh. Few of the men in this little forum, even Owen, had the opportunity to see the old Indian great at his best, as did Lambeau, and this may account for his being passed over by all except Curly. The Packer pilot, incidentally, believes he would have to name Red Grange to his all-time team for college and pro ability combined, but that he could not take No. 77 for his pro team alone, because Red did better at school.

Dutch Clark, who, of course, did not vote for himself, believes in murdering the foe with running. He has put both Hinkle and Nagurski on his team, along with Battles and Baugh. In the line, Dutch believes that Joe Kopcha, who left the Bears in 1935, when Lyman did, to play for Detroit, deserves ranking above Michalske, in his only variation.

Dutch is ready to rate Hutson as the all-time great of football. "Hutson has been a one-man team over the years," he says, "and deserves top billing as best of all."

Owen and Hein used similar language in regard to Baugh and it is obvious that however well we agree in our poll on 11 men, it will be impossible to get a majority vote for the one great player of all time. Owen and Hein voted for Baugh; Lambeau and Clark for Hutson; Karcis upholds Dutch Clark's right to that spot, and Getto would rather have Hein than anyone else.

Kiesling, who makes the pointed remark that he "probably could have named four teams, one as good as the other," avoids setting all his eggs in one basket, and prefers to let his team be the unit rather than any individual. It is surprising that the Steeler coach's liking for McAfee instead of Battles did not have stronger support. At his peak, McAfee certainly must be considered very close, if not on a par, with anyone.

Kiesling is the lone objector to Hewitt, taking Muller of Los Angeles instead, and he again is a loner in his choice of Giant Gibson over Fortmann. Still again, he is a lone standard-bearer, but this time for a storied player, the fabulous All-America Dartmouth tackle, Ed Healey, who was the subject of the first [Ed. second] player deal in league history, when the Bears in 1922 paid the princely sum of \$100 to Rock Island for the right to Healy's services.

That completes the roll call, and here once again, we look over the team that is to crush any opposition.

For an end, little more need be said for Hutson than the fact he led the league in scoring for the third straight season in this year of Our Lord with a sensational never-before-approached total of 138 points. He is the end par excellence.

Nagurski, Battles Boast Unbelievable Rush Records

THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 10, No. 1 (1988)

Hubbard and Michalske in the late '20s and early '30s helped bring in the era of the mobile lineman, in the great change-over of the game into an open, speedy tricky sport instead of an elemental battle of masses of brawn.

Edwards carried tradition through the middle decade, and Fortmann brought it in the '40s. Hein, with eight straight years as an all-league center, needs no further recommendation as a master diagnostician of plays from the line-backer post, a flawless passer-back, and a dynamic offensive charger.

Baugh this year completed 58 percent of his passes -- he is sure death -- and over six seasons he has achieved the amazing percentage of 55. It would be much, much higher if his bullet passes were not so often too hot for the receivers to handle.

Nagurski, the man who, according to Hein, could be stopped only by a head-on collision, boasts a rushing record which may never be equaled -- an average of 4.6 over eight seasons, as already told.

Battles led the league in rushing in '33 and came back to the top again in '37. [Ed. Later research has tagged Battles as the 1932 leader, but behind Jim Musick in '33.] He averaged 4.05 over seven years, and worked at a 4.9 clip in his best campaign.

Clark, the only man besides Hutson to lead the scorers in three seasons, '32, '35, '36, could do everything well with a football, in addition to plotting the perfect strategy of a game, and coaching the team, too.

That's a grand slam lineup for the one big game, Kiesling says he could pick three or four just as good.

Do YOU?

How would you like to play 60 minutes against them?