

## ARMCO'S SEMI-PRO FOOTBALL TEAMS

Courtesy of Armco Corp.

The fervor for sports which pervaded the Ashland and Middletown communities in the twenties caused the Armco Associations of both cities, in the fall of 1924, to sponsor and develop semi-professional football teams.

The majority of the players were in the employ of the Company. It was an era when the Canton Bulldogs and the Ironton Tanks were nationally known for their prowess in the professional football field. The Portsmouth Spartans and the Dayton Triangles were also severe competition. From 1924 to 1929 the Ashland and Middletown teams were maintained at high efficiency, and their home matches drew large crowds.

The rivalry between Ashland and Middletown was keen, and the records show that Ashland won six to Middletown's two over the years.

Some understanding as to the semi-pro calibre of Armco football can be gained from the roster of college players on the Middletown "Armco Blues" during the five years it was promoted.

They included: Forest McGuire, Swathmore; Johnie Becker, Dennison; Dal Gardner, University of Illinois; Pick Reiter, Miami; Joe Cox, Ohio State; Wyatt McCall, Miami; Johnnie Schott, University of Cincinnati; Jerry Tobin, Purdue; "Pude" Beatty, St. Xavier; Wendell Tussing, Georgia Tech; Ad Strosnider, University of Dayton; Buford Potts, University of Missouri; Mat Alger, St. Xavier; Ward Brashares, Miami; Mark Crawford, Purdue; "Swede" Fredrickson, Miami; Pup Graham, Chicago Cardinals; Howard Heavy, University of Cincinnati; Pat Marts, Ohio State; Tom Mincher, Miami; Jim McMillan, Purdue; Clifford Morgan, University of Missouri; Don O'Brien, Purdue; Earl Sullivan, St. Xavier; Mark Schiebert, St. Xavier; Abe Stuber, University of Missouri; Mark Vail, St. Xavier.

### Fifty Years at Armco

Competition was with such semi-professional teams as the Akron Awnings, Ashland Armco, Chillicothe Eagles, Cincinnati National Guard, C. A. C. of Cincinnati, Cleveland Indians, Dayton Koors, Dayton Triangles, Hamilton Legion, Bobbs-Chevrolet of Indianapolis, Ironton Tanks, Kokomo Legion, Louisville C. A. C., Muncie's Flyers, Portsmouth Spartans, Portsmouth Presidents, Springfield All Stars, Toledo Police and Wabash. The record for the Middletown Armco Blues was as follows:

YEAR	WON	LOST	TIED
1924	8	0	1
1925	6	4	0
1926	5	4	0
1927	6	0	3
1928	3	6	3
1929	5	3	1
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	33	17	8

The Ashland Armco professional football team which played during 1925 to 1929 was a very colorful team and drew spectators from all over the area of Kentucky, Ohio and West Virginia. Practically everyone of its members had been an outstanding player in his college days. There were a number on the team who were All-American players of whom Red Roberts was perhaps one of the most famous, having been picked by Walter Camp two succeeding years as All-American from the famous team, the

## THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 10, No. 2 (1988)

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Praying Colonels of Centre College. In later years he was picked by several sports writers on the All-Time All-American team. The first college players on the Ashland semi-pro teams were:

John Niemiec--Notre Dame  
"Tiny" Lewis--Northwestern  
"Pooley" Hubert--Alabama  
"Red" Roberts--Centre

Dave Noble--Nebraska  
Pete Barnum--Univ. of W.Va.  
Homer Martin--Univ. of W.Va.  
Joe Setron--Univ. of W.Va.

"Bunk" McWilliams, Huntington, West Virginia, tackle, was the only man who played every season that Armco sponsored this team. He was not a college man but drew large crowds from Huntington. He weighed at that time 205 to 210 pounds and was six feet, three and a half inches tall. He went to work in the Armco Ashland Plant while playing football and continued with the company as did Tiny Lewis, Bill Edgar, Ward Brashares, Virgil Perry, Red Crist, Sonny Winters and others.

"Bunk" always made a joke of the fact that he was not a college man, having started his football career by playing "sand-lot" football while working at the American Car and Foundry in Huntington. Before one of the big games, the Associated Press sent a man to Ashland to write a story about this great team.

In the course of writing his story he asked each of the players the name of his Alma Mater. When he came to "Bunk" with the question, he replied with a very straight face, "A. C. & F." The AP man did not want to appear at a loss, so he pretended to be familiar with such a school and when the story was released, lo and behold, under the heading of colleges attended by the Ashland Armco players, McWilliams was listed as a graduate of A. C. & F. (American Car and Foundry).

The Ironton Tanks were Ashland Armco's greatest rival. Only in the last year of the Armco team's existence were they able to beat the Tanks twice in one season -- in Ashland and Ironton -- and then only by a slight margin, but the Ashland fans were satisfied and felt that the team went out in a blaze of glory.

The players on these teams were: Virgil Perry, Miami University; George Romey, Canton Bulldogs; Layne Tynes, University of Texas; Johnny Stuart, Ohio State University; Winston Charles, William & Mary College; Walter Kurtshalz, Wilmington College; Homer Martin, University of W. Va.; Zern Joseph, Miami University; Fayne Grone, Georgetown College; R. S. Keach, Lafayette College; Ashby Blevins, Centre College; Walter Skidmore, Centre College; "Bunk" McWilliams, Huntington Pros; Joe Work, Miami University; "Red" Joseph, Ohio State University; "Snooks" Winters, Marshall College; "Hep" McCoy, Ceredo; Arturo Archoska, Syracuse; Ed Crowley, Georgia Tech; Zach Coles, Vanderbilt; Rollie Drennon, Georgia Tech; George Ellison, Univ. of Ky.; Paul Gorill, Ohio State; Pooley Hubert, Univ. of Alabama; Mike Kresky, Georgetown Univ.; Joe Kresky, Wisconsin Univ.; Dave McArthur, Univ. of Tennessee; Boni Petcoff (All Big Ten Tackle), Ohio State Cap. '25; Al Rapp, Xavier; Herb Rapp, Xavier; Leo Raskowski, Ohio State; Roman Shaeffer, South Dakota State; Frank Smith, Univ. of Ky.; Robert Wimberly, South Carolina Univ., Dick Wolf, Miami University.

From 1926 through 1929 the following teams appeared on the Ashland Armco schedule; Canton Bulldogs, Cincinnati Guards, Cincinnati Potters, Cleveland Panthers, Columbus Tigers, Dayton Koors, Dayton Triangles, Ft. Wayne Pyramids, Ironton Tanks, Kokomo Legion, Middletown Armco Blues, Portsmouth Spartans and West Virginia Wildcats.

The results for Ashland Armco semi-pro football efforts were as follows:

YEAR	WON	LOST	TIED
1926	6	3	1
1927	6	2	2
1928	8	2	0
1929	8	2	1
	28	9	4