

THE 1975 CHICAGO WINDS

by Tod Maher

The Chicago Winds entered the 1975 season much like the other ten members of the World Football League – battle-scarred but hopeful. The Winds began life as the Chicago Fire, a 7-13 finisher in the Central Division of the financially-weak World Football League. The Fire was owned by Tom Origer, one of the few stable owners in otherwise rocky inaugural WFL season. It was Origer who helped push league founder Gary Davidson (father of the American Basketball Association and the World Hockey Association) into resigning as league president the year before. In his place was Chris Hemmeter, part-owner of the Hawaiians. It was his austere financial program for the 1975 season that was dubbed the Hemmeter Plan.

Gone too in 1975 was Origer himself. Origer was a \$750,000 victim of the WFL's first season. Origer was replaced by real estate man Eugene Pullano as the principal owner. Pullano's first order of business was the hiring of former AFL quarterback Vito "Babe" Parilli as head coach and general manager of the newly-christened Winds. Parilli the New York-Charlotte entry in the WFL to a 10-10 record the year before.

Pullano next offered a \$4 million contract to New York Jets quarterback Joe Namath. Namath reportedly considered the offer seriously, but eventually turned down the lucrative offer.

After opening up the exhibition season with a 43-23 loss to the Jacksonville Express, Pullano surprised everyone by firing Parilli. A furious Parilli claimed he had a contract "for life."

Parilli was soon replaced by Leo Cahill as the general manager, and by Abe Gibron at the head coach position. Cahill had been a highly successful manager in the Canadian Football League, while Gibron was a popular assistant with the Chicago Bears. The changes didn't stop the Winds from losing their next and final pre-season contest against Charlotte, 22-21.

With the season opener scheduled for August 2 at Birmingham, the Winds continued to pick up players (a practice all WFL clubs would continue as the season would unfold). The Winds added a number of backups from the 1974 edition of the cross-town rivals, the Chicago Bears. These players joined future Detroit Lion QB Gary Danielson and former standout receiver John Gilliam on the roster.

Before an estimated crowd of 31,000, the Winds were shutout 10-0 by the Birmingham Vulcans. The following week it was 28-18 defeat at the hands of the Shreveport Steamer. The Winds limped back home for their first (and last) home game against the Portland Thunder.

Season ticket sales never reached 2,000 and only a few more attended the home opener. Billed as a homecoming for Gibron, Chicago fans got their monies worth as the Thunder and the Winds battled to a 17-17 tie at the end of regulation. The Winds prevailed for the first and only win of the year on a 28-yard touchdown pass from Beathard to Gilliam in overtime.

Chicago dropped to 1-4 with two more road losses. It was there that two unnamed investors withdrew \$175,000 that had been deposited with the league. On September 2, the Chicago franchise was promptly canceled by the league.

Several days later the thirty-eight members of the Chicago Winds were placed in a dispersal draft. Few of the players signed with their new teams. Less than two months later, on October 22, the World Football League, would fold up its tattered tent for good.

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RECORD (1-4)

0	At BIRMINGHAM	10	est.	31,000
18	At SHREVEPORT	28		10,611
25	PORTLAND	17 (OT)		3,501
17	At HAWAII	28		10,313
7	At MEMPHIS	41		21,515

1975 CHICAGO WINDS STATISTICS

TEAM STATISTICS	CHI.	OPP.
FIRST DOWNS	74	101
BY RUSHING	29	52
BY PASSING	40	33
BY PENALTY	5	11
THIRD DOWN EFFICIENCY	27/70	39/73
TOTAL NET YARDS	1449	1792
TOTAL OFFENSIVE PLAYS	318	342
NET YARDS RUSHING	494	935
RUSHES	147	215
GROSS YARDS PASSING	993	852
LOST ATTEMPTING TO PASS	38	37
NET YARDS PASSING	955	815
ATTEMPTS/COMPLETIONS	161/82	130/72
HAD INTERCEPTED	9	6
PUNTS/AVERAGE	28/37.3	26/24.7
PUNT RETURNS/AVERAGE	18/1.2	20/5.8
KICKOFF RETURNS/AVERAGE ..	25/23.1	13/21.0
SC RETURNS/YARDS	1/20	0/0
FUMBLES/LOST	11/6	13/8
PENALTIES/YARDS	36/421	36/363

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING	NO	YDS	LG	RECEIVING	NO	YDS	LG
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Wyatt	45	183	16	Gilliam	20	390	49
Kellar	62	179	27	Kellar	19	181	21
Pinder	24	95	14	Adkins	12	130	23
Adkins	1	22	22	Gillespie	6	61	16
Beathard	7	20	9	Williams	2	58	56
Gagnon	4	6	5	Gagnon	5	48	18
Williams	2	1	1	Pagac	4	48	24
Gillespie	1	-4	-4	Wyatt	6	41	17
Gilliam	1	-13	-13	Burchfield	3	28	20
OPP'S LG: 2				*Others	2	1	4
				OPP'S LG:58			

PUNTING	NO	YDS	LG
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Sark	4	195	57
Gilbert	24	851	56
OPP'S YDS:643			OPP'S LG: 54

PASSING	ATT	COM	YDS	HI	LATP	LG
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Beathard	145	73	886	7	38	49
Danielson	15	9	107	2	0	21
Williams	1	0	0	0	0	--
OPP'S LG:53						

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KICKOFF RETURNS	NO	YDS	LG	PUNT RETURNS	NO	YDS	LG
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Williams	15	376	68	Gillespie	4	25	10
Wyatt	6	143	30	Williams	3	-3	3
Gillespie	4	59	21	Howard	1	0	0
OPP'S LG:52				OPP'S LG:36			

INTERCEPTIONS	NO.	YDS.	LG
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Anderson	2	40	25
Kogut	2	25	18
Howard	1	33	33
Roussel	1	1	1

PLAYER	1975 CHICAGO POS.	WINDS EX	ROSTER HGT	(WFL) WGT	B/DATE	COLLEGE
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Adkins, Margene	WR	CN	5-10	185	4/30/57	Wichita State
Aldridge, Allen (+SHR)	DT/DE	CN	6-6	250	4/27/45	Prairie View A&M
Anderson, Ralph	S	N	6-3	185	4/ 3/49	West Texas State
Bailey, Chuck (+SA)	DT		6-1	235	11/??/??	Michigan State
Baird, Dean	LB		6-3	233	11/13/52	Kansas
Beathard, Pete	QB	AN	6-1	205	3/ 7/42	USC
Botts, Mike (+CHR)	C		6-7	250	2/ 5/50	Penn State
Broadnax, Jerry	TE	N	6-4	22	8/19/51	Southern U.
Burchfield, Don	TE	N	6-2	225	3/17/49	Ball State
Carter, Mike	CB		6-	190	1/20/??	Western Michigan
Coles, Ron	T/G		6-5	255	8/21/51	Wayne St. (NEB.)
Curl, Ron	DT	C	6-2	250		Michigan State
Danielson, Gary	QB	N	6-3	195	9/10/51	Purdue
DeCree, Van	LB		6-1	220	9/24/53	Ohio State
Forrest, Tom	T/G	N	6-2	255	4/11/52	Cincinnati
Gagnon, Dave	HB	N	5-10	190	1/17/51	Ferris State
Gessford, Jim	TE		6-3	225	4/??/51	Hastings
Gilbert, Jim	P/K		6-0	190	12/ 8/52	Northern Ill.
Gillespie, Tim	WR		5-11	175	7/ 7/53	St. Norbert's
Gilliam, John	WR	N	6-1	195	8/ 7/45	So.Carolina St.
Griffiths, Rich	LB		6-3	230	12/ 8/53	
Haddox, Randy	K		6-3	220	7/23/53	Texas A&M
Heinrich, Mick	DE		6-5	230	12/ 2/51	Illinois
Hoban, Mike	G	N	6-2	240	9/ 9/52	Michigan
Howard, Harry	S	N	6-1	190	10/ 7/49	Ohio State
Ilgrenfritz, Mark (+SHR)	DT	N	6-5	250	8/ 9/52	Vanderbilt
Jameson, Larry (+SA)	DE/DT	N	6-7	270	2/ 1/53	Indiana
Jenkins, Al (+BIR)	T	AN	6-2	260	7/15/46	Tulsa
Kellar, Mark (+SA)	FB	N	6-0	220	7/17/52	Northern Ill.
Kinney, Steve (+PHI)	T/G		6-5	255	6/27/49	Utah State
Kogut, Chuck	LB		6-2	220	2/15/52	Illinois
Line, Bill	DT	N	6-7	265	8/11/48	SMU
Lowery, Doug	C/G		6-3	255	7/28/51	Arkansas St.
Malheiro, Dave	G		6-2	245	6/??/??	Miami (OH)
Marks, Richard	S		6-1	195	6/17/52	Northern Ill.
May, Art	DE	N	6-4	235	11/16/48	Tuskegee Inst.
McCreight, Tom	G		6-2	245		Northwestern
Mitchell, Joe	WR	C	6-2	210	2/15/53	Northeast La.
Murdock, Guy	C	N	6-2	230	6/27/50	Michigan
Pagac, Fred	TE	NC	6-1	220	4/26/52	Ohio State
Phillips, Hal (+PRT)	CB	C	6-1	190	5/19/49	Michigan State
Pinder, Cyril	HB	N	6-2	220	11/13/46	Illinois
Pleasant, Chester	LB		6-1	230	3/28/52	Northeast La.
Reamon, Charlie	CB		5-11	190	7/14/49	MD-Eastern Shore

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PLAYER	POS.	EX	HGT	WGT	B/DATE	COLLEGE
Rhone, Walter	DB		6-0	180	6/ 6/51	Central St. (MO)
Roberts, Willie	CB	N	6-1	187	6/28/48	Houston
Roussel, Tom	LB	N	6-3	235	1/20/45	Southern Miss.
Sanduk, Ken (+PHI)	DT		6-4	250	8/ 4/50	Penn State
Sark, Earl	P/K		6-1	190	3/ 7/52	New Mexico St.
Shorty, Larry	LB		6-2	220		Arizona State PLAYER
Simonton, Claud	LB		6-1	225	8/30/50	Tennessee
Smith, Dave	LB		6-1	220	3/29/52	Oklahoma
Watley, Ira	T	C			11/ 1/51	San Diego St.
Watson, Allen	K	N	5-11	165	11/ 4/44	Newport (Wales)
West, Bill	CB	NC	5-11	180	3/ 3/47	Tennessee St.
Williams, Matthew (+CHR)	FB		5-11	205	4/11/51	Northeast La.
Williams, Russell	QB		5-11	180	12/11/52	Arizona
Wilson, Mike (+PHI)	G	ANC	6-2	250	10/20/47	Dayton
Wright, Steve	T	N	6-6	250	7/17/42	Alabama
Wyatt, Bob (+PRT)	HB	C	6-0	230	9/21/49	North Tex. St.

A = AFL, C = CFL, N = NFL