

# WHAT ARE WE DOING IN BUFFALO?

## Packers once played Chicago Cardinals there

by Art Daley

Other than the weather, Green Bay doesn't have much in common with Buffalo.

In fact, Green Bay doesn't have much in common with any other city in the National Football League, but the topic today somehow has to do with Buffalo, the site of a Packer-Bill game on a recent Sunday.

Remember? The Packers took quite a whacking at the hands of the Bills, a 28 to 0 lesson. It was unusual in the fact that the defense gave up 14 points and the offense coughed up the other 14.

That particular game is best put away in the back row of the memory house, like a few hundred others over the years.

And speaking of memory, which is a sort of first cousin to history, one of the little-known facts in the Green Bay archives is that the Packers once played a league game in Buffalo against the Chicago Cardinals.

his old typist has been around the Packer scene since the early 1940's and never heard of such crazy scheduling. League game on a Wednesday night? Fifty years ago?

### Train fight coverup

That's right, according to James (Jimmy) Ford, one of Green Bay's few remaining links with the Packers of the 1930's. Ford, a student at Whitewater at the time, had heard about a fight on the train "coming from Buffalo" and

had been investigating recently what he termed a coverup by the Green Bay *Press-Gazette*.

Coming from Buffalo? What the hell were the Packers doing in Buffalo? That city had no team, although the Buffalo All-Americans, the Buffalo Bisons and the Buffalo Rangers played in the NFL in the 1920's and then folded. Buffalo never had pro football again until the Bills were launched in 1960.

The 1938 NFL schedule proved the point – Sunday, September 25, Green Bay vs. Chicago Cardinals at Milwaukee; Wednesday, September 28, Green Bay vs. Chicago Cardinals at Buffalo. A look at the files of the *Press-Gazette* revealed all the game details but nothing of the fight.

It was quite obvious that Buffalo was a real football-minded city. The city had just built a \$2 million dollar Municipal Stadium and the town fathers scheduled a football week. The Packers and Cardinals would play Wednesday night under the \$160,000 lighting system; Texas Tech would meet Duquesne Friday night; and Canisius and the University of Scranton would meet on Saturday afternoon.

The new stadium had a seating capacity of 40,000 and close to 30,000 turned out for the pro game. That was a huge crowd since pro football was a weak sister to college football at that time.

### Packers celebrate victory

The Cardinals were a little behind the Bears on the Packers' list of hated teams. In the Sunday game in Milwaukee, the Packers won with ease, 28-7.

The game in Buffalo was a different story. It offered the Cardinals a quick opportunity to get revenge and they were leading Green Bay, 22-21, with a few minutes left. The Cardinals, apparently trying to run the

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clock down, fumbled and Baby Ray recovered for Green Bay on the Cardinal 17. Tiny Engebretsen kicked a 24-yard field goal for the victory.

The *Press-Gazette* account added this:

"The final gong sounded and the Packer gridders staged a celebration on the gridiron that would have done credit to a bunch of collegians. The game ball was given right away to Engebretsen."

The Packers finished that season with an 8-3 record (the Cardinals 2-9) and went on to lose to the New York Giants 23-17 in the NFL championship playoff. The Pack got revenge in 1939, beating the Giants 27-0 in the title playoff.

The fight on the train took place during a poker game. Leo Katalinas, a rookie tackle from Catholic University and a former college boxing champion, was needling the card players for whatever reason and actually took a poke at one of the players.

### **Herber injures hand**

Arnie Herber, the Pack's star passer and now in the Pro Football Hall of Fame, got up from the game and took a shot at Katalinas and missed with his right fist. The fist instead hit the wall. He then decked Katalinas with his left fist. This broke up the game and the story goes that the players stepped over Leo like he was a log. Nothing was ever said about the fight, of course.

The Packers were off the next Sunday but then a week later played the Detroit Lions in Green Bay and lost, 17-7. No Herber. Supposedly, he injured his hand in the Cardinal game in Buffalo. The *Press-Gazette* never said how he injured it and Ford felt that the *Press-Gazette* covered up the real reason he hurt his hand – by hitting the wall in back of the seat.

The famous Dutch Clark, then coach of the Lions, said he was glad Herber didn't play more. In the rematch at Detroit, the Packers, with Herber passing to Don Hutson, won with ease, 28-7. Detroit finished 7-4, one game behind the Pack.

Most of the details of the fight were uncovered by Ford during bull sessions with the players years later. As to a so called coverup by the *Press-Gazette*, the Packers were actually saved by Publisher A.B. Turnbull, who made the Pack a corporation in the 1920's and became their first president. Thus, the arrangement between the newspaper and the Packers was quite cozy.

Shoving a fight under the rug could never happen now. It would get coast-to-coast TV and newspaper display, and the people involved would get X-rated and examined along with their relatives.

Can you imagine John Elway or Joe Montana breaking his hand in a fight around a poker game? Come to think of it, does anybody play poker anymore-except all those old retired guys down in Florida?

Anyway, soaks, that's your slice of Packer History for a spell.

PS – Did you note that on the day the Packers lost at Buffalo, all of their cohorts in the Central Division also lost –the Bears to New England,30-7; the Buccaneers to Miami, 17-14; the Lions to the New York Giants, 13-10 in overtime (on a fumble); and the Vikings to the San Francisco 49ers 23 to 11. Central got beat by a combined score of 115 to 55.