

**THE ROLE OF THE ROAD TEAM IN THE N.F.L.:  
THE LOUISVILLE BRECKS**

**1988 P.F.R.A. Annual**

**by Brian S. Butler**

When Aaron Hertzman mailed the \$25 application fee to place his Breckenridge Athletic Club in the American Professional Football Association (APFA, renamed the National Football League in 1922) for the 1921 season, he had no grand dream of Louisville becoming a professional football powerhouse. His primary goal was to draw name talent to Louisville and take a profit on his investment.[1]

Hertzman was a bookkeeper in his father's company, the American Cap Manufacturing Company, when he applied with the APFA. Within two years he would be vice-president. A veteran of World War I, he and his five brothers made up the largest number of sons to fight in the war from Louisville.[2]

Hertzman managed the Brecks through the early years of the NFL's development, playing schedules split between league games and local, independent games. There is no record of Hertzman having played with the Brecks at this time as some managers did, or whether he played the game during his stay in the Army. Perhaps he made connections in the military that brought him in touch with league organizers, or maybe his father, Jacob, had made contacts on one of his many business trips in the years before the war.[3]

Whatever his contacts or motives, Hertzman managed one of the several teams that filled a role needed to assure the fledgling league's success. Professional football needed three things before its success was assured. It needed big markets (New York finally entered the league in 1925); top-name college graduates (Harold "Red" Grange joined the NFL the same season); but most of all, it needed a group of teams who were available to travel to the established markets to be beaten by the hometown favorites -- the road team.

The history of the road team phenomenon and its role in the development of the National Football League had been too long neglected. It is the purpose of this paper to define that role and at the same time place the Louisville Brecks within the structure of the league's development.

**The Brecks and the Ecology of Independent Football**

Several questions arise when one tries to define the Brecks: Where did they come from? Were there other teams like them? Who were their players? What do we know of their fans? And why did they fail? To answer these and other questions that will arise a general history of the club is essential.

Athletic clubs in Louisville date back at least to 1888-89, when a Louisville "Athletic Club" was built at one corner of Fifth and St. Catherine Streets at what was then the city's perimeter.[4] The club's primary objective "was the cultivation of manly sports and the promotion of healthy exercise and physical culture." A city parks board was established in 1890 and by 1896, 1,079.18 acres were preserved for park land.[5] The Louisville *Courier-Journal* reported in 1922 that the Brecks dated "back fifteen years, springing from a boys neighborhood team, the Floyd and Brecks, that has kept itself intact probably longer than any independent team in the country." [6]

In the years during and just after World War I the Brecks are reported to have played as an independent team, though it is not known whether they played professionally. In 1919 they defeated an independent team from New Albany, Indiana, the Calumet Athletic Club, for the "Falls Cities" title, 17-0.[7] While a champion was declared, no "league" existed at this time. As well, the military played a role in providing football for the Louisville fans. In just one of several intracity military games Camp Taylor defeated Camp Shelby, 52-21, in 1917.[8] Interestingly, this game brought to light a local hero, Salem Ford, who played for Camp Shelby and later for the Brecks.

By 1922 the Brecks were the "class" of the independent football teams in the Falls Cities.[9] What brought them to the top? In 1920, including the Brecks there were at least nine independent teams

## THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 10 Annual (1988)

---

playing either amateur or professional football in the area and at least one team in Evansville, the Evansville Ex-Collegians. Of these, the K&I Terminal Railroad team claimed independent championship honors by reason of their 33-0 defeat of the Calumet team on November 28.[10]

The following week was to be Louisville's first real taste of professional football. K&I hosted "Chick [sic] Harley's Logan Squires," an independent professional team from Chicago managed by William Harley.[11] Bill Harley appears to have been quite a finagler. Charles "Chic" Harley, on the other hand, had been an All-American back at Ohio State the previous year. To assure a large draw, and thereby a better pay-off, Bill Harley used his younger brother's name to identify the team. As well, the elder Harley had apparently assured K&I's management that the "star" from Ohio State would play.

The game was played before 2,000 on December 5 at Eclipse Park. Half the crowd expected to see Chic Harley, but he did not make the trip. Bill Harley explained that his brother "was unable to make train connections." Even without the star back, the Logan Squires won 14-7. However, the *Courier-Journal* offered a grim prediction: "It was freely predicted that a few similar incidents would kill professional football here." [12]

There is no record of K&I having fielded a team in 1921, but the Brecks were indebted to their legacy. No less than seven Breck players appeared with the K&I team in the 1920 season.[13] This was not unusual. The *Courier-Journal* article of September 20, 1922 reported that the Brecks had been able to "recruit the city's best players as soon as they [were] available." The Brecks swallowed up talent from within the Louisville area each year. This was evident during the 1920 season and became even more evident during the 1921 and 1922 seasons. Players changed teams, sometimes on a weekly basis. For example, Major Craig Krayenbuhl, an All-American quarterback from Army, played for the Camp Knox Basic team in 1920 and 1921, joining the Brecks in 1922. Also, Marydale sported Hubert and Eugene Wiggs, Louis Jansing, and A.J. "Bo" Otto when they defeated the Brecks on November 20, 1920.[14]

By 1922, the Brecks were casting off players as well. A right end named White appears for the Brecks in the Marydale game of 1920; however, White is playing right end for the Louisville Athletic Club in their 27-7 loss to the Brecks in 1921. Likewise, John Quast appears at right end for the Brecks in 1920, yet he plays with the Louisville Athletics in 1921 and the Calumet team in 1922.[15] These types of player moves were not unusual and the Brecks took full advantage of their opportunities.

Aside from playing football on the weekends with local independent teams, most players, if not all, worked semi-skilled or clerical jobs. By 1924, 23 clubs, comprising over 500 players, fielded teams in the Falls Cities under the auspices of the PCFF.[16] But even before this league was organized, there were up to twelve teams scheduling both professional and amateur games in the area. Of the total, a sample of 38 players whose occupations are known has been drawn.[17] Of these, 25 held clerical positions. Ten worked in positions we will label "semi-skilled." These include four printers, two draftsmen, two carpenters, an ironworker and a chauffeur. Of the remaining players, two worked as unskilled laborers, and one, James Van Dyke, was an assistant city livestock inspector. Interestingly, David Self, a member of the Celts Athletic Club, listed his occupation as "ballplayer" in the 1925 Louisville City Directory, while in 1924 and 1926 he held jobs as an unskilled laborer.

Until fire destroyed it on November 20, 1922, the Brecks played their home games at Eclipse Park.[18] Eclipse had been the home of the Louisville Colonels minor-league baseball team also. The park was located on the northwest corner of Kentucky Avenue and Seventh Street and was reached by the Fourth Street railway. Apparently one left the streetcar on Fourth near the Kentucky Avenue and walked to the park through an alley. The alley is still known as Baseball Alley, but we might assume that on Sundays in the fall before November of 1922 it could just as easily have been called "Football Alley." [19]

Aside from Eclipse Park, independent football was being played in at least ten other parks, or fields, in the Falls Cities.[20] Glenwood Park in New Albany, Pennsylvania Field in Jeffersonville, and Bauer Park in St. Matthews were reached by interurban railways. Parks within Louisville included: Ninaweb Field on the Taylor Boulevard line; Shelby Park, reached by either the Oak Street or Shelby Street lines; and Shawnee Park, at the terminus of either the Broadway or Chestnut Street lines. The October 28, 1923 game between the Central Athletic Club and the Shawnee Templars was one of only a few played on Prestonia Field. The encouraging game-day report noted, "Prestonia Field can easily be reached by Preston Street cars or automobiles." [21]

## THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 10 Annual (1988)

---

After Eclipse Park was destroyed the Brecks took two courses. The first, while they were still in the NFL, was to play home games of the 1923 season at the newly constructed Parkway Field. The site for Parkway Field was chosen partly because of accessibility by either the Second Street or Fourth Street lines. As well, it was reported that "Automobiles will find an ideal road to the grounds." [22]

The second course was to make Alumni Field, also known as St. Xavier Field, their home for the 1924 season. Having left the NFL after 1923, the Brecks felt Alumni Field was "more suitable" to their schedule. One attraction of this field was its desirable location. Not far from Shelby Park, it too was reached by both the Oak Street and Shelby Street lines. [23]

It is reasonable to assume that many fans did arrive by automobile. Between 1922 and 1924 the number of cars registered in Jefferson County jumped from 26,650 to 40,916, and by 1926 the number was 50,034. [24] The figures represent a ratio of approximately one car to every ten residents of Jefferson County, based on the population listed in the 1920 census. The ratio was even lower for 1926. [25]

We can be confident that most of the fans arrived by streetcar. What else do we know about the fans? Unfortunately, not much. Attendance figures at independent games frequently went unreported and the few that were reported usually were estimates. Therefore although we cannot put full faith in these figures they are all we have, and as a reference point they will do.

Often the report was "a small crowd viewed the game," or "the game was witnessed by a large crowd." [26] The Logan Square-K&I game in 1920 was reported to have drawn 2,000 fans, the only attendance given for the entire 1920 season. [27] Some teams had a loyal following. In a 7-7 tie with the Brecks on October 15, 1922, "Parkland came primed for the game, several hundred fans and a cheerleader from the West End egging their favorite on." [28] By the 1923 season, attendance figures were reported more readily. An October 21, 1923 game at Glenwood Park had 800 fans witness a 0-0 tie between Calumet and the Jeffersonville Olympics. Four hundred saw Portland defeat the Shamrock Athletic Club 13-6 on October 28 at an undisclosed park. And "almost 2,000" saw the Brecks defend "their State professional title" by defeating the Clifton Athletic Club 3-0 at parkway Field. Even so, out of a representative number of contests (16), only four had attendance figures reported for the 1923 season. [29]

For many of these fans independent football may have been their only chance to see the game beyond the high school level. Many followed the exploits of the Centre College Colonels of Danville, Kentucky, as the Louisville *Courier-Journal* reported on the team almost daily during the season in the early 1920's. The "Praying" Colonels had put together some impressive seasons just after the war under captain A.T. "Bo" McMillan, their All-American quarterback. Centre played a yearly game in Louisville with Washington and Lee. However, tickets for these games were scarce for the Louisville fan. In 1922, the *Courier-Journal* reported that "only 400 seats" were available for the Kentucky State (University of Kentucky)-Centre game in Louisville that year. The 1921 Washington and Lee game was reported to have drawn fans from Harrodsburg and Somerset, and if we can apply a general principle, most were alumni or undergraduates in attendance. [30]

We are left with conjecture. If all teams had a following similar to Parkland's, then perhaps most of the fans were friends and acquaintances of the players. Perhaps they worked with the players. This would place them in the same, lower-middle class socio-economic level. Likewise, most of the pre-game publicity was given to match-ups that were appealing to specific allegiances. For the November 19, 1922 Breck-Central A.C. game it was reported in the morning *Courier-Journal* that "Local roots, divided in their allegiance will be on hand at Eclipse Park this afternoon." [31] But fate would have it that this would be the last game at Eclipse Park, for fire destroyed the wooden grandstands early the following morning, leaving the Brecks without a home field and dousing the hopes for the remainder of the NFL season for the locals.

### **The Brecks and the N.F.L.**

Aaron Hertzman, in a letter to Leo V. Lyons, manager of the Rochester Jeffersons and "honorary historian" of the NFL, recalled that he had sent his \$25 franchise fee to the league on February 21, 1921. The Official NFL Encyclopedia confirms that although officials from Louisville failed to attend the league meeting in April, the league did receive a letter requesting a franchise from the Breckenridge team of Louisville. [32] The Hertzman letter further states:

## THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 10 Annual (1988)

---

The majority of present owners know [nothing] of the hardships Joe Carr went through in finding new clubs each year, most of which only lasted one season -- but they did contribute dues and assessments, which were essential to the continuance of the league until it finally got on its feet. The three or four or five games they filled in the schedules of the ruling clubs enabled the league to keep going.

Independent football teams in the Falls Cities were some professional, some amateur, and some both, or "semipro." [33] It is quite likely that any of the several teams in the Louisville area might have joined the NFL, but the Brecks, in Hertzman, had a manager who saw the potential of the league and beat his rivals in acquiring a franchise.

The Goldberg Tailors were one such team. The Goldbergs traveled extensively in the 1922 and 1923 seasons, playing professionally on the road and with amateur competition in Louisville. In 1922 they played at Owensboro and Evansville professionally and were at home to play Calumet. The 1922 Calumet team played, primarily, an amateur schedule. On October 27 they played the Central A.C. in a game that would "probably settle the amateur Championship of the Falls Cities." [34]

In 1923 the Goldberg team played in Jonesboro, Indiana (the 1922 Indiana State professional champions); Paducah; Princeton, Kentucky; Kokomo, Elkart and Indianapolis, Indiana; Cincinnati; and Springfield, Illinois ("one of the strongest professional football teams in Illinois.") The *Courier-Journal* reported on September 30 that "The Goldbergs made one of the best records of any traveling professional team last season, with nine victories out of ten games." Meanwhile, the Central A.C. played the 1923 season in Louisville under the Goldberg name. The Goldbergs, then, played professionally on the road and competed on an amateur basis at home as the Central A.C. As well, the Goldberg club had under contract several former Brecks in J. Harper Card, "Bo" Otto and Bob Padan. [35] If nothing else, we are certain of the fact that the line between amateur and professional independent football within the Falls Cities was not clear. What was clear, though, was that the Breck's management and not the Goldberg's, made the decision in 1921 to field a team in the only truly professional football organization, the APFA.

At its inception in 1920 the APFA had eleven members. By the close of that first season fourteen teams made up the lead standings, with the Akron Pros on top holding an 8-0-3 record and the Muncie Flyers in the cellar, having lost the only league game they played. The league had at least one "star" in Jim Thorpe, who served not only as league president, but also played in the Canton Bulldog backfield. [36] And in that first season one team served as a model for the "road team," the Columbus Panhandles.

The Panhandles had been formed by Joe Carr in 1905. Carr was an employee at the Pennsylvania Railroad Company in Columbus and had successfully put together a traveling professional base team, the Panhandle White Sox, in 1900. The team name came from the Panhandle Division of the railroad company. The company also made it easy for the team to travel, and travel they did. [37]

In the 1920 season the Panhandles played ten games, five within the league, five outside. Their league record was a dismal 0-5, and for the season the team could muster only seven points in the league, all in a 43-7 loss to the Buffalo All-Americans on November 14. Their league opponents racked up 107 points. Outside the league, the Panhandles did a little better at 2-1-2. These games were with teams in Ohio; the Fort Wayne, Indiana Friars; and a local team, the Wagner Pirates. The Panhandles managed 34 points outside the APFA and their opponents 14. In all, the Panhandles played nine of ten games on the road, the only home game being their 24-0 defeat of the Wagner Pirates. [38] The Panhandles, then, give us a working definition within which we can place many road teams. Generally, the road teams played most of their league games on the road, usually being soundly defeated by "established" teams, i.e. teams in the better markets or with better records. The typical road team also had a number of games outside the league.

Another feature of the road team was the link to local talent. Columbus had under contract at least three of the famous Nesser brothers, who, until 1926, had as many as six brothers and a son in the NFL. The Nessers were employees in the Panhandle Division with Joe Carr and of the three on the 1920 roster none had college experience. Of the twenty players listed on the roster, only seven had college experience. [39]

## THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 10 Annual (1988)

---

By 1921 it was clear that APFA needed more than a figurehead as league president. Therefore, in 1921 the league owners chose Joe Carr, manager of the Panhandles, as president of the league. Carr proved a brilliant organizer and brought to the league the leadership it was lacking. Carr at once made two decisions that helped solidify the fledgling league. First he declared that a player under contract to one team could not be solicited by another team before first being declared a free agent. The second decision was to fashion the player's contract after that used in professional baseball.[40]

Carr liked the idea of having professional football in cities with strong baseball traditions, so it was that he granted Hertzman's Brecks their franchise in 1921. No attention was paid by the Louisville papers to the franchise being granted. In fact, little attention had been paid the league for the entire 1920 season. Only in December, when the Buffalo All-Americans defeated Jim Thorpe and the Canton Bulldogs at New York's Polo Grounds 7-3, did the *Courier-Journal* provide a game report.[41]

Also granted a franchise for the 1921 season was the New York Giants. However, because of a "blue" law preventing the team from playing on Sundays, they were forced to compete with college football for stadium space as well as fans. They lost their only two league games that year. Mismanaged and presumably in debt, the team's franchise was canceled by the league for not posting the necessary fees for the 1922 season.[42] It would not be until 1925 that professional football would secure a niche in the country's largest market.

But the decision that affected the Brecks, as well as other "lesser" teams, was Carr's request of some to serve as road teams to fill in open dates in the schedules of the more "established" teams.[43]

It appears that the Brecks had no intention of being used, primarily, as a road team, but the results show otherwise. The 1921 Brecks do not fit the Columbus Panhandle model of a road team, but few road teams had the great number of road games the Panhandles did. Having played only two league games, one at home and one on the road, the Brecks hardly justify the term "road team." But they were a home-grown squad. And unlike most road teams, the Brecks' two league games were not with established teams but with the Evansville Crimson Giants and the perennial road team, the Panhandles.

The Evansville game marked the league debut of both the Brecks and the Crimson Giants.[44] Played in a drizzle at Bosse Field in Evansville, the game drew "more than 2,000," according to the Evansville Journal. Proceeds went to a fund to erect a memorial to James Bethel Gresham, the first Indiana soldier to die in World War I. The Brecks were shutout, 12-0, a foreshadowing of their fate within the league.[45]

The next six games were played at Eclipse Park against independent teams. The Brecks won all but two, both losses to the Camp Knox Basic team. Two wins were over Calumet, the same Calumet team that was "slaughtered" by Evansville 90-0 on October 22 in Evansville. The *Courier-Journal* understated the loss: "The locals had the better of the game all the way through." [46]

A November 6 game with the APFA's Cincinnati Celts was canceled. The only reason given was that the Celts could not fulfill the contract. The Parkland team was substituted and defeated 6-0.[47]

The Columbus game of December 4 was the first of only three league home games the Brecks would play and the pregame press featured the Nesser brothers. A pass late in the game won it for the Panhandles 6-0. Although the *Courier-Journal* made no mention of the crowd size, the Ohio State Journal noted that it was small.[48]

Thus the Brecks lost their only two league games in 1921 but finished with an overall record of 4-4-1. Evansville managed a 7-2-1 record overall, with a 3-2 league record. The Crimson Giants traveled only once in league competition, losing at Green Bay 43-6 on November 6. Columbus again proved the true road team in 1921. Eight of their nine league games were on the road, their only win against the Brecks. Of the Panhandles' eight losses, six (2 to the Akron Pros, 1 each to the Chicago Cardinals, the Buffalo All-Americans, and the Dayton Triangles) were against established league teams. It appears that Joe Carr made his team an example of what he wanted in a road team.[49] The Brecks were expecting 1922 to be the big year for professional football in Louisville. Their luck turned bad, however, and at season's end one could only classify the Brecks as a road team.

The promising headline in the *Courier-Journal's* sports section on September 20 read: "Professional Football to Take Real Place in Sport; Good Games for Louisville." The report added that league

## THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 10 Annual (1988)

---

members each paid \$1000 to join the league. A partial schedule followed, with Canton, Cleveland and Toledo on the road; Evansville, Columbus and Marion at home. Four open dates were to be filled later.[50]

A closer look at several of the road teams for the 1922 season can show how the road team was used and will help in understanding their historical role as a crutch upon which the league's established teams could lean.[51]

The Hammond Pros had fielded a team in 1921 and finished with a league record of 1-3-1. The 1922 squad played six league games, all on the road, finishing 0-5-1 and failing to score the entire year while relinquishing 69 points. Outside the league the Pros played the Gary Elks twice, winning one and losing one. The league games included three established teams, Akron, Buffalo, and the Racine Legion. Of the 23 players on their roster, eight played football with other teams in the league. The roster included at least two black players, Jay "Inky" Williams from Brown, and John Shelbourne from Dartmouth.[52] Hammond continued to field teams through the 1926 season, but in six years the Pros won only five league games and lost 28.

The Minneapolis Marines had also compiled a record of 1-3-1 in the 1921 season. The 1922 team played four league games, including one at home -- their only league win, 13-6 over the Oorang Indians. Their losses were all to established teams -- the Chicago Cardinals, Dayton Triangles and Green Bay. They did manage 19 points while allowing only 40. Their record outside the league stood at 4-0. Of twenty on the roster, only five played league ball aside from the Marines. In four years in the league the Marines won but four games, losing 17.

The Rochester Jeffersons provide an example of an established team that fell from the upper echelon into the ranks of the road teams. The 1920 and 1921 Jeffs had at least two All-Americans in Elmer Oliphant of Army and C.E. Horning of Colgate; but by the 1922 season these and others deserted the team. (Jim Irwin joined the Brecks in 1922.[53]) Thus, after finishing 6-3-2 as a charter member of the league in 1920 and 2-3 in 1921, the Jeffs failed to win again before leaving the league after 1925. In 1922, the Jeffs could muster only 13 points while allowing 76 and compiling a league record of 0-4-1. Outside the league the Jeffs were 3-1 and all but one of these were on the road. Unlike most road teams, the Jeffs had a high percentage of players who spent time with other league teams, 12 of 25.

The 1922 Brecks had aspirations of establishing themselves in the league. However, the home schedule included only games with other road teams. Of these, the only one played was the November 12 game with Evansville. The Evansville game proved to be the Brecks' only league win in their history. It also proved to be the only game in which the Brecks scored. In a three-year total of nine games, the Brecks scored only 13 points, their opponents 250.

On the road that year the Brecks were atrocious. Their first game was on October 1 with the league standard-bearers and eventual champs, the Canton Bulldogs. Before 3,000 fans at Lakeside Park, the Brecks were beaten 38-0. Jimmy Van Dyke, the assistant city livestock inspector, had his one moment of NFL glory erased when an accidental whistle brought back his 95-yard run for a touchdown.[54]

After three home games, all nonleague, the Brecks traveled to Toledo for an October 29 game at Swayne Field. Before 2,500 the Brecks were handed a 39-0 loss. The following week in Racine, the Brecks took the worst loss in team history in the league. The Legion destroyed the Brecks 57-0. The Racine Journal-News played on the regional differences in the teams with the headline, "No Sah! Colonels Are No Match for Legion." The report labeled the Brecks "sons of former Confederates." [55]

The close of the home season came quickly on the morning of November 20, as Eclipse Park burned. But it was evident beforehand, in the *Courier-Journal* at least, that hopes for the season were squashed. The only league victory in Breck's history was given only one sentence:

### **Brecks Win**

The Brecks scored their first victory in a league game yesterday at Eclipse Park when they defeated Evansville 13-6 in a bitterly and at times brilliantly fought encounter. [56]

## THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 10 Annual (1988)

---

The 1923 season would see the close of professional football's experiment in Louisville. Unlike the optimism preceding the 1922 campaign, the *Courier-Journal* provided only a small report prior to the 1923 season. The Brecks held out an ultimatum to the Louisville football fans. Announcing the sale of season tickets, the club said it would be impossible to bring Akron, Columbus, or Oorang to Louisville "unless a certain number are sold." It added that had Eclipse not burned down the previous season, forcing cancellation of the final two games, the team would probably have broken even.[57]

In Louisville the nature of independent football changed when the Falls Cities Football Federation (FCFF) was formed.[58] With thirteen charter members, the league elected officers and laid down by-laws. Most significantly, the league would operate on an amateur basis.

The Brecks provided competition for three FCFF teams, Calumet, Clifton and the Central A.C., and shut them all out, 6-0, 3-0 and 13-0, respectively.[59]

The Brecks were no competition for their NFL opponents, however. Their first league game of 1923 was at Canton on October 7. The Brecks achieved only four first downs in the 37-0 loss. The Canton Repository, in a subheading, told the Brecks to "Get a Team." The article further stated, "Louisville proved a flivver, not bringing the men advertised and showing no class at all on either attack or defense." Away for a second time, the Brecks took a 34-0 loss at Columbus on October 21. A November 18 home game with Akron was canceled due to poor ticket sales.[60]

The Brecks hosted the Oorang Indians in their final NFL game. The December 9 game was preceded by four days of hype in the *Courier-Journal*. Oorang was actually a team made up of Indians, with Jim Thorpe serving as player/coach. Their roster included such names as Joe Little Twig, Arrowhead, Long Time Sleep, and Buffalo. The team served as a promotion for its owner's business. Walter Lingo owned an Oorang Airedale kennel in LaRue, Ohio and used the team to push his dogs. The team played all road games, and in 1923 was 0-10-0 before coming to Louisville. The Brecks took a 12-0 loss on a sloppy field even though Thorpe sat out with an ankle sprain. The Indians used "war whoops" and gave away an Airedale as part of the "show." [61]

From the rosters of the three league teams the Brecks fielded we find that only five of 38 different players played NFL football outside of Louisville. At least some of the rest of the teams remained in Louisville. Herb Gruber was officiating football in 1935 and Hubert Wiggs was still officiating in 1927.[62]

### **A Bright Star and the Light of Legitimacy**

While the NFL used road teams in its early years it struggled with legitimacy. Coaches and athletic directions of major colleges decried that professional football would ruin the game. Citing examples such as the infamous Carlville-Taylorville game of 1921, in which several Notre Dame players received cash for their participation, as well as the fact that Green Bay was temporarily suspended after the 1921 season for using college players under assumed names, the likes of Amos Alonzo Stagg called pro football a menace.[63]

Constant reassurance from the NFL could not quell the attacks. The organizational meeting in Canton in 1920 called for teams not to encroach on college teams. And again in 1922, Joe Carr issued a statement defending the integrity of the league: "Our league... is unalterably opposed to the use of college men who are still eligible for intercollegiate competition." [64]

The attacks continued into 1925, when Tim Mara acquired the New York Giants.[65] The Giants had the services of Jim Thorpe, but at 37 he was not the player he had been. In their debut in the Polo Grounds, the Giants drew 27,000, at that time a league record. But by October 29 they had released Thorpe and were losing money.[66]

After Thorpe's release it was only fitting that a new star would emerge to polish the game that was having trouble. Against his father's wishes, Harold "Red" Grange signed a contract with the Chicago Bears only hours after playing his final college game with Illinois on November 21, 1925. According to an editorial by James B. Carolan, Grange's decision would "do much to settle the question of the future of pro football." [67]

## THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 10 Annual (1988)

---

The most pivotal game in NFL history had the Bears and Grange meet the Giants of New York in the Polo Grounds on December 6, 1925. Before 73,651 the Bears won 19-7, but more important, the game and its new star had turned the heads of all football fans everywhere. After a barnstorming tour through the south and into California, Grange had earned an unbelievable sum of nearly \$200,000! By 1926, Grange, under the tutelage of his manager, C.C. "Cash and Carry" Pyle, had a line of sweaters and had made a movie, "One Minute to Play."[68]

But even with their new star it took the mighty pen of Joe Carr to nail down the plethora of criticism the pro game still received. At the close of the 1925 season, Carr ordered the Milwaukee Badgers to pay a \$500 fine and retire from the league for using high school players in a game with the Chicago Cardinals. For their part the Cardinals were fined \$1000 and placed on one year probation.[69] Then at the league meeting in July, Carr instituted the rule whereby a college player could not be signed until his college class had graduated.[70] Joe Carr was determined to earn the league legitimacy.

The Brecks finished their last season of football in 1924 as members of the FCFF and compiled a 2-3 record. In 1926 the NFL allowed two wholly road teams to operate out of Chicago. One assumed the name the Los Angeles Buccaneers and the other the Louisville Colonels. Neither team played in its "home" city. The Colonels played with castoffs from other NFL teams, and it is doubtful whether many in Louisville bothered even to follow the team.[71]

Professional football was dead in Louisville following the 1923 season. The rest of the NFL consolidated to twelve teams in 1927 and was assured a successful future. Bouyed by the road teams until acquiring the New York market, a true "star" and legitimacy, the NFL grew to rival professional baseball in commercial appeal.

### NOTES

1. Information on Hertzman's motive on entering the APFA was obtained from the Professional Football Hall of Fame's Library Research Center, Joe Horrigan, curator (hereafter PFHF).
2. Biographical information from a report by the Citizens Historical Association (Indianapolis, 1944), courtesy the Filson Club.
3. Jacob Hertzman was a Russian-Jewish immigrant who came to Louisville in 1890. From 1908 until before World War I he was a traveling agent for an unspecified firm -- Citizens Historical Association. Information on Hertzman's occupation from the Louisville City Directory, 1907-15.
4. J. Stoddard Johnston, ed., *Memorial History of Louisville*, II, p. 326.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 340-341. For a history of leisure in American society prior to 1920, including park development, see Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920*.
6. *Louisville Courier-Journal*, Sept. 20, 1922.
7. *Ibid.*, Nov. 17, 1919.
8. *Ibid.*, Nov. 25, 1917. The War Department issued over 3000 footballs during World War I. See John Rickard Betts, *America's Sporting Heritage*, p. 137.
9. *Louisville Courier-Journal*, Sept. 20, 1922.
10. *Ibid.*, Oct. 18, 1920, Oct. 30, 1920, Nov. 8, 1920, and Nov. 15, 1920.
11. The PFHF reports that Bill Harley had made a claim of half ownership of the Chicago Staleys in 1921. This was not the case and when both George Halas and Bill Harley applied for a new Chicago franchise at the league meeting in 1922 it took a phone call to A.E. Staley to straighten things out. A new franchise, the Bears, was awarded to Halas. Harley was later granted a franchise in Toledo and after two seasons the team was ordered to suspend operations because they could not meet costs. In 1926, Harley was granted the right to manage the Louisville Colonel operation out of Chicago. See also Beau Riffenburgh, *The Official NFL Encyclopedia*, p. 16.
12. *Louisville Courier-Journal*, Dec. 5, 1920, and Dec. 6, 1920.
13. *Ibid.*, Nov. 22, 1920, and Dec. 6, 1920. The players involved: Hubert and Eugene Wiggs, James Van Dyke, Dick Gibson, A.J. "Bo" Otto, Louis Jansing, and William Netherton. Breck rosters supplied by PFHF.
14. *Louisville Courier-Journal*, Sept. 20, 1922. Krayenbuhl was unable to travel with the Brecks, perhaps because of his military status. His appearance against Owensboro on Oct. 8 (C-J, Oct. 9, 1922) appears to have been his last with the Brecks.

## THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 10 Annual (1988)

---

Louisville Courier-Journal, Nov. 22, 1920. The report indicates this game cost the Brecks the independent championship. Could it be that the Wiggs brothers, who also played for K&I, joined the Marydale team for the sole purpose of preserving the championship for K&I?

Ibid., Oct. 31, 1921. A.J. Otto and Louis Jansing appear for the Louisville Athletic Club. Ibid., Nov. 7, 1921. Ed Gregg plays for the Parkland Athletic Club and appears on the 1922 Brecks roster supplied by the PFHF.

15. Louisville Courier-Journal, Nov. 22, 1920, Oct. 18, 1920, Nov. 8, 1920, Oct. 31, 1921, and Nov. 20, 1922.

16. Ibid., Sept. 29, 1924.

17. Players whose full names are known and easily identifiable were chosen. Occupations were drawn from the Louisville City Directory, 1921-26.

18. Louisville Courier-Journal, Nov. 20, 1922.

19. George H. Yater, Two Hundred Years at the Falls of the Ohio: A History of Louisville and Jefferson County, p. 150.

20. Information on parks is taken from game accounts. Information on street railway lines from "The New Map of Greater Louisville" (Guy A. Pease, Louisville, 1936).

21. Louisville Courier-Journal, Oct. 28, 1923.

22. Ibid., Nov. 30, 1922.

23. Ibid., Sept. 21, 1924.

24. Figures taken from "The Report of the President to the Stockholders of the Louisville Railway Company" (NP, 1926). These numbers could be misleading if we are to account for the number of automobiles that were in the county and not registered.

25. U.S. Fourteenth Census of Population. Jefferson County's population in 1920 was listed as 286,369.

26. Louisville Courier-Journal, Nov. 6, 1922, and Oct. 24, 1921.

27. Ibid., Dec. 6, 1920.

28. Ibid., Oct. 16, 1922.

29. Ibid., Oct. 1, 1923, Oct. 22, 1923, Oct. 29, 1923, Nov. 12, 1923, Nov. 26, 1923, Dec. 3, 1923, and Dec. 5, 1923.

30. John Y. Brown, The Legend of the Praying Colonels. Brown outlines the rise of this small central Kentucky school to the elite of college football. Louisville Courier-Journal, Nov. 6, 1922, and Nov. 25, 1923.

31. Ibid., Nov. 19, 1922.

32. Letter from Aaron Hertzman to Leo V. Lyons, Feb. 24, 1961, courtesy of PFHF. Riffenburgh, p. 15.

33. Louisville Courier-Journal, Sept. 30, 1923. While the Brecks were predominately a professional team, some of the teams did play both professional and amateur games. Not always did the C-J report whether a specific game was played professionally.

Ibid., Nov. 29, 1920, Nov. 22, 1920, and Oct. 23, 1921. Evansville roster supplied by the PFHF.

34. Louisville Courier-Journal, Oct. 22, 1922, Oct. 28, 1922, and Nov. 27, 1922.

35. Evansville Journal, Oct. 3, 1921.

36. Louisville Courier-Journal, Oct. 23, 1921. Breck's results provided by the PFHF. 47. Ibid., Nov. 4, 1921, Nov. 7, 1921.

48. Ibid., Nov. 30, 1921, and Dec. 5, 1921. Ohio State Journal, Dec. 5, 1921.

49. PFHF records. A November 11 game at Evansville shows that the Crimson Giants defeated the Louisville "Colonels" 7-0 at Bosse Field. Might this actually be the Hermes A.C. "Cussing Colonels"? There is no record of this game in the Louisville papers and I know of no other team called the Colonels in the Louisville area at this time.

50. Louisville Courier-Journal, Sept. 20, 1922. According to the PFHF, the \$1000 was only a guarantee against which league assessments would be made. A balance of \$1000 was to be kept in league coffers and the remainder withdrawn by the team to cover outstanding expenses at the end of the season. The actual franchise fee was \$2500.

51. Records on individual players from Treat, pp. 91-267, "All-Time NFL Roster."

52. For a history of the black athlete see Wally Jones and James Washington, Black Athletes Challenge American Sports. Also, Ocania Chalk, Black College Sport. Other black stars in the league in its early years included Fritz Pollard and Paul Robeson, who played with the 1921 Akron Pros, the APFA's first champion (Treat, p. 27). Pollard went on to become the first black coach in the NFL with the 1923 Hammond Pros (Treat, p. 37). [See also "Shooting Stars: The Rise and Fall of Blacks in Professional Football," by Gerald R. Gems, p. 1 of this volume -- Ed.]

53. Treat, pp. 91-267.

54. Louisville Courier-Journal, Oct. 2, 1922.

55. Racine Journal-News, Nov. 6, 1922.

## THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 10 Annual (1988)

---

56. Louisville Courier-Journal, Nov. 13, 1922.
57. Ibid., Sept. 5, 1923.
58. Ibid., Sept. 15, 1923.
59. Ibid., Oct. 1, 1923, Nov. 26, 1923, Dec. 3, 1923. Canton Repository, Oct. 8, 1923.
60. I could find no information regarding the reference to the Brecks "not bringing the men advertised." Louisville Courier-Journal, Oct. 22, 1923, Nov. 16, 1923.
61. Louisville Courier-Journal, Dec. 4, Dec. 5, Dec. 6, Dec. 7, Dec. 8, Dec. 9, and Dec. 10, 1923.
62. Treat, pp. 91-267. Louisville Courier-Journal, Oct. 31, 1927, and Dec. 2, 1935.
63. New York Times, Nov. 2, 1923. Others who called for the abolition of pro football included the Yale Daily News, Dec. 2, 1921, Knute Rockne (New York Times, Feb. 8, 1922). Father William Cary, Chairman of the Athletic Board at Notre Dame, investigated the scandal at his school and found that "emissaries from professional promoters frequently visit universities to tempt their athletic stars" (New York Times, Feb. 5, 1922).
64. New York Times, Sept. 19, 1920, and Feb. 4, 1922.
65. Professional Football Researchers Association Annual, 1982, p. 20.
66. New York Times, Oct. 18, 1925, and Oct. 29, 1925.
67. Ibid., Nov. 22, 1925, Nov. 23, 1925.
68. Allison Danzig, ed., Sport's Golden Age: A Close-Up of the Fabulous Twenties, p. 175. John B. Kennedy, "The Saddest Young Man in America," Collier's (Jan. 16, 1926), pp. 14-15. New York Times, Sept. 10, 1926.
69. New York Times, Dec. 30, 1925.
70. Riffenburgh, p. 17.
71. Louisville Courier-Journal, Sept. 28, 1924. Riffenburgh, p. 22.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Betts, John Rickard. *America's Sporting Heritage*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1974.
- Brown, John Y. *The Legend of the Praying Colonels*. Louisville: J. Marvin Gray & Associates, 1970.
- Chalk, Ocania. *Black College Sport*. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1976.
- Cohen, Richard M., et al. *The Sports Encyclopedia: Pro Football*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1974.
- Danzig, Allison, and Peter Brandwein, eds. *Sport's Golden Age: A Close-Up of the Fabulous Twenties*. Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1969.
- Johnston, J. Stoddard, ed. *Memorial History of Louisville, vol. II*. Chicago & New York: American Biographical Publishing Co., 1896.
- Jones, Wally, and James Washington. *Black Champions Challenge American Sports*. New York: David McKay Co., 1972.
- Kennedy, John B. "The Saddest Young Man in America," *Collier's*, 77 (Jan. 16, 1926), pp. 14-15.
- Newcombe, Jack. *The Best of the Athletic Boys*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1975.
- Reichler, Joseph L., ed. *The Baseball Encyclopedia*, 6th ed., rev. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1985.
- Riffenburgh, Beau. *The Official NFL Encyclopedia*. New York: New American Library, 1986.
- Rosenzweig, Roy. *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Treat, Roger. *The Official Encyclopedia of Football*, 10th ed., rev. New York: A.S. Barnes & Co., 1972.
- Vincent, Ted. *Mudville's Revenge: The Rise and Fall of American Sport*. New York: Seaview Books, 1981.

## **THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 10 Annual (1988)**

---

Wheeler, Robert W. Pathway to Glory. New York: Carlton Press, 1975.

Yater, George H. Two Hundred Years at the Falls of the Ohio: A History of Louisville and Jefferson County. Louisville: The Heritage Corp., 1987.

\* \* \* \* \*