Paul Brown

by Jack Clary

Paul Brown.

The name conjures up many things in many minds ... a Hall of Fame coach ... the only person ever to start two NFL franchises ... pro football's master innovator and organizer ... a driving force on the NFL's football direction ... one of the NFL's most powerful inside players.

But as one who knew him well for some 15 years, having helped him write his autobiography, PB: The Paul Brown Story, in 1979, and who has studied the effects other great NFL giants such as George Halas, George Preston Marshall, Art Rooney, Bert Bell, Pete Rozelle, Tex Schramm, even Al Davis, have had on the game, I believe that PB had the most profound influence on the game itself and how it is played.

For that reason, his death last summer leaves a gigantic void in the NFL that cannot be filled but can only be compensated for. In truth, all of football will feel his loss because his influence spread throughout all levels of the game from those who he had coached, or those who sought his counsel. His success on the field was unquestioned: 352 victories, 146 losses and 14 ties in 40 seasons as a head coach -- at the time of his retirement from coaching in 1975, the best record in the history of the game by any coach, regardless of competition level(s).

But it will be the NFL that will feel his loss most profoundly, including those new NFL owners who are more concerned with profits than the game itself. At the time of his death, many of them refused to listen to his voice in the NFL's inner councils as he tried to help preserve the game as he knew it. He correctly perceived it being battered by the bottom-line gnomes, and deplored a lack of feeling for the sport by many in this group who he called "non-football people," or "playing owners," and who had begun to drive the league's policies over the past decade.

"It was to our detriment that he was being ignored too much over the last few years," one NFL general manager told me. "He believed that the game itself was the primary reason for the popularity of pro football and that we should do all we could to preserve and protect it. But he faced a majority of owners who now believe that a return on their investment is more important than the game and its future." HIS ROOTS WERE PRO FOOTBALL'S ROOTS

Looking back over his life that was so dedicated to professional football during his last 45 years, it seems only proper that PB would find not only his human roots, but his football roots as well, in Massillon, Ohio, in an area of Ohio that is considered the genesis of professional football. At the same time, it is a wonderful irony that young PB, whose father worked on the railroad, had no really fond memories of Sunday afternoons at the stadiums around Massillon and Canton where professional football fought its first battles of survival.

In fact, until he became part of professional football in 1946 when he joined the Cleveland Browns in the All- America Football Conference, Brown's football interests were consumed by playing for Washington High School in Massillon, and at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio after being rejected as being too small to compete at Ohio State. He loved the heady atmospheres of fun and amateurism of the high school and college games and those feelings predominated when he returned to Massillon and led Washington High School to national prominence for nine seasons. Those Tigers won 80, lost just eight and tied 2, and in his final six seasons, he had a 58-1-1 record.

Ohio's high school coaches had enough of him and leaned on Ohio State to make him head coach, succeeding Francis Schmidt in 1941. Two years later, he coached the Buckeyes to their first national championship and in his three seasons, he had an 18-8-1 record.

"Nothing has ever meant as much to me as what I accomplished during my years at those schools, where I had the only two jobs I ever wanted," he always claimed.

Even after he entered pro football, PB always claimed that "I coached the Browns exactly like I did Massillon and Ohio State in what I expected from the players."

He secured a commission in the Navy after the 1943 season and in the spring of 1944, he was dispatched to the giant Great Lakes Naval Training Center outside Chicago to be an assistant coach under Tony Hinkle. But Hinkle left for duty in the Pacific before the season began, so PB handled the chores for two years, with a 15-5-1 record in leading a final game victory over Notre Dame.

The Perfect Marriage: Paul Brown & Pro Football

It was during this time that Arch Ward, than the renowned sports editor of the Chicago Tribune and innovator of both the baseball All-Star Game and College Football All-Star Game, began forming the All-America Football Conference to allow pro football the same two-league setup enjoyed by major league baseball.

Mickey McBride, from Cleveland, was granted a franchise and tried to sign Frank Leahy, then on military leave from his coaching post at Notre dame. But Leahy turned him down and McBride sought a recommendation from John Dietrich, a writer at the Cleveland Press, who recommended PB. Arch Ward enthusiastically seconded the nomination.

But remember, Brown was not a devotee of pro football and his ultimate decision to accept McBride's offer was made more in anger at Ohio State than in enthusiasm for a new coaching challenge. He later admitted that Ohio State didn't give him the kind of "welcome home" that he had expected. His Buckeyes successor, Carroll Widdoes, had thrived, including an unbeaten season in 1944, and athletic director, Lynn W. St. John was only lukewarm in assuring PB that he could return as head coach.

"I needed more than that," he later wrote in his autobiography. "I needed to be pampered a bit and told that I truly would be welcomed. Someone had to say, 'Gee, we'll really be looking forward to getting you back.' No one said that and it only added to my hurt feelings. I'm sure Mr. St. John didn't mean anything bad in the way he presented the situation to me and that he was probably only revealing his true feelings. But it was this attitude, coupled with the emotional turmoil of 1943 (when his "Baby Bucks" won just three games with a team mainly comprised of 17-year-olds and 4-Fs (players physically exempt from military duty) because eligibility rules under Ohio State's enrollment in a wartime Army ROTC program forbade his varsity holdovers from playing football) that made me a willing listener when Arch Ward began wooing me to become coach of the All-America Conference's new Cleveland franchise."

In agreeing to the job, he got every conceivable concession, including a guarantee of having complete control of the team's operation. He told his new bosses, McBride and Dan Sherby that "I wanted to build a dynasty from the start and that I wanted our team to have the very best of everything -- players, coaches and equipment -- regardless of what it cost.

"I'm sure you men are interested in making this go financially," he told them, "but I'm not interested in your pocketbook. If we win the game and nobody is in the stadium, that won't bother me because I'll be satisfied with winning. If we lose the game in front of 82,000 people, however, that's bad."
In later years when he ran the Bengals with the kind of control he had been promised with the Browns and was very aware of the bottom line, he chuckled when he recalled that conversation. "I'm sure they must have wondered just what sort of person they had under contract," he wrote.

He Built the Dynasty that He Promised

Yet, PB did all that he promised for his new owners -- the dynasty that he promised with a team that had a 52-4-3 record, and won all four AAFC titles -- and despite his warnings, they still reaped great profits from his efforts until his teams' dominance snuffed out competition from the other AAFC teams, most of whom were not run with the organization and efficiency of the Browns, nor stocked with the level of great talent.

When the Browns were merged into the NFL in 1950, the success continued for other owners who followed McBride and Sherby and so, relatively, did the team's success on the field until PB was

dismissed by Art Modell in 1962, a rash decision that Modell admits was the worst he ever made. It shook up the football world and every coach from that point on, never felt secure in a job. How could he, if Paul Brown, who had a 168-68-8 record, with seven league championships, be fired?

But in his 17 seasons with the Browns, he did even more for the game that he once disdained and changed the way it not only was played, but how it was perceived by the public. He meticulously had picked that first group of Browns players from those who had played for him in high school, college and at Great Lakes; who had impressed him when they played against him (Otto Graham and Marion Motley, for example); and from the recommendations of coaches in whose judgements he had iron-clad trust.

His 1948 team was 16-0 in regular season and playoff competition, the first perfect season in major league pro football history and one every bit as legitimate as that achieved by the 1972 Miami Dolphins -- the only one in NFL history -- because it was compiled in the heyday of the AAFC, when it was competitively stronger than the NFL.

He was rebuilding that dynasty when the Browns entered the NFL and didn't miss a beat as they buried the defending NFL champion Philadelphia Eagles, 35-10, in their first regular season game, afterwhich NFL commissioner Bert Bell declared, "This is the most intensely coached team I ever have seen." They went on to win the 1950 NFL title after beating the New York Giants in a conference playoff, and then won two more NFL titles in five more consecutive championship game appearances ... making it seven league championships in ten seasons.

No one has ever come close to that record.

When Brown founded the Bengals in 1968, he brought the team to playoff status in its third season -- quicker than any other expansion team in any sport, ever -- and twice more had it in the playoffs before he retired as head coach after the 1975 season and devoted the rest of his years to running the club as part owner, vice president and general manager. Yet, he always remained active in the club's football activities as he over saw the draft, critiqued the coaches the day after every game when he looked at the "pictures" with them and attended most of the daily practice sessions.

Yet, PB never interfered with their work during the week or during a game -- unlike one well-known managing director in the NFL -- because he believed they should have -- and he gave them -- the same autonomy that he had demanded. I sat with him in his private box at Riverfront Stadium and on the road for scores of games and there never were any communications with the coaches during a game. That didn't stop him from "coaching" those who sat with him, and his company at a game was post-graduate course in football.

His Secret was People, Not X's & O's

He was labeled a "football genius" because of his great record at Cleveland but those who ever thought of him as a "mad football scientist," immersed in acres of X's and O's, would be disappointed to know that he didn't know any more technical football than most other coaches -- and he never made any claims to the contrary.

But unlike most of his coaching rivals, PB had other talents which complemented his technical knowledge of football ... teaching ... organization ... innovation ... common sense ... and a strong belief in the "people aspects" of the sport that raised him to the pinnacle of his profession.

He bound all of this with an approach that he admitted was "strong-willed and single-minded," and underscored by a fierce sense of independence. "I believed strongly in the things that were necessary for us to win," he wrote, "and I refused to tolerate any exceptions to those beliefs."

Part of their grounding came from a lecture he once heard at Miami University, in which the dean stressed "the eternal veritites -- truth, honesty, good character." He always believed in them, expected those around him to practice them, and then added to the list "loyalty," which he probably prized most of all as a virtue by all who were part of his life.

Every year, from his first Browns team in 1946 until his last Bengals team in 1990, he gave an hour-long lecture at the start of each training camp in which "I never left anything to their imagination. I laid out exactly what I expected from them, how I expected them to act on and off the field and what we expected

to accomplish each day of the season." That talk was a classic of how to achieve success and he passionately believed every word.

He had one basic philosophy: "Everything we do must be in terms of our team, and of doing our best." First and foremost, he was a "people person," because he believed that success in football came only when "everyone was in the spirit of the occasion." PB always said he worked harder at this aspect of the job than any other and the results were seen when so many of his former players stayed in contact with him and treated him with such affection.

He talked to this players, as a group, every day before they went out to practice. Everyone sat in an assigned seat in a meeting room -- as he had done in high school when taking roll -- and his discussions would include the day's plan, and then any topic that he felt should be discussed. Sometimes it dealt with the team and football; other times it might touch on their lives away from the game; or an issue that he believed of interest to them.

It used to befuddle him a bit, rankling him at first then bemusing him later in life, to read the various characterizations of him, and he could rattle them off "... the cold, hard, cruel, unfeeling, calculating Brown," he would say, laughing.

Much of that talk stemmed from those who did not understand his reserved demeanor; or who didn't understand his very businesslike approach to everything that touched on his team; or from those who tried to stir up the rivalry between their team and his. That was the case in New York City for so many years where he became a juicy target for pundits who dreamed up all the adjectives that he could rattle off so easily. It all began when the Browns first played the Yankees and Dodgers in the AAFC, and later in their great rivalry with the Giants. In those times, he, rather than his team, became their target of opportunity, and beating the Browns meant really beating Paul Brown.
Indeed, I was present at Yankee Stadium on a cold, gray December afternoon in 1959 when the Browns were getting buried by the Giants, and late in the game, thousands of whiskey-soaked fans poured from the stands, surrounded the Browns bench, began hassling the players and coaches so violently that PB took his team to its locker room with still two minutes to play. Officials finally restored order and the team returned to finish the game, but he stayed inside, still fearful of his own safety.

He was a shy person until he knew you, but always soft- spoken but with a marvelous knack for the use of language, some of it reflecting the more formal times in which he was raised. He had a great sense of humor, always with a joke or two at hand and enjoyed a couple coming the other way. He laughed easily with friend, though not often in football situations because he admitted, "I was too obsessed with the game as we practiced it or played it to find anything humorous." Of course, there were many humorous things happened and which he remembered -- and which he took great delight in retelling.

His relations with the greatest majority of his players was always strong, though his strong-willed approach irked many while they played for him. Even Jim Brown, whose resentment of his tight control really began the split with Modell that resulted in PB's departure from the Browns, made his peace with his former coach. So did many others who had resented his tight control of their football lives and his rigid insistence that everything be done his way. "Age does marvelous things for understanding," he said. He helped to get many of them jobs, and in his latter years, when he received word of their death, he was touched as if it was a member of his own family, which in a certain respect, was true.

A few years ago when the Bengals were playing in Washington, PB got a call at the team's hotel from Frank Ryan, who had been the Browns quarterback during his final season in Cleveland. Ryan had resented PB's autocratic ways at the time and never had much positive to say about their relationship. But the telephone call went like this:

PB: Hello.
Ryan: Coach Brown, this is Frank Ryan.
Pause.
PB: You mean, my Frank Ryan.

"I couldn't speak for a few seconds because I was so choked up at hearing that," Ryan told some friends. "To think that after a quarter century, he still remembered me as 'my Frank Ryan' was so special."
His Secret: If it Doesn't Make Sense, Don't Do It!

While PB always had a great curiosity about why and how things happen -- and this led to many of his innovations - - the single key to his success, in my opinion, was his ability to so strictly adhere to his principal commandment: "If it doesn't make sense, why do it?" Like everything else he did, this made eminent sense in its own right because it eliminated everything that didn't work. Hence, his teams always went into a game with the least margin of error.

Even when he finished coaching, this was an important tenet. When he saw something that he didn't like during a game, he would say, "Why are we doing this? It doesn't make any sense." A violation of this belief was one of the gravest crimes that his coaches could commit.

That word "why," more than any other, appeared in all of his playbooks because he believed -- long before the modern child psychologists began preaching it -- that everyone should know why they are being asked to do something. "If you tell them why, then they are more apt to be in the spirit of the occasion," he often said. PB not only told the players "why," but he also had them write it because for most of the time he coached, every lecture had to be inscribed, word for word, in their playbooks -- another of the innovations he brought to the game from his classroom teaching experiences in high school and college. Every subject, beginning with "why we take calisthenics," which was always the first thing the players copied down at training camp, to the most complex pass route, began with "Why do we do this?"

Everything was based on Teaching & Execution

While he was always pleased to be called "coach," he always maintained throughout is career that he was a teacher, "no different than my days at Washington High School when I taught history and English. The same principles apply in coaching that apply in teaching a classroom subject, and so do the same demands on the players and students." It made sense to him to apply these classroom techniques because he believed that football was a subject that needed the same attention as any subject requiring comprehension and memorization.

Hence, he introduced playbooks and classroom teaching procedures into pro football. The books were not the epic tomes that are used today but simple, "marble" covered books that every kid used in school. He used them at Ohio State and at Great Lakes. In fact, Bud Grant, the great coach of the Minnesota Vikings, who had played for Brown as a 17-year old seaman recruit in 1945 at Great Lakes, kept his and said he referred to it many times during his coaching career.

At the end of the season, PB collected all of the books and like a good teacher, he went through each one to help him further ascertain the work habits of his players.

As he also had done at Massillon, where he integrated psychological testing with classroom records to get an idea of what kind of person he was coaching, he introduced such testing in pro football. "Knowing a man's capacity to learn before we drafted him helped us calculate his potential," he said, noting that his testing procedures showed a distinct pattern between intelligence and achievement of success. "Players with low intelligence progressed only so far in our football, and then quickly leveled off," he noted.

This kind of draft preparation startled his rivals, most of whom came to those early draft sessions armed only with what meager reports they received from friends in college football or with magazines listing the best players. When PB arrived at his first NFL draft session in 1950, he had notebooks which carefully listed, by position and order of preference, the players he was interested in selecting. Remember, this was at a time when NFL drafts had 30 rounds per team but he felt it folly to waste even a 30th round pick. "It made sense to me to do it that way," he said.

While never willing to overlook any player, even those from small schools, he always preferred talented players from the Big Ten, Big Eight, Southwest Conference and major independents, who were familiar with bad weather, rough playing fields, the pressures from playing before big crowds; and he preferred the life-style and general philosophy of kids raised in those areas, which was more in tune with his own.

Yet, don't be misled by the "life style" factor because he was always willing to take a chance on a player whose reputation with a team had made him unwelcome "as long as I knew he had the potential to be a fine player and that he was not really a disruptive person," he said, adding: "I always believed that young men want to work in an atmosphere of reasoned discipline and order and respond better under those conditions."

Often it happened that way, but when it didn't, he would just move them on--players who were primarily "selfish or the disloyal, or those who could not adjust their individual skills to our team concepts."
Adjusting "individual skills to our team concepts" was a big determinant in his personnel selection. While talent was always a major factor in his team's success -- and there was no one better in assessing it -- he always looked closely at a player's character, and would choose a player with lesser talent but who had good citizenship qualities, over a more gifted athlete who he foresaw as a problem. "When you get problem players," he often said, "they can become a cancer on your team and you must excise them just as you would excise a cancer from your body."

He once had traded for a wide receiver and a couple of days after arriving in Cincinnati, he casually mentioned to PB how disappointed he had been with his old team at getting only four or five balls thrown to him in practice every day. That was enough for Brown, who quickly traded him to another team. "A player who counts how many times the quarterback throws to him in practice isn't in the spirit of the team."

He was also very demanding of a player's ability to perform. "The ability to perform under pressure is the mark of a great player," he always said, and he lost interest in those who showed a distinct lack of ability to achieve it.

The Laws of Learning Ruled the Roost

PB's football philosophy was simple: Precision. There were never a lot of plays but his teams were "machined, as he often said, meaning that every player carried out his assignment precisely -- or as near to precision as possible -- because he made them run the plays until he saw the precision that he demanded.

This same organized approach began in training camp. In addition to copying down every word of his lectures and diagramming not only the plays but writing the philosophy ("why") of every play -- "I applied the basic laws of learning -- hearing, writing and then doing it again ad again."

In training camp, the team got one running play in the morning and a pass play in the afternoon session. The first play each year was a straight-ahead run ("the best play in football is straight ahead") and the second was off-tackle ("the second-best is almost straight ahead") because it fit the importance he placed on the ability of an offense to blow a defense off the line of scrimmage. All of the elements of each play -- the blocking schemes by the line, the footwork of the quarterback and running backs -- were taught in unit drills before the entire play was put together. The defense, in the meantime, learned the techniques necessary to foil such a play, and then each unit worked together to polish what they had learned. Thus, in his scheme, everyone was concentrating on the same thing.

His practices were never long, grueling affairs. "The laws of learning," he said, "were the same for football as they were in my English and history classrooms. A person's attention span lasts no more than 60 to 90 minutes, after which he begins to drift. Our practices in high school, college and the NFL were never longer than 90 minutes, and most often we were off the field before that. I wanted a total mental and physical effort from my players, and didn't want them 'saving' themselves. I cut off practice after 90 minutes whether or not we were finished and I told the players it was our (coaches) fault for not organizing ourselves to get everything done within that time frame."

During airplane trips, each player was given a written examination on the upcoming game plan. "They were graded, too," his great Hall of Fame tackle, Mike McCormack said. "Of course, if a guy didn't know the answer, he could check with the guy next to him, but then that player was apt to remember something he had forgotten. Either way, Paul got the message across."

Paul Brown's Offensive System: The Running Game

All of this laid the groundwork that simply implemented his football philosophy and that framed so many innovations during his pro coaching years -- innovations that gave pro football a distinct look which lasts to this day.

Much of it began when he first worked at Great Lakes as an assistant coach to Tony Hinkle, he was introduced to George Halas' T-formation offense because Hinkel had coached for Halas in Chicago. But when Hinkle left just before the 1944 season began, PB inherited his team and his system.

"It was too late to change, so I stayed with the system and adopted the good points into my overall philosophy," he told me. "Even before I went to Ohio State, Noble Kizer, who was head coach at Purdue at the time, and who had been one of Knute Rockne's Seven Mules at Note Dame, had convinced me of the importance of having a big fullback to control the ground game, particularly because he could power back into the weakside (his teams primarily played a single wing system, with an unbalanced line)."

He was further convinced of this theory during his final season coaching at Massillon when Marion Motley, who played for arch-rival Canton-McKinley High School, gave his team fits. Motley was the fullback on his 1945 Great Lakes team, and of course, a Hall of Fame player for his great Browns teams where his value was further increased when he became the pioneer player in the development of the fullback draw play, and by his pass blocking ability to protect quarterback Otto Graham. Even after Motley finished, PB always made it a point both as a coach and as general manager to provide his teams with dominating fullbacks...Jim Brown, Maurice Bassett, Ed Modzelewski, Harry Jagade and Curley Morrison with the Browns; Booby Clark, Pete Johnson, Larry Kinnebrew and Icky Woods with the Bengals.

Paul Brown's Offensive System: The Forward Pass

Throughout his pre-pro football coaching career, the passing game had always been part of his offense but he still believed that running the football was the principal way to go -- until his team's first exhibition game ever, in Akron, against the Brooklyn Dodgers when he saw a pass offense designed by Dr. Mal Stevens and run by Glenn Dobbs, score three first half touchdowns. "I decided before that half was over that you had to integrate the running game with an intelligently conceived passing offense to win in pro football," he said later.

With that decision, he raised professional football to a different level, and gave it a distinction that it still holds today over the college game, despite the fact that at that time, pro pass offenses were relatively unsophisticated because passers usually waited until their receivers came open before throwing the ball.

That "didn't make sense" to allow the actions of a defender to dictate when the ball would be thrown. So he designed intricately-timed pass routes, including the comeback pattern, where the ball was thrown even before the receiver broke into the open, allowing him the instant or two necessary to catch the ball before the defender could make a play. The routes had to be precise because he had determined exactly how much time and space was needed to make the plays work, and every receiver and passer threw the ball exactly as those routes were designed.

He also believed it made no sense to run a pass route into an area already occupied by a defender, so he developed the "read and react" route. If a defender was to go to the left and a defender was there, he went to the right instead. The quarterback also had to recognize this.
Brown also discovered the advantage of splitting one end a few yards from the tackle to allow him more room to get into the secondary, thus forming the position now known as the split end; and of breaking the conventional tight T- formation by permanently placing one of the halfbacks outside the tight end to create a new position called "flanker." (Halas often put a back in motion to break the tight T.) He traded Michigan's great All-America tailback, Chuck Ortmann before he ever played a game for the Browns, to get Dub Jones (and $25,000) from the Brooklyn Dodgers (another example of getting an opposing player who had impressed him). Jones was a fine runner, but Brown believed that his speed made him even more dangerous in the open field as a pass receiver. He handled the flanker role brilliantly and it was soon adopted by other coaches.

He then refigured the backfield on a permanent basis with the split, or "pro set" alignment, by stationing the fullback and other running back behind the tackles where they could take a hand-off for running plays, lead each other as a blocker across the formation, wheel more quickly into a pass pattern, or have either or both stay in as pass blockers. He also stationed the fullback directly behind the quarterback, and put the other running back next to him.

Soon, coaches from all over the country came to his lectures and practices to learn more about this new offensive philosophy and some, like Sid Gillman, then coaching at the University of Cincinnati and soon to

coach the Los Angeles Rams, began claiming some of it as their own design. In fact, there still are many coaches who scoff at Gillman's claims -- and those of his supporters - - that he should be considered the "pioneer" of pro football's passing game. "Check his files to see if he still had that old Browns playbook," one of them said to me.

Today, the passing game is the hallmark of professional football, the one thing that has always set it apart from the college game because of its intricate design. The appeal of marvelously gifted athletes catching long, arching passes or so precisely catching shorter ones with such hand-eye-foot dexterity is primarily what has given the pro game its great appeal.

When pro defenses began relying so heavily on zone defenses in the early 50s, PB designed rollout moves for his quarterbacks, accompanied to the right or left by a convoy of blockers (Hank Stram liked this so much when he coached the Kansas City Chiefs to a pair of Super Bowls in the late sixties, that he called it a "floating pocket"). While Stram's quarterback, Len Dawson, always threw from this alignment, PB gave his quarterback, principally Otto Graham, for whom it was designed and who had been a great single wing tailback at North Western, the option of running with the linemen out ahead as blockers.

Yet, even with his great success, Brown never foresook the importance of the running game but he never became so stubborn as to insist the run had to set up the pass. "We always did whatever it took," he said. "It didn't matter as long as we were successful," though his teams always had gifted running backs. Even his first Bengals team produced the American Football League's 1968 rookie of the year in running back Paul Robinson -- and the 1969 AFL Rookie of the Year in QB Greg Cook.

The Paul Brown System: Play-calling

Brown aroused more than his share of critics with his system of "messenger guards" shuttling plays into the game. This ran contrary to the so-called "spirit of the game," where a quarterback was supposed to call his own plays. No one had ever done this before -- indeed, college football's rules at one time even forbade a substitute from bringing in any instructions.

But it was PB's feeling that no quarterback worked as hard as a coaching staff to prepare for a game. Hence, no quarterback could be as prepared as the coaching staff to call the plays. His coaches also had a definite assignment on every play and as a whole, they could evaluate the efficacy of each play and know on the spot whether or not it was viable in the game plan. The quarterback could not see all of these elements, thus his decision-making could not be as precise.

He chose guards to bring in plays because they did not handle the ball (other teams which have adopted the system and dispatch wide receives or running backs if they are into situation substitution). In his typical thorough method of preparation, his guards used the system in each of their daily practices so that everything would be as close as possible to game conditions.

While this was revolutionary -- and it also worked better than anyone had ever imagined -- it also brought forth a deluge of sour grapes, based primarily on an ignorance of the system that unfairly subjected his quarterbacks, particularly Graham, to needless criticism. PB always insisted that it was never disparaging to the intelligence of his QBs, and indeed, many of the calls were predicated on what the defense would do. Hence, the call going into the game would be a "check with me," call, whereby the quarterback knew what his options would be when he saw the defensive alignment, and then he called the correct option at the line of scrimmage.

Of course, there also were some humorous moments, particularly when George Ratterman was the Browns quarterback. One day, he startled Lindell Houston when he brought a play into the game and Ratterman told him, "Go back and tell him I don't like that, and to give you another one." Houston had taken about four steps out of the huddle when he stopped, realized what he was doing and snapped, "Go tell him yourself."

Graham used it well enough to go the the Hall of Fame and if imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then it certainly was a smashing success because there is hardly a quarterback in any level of football who does not get his calls from the sideline, either via messenger or wigwagging of had signals. And PB put it in the correct perspective: "On the basis of the number of victories and championships we won, it was a sound and very successful system."

Innovations are a Key Part of His Legacy

Call it a quirk if you wish, but Brown was always uneasy if matters around him were unfamiliar, and that meant not knowing precisely just how well his football players were performing. Thus, it made sense to him to grade players from game films and to chart their progress. He had done it in rudimentary fashion in high school, college and at Great Lakes. With the Browns, his coaches used a hand- cranked moviola machine -- the same kind that Hollywood and television film editors used to dissect scenes and splice them together to form the finished film -- for their evaluations.

It enabled PB and his staff to study in slower motion and more precise detail exactly what had happened.

He also ordered a complete statistical analysis of the team in the off-season, charting its tendencies -- and those of its opponents -- in all situations (that is accomplished on a weekly basis now by computers). Thus, he was the first head coach to maintain his staff year- round, a practice that most NFL teams didn't begin until the mid-60s, when PB was already looking around for another NFL franchise to found.

"I found it demeaning for my coaches to become used car salesmen, or work in liquor stores to maintain their families," he said. "I not only wanted them to build pride in their jobs but to help us become better prepared for the next season. How else were you going to know which players were performing consistently so they would be rewarded (remember, he also negotiated their contracts) or moved off the team?"

Then there was the time in the early 50s when a 49ers player smashed Graham in the face so viciously that he required several dozen stitches inside and outside of his mouth to sew up the wound. He was well enough to play the following week, but to protect him from further injury, he went to a friend at the Riddell sporting goods firm and asked him to develop, within a week's time, something of "tinsel strength," that could protect Graham's face.

Thus was born the face bar across the helmet, and from that evolved the face mask -- no players wore any kind of face mask at this time -- from which he received a royalty payment for several decades thereafter.

And then there was the taxi squad. When PB formed the Browns, he had such a largesse of good players that he wanted to keep more than the 33 roster players. He persuaded McBride, who also owned the Yellow Cab franchise in Cleveland, to keep them around as taxi drivers. Thus was born the "cab," or "taxi squad," which was ready-made reserve group of players who practiced with the team.

Oh yes, the pre-game movie. When Brown coached at Massillon, he took his players to a Friday afternoon movie to help relieve the tension before they played that night before a crowd that always filled the 21,000 seat high school stadium, now named in his honor. At Ohio State, he moved his players to a country club near the university to get them away from all the campus hi-jinks, and after dinner, took them to the movies to relax.

Nothing changed with the Browns because they became the first team to stay at a hotel in their own town on the eve of a game. The players ate their dinner together, afterwhich he took them en masse to a movie in downtown Cleveland. Sometimes they encountered the next day's opponents who were out on the town for dinner and whatever, and the Cleveland players often were given a couple of derisive hoots -- until the next day, when the Browns soundly whipped them. He kept the movie tradition with the Bengals until the genre changed too dramatically for his taste, though a couple of distributors offered any film he wished.

Back in the late 40s, AAFC teams began to fly to games in California, a 12 to 14 hour affair. While most teams were given box lunches when they piled aboard a chartered aircraft, PB ordered hot meals for his players.

That was all part of his "people" practices, that even extended into the front office where he made it a point every day, according to those who worked for him in both Cleveland and Cincinnati, to say something to everyone in the office. During his trips through the office, whether on business or not, and spoke to everyone ... sometimes a simple, "good morning," or an inquiry about the family, a compliment about a new dress or a tasteful quip about a colorful necktie. Whatever, everyone had a word from the boss before the day ended.

"All of us miss that," says Al Heim, the Bengals public relations director who had been with the team since Brown started it back in late 1967. "He made all of us feel a bit special, and many times, I found myself going into talk to him about things which really were not important to the team. Or, he would come into my office, look at our scrapbooks for a bit, and then sit down and talk about something that really didn't focus too much on football.

"It was one of the qualities that made him so special."

So special, indeed ... and terribly missed by anyone who cared about him ... and about pro football.

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Paul Brown's Coaching Record:

	Years	W	L	T	Pct.
High School Football					
Severn Prep	1930-31	16	1	1	.941
Massillon	1932-40	80	8	2	.909
College Football					
Ohio State	1941	6	1	1	.750
Ohio State	1942*	9	1	0	.900
Ohio State	1943	3	6	0	.333
Service Football					
Great Lakes	1944	9	2	1	.818
Great Lakes	1945	6	3	1	.667
Professional Football					
All-American Conference					
Cleveland Browns	1946*	12	2	0	.857
Cleveland Browns	1947*	12	1	1	.923
Cleveland Browns	1948*	14	0	0	1.000
Cleveland Browns	1949*	9	1	2	.900
National Football League					
Cleveland Browns	1950*	10	2	0	.833
Cleveland Browns	1951#	11	1	0	.917
Cleveland Browns	1952#	8	4	0	.667
Cleveland Browns	1953#	11	1	0	.917
Cleveland Browns	1954*	9	3	0	.750
Cleveland Browns	1955*	9	2	1	.818
Cleveland Browns	1956	5	7	0	.417
Cleveland Browns	1957#	9	2	1	.818
Cleveland Browns	1958p	9	3	0	.750
Cleveland Browns	1959	7	5	0	.583
Cleveland Browns	1960	8	3	1	.727
Cleveland Browns	1961	8	5	1	.615
Cleveland Browns	1962	7	6	1	.538
American Football League					
Cincinnati Bengals	1968	3	11	1	.214
Cincinnati Bengals	1969	4	9	1	.308
National Football League					
Cincinnati Bengals	1970#	8	6	0	.571
Cincinnati Bengals	1971	4	10	0	.286
Cincinnati Bengals	1972	8	6	0	.571
Cincinnati Bengals	1973#	10	4	0	.714
Cincinnati Bengals	1974	7	7	0	.500
Cincinnati Bengals	1975+	11	3	0	.786

* League champion p Lost Playoff
\# Division champion + Wild Card Playoff

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Paul Brown's NFL Coaches

Players who either played or coached for Paul Brown in high school, college, service bal or professional football, or who worked in his organization, and later became head coaches in the AFL/NFL:

Baltimore	Weeb Ewbank	1954-62
	Don Shula	1963-69
	Don McCafferty	1970-72
	John Sandusky	1972
	Mike McCormack	1980-81
Buffalo	Lou Saban	1962-65, 1972-76
	Hank Bullough	1984-85
Chicago	Abe Gibron	1972-74
Cincinnati	Bill Johnson	1976-78
	Homer Rice	1978-79
	Forrest Gregg	1980-83
	Sam Wyche	1984-
Cleveland	Blanton Collier	1963-70
Denver	Mac Spedie	1964-66
	Lou Saban	1967-71
Detroit	Bill Edwards	1941-42
	Don McCafferty	1973
	Rick Forzano	1974-76
Green Bay	Forrest Gregg	1984-88
	Lindy Infante	1989-
Houston	Lou Rymkus	1960-61
	Chuck Studley	1985
Kansas City	Paul Wiggin	1975-77
	Frank Gansz	1988
Miami	Don Shula	1970-Present
Minnesota	Bud Grant	1967-83
New England	Lou Saban	1960-61
New York Jets	Weeb Ewbank	1963-73
	Charley Winner	1974-75
	Walt Michaels	1977-82
	Bruce Coslet	1990-Present
Philadelphia	Mike McCormack	1973-75
Pittsburgh	Chuck Noll	1969-91
San Francisco	Bill Walsh	1979-88
Washington	Bill McPeak	1961-65
	Otto Graham	1966-68