

PFRA-ternizing

From Bob Gill:

With help from Tod Maher, I've recently finished a book called "Outsiders: Minor League and Independent Football, 1923-1950," published by St. Johann Press. This is a companion book to "Minor League Football, 1980-1985," which McFarland published four years ago. Between them, these books contain a pretty thorough account of all of the top minor leagues and independent teams that have ever existed, and quite a few others a notch or two below that.

The new book contains the basic information (aside from the individual game statistics) from a half-dozen PFRA books I did a while back: "Best in the West" (PCFL 1940-48), "A Minor Masterpiece," Vols. I and II (American Association 1936-41, AFL 1946-50), "The Outsiders" (AFLs of 1936-41, with Tad Maher), "Southern Exposure" (Dixie League, 1936-46) and "Down in the Valley" (Ohio Valley League, 1925-29). It's presented differently, though:

Rather than yearly rosters for each team, this book has a player register so you can trace the careers of individual players or look up one guy you're interested in, which was basically impossible before. (Coaches get a register of their own.) There are hundreds of new bits of information about the players -- we've added heights, colleges, birthdates, whatever, though it's still far from complete and always will be.

Game scores are included for the top teams, in basically the same form as in the PFRA books. And there's a section listing regular starters for all the top teams by year, which is something new. The written histories from the earlier books are basically the same, though everything has been adapted one way or another, to accommodate new information or just for the heck of it. The book also includes revised and updated versions of a few articles that originally appeared in the Coffin Corner.

Finally, maybe one-third of the material in the book covers leagues that I never managed to get done for PFRA publications, like the 1923-24 Anthracite League in Pennsylvania, the 1926 AFL, the 1934 AFL, and a bunch of slightly lesser leagues and independent teams, many of them closely related to the big boys.

The book is available from St. Johann Press, P.O. Box 241, Haworth, NJ 07641 (phone number 201-387-1529), for \$45 plus \$4 shipping. Dave Biesel of St. Johann adds, "The best sources are Amazon.com, Borders (they will special-order) or from us."

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Western New York Committee:

The 1917 Buffalo Semi-Professional season has been completed and is online. Several projects are currently under way. Darin Paine is researching the 1940 Buffalo Indians and 1941 Buffalo Tigers. Ken Crippen is working on the 1946-1949 AAFC team in Buffalo, as well as the first 10 years of the Watertown Athletic Association. There are also smaller projects on the 1920-1921 All-Tonawanda team, as well as other teams in the 1920s and 1930s. Visit <http://www.wnvpfra.org> for a listing of all work completed to date.

Rochester Jeffersons Committee:

The Rochester Jeffersons Committee has set a preliminary date of December 2007 for the completion of the research portion of the project. At that point, the information will be compiled into book format for publication sometime in 2008. Visit <http://www.rochesterieffersons.com> for the current status of the project.

From John Fenton:

If anyone is interested in helping out either of these committees, please contact Ken Crippen at [Ken Crippen@billsbackers.com](mailto:KenCrippen@billsbackers.com).

A **Membership Development Committee** is now being formed. The purpose of this new committee is to help researchers and other interested parties get the most out of their PFRA membership. Its first task will be to look into ways of facilitating communication between our members. If you'd like to participate, or simply have any ideas, please contact John Fenton, jifenton@comcast.net, (267) 235-2164.

Longtime member Ken Crippen has agreed to become assistant executive director, overseeing PFRA Committees. Anyone interested in forming or being active in a PFRA committee should contact Ken at Ken Crippen / 740 Deerfield Road / Warminster, PA 18974

Pro Bowl Teams of the Fifties

By Joel Bussert,

When the National Football League absorbed three teams from the All America Football Conference after the 1949 season, it was the beginning of a new era in professional football. And the new era would include, for the first time, an all-star game, similar to the one major league baseball had conducted since 1933. The announcement was made June 3, 1950, at the conclusion of a League meeting in Philadelphia, where the proposal was approved unanimously by the 13 owners, awarding the game to Los Angeles and the metropolitan Publishers Association. According to a Los Angeles *Times* story of September 10, 1950, the League's coaches and the sports editors of the five Los Angeles daily newspapers would make "recommendations" to Commissioner Bert Bell, who would have the "final say" on the rosters, though it appears from subsequent events that while Bell had oversight of the game, he had little, if any, role in the actual selection of the players. The selection rules provided that at least two players from each team in the League must be selected, but not more than seven from one team.

Bell explained that the league felt "morally obligated" to the Publishers Association, since the *Times* had sponsored a different version of an all-star game in Los Angeles after the 1938, 1939, and 1940 seasons. Like those earlier contests, which pitted the League champion against an all-star squad composed of players from the other teams, the game would be called the Pro Bowl (after games in New York after the 1941 season and in Philadelphia after the 1942 season, the earlier series had been suspended).

Even after 50 years there is still some confusion about early Pro Bowl rosters. The best sources for news about the early Pro Bowls are the Los Angeles newspapers; as sponsors of the event, they initiated the announcements of the squads in mid-December each season, and printed frequent stories throughout the period preceding the game.

The following is a compilation of the original squads that were selected for each of the Pro Bowl's first 10 games, covering the seasons of 1950 through 1959. In addition, in notes accompanying each season's selections, I have identified those players who did not participate and the players who were added to the squad to replace them. In a number of years, a player was also added to each squad after the original selections had been made, usually as the choice of his squad's head coach. In order to produce the list of additions and deletions to the original squads, I compared the original selections with the squads listed in the game program and in the Los Angeles *Times*' game-day story, and also tracked roster changes, whenever I could locate the information, in the pages of the *Times*.

For the 1951 game, the selections were announced separately for linemen and backs for each squad, but there was no indication which players were offensive or defensive selections, except for a reference to defensive backs, nor was there any indication as to starters or alternates.

Articles that appeared the week prior to the game, when the teams assembled in Los Angeles for practice, make it clear that the head coaches, Paul Brown for the American Conference (or East team) and Joe Stydahar for the National Conference (or West team) could choose their own starting lineups. The *Times*, on January 8, reported that Stydahar's 5-3-3 defense lined up like this: Ends Larry Brink and Ed Sprinkle, Tackles Dick Huffman and Thurman McGraw, Middle Guard Ray Bray, Linebackers Norm Standlee, George Connor, and Bulldog Turner, Halfbacks Don Doll and Woodley Lewis, and Safety Spec Sanders. However, the gameday

THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 28, No. 6 (2006)

story of January 14 identified the starting defensive tackles as Fred Davis and Leo Nomellini, and also listed Ed Neal and Visco Grgich as middle guards behind Bray ..

The Times identified the offensive starters on January 12, two days before the game, as Ends Tom Fears and Dan Edwards, Tackles Huffman and McGraw, Guards Dick Barwegan and Lou Creekmur, Center Brad Ecklund, Quarterback Bob Waterfield, Halfbacks Glenn Davis and Billy Grimes, and Fullback Dick Hoerner.

Meanwhile, the American defense, listed in a January 7 article, had Ends Bob Dove and John Green, Tackles Paul Lipscomb and Al DeRogatis, Linebackers John Cannady, Jerry Shipkey, and Tony Adamle, and Defensive Backs Harry Gilmer, Emlen Tunnell, Otto Schnellbacher, and Bill Dudley. By game day the defense had a slightly different cast, according to the Times: Arnie Weinmeister had replaced Lipscomb at tackle, Bill Willis had been added at middle guard, Chuck Bednarik had replaced Shipkey at linebacker, and the secondary had been reduced to Gilmer, Tunnell, and Schnellbacher. On offense, Paul Brown's starters were Ends Mac Speedie and Bob Shaw, Tackles Lou Groza and Bill Fischer, Guards Al Wistert and Weldon Humble, Center Bill Walsh, Quarterback Otto Graham, Halfbacks Gene Roberts and Elmer Angsman, and Fullback Marion Motley.

Beginning in 1952 and continuing through the 1959 game, the selections identified starters on offense and defense, and alternates, who could be either. The 1960 selections included an offensive and defensive team, but starters were not identified. Since the selections are not consistently listed in alphabetical order, either by player or by team, it may well be that the starters were the first players listed at each position, but I have never located any reference that substantiates this assumption.

In any event, it seems clear that coaches were still free to fashion any lineup and combination they chose to use. For instance in the 1952 game, George Connor was announced as a "starter" at defensive tackle for the National team, but in the actual event Connor started at offensive tackle along with Mike McCormack, supposedly an alternate, instead of Dick Wildung and Leo Nomellini. Nomellini ended up starting at defensive tackle. In the offensive backfield Tank Younger, named earlier as a defensive starter, and John *DoWey*, an alternate, replaced Doak Walker and

Billy Grimes. On defense, Ed Sprinkle replaced the injured Leon Hart at end, Ray Bray was out as a defensive guard, and Connor started at linebacker. Thus, Connor and Younger appeared as starters on both offense and defense.

I have underlined the players identified in the NFL Record Manual and the Encyclopedia of Pro Football as starters, but, to further confuse matters, the lineups from these sources are occasionally different than those appearing on the official scoresheets. Appendix A identifies the discrepancies between the scoresheets and the Record Manual/Encyclopedia lists.

There were some odd selections along the way. The most mystifying omission occurred in 1956. Otto Graham led the league in passing for the second straight season in 1955 and led the Browns to their second straight championship, but the East Pro Bowl quarterbacks were Eddie LeBaron of Washington and Adrian Burk of Philadelphia. In 1955, when the West squad was announced on December 16, 1954, the Times listed Roger Zatkoff of Green Bay as a starter at defensive halfback. Zatkoff was a linebacker for the Packers, but the 29-player squad included only three defensive backs, Halfback Jim David of Detroit, and Safeties Jack Christiansen of the Lions and Jim Cason of San Francisco. Two days later, as the coach's choice, Buck Shaw of the 4gers added Detroit rookie DB Bill Stits to the squad, and Zatkoff was thereafter identified as a linebacker.

Since most linemen in the Fifties had experience on both sides of the ball, and many times an offensive starter

might also be a defensive backup on his team, the Pro Bowl squads were generally light on linemen. In 1956, for instance, each squad had five tackles (two on offense, two on defense, and an alternate) and three guards (two on offense and a middle guard on defense).

Meanwhile, the 1951 game had more quarterbacks than the coaches could use. Each squad had four, meaning that eight of the League's 12 T-formation quarterbacks (Pittsburgh still operated out of the single wing) were participating in its All-Star game. The next year the American team had two quarterbacks and the National three, but by 1953 both squads were carrying only two quarterbacks. However, in 1954, because of close voting between YA Tittle and Norm Van Brocklin for the alternate position on the West team, Commissioner Bert Bell expanded the game's rosters to 31 players, permitting both of them to be on the squad. The twoquarterback format resumed for the 1955 game, and was adhered to thereafter, except in 1957, when both squads had three quarterbacks.

Comments on each season follow.

1951 : Teams were selected by the coaches and metropolitan sports editors. Emlen Tunnell, Otto Schnellbacher, Jerry Shipkey, and Tony Adamle were identified as "defensive backs" on the East team, while Spec Sanders, Don Doll, and Woodley Lewis were identified as "defensive backs" on the West squad, and Norm Standlee as a "linebacker." Despite the announced limitation of seven players from one team, the Giants and Los Angeles each had eight representatives. Cleveland and the Bears each sent seven players.

1952: "By special 'dispensation" of Commissioner Bert Bell, Cleveland and Los Angeles each sent eight representatives to the game. The teams were selected by league coaches and sports editors of the five metropolitan Los Angeles daily papers.

1953: Seven Cleveland players were on the East team, and the Rams, Detroit, and San Francisco each provided seven players to the West squad. When the East team was announced on December 16, it included only 30 players, while the West squad, announced two days later, had 31. There was no explanation why the East did not have the mandated 31 players. On December 30, when Lynn Chandnois and Hugh Taylor were added as replacements for Dub Jones and Mac Speedie, who were injured, it was also announced that Abe Gibron was the "31st player for the American (East) team." It may be that announcement of Gibron's name was withheld, since he would have been the eighth Brown, and when Jones and Speedie were injured, Abe became eligible to be added to the squad.

Frank Gifford was a member of the East team for three days. He was added to the squad on January 3 when Otto Graham was called back to Cleveland by the death of his infant son, but on January 6 it was announced that, following his son's funeral, Graham was re-joining the team, and that Gifford would step aside. Paul Schissler, managing director of the game, explained that "when Gifford joined the squad he did so with the understanding that he would not be included if Graham returned." The teams were chosen by the division coaches and the sports editors of the metropolitan Los Angeles papers.

1954: Seven Browns again were elected to the Eastern team, while the Lions and 4gers again had seven Western representatives. Because Bert Bell expanded the West squad to 31 players to accommodate three quarterbacks, the East was permitted to add DE Bill McPeak as its 31st player. When the Browns' Warren Lahr and the Giants' Kyle Rote did not participate and were replaced by Cleveland's Tommy James and Ray Renfro, the final East team had eight of Paul Brown's players. The teams were chosen by a vote of coaches and "local" pro football writers.

1955: Seven Browns and seven Eagles made the East team, while seven 4gers were on the West squad. In order to permit each coach to strengthen a position, the 30th player on each squad was selected by the team's

THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 28, No. 6 (2006)

Head Coach, pursuant to an agreement at the previous year's League meeting. Washington Fullback Rob Goode was Coach Jim Trimble's choice, while West Coach Buck Shaw added Defensive Back Bill Stits, who joined six Detroit teammates that were elected to the team .

1956: The East squad had seven Browns and seven Redskins, and the West squad had seven Rams and seven Bears. Selections were made by the League's coaches. A few days after the squads were announced, Doak Walker was added to the West team and Frank Varrichione to the East team, presumably as the coaches' "bonus" choices. Defensive End Carlton Massey appears as a starter for the East in the Record Manual, the Encyclopedia, and on the scoresheet, along with 10 offensive players. The Los Angeles Times, in its game-day advance, listed Kyle Rote as the starter.

Many sources, including the official Pro Bowl roster, list Leon Clarke, Dick Stanfel, Paul Miller, Frank Gatski, and Jim Weatherall as squad members, but I can find nothing to support this, and Clarke was still a senior at Southern California during the 1955 season. Their inclusion has probably resulted from the everlasting confusion that arises from playing an all-star game in the calendar year following the season in question.

1957: Paddy Driscoll tabbed Leon Clarke as his "bonus" choice for the West team, and East Coach Jim Lee Howell added QB Bobby Thomason. The Giants, Bears, and Lions each had seven players selected. "Fans, league coaches, and sports editors of metropolitan Los Angeles newspapers which sponsor the event combine(d) to make the final selection." Kickers Sam Baker and Bert Rechichar were added to the squads several days after the original selections were announced, but it is not clear why. The East squad needed a kicker, but the West already had Les Richter and Bobby Layne.

Guard Duane Putnam was named to the West team as a starter, but participated in the Hula Bowl, which then had a format of NFL stars, service men, and "independent" players versus college all-stars, and was dropped from the Pro Bowl squad when he was unable to arrive on time for practice. He was replaced by John Hock, his Rams' teammate. As a result, Bill George, who was the Bears' middle guard in 1956 and was selected to the West team at that position, started at offensive guard in the Pro Bowl. Curiously, for the second straight year, the defensive lineups announced as "starters" for both teams included four linemen, a middle guard, three linebackers, and only three defensive backs, though no team in the NFL utilized a 5-3-3 defense in 1956.

1958: Only the Browns achieved the maximum of seven players. The squads were selected by a vote of the coaches. Buddy Parker added OB Earl Morrall to the East team, and George Wilson picked Darris McCord, who became the seventh Lion on the West squad. Frank Gifford was selected as a starter for the East team, but elected not to participate, instead playing in the Hula Bowl.

The "starters" for the East team in the Record Manual and on the official scoresheet include eight defensive players and three offensive players, an unlikely combination. In its advance story on the day of the game, the Los Angeles Times listed the East's offensive starters as Ends John Carson and Jack McClairen, Tackles Lou Groza and Roosevelt Brown, Guards Dick Stanfel and Jack Stroud, Center Ray Wietecha, Quarterback Eddie LeBaron, Halfbacks Ollie Matson and Ray Renfro, and Fullback Jim Brown.

1959: The Giants, Browns, Colts, and Bears each sent seven players. Selections were made by the coaches of each division. Defensive Backs Jerry Norton (East) and Jerry Mertens (West) were the "bonus" choices by Jim Lee Howell and Weeb Ewbank, respectively. Ollie Matson was selected as a starter, and Bobby Layne as a co-starter, but both chose to participate in the Hula Bowl instead. The following year the NFL made participation in the Pro Bowl mandatory for any players selected for the game.

1960: The Giants again had seven players, as did the Colts and 4gers. The "bonus" choices were Marion Campbell (East) and Emlen Tunnell (West). The Rams' Les Richter was listed on both the offensive and

THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 28, No. 6 (2006)

defensive squads for the West team. The teams were selected by the coaches.

(Actual game starters have been underlined, based on lineups appearing in the Record Manual and Encyclopedia of Pro Football, which are occasionally different than those appearing on the official scoresheets. See Appendix A for notes.)

1951 East Pro Bowl Selections

E: John Green, Phi; Pete Pihos, Phi; Ray Poole, NYG; Mac Speedie, Cle; Bob Shaw, ChiC.
T: Lou Groza, Cle; Arnie Weinmeister, NYG; Al DeRogatis, NYG; Al Wister!, Phi; Paul Lipscomb, Was.
G: Bill Fischer, ChiC; Walt (Piggy) Barnes, Phi; Weldon Humble, Cle; Bill Willis, Cle.
C: Bill Walsh, Pit; John Cannady, NYG; Chuck Bednarik, Phi.
OB: Charley Conerly, NYG; Harry Gilmer, Was; Otto Graham, Cle; Jim Hardy, ChiC.
HB: Elmer Angsman, ChiC; Bill Dudley, Was; Joe Geri, Pit; Gene Roberts, NYG.
FB: Marion Motlev, Cle; Pat Harder, ChiC.
DB: Tony Adamle, Cle; Jerry Shipkey, Pit; Otto Schnellbacher, NYG; Emlen Tunnell, NYG.

1951 West Pro Bowl Selections

E: Clayce Box, Det; Larry Brink, LA; Dan Edwards, NYY; Tom Fears, LA; Ed Sprinkle, ChiB.
T: George Connor, ChiB; Fred Davis, ChiB; Dick Huffman, LA; Thurman McGraw, Det; Leo Nomellini, SF.
G: Dick Barwegen, ChiB; Ray Bray, ChiB; Lou Creekmur, Det; Visco Grgich, SF.
C: Clyde Turner, ChiB; Ed Neal, GB; Brad Ecklund, NYY.
QB: Frank Albert, SF; John Lujack, ChiB; Norm Van Brocklin, LA; Bob Waterfield, LA.
HB: Glenn Davis, LA; Billy Grimes, GB; John Strzylkalski, SF; Doak Walker, Det.
FB: Dick Hoerner, LA; Zollie Toth, NYY.
DB: Don Doll, Det; Woodley Lewis, LA; Spec Sanders, NYY; Norm Standlee, SF.
Notes:
Ray Poole was selected but did not participate. Bob Dove, E, ChiC replaced Poole.

1952 East Pro Bowl Selections Offense

E: Fran Polsfoot, ChiC; Dante Lavelli, Cle.
T: Lou Groza, Cle; Paul Lipscomb, Was.
G: Bill Fischer, ChiC; George Hughes, Pit.
C: Bill Walsh, Pit.
OB: Otto Graham, Cle.
HB: Joe Geri, Pit; Dub Jones, Cle.
FB: Rob Goode, Was.

Defense

E: Len Ford, Cle; Tom Wham, ChiC.
T: Arnold Weinmeister, NYG; Al DeRogatis, NYG.
G: Bill Willis, Cle; Mike Jarmoluk, Phi.
LB: Chuck Bednarik, Phi; TonyAdamle, Cle.
DB: Otto Schnellenbacher, NYG; Emlen Tunnell, NYG; Russ Craft, Phi.

Alternates

E: Pete Pihos, Phi.
T: Laurie Niemi, Was.
C: Tex Coulter, NYG.
G: Jerry Shipkey, Pit; Jon Baker, NYG.
B: Eddie Price, NYG; Ken Carpenter, Cle; Bill Dudley, Was; Sammy Baugh, Was.

**1952 West Pro Bowl Selections
Offense**

E: Gordon Soltau, SF; Elrov Hirsch, LA.
T: Dick Wildung, GB; Leo Nomellini, SF.
G: Lou Creekmur, Det; Dick Barwegan, ChiB.
C: Brad Ecklund, NYV.
OB: Bob Waterfield, LA.
HB: Doak Walker, Det; Billy Grimes, GB.
FB: Dan Towler, LA.

Defense

E: Larry Brink, LA; Leon Hart, Det.
T: George Connor, ChiB; Ray Collins, SF.
G: Stan West, LA; Ray Bray, ChiB.
LB: Don Paul, LA; Tank Younger, LA.
DB: Don Doll, Det; Johnny Lujack, ChiB; Jim Cason, SF.

Alternates

E: Ed Sprinkle, ChiB.
T: Mike McCormack, NYY. G: Les Bingaman, Det.
C: Bulldog Turner, ChiB.
B: Bobby Layne, Det; Norm Van Brocklin, LA; Bob Hoernschemeyer, Det; George Taliaferro, NYY; John Dottlev, ChiB.

Notes

There were no additions or deletions to the squads.

**1953 East Pro Bowl Selections
Offense**

E: Mac Speedie, Cle; Elbie Nickel, Pit.
T: Lou Groza, Cle; Laurie Niemi, Was.
G: Bucko Kilroy, Phi; Bill Fischer, ChiC.
C: Tex Coulter, NYG.
OB: Otto Graham, Cle.
HB: Dub Jones, Cle; Rav Mathews, Pit.
FB: Eddie Price, NYG.

Defense

E: Bill McPeak, Pit; Len Ford, Cle.
T: Arnold Weinmeister, NYG; Ernie Stautner, Pit.
G: Jon Baker, NYG; Bill Willis, Cle.
LB: Chuck Bednarik, Phi; Jerry Shipkey, Pit.
HB: Emlen Tunnell, NYG; Harry Gilmer, Was.
S: Johnny Williams, Was.

Alternates

E: Pete Pihos, Phi; Horace Gillom, Cle.
T: Paul Lipscomb, Was.
LB: John Cannady, NYG.
B: Russ Craft, Phi; Charley Trippi, ChiC; Ollie Matson, ChiC; Jim Finks, Pit.

**1953 West Pro Bowl Selections
Offense**

E: Clovce Box, Det; Bill Howton, GB.
T: Fred Williams, ChiB; Leo Nomellini, SF.

THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 28, No. 6 (2006)

G: Lou Creekmur, Det; John Wozniak, Dallas.
C: Bill Johnson, SF.
OB: Norm Van Brocklin, LA.
HB: Dan Towler, LA; Bob Hoernschemeyer, Det.
FB: Joe Perry, SF.

Defense

E: Ed Henke, SF; Ed Sprinkle, ChiB.
T: Jim Winkler, LA; George Connor, ChiB.
G: Dick Barwegan, ChiB; Stan West, LA. LB: Don Paul, LA; Tank Younger, LA.
HB: Bob Smith, Det; Gene Schroeder, ChiB.
S: Don Doll, Det.

Alternates

E: Elrov Hirsch, LA; Gordon Soltau, SF.
T: Ab Wimberly, GB.
LB: Hardy Brown, SF; Deral Teteak, GB.
B: Bobby Layne, Det; Pat Harder, Det; Hugh McElhenny, SF; George Taliaferro, Dallas.

Notes

Mac Speedie and Dub Jones were selected but did not participate.
Hugh Taylor, E, Was replaced Speed ie, and Lynn Chandnois, HB, Pit replaced Jones.
Abe Gibron, G, Cle was added to the East squad as its 31st player.

1954 East Pro Bowl Selections

Offense

E: Elbie Nickel, Pit; Dante Lavelli, Cle.
T: Lum SnYder, Phi; Lou Groza, Cle.
G: George Hughes, Pit; Abe Gibron, Cle.
C: Ken Farraqu, Phi.
QB: Otto Graham, Cle.
HB: Kyle Rate, NYG; Lynn Chandnois, Pit.
FB: Chick Jaqade, Cle.

Defense

E: Gene Brito, Was; Len Ford, Cle.
T: Ernie Stautner, Pit; Arnold Weinmeister, NYG.
MG: Bucko Kilroy, Phi.
LB: Chuck Bednarik, Phi; Marv Matuszak, Pit; Bill Svoboda, ChiC.
Backs: Warren Lahr, Cle; Emlen Tunnell, NYG; Don Doll, Was.

Alternates

E: Pete Pihos, Phi.
T: Paul Lipscomb, Was.
G: Dale Dodrill, Pit.
Backs: Bobby Thomason, Phi; Frank Gifford, NYG; Charley Trippi, ChiC; Don Paul, ChiC; John Olszewski, ChiC.

1954 West Pro Bowl Selections

Offense

E: Gordon Soltau, SF; Elroy Hirsch, LA.
T: Lou Creekmur, Det; Leo Nomellini, SF.
G: Dick Barwegan, Bal; Dick Stanfel, Det.
C: Bill Johnson, SF.
QB: Bobby Layne, Det.

THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 28, No. 6 (2006)

HB: Doak Walker, Det; Hugh McElhenny, SF.

FB: Joe Perry, SF.

Defense

E: John Martinkovic, GB; Andy Robustelli, LA.

T: Art Donovan, Bal; Dave Hanner, GB.

MG: Art Michalik, SF.

LB: George Connor, ChiB; Don Paul, LA; Clayton Tonnemaker, GB.

HB: Tom Keane, Bal; Don Kindt, Chi8. S: Jack Christiansen, Det.

Alternates

E: John Hoffman, ChiB.

T: Fred Williams, ChiB.

G: Les Bingaman, Det.

B: YA Tittle, SF; Norm Van Brocklin, LA; Yale Lary, Det; Dan Towler, LA; Tank Younger, LA; George Taliaferro, Bal.

Notes

Warren Lahr and Kyle Rote were selected but did not participate.

Tommy James, DB, Cle replaced Lahr, and Ray Renfro, HB, Cle replaced Rote.

Bill McPeak, DE, Pit was added to the East squad as its 31st player.

Bert Bell had permitted the West Squad to include 31 players and three quarterbacks because of the close competition at that position.

1955 East Pro Bowl Selections

Offense

E: Pete Pihos, Phi; Dante Lavelli, Cle.

T: Lou Groza, Cle; Lum Snyder, Phi.

G: Bill Austin, NYG; Bucko Kilroy, Phi.

C: Frank Gatski, Cle.

QB: Otto Graham, Cle.

HB: Ollie Matson, ChiC; Kyle Rate, NYG.

FB: Eddie Price, NYG.

Defense

E: Norm Willey, Phi; Len Ford, Cle.

T: Ray Krouse, NYG; Don Cola, Cle.

MG: Dale Dodrill, Pit.

LB: Chuck Bednarik, Phi; Wayne Robinson, Phi.

HB: Tom Landry, NYG; Dick Lane, ChiC.

S: Paul Cameron, Pit; Emlen Tunnell, NYG.

Alternates

E: Hugh Taylor, Was.

T: Jerry Groom, ChiC.

G: Abe Gibron, Cle.

B: Adrian Burk, Phi; Johnny Lattner, Pit; Billy Wells, Was; Dick Alban, Was

1955 West Pro Bowl Selections.

Offense

E: Harlon Hill, ChiB; Billy Wilson, SF.

T: Lou Creekmur, Det; Bill Bishop, ChiB.

G: Duane Putnam, LA; Bruno Banducci, SF. C: Leon McLaughlin, LA.

QB: Norm Van Brocklin, LA.

HB: Doak Walker, Det; John Henry Johnson, SF.

FB: Joe Perry, SF.

Defense

E: Gino Marchetti, 8al; Ed Sprinkle, ChiB.

T: Art Donovan, Bal; Al Carapella, SF.

MG: Bill George, ChiB.

LB: Lavern Torgeson, Det; Joe Schmidt, Det.

HB: Jim David, Det; Roger Zatkoff, G8.

S: Jack Christiansen, Det; Jim Cason, SF.

THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 28, No. 6 (2006)

Alternates

E: Bob Boyd, LA.
T: Dave Hanner, GB.
LB: Les Richter, LA.
B: Y. A. Tittle, SF; Volney Quinlan, LA; Buddy Young, 8al; Chick Jagade, ChiB.

Notes

Paul Cameron and Chick Jagade were selected but did not participate.
Frank Gifford, HB, NYG replaced Cameron, and Dan Towler, FB, LA replaced Jagade.
Rob Goode, FB, Was was added to the East squad as its 30th player.
Bill Stits, DB, Det was added to the West squad as its 30th player.

1956 East Pro Bowl Selections

Offense

E: Pete Brewster, Cle; Pete Pihos, Phi.
T: Lou Groza, Cle; Roosevelt Brown, NYG.
G: Abe Gibron, Cle; Jack Stroud, NYG.
C: Harry Uliniski, Was.
QB: Eddie LeBaron, Was.
HB: Ollie Matson, ChiC; Frank Gifford, NYG.
FB: Fred Morrison, Cle.

Defense

E: Carlton Massey, Cle; Gene Brito, Was.
T: Don Colo, Cle; Volney Peters, Was.
MG: Dale Dodrill, Pit.
LB: Lavern Torgeson, Was; Wayne Robinson, Phi; Fred Wallner, ChiC ..
B: Jack Butler, Pit; Dick Lane, ChiC; Emlen Tunnell, NYG.

Alternates

E: Norm Willey, Phi.
T: Ernie Stautner, Pit.
LB: Chuck Drazenovich, Was.
B: Adrian Burk, Phi; Kyle Rote, NYG; Rav Mathews, Pit; Joe Scudero, Was; Ken Konz, Cle; Was; Johnny Olszewski, ChiC.

1956 West Pro Bowl Selections

Offense

E: Harlon Hill, ChiB; Billy Wilson, SF.
T: Lou Creekmur, Det; Bill Wightkin, ChiB.
G: Duane Putnam, LA; Stan Jones, ChiB.
C: Dick Szymanski, Bal.
QB: Norm Van Brocklin, LA.
HB: Ron Waller, LA; Rick Casares, ChiB.
FB: Alan Ameche, Bal.

Defense

E: Gino Marchetti, Bal; John Martinkovic, GB.
T: Art Donovan, Bal; Bud McFadin, LA.
MG: Bill George, ChiB.
LB: Joe Schmidt, Det; Roger Zatkoff, GB; Les Richter, LA.
B: Will Sherman, LA; Bert Rechichar, 8al; Jack Christiansen, Oet.

Alternates

E: Bill Howton, GB. T: Bob Toneff, SF.
B: Ed Brown, ChiB; Jim David, Det; Bobby Dillon, GB; Dick Moegle, SF; Howie Ferguson, GB; Tank Younger, LA; John Hoffman, ChiB.

Notes

Tank Younger was selected but did not participate. Andy Robustelli, DE, LA replaced Younger.
Frank Varrichione, T, Pit was added to the East squad as its 32nd player.
Doak Walker, HB, Det was added to the West squad as its 32nd player.

1957 East Pro Bowl Selections

Offense

E: Pete Brewster, Cle; Elbie Nickel, Pit.
T: Roosevelt Brown, NYG; Mike McCormack, Cle. G: Buck Lansford, Phi; Dick Stanfel, Was.
C: Jack Simmons, ChiC.
OB: Charlev Conerly, NYG.
HB: Ollie Matson, ChiC; Frank Gifford, NYG. FB: Fran Rogel, Pit.

Defense

E: Gene Brito, Was; Andy Robustelli, NYG.
T: Ernie Stautner, Pit; Roosevelt Grier, NYG.
MG: Walt Michaels, Cle.
LB: Chuck Bednarik, Phi; Chuck Drazenovich, Was; Leo Sanford, ChiC.
B: Dick Lane, ChiC; Jack-Butler, Pit; Emlen Tunnell, NYG.

Alternates

E: Bill McPeak, Pit.
T: Jim Weatherall, Phi.
LB: Lavern Torgeson, Was.
B: Al Dorow, Was; Bobby Thomason, Phi; Kyle Rate, NYG; Don Paul, Cle; Lindon Crow, ChiC; Leo Elter, Was.

1957 West Pro Bowl Selections

Offense

E: Harlon Hill, ChiB; Bill Howton, GB.
T: Lou Creekmur, Det; Bob St. Clair, SF.
G: Stan Jones, ChiB; Duane Putnam, LA.
C: Charlev Ane, Del.
OB: Ed Brown, ChiB.
HB: Hugh McElhenny, SF; Lenny Moore, Bal.
FB: Rick Casares, ChiB.

Defense

E: Gino Marchetti, Bal; Paul Miller, LA.
T: Art Donovan, Bal; Bud McFadin, LA.
MG: Bill Georqe, ChiB.
LB: Roger Zatkoff, GB; Les Richter, LA; Joe Schmidt, Del.
B: Jim David, Det; Bobby Dillon, GB; Jack Christiansen, Det.

Alternates

E: Billy Wilson, SF; Leon Clarke, LA.
T: Leo Nomellini, SF.
C: Larry Strickland, ChiB.
B: Bobby Layne, Det; Tobin Rate, GB; J. C. Caroline, ChiB; Yale Lary, Det; Alan Ameche, Bal.

Notes

Duane Putnam was selected but did not participate. John Hock, G, LA replaced Putnam.
Sam Baker, K, Was was added to the East squad as its 32nd player.
Bert Rechichar, DB, Bal was added to the West squad as its 32nd player.

1958 East Pro Bowl Selections

Offense

E: John Carson, Was; Jack McClairen, Pit.
T: Lou Groza, Cle; Roosevelt Brown, NYG.
G: Dick Stanfel, Was; Jack Stroud, NYG.
C: Ray Wietecha, NYG.
OB: Tommy O'Connell, Cle.

HB: Ollie Matson, ChiC; Frank Gifford, NYG.
FB: Jim Brown, Cle.

Defense

E: Gene Brito, Was; Andv Robustelli, NYG.
T: Bob Gain, Cle; Ernie Stautner, Pit.
MG: Chuck Drazenovich, Was.
LB: Chuck Bednarik, Phi; Walt Michaels, Cle.
HB: Jack Butler, Pit; Don Paul, Cle.
S: Jerv Norton, Phi; Emlen Tunnell, NYG.

Alternates

E: Tom Scott, Phi.
T: Mike McCormack, Cle; Frank Varrichione, Pit.
LB: Leo Sanford, ChiC.
B: Eddie LeBaron, Was; Bill Barnes, Phi; Lindon Crow, ChiC; Jim Podoley, Was.

1958 West Pro Bowl Selections

Offense

E: Billv Wilson, SF; Bill Howton, GB.
T: Lou Creekmur, Det; Kline Gilbert, ChiB.
G: Duane Putnam, LA; Harlev Sewell, Det.
C: Jim RinQo, GB.
QB: YA Tittle, SF.
HB: Hugh McElhenny, SF; Tom Wilson, LA.
FB: Rick Casares, ChiB.

Defense

E: Gino Marchetti, Bal; Doug Atkins, ChiB.
T: Art Donovan, Bal; Leo Nomellini, SF.
MG: Bill George, ChiB.
LB: Joe Schmidt, Det; Les Richter, LA.
HB: Bobby Dillon, GB; Jim David, Del.
S: Yale Lary, Det; Jack Christiansen, Del.

Alternates

E: Jim Mutscheller, Bal.
G: Stan Jones, ChiB.
LB: Dick Daugherty, LA; Marv Matuszak, SF.
B: John Unitas, Bal; Jon Arnett, LA; Alan Ameche, Bal; Bert Rechichar, Bal.

Notes

Tommy O'Connell and Frank Gifford were selected but did not participate.
Dale Dodrill, MG, Pit replaced O'Connell, and Ray Renfro, HB, Cle replaced Gifford.
Earl Morrall, OB, Pit was added to the East squad as its 31st player.
Darris McCord, DE, Det was *added* to the West squad as its 31st player.

1959 East Pro Bowl Selections

Offense

E: Pete Retzlaff, Phi; Bob Schnelker, NYG.
T: Frank Varrichione, Pit; Roosevelt Brown, NYG.
G: Dick Stanfel, Was; Jim Ray Smith, Cle.
C: Jim Schrader, Was.
QB: Norm Van Brocklin, Phi; Bobby Layne, Pit (tie).
HB: Ollie Matson, ChiC; Alex Webster, NYG.

THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 28, No. 6 (2006)

FB: Jim Brown, Cle.

Defense

E: Gene Brito, Was; Leo Sugar, ChiC.

T: Ernie Stautner, Pit; Bob Gain, Cle.

MG: Sam Huff, NYG.

LB: Walt Michaels, Cle; Chuck Drazenovich, Was.

HB: Dick Lane, ChiC; Jack Butler, Pit.

S: Jimmy Patton, NYG; Don Paul, Cle.

Alternates

E: Gem Nagler, ChiC; Tom Scott, Phi.

T: Don Colo, Cle; Lou Groza, Cle.

C: Ray Wietecha, NYG.

B: Frank Gifford, NYG; Tom Tracy, Pit; Bill Barnes, Phi.

1959 West Pro Bowl Selections

Offense

E: Raymond Berry, Bal; Billy Wilson, SF.

T: Jim Parker, Bal; Bob St. Clair, SF.

G: Duane Putnam, LA; Harley Sewell, Det.

C: Jim RinQo, GB.

QB: John Unitas, Bal.

HB: Jon Arnett, LA; Lenny Moore, Sal.

FB: Rick Casares, ChiB.

Defense

E: Gino Marchetti, Sal; Doug Atkins, ChiB.

T: Fred Williams, ChiS; Gene Lipscomb, Bal. MG: Bill George, ChiB.

LB: Joe Schmidt, Det; Les Richter, LA.

HB: Bobby Dillon, GB; Jim David, Det. S: Will Sherman, LA; Yale Lary, Det.

Alternates

E: Del Shofner, LA.

T: Leo Nomellini, SF.

G: Stan Jones, ChiB.

C: Charley Ane, Det.

LB: Joe Fortunato, ChiB.

B: Bill Wade, LA; Hugh McElhenny, SF; Willie Galimore, ChiB; Alan Ameche, Sal.

Notes

Bobby Layne, Ollie Matson, and Gino Marchetti were selected but did not participate.

Eddie LeBaron, QB, Was replaced Layne; Tommy McDonald, HB, Phi replaced Matson; and Don Joyce, E, Bal replaced Marchetti.

Jerry Norton, DB, Philadelphia was added to East squad as its 32nd player.

Jerry Mertens, DB, SF was added to West squad as its 32nd player.

1960 East Pro Bowl Selections

Offense

E: Bill Anderson, Was; Bob Schnelker, NYG; Jimmy Orr, Pit.

T: Roosevelt Brown, NYG; Ken Panfil, ChiC; Lou Groza, Cle.

G: Jim Ray Smith, Cle; John Nisby, Pit.

C: Jim Schrader, Was; Art Hunter, Cle.

OB: Norm Van Brocklin, Phi; Bobby Layne, Pit.

HB: Frank Gifford, NYG; Tommy McDonald, Phi; Bill Barnes, Phi; John David Crow, ChiC.

FB: Jim Brown, Cle; Don Bosseler, Was.

Defense

E: Ernie Stautner, Pit; Bob Gain, Cle; Andy Robustelli, NYG.

T: Bob Toneff, Was; Frank Fuller, ChiC; Jess Richardson, Phi.

LB: Sam Huff, NYG; Walt Michaels, Cle; John Reger, Pit.

B: Dean Derby, Pit; Tommy Brookshier, Phi; Lindon Crow, NYG; Jimmy Patton, NYG; Jerry Norton, ChiC.

1960 West Pro Bowl Selections

Offense

E: Raymond Berry, Bal; Del Shofner, LA; Billy Wilson, SF.

T: Jim Parker, Bal; Forrest Gregg, GS; Sob St. Clair, SF.

G: Art Spinney, sal; Harley Sewell, Det; Stan Jones, ChiB.

C: Jim RinQo, GB; Les Richter, LA.

QB: John Unitas, Bal; Y. A. Tittle, SF.

HB: Lenny Moore, Bal; Paul Hornung, GB; Jon Arnett, LA.

FB: Rick Casares, ChiB; J. D. Smith, SF.

Defense

E: Gino Marchetti, Sal; Doug Atkins, ChiB; Lamar Lundy, LA.

T: Leo Nomellini, SF; Gene Lipscomb, Sal; Fred Williams, ChiB.

LB: Joe Schmidt, Det; Bill George, ChiB; Bill Forester, GB; Les Richter, LA.

HB: Erich Barnes, ChiB; Jim David, Det; Abe Woodson, SF. S: Dave Baker, SF; Yale Lary, Det.

Notes

Marion Campbell, DE, Phi was added to the East squad as its 33rd player.

Emlen Tunnell, S, GS was added to the West squad as its 33rd player.

Appendix A

Starting lineups appearing in the *NFL Record Manual* and *Encyclopedia of Pro Football* are occasionally at variance with the lineups appearing on the official Pro Bowl scoresheets. I have underlined starters above, based on lineups in the *NFL Record Manual* and the *Encyclopedia*. Differences among the sources are as follows:

1951: Scoresheet lists Clyde Turner, Ray Bray, and Fred Davis as starters instead of Brad Ecklund, Lou Creekmur, and Thurman McGraw.

1955: Scoresheet lists Les Richter as starter at G, instead of Bruno Banducci.

1958: Record Manual and Scoresheet list Andy Robustelli as starter at T. Encyclopedia lists Roosevelt Brown.

1960: Scoresheet lists Leo Nomellini, Gene Lipscomb, Joe Schmidt, Bill George, Jim David, Abe Woodson, and Rick Casares as starters, instead of Del Shofner, Art Spinney, Stan Jones, Jim Ringo, Lenny Moore, Jon Arnett, and J.D. Smith.

Appendix B

Pro Bowl Roster Limits

1951-1954: 31

1955: 30

1956-1957: 32

1958: 31

1959: 32

1960: 33

'Last Team Standing' by Matthew Algeo

The Story 'of the World War II Steagles

By Bob Hoover, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Copyright, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 2006, all rights reserved. Reprinted with permission.

It's seldom recalled today, but Art Rooney sold the Pittsburgh Steelers for an alleged \$160,000 to New York playboy Lex Thompson in late 1940 and joined his football buddy Bert Bell as a co-owner of the Philadelphia Eagles.

It was one of the countless oddball deals and arrangements that typified the National Football League in its years as a poor also-ran to baseball, both major and minor.

Rooney had a change of heart. He and Bell traded franchises with Thompson the following spring, keeping "The Chief" in his North Side home and setting the stage for yet another wacky NFL operation, "The Steagles."

As Matthew Algeo recounts, in his history subtitled "How the Steelers and the Eagles -- 'The Steagles' -Saved Pro Football During World War II," the hybrid team kept the flickering flame alive in both Pennsylvania cities where it now blazes white-hot.

Rooney and Bell nursed the Steelers through a 7-4 season in 1942, the team's first winning record, but the war's demand for manpower made prospects for the '43 season bleak.

Cleveland dropped out of the NFL earlier that year and the rosters of other teams were shrinking faster than the cheap uniforms supplied by Rooney. His team was reeling from the departures, so he and Bell proposed a wartime merger to Thompson, who realized that if Pittsburgh also dropped out of the league, the NFL was probably doomed.

The result was an unwieldy arrangement with two coaches -- Greasy Neale of the Eagles and Rooney's pal Walt Kiesling -- who hated each other. Dominated by Philadelphia players, the Steagles dressed in the green and white of the Eagles, lived and practiced in Philly and played only two games at Forbes Field.

Adding to the strain was Thompson's requirement that the players, though rejected for military duty, had to work in defense plants during the week. Ted Doyle, one of the six Steelers on the hybrid team Algeo dubbed "Birds of Steel," worked at Westinghouse in East Pittsburgh during the week, hopping the train most Fridays to make the games.

The Steagles finished 5-4-1, out of the running, but gave fans in both cities their money's worth. Algeo's account, which includes an instructive overview of life on the homefront during the war, is a colorful and sympathetic one about the struggles and determination of a handful of men who had no idea that they were preserving a sickly plant that would grow into a financial redwood in the next 50 years.

It was a fun while it lasted, which was only one season. The next year the Eagles returned to single ownership, but the Steelers were forced into a merger with the old Chicago Cardinals, with disastrous results. The CardPitts lost all 14 games. That was not fun.

One on One - Conversation with Jim Brown, Part 2

By Roger Gordon

Originally published in The Orange and Brown Report, Summer 2006.

Jim Brown is a busy man - even at age 70. The former Cleveland Browns Hall of Fame fullback runs his nearly two-decade-old Amer-I-Can program and is an executive advisor for the Browns. Brown resides in California's Hollywood Hills with his wife Monique and their two children - son Aris, 5, and daughter Morgan, 3.

Brown remains quite an articulate gentleman. He is candid, frank and pulls no punches whatsoever when speaking on topics across the board., from A to Z. In this, the second installment of The OBR's exclusive interview with Brown, The Great One talks about the Heisman Trophy he didn't win, the passion of Browns fans, Art Modell's ultimatum, Bill Belichick and more.

The OBR: When you were on the cover of *Sports Illustrated* in a Raiders uniform in '83, were you fully intent on making a comeback?

JB: No, no, that was all just a way of challenging the concept of running out of bounds ... you know, 230-pound back runs out of bounds because a 180-pounder is going to hit him. I did a radio show in Vegas and they said, "Franco (Harris) is going to break your (all-time rushing yardage record)." I said, "Well, Franco is running out of bounds to get away from hits. If he's going to run out of bounds and creep and crawl to a record, I'll come back and creep and crawl and re-break the record."

And people took me seriously, so we carried it to a . . . we were going to Atlantic City and doing some events . . . I pulled a muscle, and we made some money, and my guys promoted the exhibition, and I got on the cover of *Sports Illustrated* with a Raider uniform because [Raiders president] Ai [Davis] was a friend of mine, and he could go along with the joke, and we were all laughing, but no, it wasn't serious at all.

The OBR: When you finished second in the Heisman [Trophy voting] in '56 to Notre Dame's Paul Hornung, were you disappointed? Many consider it to be the biggest [Heisman Trophy voting] travesty ever, what with Hornung winning it despite the Fighting Irish's 2-8 record.

JB: No, I wasn't disappointed at all. My disappointment was that we were in a country at the time that it was known that a black player couldn't win it. The disappointment was based upon the fact that people would still be prejudiced to the point that, going into a season, you knew that a black player couldn't win the Heisman Trophy because of the way the votes would go down.

But, as far as being fair, I didn't think I *should* have won the Heisman Trophy because I don't know if I was the best player that year or not. I was just happy to be starting at Syracuse and getting a chance to really show that I could play, so I wasn't even thinking about winning it or not winning it or whatever. On one hand, I don't even think I deserved it. On the other hand, I should have had the opportunity to win it in a fair voting situation. They should, not have allowed prejudice to dominate our scene.

The OBR: Do you have any opinion on who *should* have won it?

JB: No, I don't really know, I didn't pay that much attention to it.

THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 28, No. 6 (2006)

The OBR: Had the Browns contacted you? Did you know you were going to get drafted by them?

JB: Nope. I didn't know anything. I was just waiting to see who would draft me. In fact, the rumors were that New York was going to draft me, I guess because I was from New York, but that was it. I didn't know.

The OBR: When you got drafted by the Browns, I'm assuming you were aware of their tradition a little bit?

JB: I learned it quick enough. At the time, we didn't scrutinize things the way you scrutinize them now. I was happy to be drafted by the Browns, and then the other thing on my mind was to be able to really go in there and play football right away. That's what I wanted to do. I didn't want to wait around two or three years, I wanted to play right away.

I got there two practices before any other rookie because I drove from the [College] All-Star Game and got there in time to get into the early practices. I think the first exhibition game was in Akron. I broke one for about 40 yards and Paul called me *off* the field and said, "You're my running back," and that was what I wanted. There was no doubt about it, I was his running back, and he liked to run the ball, so I was feeling good.

The OBR: Give us a few sentences on playing in Cleveland and the passion the fans have for football there that you remember.

JB: I feel like a very privileged person to have played in Cleveland. We had 80,000 people, they loved our performances, I loved the fact that they *did* love my performances. They've been very forgiving of me over the years, they allowed me to step out of line once in a while. I was able even to speak nicely about [Art] Modell and they didn't crucify me. So I've always had I think a relationship with the Cleveland Browns fans, and always will, because we shared history together. Those families grew up with me, and I didn't grow up with them, but I was very cognizant with how they felt.

And later on when I did my book, I realized that fathers and sons, and mothers and daughters, have been in those stands season tickets - and when I performed on a high level, they were proud and happy about being together and having a shared experience. So that made it real valuable, it took it into a different arena because we set some book records in Ohio, and the people standing in line expressed that to me. It was the first time I knew that some people felt that way.

The OBR: Are you talking about your book *Out of Bounds*?

JB: Yeah.

The OBR: What was your first book?

JB: It was *Off My Chest*. But *Out of Bounds* is the real one. It was more representative of me.

The OBR: When Bobby Mitchell was traded to Washington, were you in favor of it?

JB: No, I wasn't in favor of it. I thought Bobby was one of the alltime greats at that time. He was the opposite of me. He could do things I couldn't do, and we needed him in my opinion. And I didn't think he was very much appreciated.

And I loved Ernie Davis, and I helped recruit him, but I thought he was too similar to me. And Bobby was so different. To me, two weapons that are kind of the same is not as good as one that's very different from the other. And I just had admiration for his particular kind of abilities. I didn't say anything about it, of course, but I didn't think it was the greatest trade on earth.

The OBR: Didn't the Redskins switch Mitchell to receiver, and he went on to a Hall of Fame career?

JB: Yeah, he made All-Pro the first year, came back and beat us one game. I knew he could play because in the [College] All-Star game I saw him, and he scored two TDs, and I knew he was a great player, and he was. I mean, he was lightning.

The OBR: Your rookie year, the Browns were coming off their first losing season ever. You made it to the NFL Championship Game, but lost to Detroit. Those late '50s, early '60s teams ... the Browns had good teams, but they just couldn't get over that hump until 1964. What's your take on that, why they couldn't get over the hump

during that period?

JB: I don't really know, I really don't. Detroit killed us in that game. Honestly, I think we were too conservative in the big games. Against Detroit, I knew that I wanted to run some sweeps, and I scored one TD as I remember. But we never had a real game plan that inspired you. The other teams were good I guess, but I think we could have beaten any of them if we really had the right kind of game plan.

The OBR: Is that a direct shot at Paul Brown?

JB: It's a shot at the game plan. The game plan was not good. I don't care who's responsible for it, and I'm not afraid of criticizing anybody, but that's not my point. The fact is that I didn't feel - and it's my opinion - that the game plans were not ... we used to fight against conservatism. We always fought to open up the offense rather than to get tied down to three or four plays and be afraid of certain individuals. We [players] weren't afraid of any individual, we wanted to run with anybody, and that's the attitude we had. And then the coaching staff would come up with these very antiquated approaches.

The OBR: Give us a few sentences on your memories of your famed battles with Sam Huff.

JB: I have a lot of admiration for Sam. Sam was a very bright player, one of the brightest players that ever played. He got a lot of knocks, but he was a real good player on a great defensive team and a great organization. Those guys were smart, Sam was smart, they were difficult to run against, difficult to beat, they maximized all of their players. And Sam was a team leader, and was the first real defensive hero. He and I are good friends. I respect him a lot. He's been a gentleman, and I just have the respect for his playing ability and also as a human being.

The OBR: Was he the toughest linebacker you ever went up against?

JB: There's no toughest. I don't know. Two linebackers that I look at from the Jim Brown perspective would be Dick Butkus and Lawrence Taylor. Now, saying that, there's a lot of great linebackers ... Willie Lanier, Bednarik, Nitschke ... but we all have preferences, and my preference is Butkus. He was a physical freak, and so was L T. But Butkus was a bone-crushing type, and L T was like a gazelle that had the strength of a lion. They're two opposites, and I picked them because they represent two styles. There are other people that would be one of those two styles that could be considered as good as those, but these are my two picks.

The OBR: What were your first impressions of Leroy Kelly, and if you had stuck around for five, six more years, what do you think would have happened to Leroy's career?

JB: I knew Leroy Kelly was a star. In fact, I wrote a letter to Blanton Collier and told him that. I knew he was good. He was a hell of a runner, no doubt about it. I knew he would fill in beautifully, and I had no intentions of sticking around and trying to keep him out of the lineup, or play longer than I should've. We're good friends. It's a great feeling. He's in the Hall of Fame, and he did an unbelievable job.

The OBR: When you retired, you had had full intentions of coming back in '66, didn't you?

JB: Nope. Nope. I told them that I was going to retire, but I told them if I felt they needed me, I would consider coming back. I wasn't coming back ... only if I felt there would be a need to come back. And then Art [Modell] jumped the gun and gave me an ultimatum. It was a one-way contract, and it was a ridiculous ultimatum. So that just sealed the deal.

The OBR: Can you tell us what the ultimatum was?

JB: If I didn't get back to camp on time, he would fine me. He couldn't fine me until I agreed on a contract. He only had the rights to me if I played. We didn't have a contract that I had to play for a certain amount of money.

The OBR: I guess what we're saying is, after that championship against Green Bay in January of '66, when you walked off the field that day after you lost to the Packers, were you saying to yourself, "This is it?"

JB: No. Art and I had talked about it. He was telling me how many years I should play and all of that kind of stuff. No, I don't think like that. I don't know *what* I thought.

The OBR: I guess what we're saying is, when did you come to the decision that you weren't coming back? Was it when Art gave you the ultimatum?

JB: No, like I said to you, I had no intentions of coming back, but if I felt that they needed me, if I would look at the situation and I felt that they needed me to really get somewhere, then I would consider it. See, consideration is you think about things, or you weigh the options, or you look at them. You can't look at them a lot of times beforehand. You have to wait to see ... maybe Kelly would be hurt or maybe there would be something else.

We had the kind of relationship as players that the players could have said, "Hey, man, we would like you to come back for one more year because we have a situation where we drafted these guys, and we think we can win it all" And I would have sat down with them and said, "Well, let me think about this, and hey, that's a good point," and then maybe I would have come back. But it would have been something based on human beings getting together, talking about accomplishing a goal. And if the linemen came back and said, "Hey man, you know ... ," and Frank Ryan said, "Look, we feel that we will discuss it as we did things that year anyway," then I could have possibly come back. But when Art gave me an ultimatum, there was nothing to consider.

The OBR: Minus the ultimatum, let's say it was the middle of the season, and Kelly got hurt. Would you have ... ?

JB: No.

The OBR: You wouldn't have returned in the middle of the season.

JB: No, I wouldn't have.

The OBR: You've become good friends with Bill Belichick over the years, correct?

JB: Yes.

The OBR: Talk a little about your relationship with him and why you feel he didn't achieve near the success in Cleveland that he has in New England.

JB: What do you mean, why I feel he didn't achieve ... that's you saying that, that's not me.

The OBR: Record-wise, I mean.

JB: Well, record-wise ... I don't go by records.

The OBR: Championship-wise. How about that?

JB: I don't go by championships, I go by circumstances and situations. And I go by people. So you asked me why I think he didn't do in Cleveland what he did in New England. But if you just let me tell you, you might get your answer. Belichick and I became friends within five minutes of meeting each other. Belichick is a winner, he's a person of character and extremely smart. He's sensitive and he's dogmatic in his approach to being successful. I became a consultant to him in Cleveland, and it was beautiful to be able to relate to him. When we got to the playoffs, we won the first game against New England. Okay? So he had success in Cleveland.

And then I guess the next year, that's when [it was announced the Browns were moving to Baltimore], and Art was gone, and we were standing on the sideline with two or three games left not knowing what the hell was going on. People didn't like Belichick that well because he didn't do a lot of talking to the media, and he wasn't a media darling and he wasn't an instant success for what the people of Cleveland wanted. But I knew him as a great human being, a great coach. That was just my opinion and my feelings and my knowledge because he was. And what he did after that is resurrect himself: One, by refusing to be the head coach of the Jets in a situation that would not suit him, and then finally going to New England where he would have a chance to do his thing. So when he got an opportunity to do his thing, and had an owner that allowed him to do it, that's when he was able to do his thing.

Now, let me say this to you. I run a program called Amer-ICan, and Belichick has been one of the greatest contributors to its success of our efforts to save lives and re-emphasize education among young people. He has understood that and has participated in it. He has met gang members in my home, he has met gang members in the hotels in Cleveland where most other people don't have a clue, and don't care.

So why is he a friend of mine? He's a person of character, he's been a winner, he's made sacrifices, he's loyal, he will participate and do anything for his friends. He came to my 70th birthday party ... and stayed all night! If I called him on the phone now, I can get him, we can talk. And if he wanted me to do anything today, I would get right up and do it. We have a genuine friendship. He's a friend of Bobby Knight's, which might be strange to people. But Bob Knight's a friend of mine. We're friends. And all of us are considered a little different, but we don't consider each other different.

Belichick and I are good friends because we believe and trust each other. Bill knows me. It doesn't take some people long to know you. They know for themselves. They don't go by what somebody else says and what they heard. They go by what they see and feel. And so the relationships that I have with certain people - with Bobby Knight and people like that - is based upon they know about who I am and how I am, and they know my character, and I know theirs. And then other people talk about acts, and we don't get into all of that because we know different.

The OBR: You're the founder and president of Amer-I-Can. How did you get Amer-I-Can started, and in your opinion, what kind of positive effects has it had over the years?

JB: I started officially in '88, and since '88 have been working pretty much to some degree, every day, to stop young men particularly from killing each other in gang warfare, helping inmates get back into society without making our society more dangerous, dealing with schools all over the country to get kids to bring their grade-point averages up and their attendance up. Disciplinary actions have been down in Ohio schools about eight years. We had a tremendous record there. Politically, we were basi~ally put out ... politics, of all, is always very difficult.

It doesn't matter if you do a good job, but we have been effective in saving many, many lives, but below the radar screen I have the most effective organization in this country from the standpoint of stopping violence and re-emphasizing education. So anyone that would do any real research would find that out, but it doesn't matter to us because when you deal with human development, it's not qualifiable, really, and it's more qualitative. And so you do it because it's something you really want to do, but to young men that change their lives around, they're an example of what an American citizen should be in this country.

And we have some great supporters. The Jubilee Christian Center in Northern California, Dick Schafrath, who fought for us to be in the schools in Ohio, Randy Lerner of the Cleveland Browns. Just many, many individuals that have worked with us to solve these problems. Right now, we're working with the judges in Cleveland, we're working with the faith-based community in Cleveland. My director there works day and night for those kids that are in gangs in Cleveland.

It's like two worlds. Some of us want to win the Super Bowl, and some of us want to save lives. I want to do both. I don't criticize anyone that doesn't get into this type of thing because this is like the belly of the beast; that's where the violence and the crime and all of that is. We've had great, great success, and there are a lot of people that I can't even name that have helped us.

(To be continued)

Paul Briggs:

A Lifetime Dedicated to Football

By: Jim Sargent

Paul Leonard Briggs, who played the 1948 season at tackle for the Detroit Lions, spent much of his youth dreaming of becoming a football coach. Born on April 18, 1920, in Providence, Rhode Island, Paul grew up loving sports.

When he was ten, Paul and his mother moved to a five-floor apartment building located across the street from the south end zone of Brown University's football stadium. After two seasons of watching college football games from their apartment window, the energetic youth told his mom, "See that coach standing on the sideline? Some day I'm going to be down there doing what he's doing, but I'm going to be doing it better!"

That was 1932, the worst year of the Great Depression, and Paul's father, an army engineer, was working to help build dams near Grand Junction, Colorado. Later, the father brought his wife and family to Colorado. For the last part of his junior year and his senior year, Paul attended Grand Junction High. He played football as a senior and graduated in June 1939.

When his father left again, Paul, the oldest, worked and attended Grand Junction State Junior College (today Mesa State College). In 1941 he transferred to the University of Colorado, enrolled, and played tackle on the freshman team. When the war came, he stayed out one year and worked. In the fall of 1943 he returned to Colorado and started on the varsity football squad.

World War II affected Paul's life, as it did the lives of millions of other Americans. At the University of Colorado, he served in the Naval ROTC for two years, earning his commission as a lieutenant in 1943. He spent most of 1944 and 1945 serving on the *U. S. S. Daly*, a destroyer support vessel. He participated in several amphibious campaigns, earning the Purple Heart and the Bronze star for his part in naval action off Okinawa in 1945.

When the war ended, Briggs stayed in the Naval Reserve. But like thousands of veterans who went to college and played varsity sports in the postwar years, Paul enrolled at Colorado in 1946 and again started at tackle. To go with his UPI All-American and Big Six AllConference honors from 1943, he earned AllConference recognition as a junior and senior. Now 6'4" and 250 pounds, Paul graduated with a Bachelor's in Physical Education in 1948. Thinking about a future in coaching, he decided first to give pro football a shot.

In the late 1940s, the National Football League was hardly the big-time sports and entertainment show that it is today. In fact, the ten-team NFL was competing vigorously with the upstart All America Football Conference, a new league that began operations in 1946. But America's pastime in the late 1940s was baseball, and college football ranked second in fan interest.

In the postwar era, both professional football leagues drafted players, offered bonuses, and competed for top players by offering higher salaries. When the Detroit Lions selected Briggs in

the fifth round of the 1944 draft, he was serving in the Navy.

Upon graduation in mid-1948, Briggs, who had married his sweetheart Sally two years earlier, contacted Lions head coach and general manager Alvin "Bo" McMillin. Paul had met Earl "Dutch" Clark, a University of Colorado All-American in 1928 and later a Pro Football Hall of Famer who was a versatile "triple threat" back for the Lions in the 1930s. Clark scouted talent for the Lions, and he knew about Briggs. Figuring pro football might help him land a coaching job, Paul signed with Detroit.

Bo McMillin liked what he saw when Briggs showed up on August 1 st at Detroit's training camp, held for the third straight year at Alma College, located in the central part of Michigan. Coming off a successful stint as head coach at Indiana University, where his Hoosiers won the Big Ten title in 1945, Bo remarked about Briggs (according to one Detroit newspaper), "Golly, that fellow is big enough to hunt bears with a switch"!

Dedicated, strong, and bright, the hard-working Briggs played in every preseason game and made the Lions' roster. Thereafter, he started in all 12 NFL games. But in 1948, McMillin's first season as a pro coach, Detroit stumbled to a 2-10 record.

Detroit, a team that won the NFL title in 1935, had enjoyed winning records for the remainder of the Thirties. However, the Lions fell to 0-11 and fifth (last) place in the Western Division in 1942, the club's second season under Coach Bill Edwards. Charles "Gus" Dorais took over the Lions in 1943 and revived the club's fortunes for three seasons, improving to a 73 mark in 1945. But at first, Detroit was unable to compete financially with most teams in the All America Football Conference (MFC). Twice Dorais' Lions finished last in the NFL's West Division, finishing with a 1-10 record in 1946 and a 3-9 mark in 1947.

On January 15, 1948, a local syndicate of businessmen, headed by industrial leader D. Lyle Fife, purchased the Lions for \$165,000 from owner Fred J. Mandel, Jr., scion of the Mandel family of Chicago department store fame. Fife became president of the Lions board of directors, with Edwin J. Anderson, head of Goebel Brewing Company, as vice president. Breaking with the tradition of using former NFL players as coaches, the new management team, led by Anderson, lured Bo McMillin from Indiana with a lucrative five-year contract.

"We had most of our training camp at Alma College, in Alma, Michigan," Briggs recalled in a 2005 interview, "and some of those guys thought, 'This is the end of the line.' But we finished up at Michigan State Normal College (now Eastern Michigan) in Ypsilanti. Bo started at Alma to avoid distractions. He ran a tough camp. For the first four weeks, we practiced three times a day in pads, and one of those practices was quite intense. Bo liked it that way."

McMillin faced a major rebuilding job. The big returning star was "Bullet Bill" Dudley, who was on his way to a Hall of Fame career. The shifty triple threat back, an elusive runner, had paced the team in scoring in 1947 with 66 points. Ranking second on the team in rushing behind rookie fullback Camp Wilson, who gained 412 yards, Dudley ran for 302 yards and scored twice on the ground. Second in receiving behind end John Greene, who made 38 receptions for 621 yards and five touchdowns, Dudley snagged 27 aerials for 375 yards and scored seven TDs.

In addition, the versatile 5'10" 175-pound performer, who led the NFL in rushing for Pittsburgh in 1942 and 1946 and was voted the league's MVP in '46, topped Detroit in punt returns and kickoff returns. The former Virginia All-American, the NFL's highest paid player in 1947 at \$25,000, played safety on defense-players typically went both ways in the late 1940s. On

defense, Dudley, a good tackler, led his team with five interceptions, one of which he returned to the opponents' end zone.

However, Dudley suffered a shoulder injury early in the 1948 season, and his performance fell below his usual standards. Camp Wilson, a bruising runner from Tulsa University, enjoyed a great sophomore season. The 6'1" 200-pounder, a big back in those days, led Detroit's rushers with 612 yards, and he scored twice. Quarterback Fred Enke was the club's second best runner, gaining 365 yards and averaging 4.9 yards per carry.

With Dudley hurt early, Joe Margucci, the team's top pass receiver with 36 catches for 450 yards and two touchdowns, led the team in punt returns, averaging 10 yards on 10 runbacks, while Wilson led the kickoff returners with 10 for a 22.8 yard average.

The Lions, mainly a single wing team in 1947, switched to McMillin's new offense, which combined the single wing and the T-formation and worked, in effect, like the Notre Dame "box" (a formation with the quarterback and wingback close to the line, and the fullback and tailback set further behind the line). McMillin, however, used an unbalanced line.

"In those days," Briggs remembered, "we had about 27 players on the roster. We went both ways, special teams, everything. I was a strong side tackle, and I played most of the game. Most guys could play two positions, because sometimes they needed you to fill in for someone else."

Two quarterbacks alternated for Detroit. Rookie Fred Enke, the University of Arizona All-American who paced all collegians in 1947 by gaining 1,941 yards, including 1,406 by passing, was the starter. Enke led the team by completing 100 of 221 tosses for 1,328 yards.

Clyde LeForce, a second-year All-American from Tulsa, completed a better percentage of passes, 50 of 101 attempts, gaining 912 yards and accounting for nine touchdowns. LeForce, who ranked sixth among NFL quarterbacks, threw eight interceptions. The 6'1" Enke, who ranked tenth among quarterbacks, passed for 11 touchdowns, but he threw 17 interceptions.

Detroit, however, lacked depth in the defensive backfield and on the line. Partly as a result, the Lions gave up twice as many points as they scored. Also, besides Wilson and Enke, Detroit, with Dudley hurting, had no other back who gained 100 yards for the season.

On Wednesday, September 22, Detroit opened against the Los Angeles Rams in LA's Coliseum, and the West Coast squad routed the Lions, 44-7. In that game, Paul Briggs turned in a solid performance as the team's rookie tackle.

According to the lineup included with the newspaper's game story, Detroit used four other tackles, notably John "Russ" Thomas, a 6'3" 240-pound stalwart from Ohio State who was playing his third year with the Lions. Thomas played one more year with Detroit, and he coached for two seasons in the early 1950s. Another Ohio State graduate, Jack "Big John" Dugger, a versatile 6'3" athlete who also lettered in basketball and track for the Buckeyes, played one season for Buffalo of the All America Conference before playing all 12 games for the Lions in 1947. Dugger also played the '48 season for Detroit and in 1949 he played for the Chicago Bears. Warren "Dale" Hansen, a former Michigan State gridder who stood 6'3" and weighed 221 pounds, was making a comeback. Hansen, who played two games for the Lions in 1944 before entering the service, played all 12 games of the '48 season (and then left the NFL). Finally, Detroit played George "Duke" Hekkers, a 6'4" 240-pounder from Wisconsin. Hekker spent 1946 with Miami of MFC and played three games in 1947 for Baltimore, also of the MFC,

before the Lions signed him. Hekkers played all 12 games for the Lions in 1948 and 1949.

Briggs remembered the starters as being Johnny Greene and Bob Mann at ends; Russ Thomas, Jack Dugger, and himself at tackles; Howie Brown and Chuck DeShane at guards (starter Stan Batinski was traded before the season opened); Merv Pregulman at center; Fred Enke at quarterback, backed up by Clyde LeForce; Bill Dudley at tailback; Camp Wilson at fullback; and Joe Watt at right halfback, the blocking back.

"We played our first game against the Rams on the West Coast," Briggs recalled. "It was the first television game ever. We played on Wednesday night, because that's when the Rams could get on TV. We voted to ride the train, the Sky Chief, to California and back. They beat us, 44-7.

Reflecting on the season, Briggs observed, "When Bo McMillin got Detroit's coaching job in 1948, the Lions went to an unbalanced line. Most of the time we ran a single wing, and Bill Dudley was the tailback. I played strong side tackle and averaged about 58 minutes per game. In those days, an offensive-defensive lineman's 'life span' in the NFL was about three years. We didn't have face guards, mouthpieces, or good equipment. You might say the shoulder pads were elastic bands with cfhand-aid at each end!

"The big thing that happened when the Lions hired Bo, who came in with a new administration, was he 'felt his way,' because the other NFL coaches were long-time pro coaches. Bo brought two assistants from Indiana, Timmy Temerario, the line coach, and Lou Zarza, who worked with the ends. Another problem for Bo was you would get players who were All-Americans in the Big Ten, they had to make a real adjustment when they played for the Lions. See, at that time the Big Ten colleges and Notre Dame were big deals when it came to football.

"For example, Russ Thomas and Jack Dugger played at Ohio State, and they didn't think too much of Bo, who came from Indiana. Neither did Merv Pregulman, who came from Michigan. Detroit was mainly a 'midwestern' team, with most of the players coming from Ohio State, Michigan, Indiana, and Notre Dame, when I played for them. They also signed players from that strip of colleges from the Great Lakes to Louisiana and over toward Florida in the South. But they only had two or three of us who came from west of the Mississippi River.

"I don't know why Detroit didn't have a good season in 1948. From my standpoint, I was busy trying to pursue excellence as a player."

When Detroit defeated the Green Bay Packers, 24-20, at Briggs Stadium in Detroit on Sunday, October 31, the Lions not only broke an 11-game losing streak, but they also recorded the team's first win over a Western Division foe in three years. Detroit tied the score at 7-7 in the second quarter when Fred Enke connected with Bob Mann for a 7-yard touchdown. The Packers scored in the third quarter, and Merv Pregulman cut the deficit to 14-10 with a 27-yard field goal.

Late in the third quarter, Clyde LeForce hit Joe Margucci for a 55-yard touchdown and a 17-14 lead. Three minutes later, Enke broke through the line, twice shaking off tacklers, and lateralled to LeForce, who raced to the end zone and completed a 71-yard scoring play. The Lions' defense yielded only one more touchdown (the conversion was missed), preserving the victory. Unfortunately, a season-low home crowd of 16,174 witnessed Detroit's first win in 1948.

On Sunday, November 21, the Lions won the team's second, and final, game of the season,

THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 28, No. 6 (2006)

stopping the Pittsburgh Steelers, 17-14. Pittsburgh (now 3-6) outgained Detroit on the ground 202 yards to 124. and picked up 22 first downs compared to 11 by the Lions. However, the Steelers fumbled twice, and the Lions twice capitalized. In the second quarter, Bill Dudley scored Detroit's first touchdown on a 28-yard run, after scooping up a fumble by fullback Charlie Seabright. Later, Merv Pregulman kicked a 33-yard field goal, giving his club a 10-7 halftime lead.

The Lions scored again in the fourth quarter. On the play after Detroit end Cecil Souders recovered a fumble by halfback Cecil Evans, Enke connected with Dudley for 19-yard touchdown. In fact, Detroit lost another score when a clipping penalty nullified an Enke-to-Joe Margucci touchdown pass.

Against the Steelers, and all season long, the Lions played the same five tackles. Thomas, Briggs, Dugger, Hansen, and Hekkers. The only difference was whether they played on the right or left side of the line. Each was credited with playing 12 games.

In the last week of the 1948 season, the Philadelphia Eagles dumped Detroit, 45-21. Briggs remembered, "The last game, when we lost to the Eagles, 45-21, we only had 17 players. The rest were ambulatory or injured and couldn't play. Can you imagine an NFL team playing with 17 guys today?"

Paul injured his knee during that game, but he played anyway.

"During the season," he said, "we had a team banquet. Three veteran players were supposed to be the program, but none showed up. We had three rookies at the head table, but we were supposed to be 'decorations.' I got a note from Walter Briggs, the CEO of Chrysler Motor Company, just before dinner ended asking me to speak. So I got up and made a speech. After the banquet, a guard brought a message from Briggs: 'Come see me when the season is over.' "So I did. Mr. Briggs wanted me to direct a recreation program for Chrysler. But it would mean my football days were over, because I would have to set up the whole program. I went home and said to Sally, 'How would you like to live in Grosse Pointe for the rest of your life?'

"She said, 'I'd love it there.'

"I told her, 'I got a job offer from Chrysler, and we could probably do it. But you know, honey, I want to coach football. So I turned it down.'

"Sally said, 'You told me when we got married that's what we were going to do. So let's do it.'"

Paul and Sally had rented an apartment near the University of Detroit during the season. After the season, they returned to Colorado. Paul's former coach at Colorado, Dean Carlson, contacted him with an offer. Rocky Ford High School was looking for a head football coach.

Briggs seized the opportunity. He spent two years at Rocky Ford High. After two years as a head coach at Casper High in Casper, Wyoming, Paul got a bigger opportunity. Bakersfield High, in California, a school with almost 5,000 students, brought him to the West Coast. Allowed to hire his staff, the former Lion started slowly. His first team finished at 4-5. But the next three years he won championships. In the end, he coached Bakersfield for 33 years, finally retiring at age 65.

During Paul's tenure, Bakersfield won 13 Large School CIF Central California Championships. He coached four undefeated teams and once enjoyed a 27-game winning streak. Overall, he

THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 28, No. 6 (2006)

compiled a record of 244-9912 in 37 years as a head coach. Toward the end of his career, the National High School Coaches Association named the Rhode Island native as National High School Football Coach of the Year.

Restless without his beloved coaching, Briggs offered to serve as an assistant coach for Orange Coast College, a community college in Costa Mesa, California. In the early years, he worked with the backs. After 10 years at that assignment, Paul became the line coach. In recent years he worked mainly with special teams.

A perfectionist, the big guy was once quoted as saying, "I don't own a set of golf clubs, I don't play tennis, and I don't have a boat. I live and breathe football 12 months a year. I pursue excellence relentlessly."

Bill Workman, the head football coach at OCC, said about Briggs: "Paul is a throwback, he's a remarkable guy. He's a product of the 1940s and '50s. He believes in hard work, loyalty, dedication, and commitment. His word is his bond. One minute he can be chewing a kid out, but the next he's likely to be hugging him. He loves kids ... and they love him."

In May 2006 Briggs became one of eight members inducted into the inaugural class of the Bakersfield High School Football Hall of Fame. The old coach was humbled by the honor. "As you can guess," Paul commented, "it was one fond memory after another They made my day!"

Reflecting on his only season of professional football, the big tackle did not see further NFL experience as an asset to a coaching career. Briggs recounted how the athletic director at Rocky Ford High expressed doubts about whether Paul's experience as a supposedly "violent" NFL player would allow him to fit into high school coaching.

"Playing one year for the Lions was an invaluable experience, but leaving to coach was better. You have to realize in those years, the NFL was seen as a bunch of 'thugs.' I could have stayed and played, but that reputation wasn't going to help me as a coach. I did get a sense of how to play and how to coach, and I learned the rest as the years passed.

"When I think about coaching football, I can say this If you love your wife and you love your work, you will be a happy man. And I'm a happy man!"

As his career proved, Paul Briggs possessed the right combination of temperament, talent, skills, and experience to be a successful football coach. In effect, the big guy lived his football dream, thanks in part to his one good season with the Detroit Lions.

PAUL BRIGGS **T**
Briggs, Paul Leonard 6-4, 248
Colorado HS: Grand Junction [CO]
B: 4 / 18 / 1920. Providence. RI
Drafted: 1944 Round 7 Det
1948 Det 12

Chuck Bednarik

C/LB 1949-62

By John Maxymuk

Before the season finale against the Browns on December 13, 1959, the Eagles said farewell to retiring center Chuck Bednarik by presenting him with a color TV set and a check for \$1,000. Philadelphia went on to lose to Cleveland 28-21 that afternoon to finish in a tie for second place in the East, their best finish in five years. Bednarik had been a star on both sides of the ball for 11 years and now, not surprisingly, was stepping aside at the age of 34.

Bednarik's parents were Slovak immigrants who worked in the steel mills in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. As a kid he learned the game by playing with a homemade football made out an old nylon stocking stuffed with leaves. He starred on the gridiron at Bethlehem High and then entered the service as a waist gunner on a B24 that flew 30 missions over Germany in WWII. When he returned after the War, his high school coach contacted University of Pennsylvania coach George Munger who got him into Penn on the GI Bill. On the football field, he was a man among boys as a Single Wing center on offense and a linebacker on defense. At Penn, he was a two-time All American who intercepted 13 passes during his junior and senior seasons. One interception he returned for a touchdown and earned an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty for tossing the ball into the stands afterwards. As a senior, Chuck became the first lineman to ever win the Maxwell Award and finished third in the Heisman balloting in 1948.

The champion Eagles won the drawing for the bonus overall first pick in the 1949 draft and selected the hometown hero. Chuck was represented by Father Donnelly from Penn and rejected offers from the All America Conference's Brooklyn Dodgers to sign with the Eagles for a \$3,000 bonus and a salary that has been alternately noted as being from \$7-10,000. He did not play in either of Philadelphia's first two games in 1949 and went to coach Greasy Neale to complain about playing time. Neale started to work him into a rotation with center Vic Lindskog and linebacker Alex Wojciechowicz, two skilled but aging veterans. Bednarik pushed past Wojje as starting outside linebacker in 1950 and would not miss a game there until the 1957 season finale. In those eight years, Chuck went to seven Pro Bowls and received All Pro recognition every year. He had decent speed, solid pass coverage ability, great anticipation and was a steady tackler. Early 1950s Eagles coach Jim Trimble described Chuck's play, "He has an almost superhuman diagnostic ability. He's at the right place at the right time ... He's a great tackler, both on power plays and in the open field. He has loose, powerful arms and hands. He's at his best when they have a partial block on him and he reaches over and makes the tackle. He'll knock the head off an end when he catches the ball, and on a sweep, he knows when to close and turn the runner." Bednarik used a hightackling style in which he would slam into the ball carrier's chest and wrap him tightly in his arms like a python while savagely wrestling him to the ground. Hall of Fame coach George Allen once said admiringly of Chuck, "If not actually dirty, Bednarik was mean."

Chuck was also very durable and kept in shape with daily 4-hour workouts. In the off-season, he

sold concrete, earning him the very apt nickname of Concrete Charlie. Due to injuries, he had played center on occasion and had offered to play both ways for Trimble in 1955, but was asked by the team to switch to offense full time in 1958 because the team had an abundance of linebackers, but a weak offensive line. Although Colt defensive tackle Artie Donovan said in his book *Fatso* that Bednarik, "couldn't block my grandmother," and teammate Tom Brookshier claimed that Chuck often held instead of blocked, he was an able center. It was just that he was so much better on defense where he instinctually could react to a play. After two seasons at center, Chuck announced his retirement and had his "Day" prior to the Browns finale. If he had actually quit at that time, he would have had an 11-year career in which he went to seven Pro Bowls, received All Pro recognition eight times and played for one championship team.

That wonderful career can best be judged in comparison to a number of other highly respected outside linebackers who roughly could be called Chuck's contemporaries. Chuck Howley of the Cowboys played for 15 years, received All Pro notice 6 times and went to 6 Pro Bowls while playing on one champion; Andy Russell of the Steelers played for 12 years, received All Pro recognition 6 times and went to 7 Pro Bowls while playing for two champions; Chris Hanburger of the Redskins played for 14 years, received All Pro recognition 8 times and went to 9 Pro Bowls while never playing for a champion. For good measure, let's add middle linebacker Les Richter of the Rams who played for 9 years, received All Pro notice 5 times and went to 8 Pro Bowls while never playing for a champion. One other thing these four stars have in common is that none of them are in the Hall of Fame. Or consider 4gers outside linebacker Dave Wilcox, the brother of John Wilcox from the 1960 Eagles, who played for 11 years, received All Pro notice 7 times and went to 7 Pro Bowls while never playing for a champion. Wilcox is in the Hall of Fame, but had to wait 26 years to be elected. Chuck Bednarik was inducted into the Hall in his first year of eligibility, though. What happened?

1950 happened. Bednarik did not retire in 1959, but instead became the 50-minute man wearing the number 60 on the 1960 championship team. Chuck did have a remarkable year in leading the Eagles to the championship that year, but some of his exploits have been exaggerated over the years. First of all, he was not a two-way player throughout his career; he spent the majority of his career as an outside linebacker. Even in 1960, he did not play both ways for most of the season. He played 394.5 minutes that year in 12 games, an average of just under 33 minutes per game. He began the season as the starting center, but when linebacker Bob Pelegrini was injured in the fifth game of the season against the Browns, he switched over to linebacker. Rookie Bill Lapham played center for the next couple games, until the eighth game of the year, a vital match against the division rival Giants. Lapham started at center, but had so much trouble reacting to the Giants blitz schemes that Chuck relieved him in the second half, announcing to New York linebacker Sam Huff that, "The party's over; the veterans are taking over."

Bednarik played both ways that day and forever made his reputation with perhaps the most famous tackle in NFL history. The Eagles took the lead in the fourth quarter when Bednarik popped Giant fullback Mel Triplett causing a fumble that defensive back Jimmy Carr grabbed in mid air and returned 36 yards for a touchdown. When New York got the ball back, quarterback George Shaw tried to drive them for the tying score. He threw a pass to Frank Gifford coming across the middle, and Frank tried to weave his way for more yards. Gifford did not see Bednarik in Frederick Exley's phrase, "bearing down like a tractor trailer on a blind man," and Chuck hit Gifford high in the chest and knocked him backwards onto his head. The ball rolled free and Eagle middle linebacker Chuck Weber fell on it causing the famous shot of Bednarik celebrating over the fallen Gifford. All Chuck knew was that the Eagles had the ball and, "This

game is f***ing over!" He did not know that Gifford had such a severe concussion that he would not play again till 1962. There were surprises all around. Gifford's wife did not know that the dead body carried into the Giants locker room when she rushed down to see Frank was not her husband, but a fan who had suffered a heart attack in the stands that afternoon. Some complain that the only reason the tackle is so famous is that it was two Hall of Famers in a crucial game in New York, but it was a careerdefining tackle and is justly celebrated.

The next week the Eagles and Giants had the rematch in Philadelphia, and the Eagles came back to win again with Bednarik playing both ways. When the Eagles clinched the Eastern Division the week after that in St. Louis, though, Bob Pellegrini was back on defense and Chuck played center. In the championship game against the Packers, Bednarik played 58 minutes and, in legendary fashion, made the game-clinching tackle on the last play of the game. But this is often exaggerated in the retelling as well. Trailing by 4 with 9 seconds left, the Packers snapped the ball for one last play from the Eagle 22. With his deep receivers covered, Bart Starr hit check down receiver Jim Taylor at the 17. Taylor brushed past a couple of Eagle defenders until corner Bobby Jackson hit him low and grabbed his leg at the 9 while Bednarik hit him high and knocked him down with 1-2 seconds left while defensive back Bobby Freeman came in from the goal line. Bednarik did not make the tackle all by himself, wa~ not the last line of defense and he did not pin Taylor to the ground for several seconds while the clock ran out as the story is often told. Still, it was a good, solid, timely tackle.

It was a great season, and Chuck came back as center in 1961, but shifted in mid-year to middle linebacker to shore up the defense. He had never played the position before but was a quick study and played one final season as a middle linebacker at 37 in 1962 before really retiring. In retirement, his fame only grew. With his flat-nose face, gnarled and oddly bent fingers and no-nonsense candor, he was always a colorful interview for various NFL Films productions. He was elected to the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1967 and the College Hall in 1969. Also in 1969, Chucl, was named to the NFL's 50th Anniversary team as the center. 25 years later he was named to the NFL's 75th Anniversary Two-Way Team.

While he relished the role of Concrete Charlie, a fan favorite in Philadelphia, he became increasingly bitter along the way. He feuded with old teammate Pete Retzlaff over a job in the organization. He despised contemporary players for the money they make and the way they act on and off the field. He reserved special antipathy for Deion Sanders because flashy Deion played some offense to go with his work at cornerback and boasted of being a two-way player. Saddest of all, he got so resentful of Eagles owner Jeff Lurie because Lurie would not buy 100 copies of Chuck's 20-year old autobiography to give to the Eagles as presents that Bednarik publicly rooted against the Eagles in Super Bowl 39. It seems that his heart has become as twisted as his fingers, but Eagle fans should remember how much he gave to their team and how big a winner he was.

Galen Fiss

Courtesy of Jock.bio

The all-time roster of the Cleveland Browns reads like a Who's Who of pro football's Golden Age. The city's fans can argue long into the night about who was the team's most talented player-Otto Graham, Marion Motley, Lou Groza, Jim Brown, Paul Warfield-but they are likely to grow quiet when the name Galen Fiss is uttered. On a franchise known for its leaders, Galen embodied the qualities of leadership like no other Brown. The linebacker captained the 1964 squad to the NFL Championship, the last sports title won by a Cleveland team. Anyone who saw the game will never forget his age-defying, awe-inspiring performance that day, when he led a two-touchdown underdog to a 27-0 whitewash of John Unitas and the Baltimore Colts. His miraculous tackle of Lenny Moore, the game's best open-field runner, is still the stuff of legend-a gentle irony for a man who neither sought nor received the type of adulation that comes with being a football icon.

Galen Royce Fiss was born on July 10, 1931, in Johnson Kansas, a small town in the southwest part of the state. His family farmed the region's hardscrabble land. Johnson was in the Dust Bowl, and the Fiss clan was one of the few that did not follow the path west chronicled by John Steinbeck in *The Grapes of Wrath*.

They stayed and coaxed wheat crops from the land, and raised a few head of cattle to help make ends meet. Galen often spent 10 hours a day on the family tractor, working the farm with his father, grandfather and brother. When times improved, the Fiss family opened a garage in town, with Galen's father serving as head mechanic and his uncle selling used cars and trucks. Years of hard work gave Galen a rock-hard body to go with natural athletic ability and a relentless work ethic. He was the best football, baseball and basketball player for miles around, the star of Johnson High School. Galen figured he was just a big fish in a small pond, but when recruiter Don Fambrough from the University of Kansas offered a football scholarship his family suspected greater things awaited the teenager.

They were correct. Galen would letter in all three sports in Lawrence, and draw national attention in football and baseball. In the summers, he returned to Johnson to help out with the farm, and also played for a top amateur baseball team out of Garden City, 90 minutes away.

Galen liked to hit people. He stood an even six feet and weighed just a shade over 200, but delivered blows that regularly separated runners from the ball, and occasionally their senses. He played linebacker and halfback for the Jayhawks, and was nicknamed the "Earthshaker" for his jarring tackles.

Galen's hitting also earned him a spot on the Jayhawks' baseball team. He was the starting catcher, and roomed with another Kansas baseball player, Dean Smith. They were members of KU's freshman team in 1949-50. Almost 40 years later, while sitting on KU's athletic board of directors, Galen was instrumental in getting Smith's protege, Roy Williams, the coaching job after Larry Brown left the school. A handful of Galen's hoops teammates were still on the team in 1953, when Kansas advanced to the NCAA championship game.

The stars of the Jayhawk football squad, which was coached by J.V. Sikes, included halfback

Wade Stinson and tackle Mike McCormack. The 1950 team finished 6-4 (3-3 in the Big 7). With a couple of breaks, the team could have gone 9-1. Galen played linebacker and running back, joining a stellar group of sophomores that included offensive linemen George Mrkonic and Oliver Spencer, as well as Merlin Gish and Charlie Hoag. This group would fashion a 21-9 record in their three years together.

The 1951 Jayhawks finished 8-2, relying on a highpowered offense to cover the 20 points a game they gave up on defense. The problem was not with the linebacking corps. Galen and Gish were among the best in the country. Galen also starred in a reserve role in the Kansas backfield. In a game against Kansas State, he scored his lone collegiate touchdown on a run that saw him flatten five Wildcat tacklers. It was a classic "Galen Grinder," as the fans liked to call his runs.

At season's end, the Jayhawks earned a #20 national ranking. That was good enough to get them on the national TV schedule the following fall, as NBC broadcast their 13-0 pasting of TCU on September 20, 1952. It marked the first time a nationwide football audience saw the school play. The star of the 1952 squad was Gil Reich, a great all-around player who had been banished from West Point for not reporting a case of cheating. He was one of the country's best defensive backs, and also alternated with Jerry Robertson at quarterback. The Jayhawks went 7-3 and split their Big 7 meetings, finishing out of the Top 20. Galen earned All-Big 7 honors, not as a linebacker where he anchored the team's defense-but as a bruising fullback.

After the season, Galen was drafted by the Cleveland Browns in the 13th round, but he was not offered a contract. The Browns were the dominant team in pro football at the time, and Galen did not figure to make the squad. When the Cleveland Indians offered him a baseball contract, he decided to try his luck on the diamond. He played one year for their farm team in Fargo-Moorehead, which finished first and won the Northern League playoffs.

Galen split his time between catcher and outfield, and finished the year with a .275 average in 52 games. His manager that year was former All-Star Zeke Bonura. His teammates included an 18-year-old slugger named Roger Maris. The two remained friends for three decades.

After a two-year stint in the Air Force, during which he attained the rank of lieutenant, Galen received a \$7,500 contract offer from the Browns. He was a married man now, and football money seemed a better bet than the \$100 a week he would make in the minors. He would eventually make \$25,000 a year in the mid 1960s. During his college and military career, he had bulked up to 230 pounds, and was now a formidable physical presence when he took the field.

Galen and his wife Nancy would be together for 51 years, and had three kids, Scott, Bob and Leslie. Galen informed the Indians that he would be playing football for a living from then on, and reported to his first NFL training camp in the summer of 1956. The Browns were coming off a 38-14 trouncing of the Detroit Lions in the championship game. Galen roomed with his old college teammate, Mike McCormack, who had joined the team two seasons earlier after completing his military service. In the early practices, when Galen took a beating and had trouble adapting to the team's defensive system, it was McCormack who buoyed him by assuring him he was doing okay. If not for the future Hall of Famer's presence, he might have quit camp and headed back home.

Galen joined a group that included future NFL coaches Walt Michaels and Chuck Noll. The first pro game he played for the Browns was the first he had ever seen and the first he had played in

three years. Galen intercepted one pass on the year. Galen joined the Browns just in time to contribute to the first losing season in team history. Otto Graham had retired and his replacements, George Ratterman and Babe Parilli, were both felled by injuries. The upside of Cleveland's 5-7 record was a high pick in the draft, which the Browns used to select running back Jim Brown.

The Syracuse star was a key block in Paul Brown's rebuilding program, which would include defensive lineman Paul Wiggin, linebacker Vince Costello, and quarterback Milt Plum, running back Bobby Mitchell; guard Gene Hickerson, defensive back Jim Shofner, and Galen, who quickly became a team leader. Brown blended their skills with veterans like McCormack, Michaels, Lou Groza, Don Colo and Don Paul to record winning seasons for the rest of the decade.

The infusion of new blood paid dividends quickly, as the Browns returned to prominence in the Eastern Division, finishing 9-2-1. Brown was bigger than most linebackers and faster than most defensive backs, and NFL defenses had no idea how to stop him. He rolled up a league-high 942 yards, while Milt Plum and Tom O'Connell connected on enough passes to keep opponents honest.

The Cleveland defense was the league's stingiest. The Browns limited opponents to just 172 points in 12 games, recording two shutouts in the process. Galen emerged as one of the league's best LBs, permanently supplanting Noll on the right side.

The NFL title game pitted the Browns against the Detroit Lions. in Detroit. Written off after coach Buddy Parker quit and quarterback Bobby Layne broke his leg, the Lions proved their resilience by tying the 4gers in the West and defeating them in a playoff. The carried this momentum into their meeting with the Browns and humiliated them 59-14.

The Browns finished 9-3 in 1958, but failed to win the East. They lost to the Giants on the last day of the season to finish in a tie, then lost the playoff a week later when New York held Brown to a mere 8 yards in a 10-0 victory.

The Giants killed Cleveland's 1959 season, too. After two heart-breaking losses in November, the Browns were beaten 48-7 by the Giants in the worst defeat in franchise history. They finished 7-5, in second place behind New York. In 1960, the Browns avenged this lost by crushing New York 48-34 on the last day of the season. Unfortunately, the Eagles finished ahead of both, and went on to win the NFL Championship.

After missing the playoffs five years in a row, the finger-pointing started, and much of it was directed at coach Brown. Perhaps because the rival AFL was throwing money around, NFL players were starting to bristle at the hard-edged discipline of old-time coaches. Brown's coaching methods were also coming under increased scrutiny as the Browns faded from contention late in the 1961 season. Had the team played better against opposing passers, the Browns might have squeezed past the Giants and Eagles for the division title, but instead they finished third with a record of 8-5-1.

One of the best things the Browns did in 1961 was naming Galen team captain. Through all the ups and downs, he had proved to be utterly unflappable. He always did the right thing on and off the field, and always knew the right thing to say, regardless of a situation's complexity. Not surprisingly, Galen was well-liked by all of the team's player, and wellrespected-the perfect

Gibraltar for a team in transition and turmoil.

With new owner Art Modell breathing down his neck, Brown decided to start retooling the club for the 1960s. His boldest move was the trade of Mitchell to the Redskins for Ernie Davis, the first African-American to win the Heisman Trophy, and the first black player to be signed by Washington. The promise of football's ultimate two-man backfield collapsed that summer when Davis fell ill while working out with the college All-Stars. He was diagnosed with leukemia and never played a down for Cleveland, passing away the following spring.

Young Charlie Scales ended up getting most of the starts alongside Brown in 1962, resulting in the superstar's lone sub-1,000-yard campaign. Once again, Cleveland fell short of the playoffs, finishing 7-6-1, behind the Giants and Steelers. The lone bright spot was the emergence of newcomer Frank Ryan, a former Rams benchwarmer who seized control of the quarterback job after Plum was traded to the Lions and Len Dawson went to the AFL Dallas Texans. Galen recorded a career-high four interceptions, leading corps that now included young Mike Lucci. Despite being a half-step slower, Galen was two steps smarter, and made the Pro Bowl for the first time. He also gained Second Team All-Pro recognition from two of the news services-the one and only time he would earn his honor.

At season's end, Modell canned Paul Brown, and ordered the Brownie logo to be abandoned in an attempt to make a clean break with the past. Under new coach Blanton Collier, the Browns recaptured some of the old magic and finished 10-4 in 1963. Ernie Green became the starting halfback and was good enough to keep defenses honest against Brown, who reached the 1,000-yard mark in the team's eighth game. He finished with a record 1,863 yards, while Ryan threw 25 TO passes-including 13 to Gary Collins, a second-year end out of Maryland. The Browns kept pace with the Giants until the 13th week, when they were ambushed by the Lions 38-10. The Giants finished with 11 victories to deny the Browns the division crown once again. Galen was named to his second Pro Bowl after the season.

The Browns went into 1964 feeling they were just a couple of players away from putting a championship team on the field. They were right. They gave Ryan a second target by drafting Paul Warfield, and blocked flawlessly for Brown and Green all season long. On defense, the acquisition of Giants nemesis Dick Modzelewski made the Browns a great run-stopping team. The Achilles heel was, as usual, the pass defense.

The collapse of the Giants in 1964 opened the door for a new division winner, and the Browns established themselves early as the team to beat. As the campaign unfolded, the St. Louis Cardinals proved their only obstacle tying the Browns in their first meeting and beating them in their second. Cleveland finished 10-3-1 to finish a half-game in front. Galen played most of December with a cast from his fingers to his elbow after breaking his left thumb. League rules demanded that he wrap the cast with a thick sponge, and the referees inspected before each game before he was allowed to play.

The Browns specialized in winning ugly. Their defense gave up the most first downs in the league, the second most rushing yards, and the third most passing yards. The team played a zone defense in order to cover deficiencies in their defensive backfield, which was the NFL's slowest.

The winner in the west was Baltimore. The Colts led the NFL in points scored and points allowed. They were picked to win the championship by almost all of the experts, with some

bookies listing them as two touchdown favorites. This puzzled Galen, who knew Baltimore had a great team, but felt that the talent and chemistry of the 1964 Browns gave them an advantage, particularly since the game would be played in Cleveland's Municipal Stadium.

As the team captain, Galen had the honor of walking to midfield to confer with officials before the game. He had never heard the stadium louder before kickoff.

Galen got the crowd of 79,544 going in the second quarter when he made a brilliant tackle on a swing pass from John Unitas to Lenny Moore. Moore had lined up as a pass blocker, and the entire Cleveland defense bought it. When Unitas whirled around and fired a pass to him, he saw not only one defensive player between himself and the goal line, some 70 yards away-Galen Fiss.

Galen knew instantly he was out of position. His job on this play was to stay close to the line and protect against screen passes, so he could tackle the receiver before the blocking set up. On this play, he was way too deep. All-Pros Jim Parker and Bob Vogel were steaming toward him, and there was no one to back him up. Galen had no choice but to attack the play. He zig-zagged between Parker and Bob Vogel and cut a shocked Moore's legs out with a diving ankle tackle just as he turned the corner. Whenever they met in the ensuing years, Moore asked Galen how he got to him on that play.

It is no exaggeration to characterize this as a momentum-turning hit. The play kept the score at 0-0, and many of Galen's teammates said that was the moment- they were convinced they could beat the Colts.

By this point, the Cleveland fans had begun to notice something different about their team's defense sets. Gone was the zone, replaced by a tight man defense. Coach Collier felt the key to stopping Unitas was keeping receivers Ray Berry and Jimmy Orr from running crossing patterns into the seams behind the linebackers. Galen spent much of the day chasing Berry with help from Walter Beach, with Jim Houston and Ross Fitchner shadowing Orr. The move surprised the Colts, who were never able to adjust.

After a scoreless first half, the Browns struck in the third quarter with a Lou Groza field goal and a pair of TO passes from Ryan to Collins. The Colts had focused their pass coverage on the speedy Warfield, and paid the price again in the fourth quarter when Collins made his third touchdown grab to turn the championship game into a 27-0 rout. The big story was Cleveland's defensive effort against the powerhouse Colts, who managed a mere 177 yards on offense against a supposedly porous unit. One of the many unsung heroes was lineman Jim Kanicki, who got the better of Parker all day.

To his surprise, Galen was singled out for special praise. It was said that he played the "perfect" game. Over the years, he denied it, but his performance made him into a Cleveland cult hero. Actually, Galen did turn in one of the best championship performances by an NFL linebacker. There were 11 Hall of Famers on the field that day, but none was better than the Cleveland captain. He harassed Unitas all day, sacking him once and clubbing him in the helmet with his cast on one play. When he dropped into coverage, he was thinking right along with the Baltimore quarterback, blanketing Berry on his precision routes and taking away one of Baltimore's most formidable weapons. He tipped one pass that was picked off by Vince Costello, and could easily have been named MVP. Collins, who caught three TO passes, was accorded that honor.

Teammate Paul Wiggin once said that Galen turned in "the most beautifully played game I've ever seen by one individual." Jim Brown called Galen's tackle of Moore "one of the most inspirational plays in the history of football."

In 1965, when Galen received his NFL Championship ring, it did not fit on his gnarled right ring finger. That meant he would have to wear it on his left hand-in place of his wedding ring. Nancy understood.

That season, the Browns successfully defended their Eastern title, and returned to the championship game, against the Green Bay Packers. This time there would be something more than the NFL title on the line – the winner would advance to the very first Super Bowl, against the AFL champion.

The two teams met not on the frozen tundra for which Lambeau Field was so famous, but in a muddy quagmire. The Browns led 9-7 after one quarter, but the Packer running attack slowly wore them down, and Paul Hornung and Jim Taylor combined for more than 200 yards in a 23-12 victory.

The 1966 season marked Galen's last. He was 36 and slow of foot, but he and the Browns still had a great year, recovering from an 0-2 start and finishing with 9 victories. That was not enough to hold off the fast improving Cowboys, however, who won 10 times.

When he hung up the pads for the last time, Galen had played 11 NFL seasons and missed only five games. After retiring, he settled in Kansas City and got into the insurance business with his friend and teammate, Mike McCormack. Galen ran his own agency for 20 years. His sons-both of whom played football at his alma mater-still run the company, G.R. Fiss Co., today. Galen developed Alzheimer's and died on July 20, 2006. He was 75.

Galen Fiss was sometimes asked if he minded being remembered by so many football fans for one play the Moore tackle in the 1964 title game.

His answer spoke volumes about him as a player and a person. "It's an honor," he said, "to be remembered at all."