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**O.J. Anderson**

## PFRA-ternizing

### HAY & ROSS WINNERS ANNOUNCED

**Emil Klosinski** and **Matthew Algeo** are the winners of PFRA's annual achievement awards.

**Emil Klosinski**, who has written about pre-NFL days in *Pro Football in the Days of Rockne* and a biography of famous line coach "Hunk" Anderson, has been named the 2006 winner of PFRA's **Ralph Hay Award**, given for lifetime achievement in pro football research and historiography.

### Past Hay Award Winners

2005	John Gunn
2004	Jeff Miller
2003	John Hogrogian
2002	Ken Pullis
2001	Tod Maher
2000	Mel "Buck" Bashore
1999	Dr. Stan Grosshandler
1998	Seymour Siwoff
1997	Total Sports
1996	Don Smith
1995	John Hogrogian
1994	Jim Campbell
1993	Robert Van Atta
1992	Richard Cohen
1991	Joe Horrigan
1990	Bob Gill
1989	Joe Plack
1988	David Neft

For his *Last Team Standing*, the story of the Steagles and pro football during World War II, **Matthew Algeo** is the recipient of the 2006 **Nelson Ross Award** given to a PFRA member for recent achievement in pro football research and historiography.

### Past Ross Award Winners

2005	Chris Willis
2004	Michael MacCambridge
2003	Mark Ford
2002	Bob Gill, Steve Brainerd, Tod Maher
2001	Bill Ryczek
2000	Paul Reeths
1999	Joe Ziemba
1998	Keith McClellan
1997	Tod Maher & Bob Gill
1996	John Hogrogian
1995	Phil Dietrich
1994	Rick Korch
1993	Jack Smith
1992	John M. Carroll
1991	Tod Maher
1990	Pearce Johnson
1989	Bob Gill
1988	Bob Braunwart

### SHOE CONTRACT? WHAT SHOE CONTRACT?

With today's Sneaker Wars and Athletic Equipment Battles, it's hard to imagine that a pro athlete, especially a leading receiver in the NFL would buy his own shoes. But that was exactly the situation in the NFL in the early-1950s.

Somewhere in a file in the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton reposes a picture of Tom Fears, the Los Angeles Rams offensive end and Hall of Famer, wearing a pair of Addidas soccer shoes. It's a posed-action picture. One of those made famous by Jim Laughead, who photographed nearly every NFL team and most college teams from the 1930s through the 1960s. Fears is facing the camera, legs spread, airborne, and catching a ball thrown about knee-high. On his feet are soccer shoes, instead of the traditional football cleats.

When asked about his choice of footwear, Fears simply said, "I liked the feel of them. The shorter cleats seemed to take a little of the wear and tear off your legs. I bought them on my own. No one from Addidas (Fears pronounced it Ah-DYE-dis) ever approached me, ever offered me a cent. Nowadays, nearly everyone has a shoe deal. Guess I was just a little ahead of my time."

The pro athletes' shoe deals were still about a quarter-century into the future.

-- Jim Campbell

## THE COFFIN CORNER

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PFRA MEMBERSHIP \$25 per year

Bob Carroll, Editor

Ken Crippen, Assistant Editor

Frank D. Mann, Website Editor

Check the label on your CC envelope for the state of your membership. *Member thru 2007 (to 29-6)* means you are a member for this year.

# PFRA COMMITTEES

By Ken Crippen

Since the last issue of the *Coffin Corner* was put together, there have been a few changes to the PFRA Committees. First, the Rochester Jeffersons Committee was made a subcommittee of the Western New York Committee. It was determined that it would be best to keep it under the umbrella of the Western New York Committee, than it was to have it as a separate committee.

Next, the Central New York Committee was formed, due to the large amount of information coming in regarding the Watertown Athletic Association and the Syracuse Athletic Association. It was best to give it a separate committee, instead of attaching the research to the Western New York Committee. You can read more about this new committee under the Central New York Committee listing.

Finally, Andy Piascik has volunteered to head the Hall of Very Good Committee. More information on this committee will appear in future issues of *Coffin Corner*, but the work looks very promising.

## **Hall of Very Good Committee:**

Committee Goal: To solicit and sort through nominees, to prepare all HOVG-related materials for *Coffin Corner* and to prepare write-ups on the nominees.

Update: The committee is still in the formative stages and further information will be provided in future issues of *Coffin Corner*.

### Contact Information:

Andy Piascik  
25 Cartright St.  
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andy@nflhistory.net

## **Membership Committee:**

Committee Goal: To find ways to make it easier for PFRA members to contact each other and to know who is working on what research.

Update: No update at this time.

### Contact Information:

John Fenton  
11184 Hendrix St.  
Philadelphia, PA 19116  
(267) 235-2164  
jjfenton@comcast.net

## **Pre-NFL Pro Football Committee:**

Committee Goal: To research all semi-professional and professional games played prior to 1920. This would include line scores, game summaries and rosters.

Update: No update at this time.

### Contact Information:

Roy Sye  
708 W. Braeside Drive  
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syeroy@wowway.com

## **Team Radio and TV Commentators Committee:**

Committee Goal: To document the play-by-play announcers, analysts and field reporters for every single broadcast of NFL and AFL games (regular season and post season) from 1939 to the present.

Update: No update at this time.

### Contact Information:

Tim Brulia  
14 Altoona Avenue  
Enola, PA 17025  
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tbrulia@state.pa.us

## **Uniforms of Past Teams Committee:**

Committee Goal: To document every uniform design and color (helmets, jerseys, pants and socks) for each NFL, AFL and AAFC team from 1933 to the present.

Update: No update at this time.

### Contact Information:

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## **All-Pros and Awards Committee:**

Committee Goal: To generate a complete listing of All-Pro teams from all sources. For the Awards Committee: generate a complete list of all AP and UPI awards and the voting for each of them.

Update: No update at this time.

### Contact Information:

John Hogrogian

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or

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jturney@totacc.com

## **Stadiums Committee:**

Committee Goal: To document and publish information on all stadiums used by professional football teams. The stadium Committee has started and is concentrating on the stadiums in use since 1946. This would include all AAFC, NFL and AFL teams. For each stadium, the committee would like to gather the following:

- A) An aerial view
- B) An exterior view (a view taken of the stadium at street level)
- C) An interior view (a view taken from the stands)
- D) An action view (a view of a game being played in the stadium, which shows both players and some portion of the stadium from the field level)

Along with this information, factual data on each stadium will be compiled. This data would include construction dates, dates of use, anecdotal history, etc. The committee would also like to work on stadiums from other eras (pre-1946), but they will start with post-1946 stadiums. The goal of the committee is to compile book to be published.

Update: No update at this time.

### Contact Information:

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## **Empire Football League Committee:**

Committee Goal: To research and document the history of the semi-professional Empire Football League.

Update: No update at this time.

### Contact Information:

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Endicott, NY 13760  
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EmpireFoot@aol.com

## **Western New York Committee:**

Committee Goal: To research and document all amateur, semi-professional and professional teams that played in the Western New York Area. The committee would like to publish an encyclopedia when the research has been completed.

Update: No update at this time.

## **Rochester Jeffersons Subcommittee:**

Subcommittee Goal: To publish a book on the complete history of the Rochester Jeffersons. This book will contain scores, rosters, game summaries and biographies of all of the players.

<http://www.RochesterJeffersons.com>

### Contact Information:

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Ken\_Crippen@billsbackers.com

## **Central New York Committee:**

Committee Goal: To research and document all amateur, semi-professional and professional teams that played in the Central New York Area. The committee would like to publish an encyclopedia when the research has been completed.

Update: Even though this committee is new, it is rapidly completing research on Central New York Teams. The Watertown Athletic Association project is still underway, but the biggest advances have been with the research of the Syracuse Athletic Association (1890-1900). As of the publishing of this issue, the committee is close to completing the history of the Syracuse Athletic Association and will be preparing it for publication. Over the next few months, the data will be put online and a book will be published by the end of the year.

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*Ken Crippen is responsible for oversight of the PFRA Committees. If you would like to help out with a committee or if you want to form your own committee, contact him at: [Ken\\_Crippen@billsbackers.com](mailto:Ken_Crippen@billsbackers.com).*

## THE HALL OF VERY GOOD: CLASS OF 2007

Happily, the election of some great players to the Pro Football Hall of Fame has only been postponed for a year or two, but some excellent players will never find their busts in Canton. PFRA makes no judgment on whether those passed over were actually Hall of Fame-caliber players or not. What we do insist upon is that there are many, many players who deserve recognition as far better than the average.

As a way to honor these players, we hereby create The Hall of Very Good. The Classes of 2003-06 were selected by the votes of the PFRA membership. Players chosen can not be enshrined in the Pro Football Hall of Fame, and they must be passed over so many times that any ultimate enshrinement appears doubtful. Should any member of the Hall of Very Good be subsequently elected to the Pro Football Hall of Fame, he will immediately and joyfully be stricken from the HoVG.

In the past, three HOVG electees - Carl Eller, Bennie Friedman, and Gene Hickerson - were subsequently elected to the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

### Classes of 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006

Maxie Baughan	Pat Fischer	Jerry Kramer	Johnny Robinson	Otis Taylor
Jim Benton	John Hadl	Big Daddy Lipscomb	Kylr Rote	Fuzzy Thurston
Gene Brito	Chris Hanberger	Floyd Little	Tobin Rote	Mick Tingelhoff
John Brodie	Pat Harder	Jim Marshall	Lou Rymkus	Dan Towler
Jack Butler	Bob Hayes	Al Nesser	Del Shofner	Al Wistert
Gino Cappelletti	Bill Howton	Tommy Nobis	Duke Slater	
Chuck Conerly	Chuck Howley	Pete Retzlaff	Mac Speedie	
Lavie Dilweg	Alex Karras	Dave Robinson	Dick Stanfel	



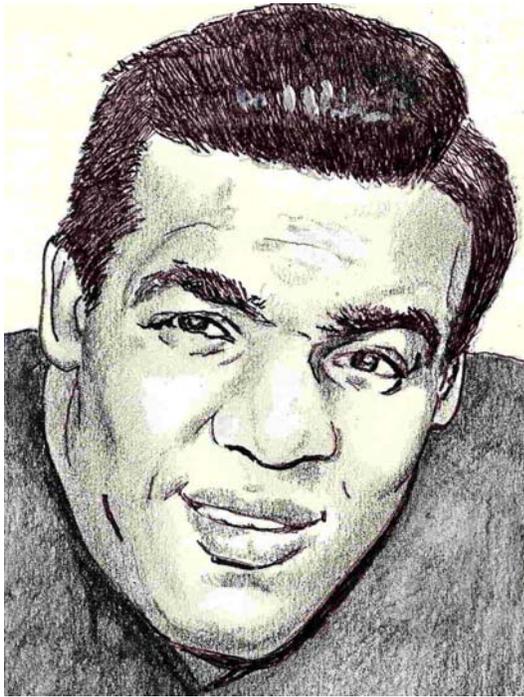
#### **FRANKIE ALBERT**

First team all-AAFC/NFL once, second team three times. All-AAFC three times. Tossed 29 TD's in 1948, 27 in '49. Co-MVP in 1948. Lost 4 years to military. Expert bootlegger, ball-handler. 48.2 yard punting average in 1949, 43.0 for career. Great on-the-run punter.



#### **ROGER BROWN**

Punishing tackle on great defenses in Detroit and Los Angeles. Starred in 1962 Thanksgiving Day Massacre. Once held all-time record with 3 career safeties. Iron man who never missed a game in 10 year career. 6 Pro Bowls, all-pro twice.



**TIMMY BROWN**

Dangerous runner, receiver, and return man. 12,681 all-purpose yards including 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> best season marks. 64 TD's, 6 on kick returns. Averaged 26.0 on kickoff returns and twice led NFL in yards. Led NFL with 5.4 rushing average in 1965. 3-time Pro Bowler.



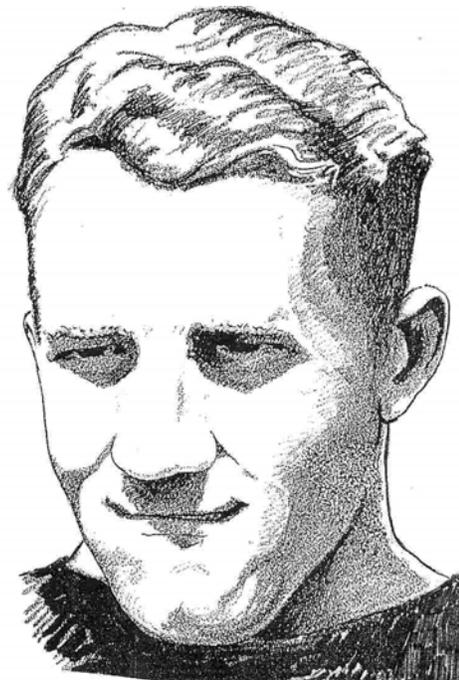
**JIM LEE HOWELL**

Winning percentage of .648 is best in Giants history of coaches with at least 3 seasons. Led team to 3 conference titles and 1956 championship. Never had a losing record in 7 years. Also won NFL title, 4 conference crowns, and all-pro honors as player.



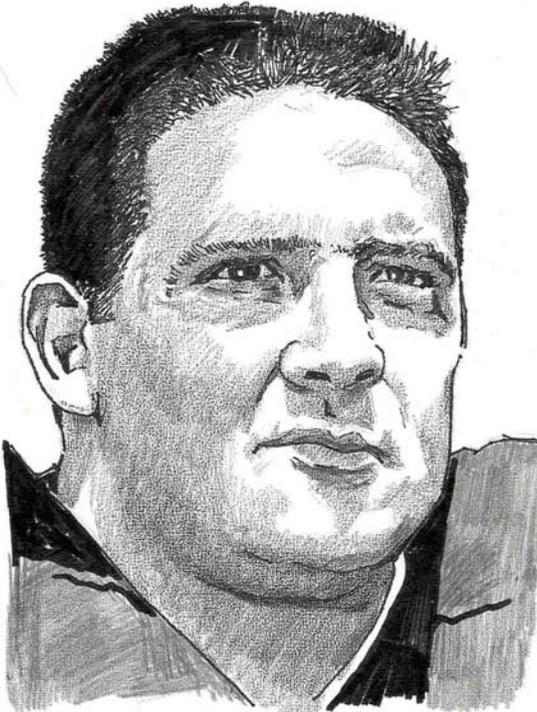
**MARSHALL GOLDBERG**

Part of Cardinals' Dream Backfield. Leader on 1 league and 2 conference champs. Led NFL in interceptions in 1941. Twice led league in kickoff return yards and finished 3<sup>rd</sup> with 24.2 yard average in '41, 2<sup>nd</sup> at 26.2 in '42. Missed 2 years in military. All-pro in '47.



**GLENN PRESNELL**

Outstanding triple threat. Led Ironton Yanks to wins over Giants and Bears in 1930. 1<sup>st</sup> in scoring, 2<sup>nd</sup> in passing, 4<sup>th</sup> in rushing and all-pro in '33. Played on Lions teams that had 7 straight shutouts in '34 and won NFL title in '35. Kicked record 54-yard field goal in '34.



**DICK SCHAFRATH**

Helped Browns finish 1st in rushing yards 5 times, yards per carry 6 times including all-time best 5.74 in 1963. Known for making multiple blocks on same play. Only missed 2 games in 13 years. All-pro 3 times, 6 Pro Bowls. Team never had losing season in career.



**ED SPRINKLE**

Rugged player on many excellent Bears' teams. One of the first pass rushing defensive ends. Played on Chicago's 1946 champions. Team finished 2<sup>nd</sup> 7 times in his career. All-pro twice, 2<sup>nd</sup> team 3 times, 4 Pro Bowls. Nabbed 7 TD passes in spot duty on offense.



**JAKE SCOTT**

Standout safety on two Super Bowl winners. 49 career interceptions. 2 in SB VII when he was MVP. In NFL Top 10 seven times. Known for playing hurt. Excellent kick returner. 5<sup>th</sup> in NFL in punt returns in 1970, 3<sup>rd</sup> in '71, 4<sup>th</sup> in '73. All-pro 4 times, 5 Pro Bowls.



**TANK YOUNGER**

Mainstay on greatest offense in history. 6.2 yards per rush in 1951, 6.7 in '54, 4.7 for career. Pro Bowler and all-pro mention on both offense and defense. Played in 4 Championship Games. First pro player from historically black college.

# 1987 CONNECTICUT GIANTS

By Mark L. Ford

Semi-pro football has its share of interesting stories-- if you can find them. A lot of small leagues have come and gone over the years. Unlike baseball, which has always enjoyed a lot of attention from the newspapers at any level, minor league football has seldom rated much coverage. A news account of a semi-pro football game is a rare find. Minor league football is a perfect example of history that you have to reconstruct.

So, what's the deal with the 1987 Connecticut Giants? They were the team that contributed more replacement players than any other during the 1987 NFL strike. The replacements came from everywhere, and while most were between grid jobs, an appreciable number were playing semi-pro ball when the call went out. At least 17 of these Giants are known to have gone to the NFL in October 1987. Including six others from Southern Connecticut State University, there were twentythree replacements from New Haven, Connecticut, enough to make a full team. This is their story. It's also the story of the CIFL, the last ambitious minor football league.

It's a story that would have gone overlooked, but for a semi-pro football enthusiast named John Guy. Guy's list, of pro players with semi-pro connections, includes not just the player names, but their roots-- teams, leagues, dates of service. Looking at the list (from Guy's book [The Encyclopedia of Minor League Football](#), as well as the annual [AFA Media Guide](#)), it's amazing how many semi -pro players ended up in NFL uniforms during the strike-- and how many of them are listed as being from the "1987-Connecticut Giants".

So, who were these Giants of small-time football? There's not much about them on the Internet. The [New Haven Register](#) ignored the local semi-pro club, other than a brief article on September 28. Luckily, the Giants were in the same league as a team in Frederick, Maryland. The Frederick Falcons got better coverage than most semi-pro teams ever see, and the [Frederick News-Post](#) is among the papers digitally preserved on newspaperarchive.com, so the story of the Giants can be pieced together.

Jimmy Jackson, who had played tackle for the New York Jets in 1966, was the coach of the Connecticut Giants. Based in New Haven, he played its games at East Haven High School's Crisafi Field. Jackson was one of the more ambitious men of the semi-pro gridiron. With the help of team owner Anthony F. Cutaia, he recruited a lot of talented players. The Giants won the championship of the Atlantic Football

League in 1985, after a 12 - 0 -1 regular season, but Coach Jackson had bigger plans in mind.

## The ACFL Resurrected

In 1986, Jackson approached officials from the Interstate Football League, which was down to only 3 teams, and proposed a merger with the best teams of the Atlantic league for a strong regional circuit. From the Atlantic and Interstate leagues came the 8 team "Continental Interstate Football League". It was probably the most awkward name for a pro football circuit since, say, the "American Professional Football Association".

"Continental" was an homage to the area's Revolutionary War heritage, rather than a geographical description, but the league was definitely "interstate", boasting teams in five states and the District of Columbia.

The Atlantic League supplied its defending champion Giants, as well as the Baltimore Rams, the (Newark) New Jersey Bears, and the (Woodbridge) Virginia Storm. From the Interstate League came the 1985 champs, the Chambersburg (Pa.) Cardinals, the Frederick (Md.) Falcons, and the Metro Buccaneers (who played their games at Roosevelt High in Washington, DC).

A former IFL team, the Pocono Mountaineers of East Stroudsburg, PA, came in as well. With the addition of the Chesapeake Bay Neptunes (Norfolk, Virginia) from the MasonDixon League, and the independent Richmond Renegades, the new CIFL had ten teams stretching across 400 miles of the Atlantic seaboard from New Haven to Norfolk.

The new CIFL covered the same area as the 1960s Atlantic Coast Football League, reviving memories of the ACFL and its Newark Bears and Norfolk Neptunes. Team names notwithstanding, these Giants, Rams, Bears, Cardinals, Falcons and Buccaneers weren't affiliated with the NFL, but there were ties to another pro football league. Coach Jackson had been proud to announce earlier in 1986 that the New Jersey Generals would make Connecticut their farm team ... just in time for the USFL's 1986 fall season. We know how that story ended, but when the CIFL organized in May, the '86 USFL season was still a go -- and the CIFL just happened to have its own Renegades, and its own teams in Baltimore and New Jersey. Had that antitrust suit gone a little better, who knows what might have happened? Still, the CIFL proved to be a strong

league, with all ten teams completing a 14 game season in 1986~ Better yet, the former Atlantic and Interstate clubs were evenly matched, with the Giants beating the Falcons 17-15 in the final 15 seconds of the first CIFL title game.

### The 1987 CIFL Season

For 1987, Chambersburg was replaced by another Pennsylvania club, the Harrisburg Patriots. The new Richmond entry was the Ravens, a name that the NFL hadn't yet taken. In 1987, each CIFL team would play eleven games-- eight against their four division rivals, and three more outside the division. The Connecticut Giants, now the defending CIFL champs, shared the Northern with Baltimore, Harrisburg, New Jersey and Pocono, while the Southern teams were Chesapeake Bay, D.C. Metro, Frederick, Richmond and Virginia. The two top finishers in each division would go to the playoffs.

While there was no formal farm club arrangement with the NFL, New Haven's location made it an ideal site for castoffs from the NFL's Giants, Jets, and Patriots. Lewis Bennett (Florida A & M) and Edwin Lovelady (Memphis State) had been in the New York Giants' training camp. Both were cut the same day, August 10, and signed up with Connecticut in time for the CIFL season opener.

Being the defending champs didn't keep Connecticut from dropping its opener, a 20-7 loss to the Ravens at Richmond on August 15. A week later, the Giants were shut out 24-0 by the Patriots at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

Pat Ragusa, a placekicker from St. John's U., had been in camp with the New York Jets. He was cut on August 27, and joined the 0-2 Connecticut team.

In week three, the 0-2 Giants hosted the equally winless Baltimore Rams and walloped them 47-13, putting Connecticut a game behind Harrisburg and New Jersey. Labor Day Weekend saw the Giants at home again, dropping the Pocono Mountaineers 38-0 and improving to 2-2-0. In their third straight home game, the Giants hosted the second place New Jersey Rams on September 12. The score was tied 10-10 when Giants' kicker Pat Ragusa hit a 35 yard field goal with 2:53 left. The 13-10 victory allowed Connecticut to take over second place from New Jersey, and put the team only half a game behind Harrisburg-- and Harrisburg was their next opponent.

The Patriots, of course, had demolished the Giants in August, but that had been in Harrisburg. Since then, the Patriots had lost a 9-6 squeaker to the Falcons, and were 31-0 to the Giants' 3-2-0. The rematch would be on Connecticut's turf on September 19. By that time, the NFL players had set a September 22 strike deadline, and many of the Connecticut Giants were preparing to tryout for the big leagues. For week 5,

however, all the CIFL teams remained at full strength. A win would allow the Giants to take over Harrisburg's first place position atop the CIFL's Northern Division. The game was tied 13-13 at the end of regulation, and neither side could score in sudden death. Harrisburg (3-1-1) remained at first place, and Connecticut (now 3-2-1) was still half a game behind.

In the days after the September 19 game, the NFL's regular players walked out on strike -- and most of the Connecticut Giants' regular players took a leave of absence for a chance to fill vacancies in the big league. Not surprisingly, five of these semi-pro Giants signed to become big league New York Giants, and three caught on with the New England, and two more joined the New York Jets. Another three went further upstate to Buffalo, and the other three were dispersed among Atlanta, Chicago and Washington.

Needless to say, the loss of 16 of their best players put Connecticut at a disadvantage. Even home field advantage was of little use against the Chesapeake Bay Neptunes, who rolled over the Giants 21-3. Connecticut now had to share second place with the Pocono Mountaineers. To make things worse, Connecticut's next game was going to be against those Mountaineers; without its first string players; on a road trip to Pennsylvania's Pocono Mountains; and against the team whom they had recently humiliated, 38-0. The Giants lost the game, 24-7, along with their second place spot.

Fortune was with the Giants, however, giving them a break when they could use it the most. The October 10 game was to have been played in Baltimore, but the Rams had folded after their October 3 loss {19-0} to Virginia. The forfeit improved Connecticut's record to 4-4-1, and they even got to stay home that weekend. Pocono, which did travel, was beaten 21-13 by the Virginia Storm. Since the top two teams in each division would make the playoffs, 4-4-1 Connecticut was tied again with 4-4-0 Pocono, and back in the championship race.

Connecticut lost its October 17 game, but so did Pocono. The Giants dropped their final regular season game, a 15-0 shutout by the Buccaneers in Washington DC, to close the season at 4-6-1. Pocono played a close game against Chesapeake, but lost 23-21 to put them at 4-6-0. Pocono had one more game-- the November 7 weekend was set aside to make up all games that had been postponed earlier - - and that would be against the Metro Bucs. With a win, Pocono would go 5-6-0 and be in the playoffs; a loss, and Connecticut would go to postseason.

Like the NFL's Washington, D. C. team, the CIFL' scapi tal city entry was having a good season in 1987. The D.C. Buccaneers took an early lead and went on to a 33-15 win over Pocono for an 8-3-0 finish.

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Pocono, at 4-7-0, finished half a game behind the 4-6-1 Giants. Connecticut, surprisingly, had made it into the playoffs without its top players. Even more surprisingly, most of those players returned in time for the playoff.

### Return to Earth: The CIFL playoffs

The only explanation is love of the game. As replacement players, the 16 Giants who left for the strike made more money in one NFL game than they would see in a season of semi-pro ball. Their NFL careers over, however, the replacements were still proud to return to the CIFL. The CIFL playoff was a Shaughnessy type, pitting the first place finisher in one division played the second-place team in the other division: Falcons vs. Giants, and Patriots vs. Buccaneers, and the winners would play for the CIFL title.

The last Frederick-Connecticut meeting had been for the 1986 CIFL championship. In that game, the Falcons held a 15-13 until the fourth-seeded Giants took the title on a field goal with 15 seconds left. None of the Falcons had crossed a picket line, and now they were hosting the most non-union team in the league.

Paul Kelly, who had been on the New York Giants' squad a couple of months before, had returned to his quarterback job for the non-NFL Giants. From his own 18, he completed a pass to John Reed in the first quarter. Reed caught the ball at the 40 and ran the remaining 60 yards for the game's first score. Pat Ragusa, who had been placekicker for the New York Jets for all three strike games, made the extra point to give Connecticut a 7-0 lead. Trailing 17-7 in the second quarter, the Giants closed the gap.

Lewis Bennett, who had caught a touchdown pass in the New York Giants loss to the 4gers in October, hauled in an 11 yard pass for Connecticut's next score. Ragusa added the point after, and the Giants were only down 17-14 at halftime ...

### Epilogue

The rest of the story is anticlimactic. Frederick scored on field goals in the third and fourth quarters for a 23-14 win, and beat Harrisburg 26-20 to win the CIFL championship. The Connecticut Giants disbanded after the 1987 season, and the CIFL itself folded after 1992. By then, the minor league football was changing. The Arena Football League had started earlier in 1987, and what would become NFL Europa had launched in 1991. Minor league football lives on today, of course, though nobody calls it that. Today, the teams play in Columbus, and Cologne, and Calgary.

With ten teams stretching across the Atlantic coast, yet within a few hours drive of six NFL clubs, the CIFL could have been a "new haven" for aspiring NFL and

USFL players. The Continental Interstate Football League was the last great minor football league of the 1980s, and is worth remembering twenty years later. Semi-pro football has its share of interesting stories-- if you can find them.

### 1987 CONNECTICUT GIANTS

Pos	NO	Player	Tm	Gm	College
WR-	10	Beau Almodobar	NYG	2	Norwich +
DB-	41	Rickey Atkinson	NE	2	So.Conn.St. ^
WR-	87	Lewis Bennett	NYG	3	Florida A&M *
WR-	86	Mike Benson	NE	dnp	So.Conn.St. *
QB-	16	Walter Briggs	NYJ	1	Montclair *
OT-	79	Mark Carlson	Was	1	So.Conn.St.^
DT-	99	Reggie Carr	NYG	3	Jackson St. +
RB-	46	Joe Chetti	Buf	2	C.W. Post *
OT-	67	Anthony Corvino	NYJ	2	So.Conn.St. ^
RB-	41	Fred DiRenzo	NYG	1	New Haven *
G -	71	Sean Dowling	Buf	3	C.W. Post *
RB-	34	Royce Fontes	NYG	dnp	Wagner *
CB-	28	David Hendley	NE	2	So.Conn.St ^
QB-	15	Paul Kelly	NYG*	dnp	New Haven *
DB-	37	Leander Knight	Atl	1	Montclair *
TE-	82	Jamie Kurisko	NYJ	3	So.Conn.St. ^
WR-	88	Edwin Lovelady	NYG	3	Memphis St. *
DB-	37	Pat Morrison	NYG	1	So.Conn.St. ^
DT-	98	Jonathan Norris	Chi	3	American Int'l*
K -	11	Pat Ragusa	NYJ*	3	St.John's *
LB-	95	Frank Sacco	NE	2	Fordham *
DE-	74	Richard Tharpe	Buf	3	Louisville *
DT-	90	Murray Wichard	NE	3	Frostburg +

- *The Encyclopedia of Minor League Football*, 3<sup>rd</sup>.Ed.
- + *Frederick News- Post*
- ^ possibly with Giants, played with So. Conn. St. U.
- Dnp – signed to team but did not play

### **CONTINENTAL INTERSTATE FOOTBALL LEAGUE 1987 FINAL STANDINGS**

<u>Northern Division</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>L</u>	<u>T</u>
Harrisburg Patriots	9	1	1
Connecticut Giants	4	6	1
Pocono Mountaineers	4	7	0
New Jersey Bears	4	7	0
Baltimore Rams	1	10	0
<u>Southern Division</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>L</u>	<u>T</u>
Frederick Falcons	10	1	0
Metro Buccaneers	8	3	0
Chesapeake Bay Neptunes	6	5	0
Richmond Ravens	5	6	0
Virginia Storm	3	8	0

#### **Playoffs**

Harrisburg Patriots 10 , Metro Buccaneers 14  
Frederick Falcons 25, Connecticut Giants 14

**CHAMPIONSHIP      November 28, 1987**  
Frederick Falcons 26, Harrisburg Patriots 20



## Florida, “The Son-Shine State”

By Denis M. Crawford

Harry Chapin wrote a song about the complexity of father-son relationships. “Cats in the Cradle” is a melancholy warning about son’s replicating the lifestyle of their work-a-holic fathers. This hasn’t stopped the sons of players and coaches in the National Football League from following into the family business.

The history of the league is filled with families that have sent multiple generations to the field or sideline. The most famous of these are the Manning’s as Eli and Peyton, scions of Archie, have continued on the tradition of quarterbacking.

There have also been times in which sons have been employed by their fathers. Most often this has been a case where the father was the head coach and the son was one of his assistants. Current Dallas Cowboys head coach Wade Phillips was once an employee of his father, O.A. “Bum” Phillips in both Houston and New Orleans. In a situation that must have been quite uncomfortable, the younger Phillips succeeded his father when the elder man was fired by the New Orleans Saints in 1985. Wade acted as interim head coach at the end of that season, operating out of the same building in which his father was forced to clean out his desk.

The Phillips’ case shows just how awkward a father-son combination on the same football club can be, and why these cases are rare. Even rarer still is to have a father employ his son as a player. In fact, in the last fifty years there have only been two such instances found and interestingly they have both occurred on the rosters of expansion teams from the state of Florida.

### The Wilson’s of Miami

In 1966 the Miami Dolphins joined the American Football League. Following training camp the Dolphins opened the season with veteran Dick Wood and three young rookies at quarterback. One rookie was number one draft choice Rick Norton, the second was John Stofa and the third was a collegiate back-up at Xavier sought after by original Dolphins coach George Wilson, Sr. The unheralded rookie was George Wilson, Jr., the head man’s son.

George Wilson, Sr. had been a championship-winning player with the Bears in the 1930’s and 1940’s. In 1957 Wilson was head coach of a Detroit Lions team that won an NFL Championship. The title game was a rout, as the Lions rolled past the Cleveland Browns 59-14. Wilson coached the Lions until 1964 and during training camps his son George Jr. would hang around Hall of Famers Bobby Layne and Yale Lary, learning

everything he could about passing and punting respectively. When the elder Wilson was named the first coach of the Dolphins he acquired the rights to his son from the Buffalo Bills. At first coach Wilson had some misgivings about bringing his son on board, realizing he might make both of them targets of derision.

Newspaper coverage of the Dolphins first training camp in St. Petersburg chronicled the head coach’s misgivings about hiring his son. Midway through camp it became apparent to Wilson, Sr. that his son just may have been the best option he had but he worried about the appearance of starting the season with George, Jr. at the helm. Fighting off the urge to see his own boy at the controls, the head coach kept his son on the bench and started the season with the younger Wilson as a punter. A nice footnote (no pun intended), Wilson, Jr. alternated punting duties with of all people Wahoo McDaniel, the famous “Wrestling Indian,” and one of the AFL’s original media darlings.

After losing six games to start their inaugural season, Wilson Sr. ignored his doubts and started George, Jr. against the Denver Broncos. While the youngster didn’t set the world on fire, he didn’t burn down the house either. An efficient performance from Junior led the Dolphins to their first victory as a franchise, 24-7. One week later Wilson, Jr. continued his solid if unspectacular play, completing all four of the passes he attempted, including an 80-yard touchdown pass. The Dolphins garnered their second victory of all time, 20-13 over the Houston Oilers.

An article in *Time* magazine chronicled the unusual father-son combo following the Oilers game. Entitled “My Son the Quarterback,” Coach Wilson admitted that after six weeks of watching his offense flounder like a beached fish, the time had come to switch to Wilson, Jr. The gist of the article was the Wilson’s were a prime example of pure nepotism that seemed to be working. The article pointed out Wilson, Jr. had never started a game at Xavier, much less in the AFL and yet found success initially in the professional ranks. Could the younger Wilson be a prodigy that only his father could have foreseen? His father and coach didn’t think so, but quickly added that he always felt his son had the tools and brains to play. “Nobody should be surprised at George Jr.,” the elder Wilson said. “He has been going to training camp since he was seven years old. He learned how to punt from Yale Lary and learned how to pass from Bobby Layne.”

As the season continued the spark that Wilson Jr. was able to provide was snuffed out and the Dolphins

finished 3-11. Along the way Wilson, Jr. played as most inexperienced rookies do, in fits and spurts. His final totals for the season were 46 completions in 112 attempts for 764 yards, five touchdowns and ten interceptions. It was as a punter that Wilson, Jr. actually excelled, averaging more than 40 yards a boot.

Having fulfilled a dream of coaching his own son in the professional ranks, Wilson Sr. was excited by the prospects of the 1967 season. The Dolphins used their first round draft choice on quarterback Bob Griese of Purdue, an exciting professional prospect. While it was apparent to all concerned that Griese would easily beat out Wilson Jr., no one outside of Dolphin management saw what would come next. In the weeks leading to training camp it became apparent just how much the management of the Dolphins regarded the young man's place on the team as inappropriate. The discomfort came to a head one summer day.

Bill Braucher's excellent history of the origins of the Dolphins, "Promises to Keep," expertly recounts the chain of events that led George Wilson Jr. to not only leave the Dolphins, but professional football altogether. Joe Thomas, the general manager of the Dolphins traded the younger Wilson to the Denver Broncos over the strenuous objections of head coach and father George Wilson, Sr. "It is ridiculous to have a situation like that on any ball club," Thomas said of the father-son tandem. Owner Joe Robbie seconded the decision considering a father coaching his son to be an "impossible situation."

While George Wilson, Sr. was upset over losing the chance to coach his son, he became incensed two days later when Denver coach Lou Saban cut George Jr. without so much as a practice in the Mile High City. The elder coach felt that Saban, Robbie and Thomas were involved in a conspiracy to rid the Dolphins of Wilson, Jr. for no other reason than they thought it was inappropriate for a father to coach his own son. "A put-up job" is how Wilson, Sr. referred to it.

George Wilson, Sr. would continue to coach the Dolphins for three more seasons. In 1970 he was fired and replaced with Don Shula. Wilson, Sr. is known now as the first coach of the Dolphins and it is coming to light that while he did not have a great deal of on-field success, he did acquire many contributors to the Dolphins dynasty of the early 70's such as Griese, Larry Csonka, Howard Twilley and others. George Wilson, Jr. never played professional football again but will always have the distinction of being the first quarterback to win a game as a Miami Dolphin and he did get a chance to do it in front of dear old Dad.

The Wilson's time as a father-son professional combination was short-lived. It was the first time in the modern era that a father employed his son on the

playing roster. No two positions on a football team are more noticeable than a quarterback and head coach. Perhaps if George Wilson, Jr. had only been a punter, no one would have cared. As quarterback however he was the focal point of the team and therefore his personal relationship with his father would naturally be the main story in the press all the time. It became a situation the team refused to tolerate and it would be ten more years before another father and son worked for the same team. Once again it would be an expansion team in Florida.

### **The McKay's of Tampa Bay**

John McKay, Jr., much like the younger Wilson, also had a distinction with a new team. John McKay, Jr. was the first player introduced over the public address system when the Tampa Bay Buccaneers took to the field for the first time in 1976. "I think in the first pre-season game I was the first to be introduced," McKay recalled in a recent interview for the Coffin Corner.

McKay came to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in 1976 as a member of the expansion veteran's allocation draft. McKay had spent a year with the Southern California Sun of the doomed World Football League rather than play for the Cleveland Browns, the team that drafted him in 1975. "They (the Sun) were willing to pay more money and it was local," said the California native. Figuring that the folding of the WFL meant the end of his professional career, the news that McKay was a Buccaneer came as a surprise for two reasons. First, he had a job as receivers coach at Oregon State. "I intended to stay there (Oregon State) and begin a coaching career. After spring practice I got a call from my Dad or someone with Tampa Bay that they had acquired my rights from Cleveland. So I signed a contract with Tampa Bay."

The second surprise was that his father would now become his boss. His "Dad" was John McKay, Sr., four-time national championship-winning coach at the University of Southern California and the first coach of the expansion Buccaneers in 1976.

The younger McKay had some trepidation in coming to Tampa Bay, although the primary one was not playing for his father at the professional level. "Part of me wasn't sure it was the right thing to do," he recalled this past winter. "I knew it was going to be tough in terms of I was going to a team that wasn't going to be very good. I also knew I was going to be a fringe player. I was someone good enough to be there but not good enough to do anything special. In hindsight I'm not even sure it was the right move, but at the time I figured I had an opportunity so why not give it a shot."

Unlike the Wilson's in Miami, the McKay's of Tampa had already experienced a father-son/coach-player relationship when the younger man played at the University of Southern California under his Dad.

Ironically, it wasn't the idea of playing for his father that attracted McKay to USC; it was the chance to continue playing with a boyhood friend. "I played high school football as a receiver and my quarterback was a man named Pat Haden, who went on to play with the Rams," McKay said. "We decided to go to the same school and were recruited nationally. I wasn't sure I wanted to go to SC partly because my father was the coach. I wasn't sure how that was going to work out. Pat and I decided to stay local and go to SC."

In one of the most oft-repeated lines of the quotable John McKay, Sr. the head coach pointed out the secret reason he was able to lure his son to the Trojan campus. "I had an advantage – I slept with his mother."

On the field it worked out quite well for Haden and McKay, Jr. as the Trojans won a national title in 1972 and 1974. While not prolific, McKay, Jr. was a dependable target for Haden and played well enough that while his relation to McKay, Sr. was never forgotten, his playing time was not questioned as pure nepotism.

"It's not easy having your Dad as Coach," McKay said. "It was made easier at SC because we won almost every game. There was never any real reason for concern. We won two national championships while I was there. If you're winning its no problem at all."

In Tampa Bay there would be no winning, literally. The expansion Buccaneers lost their first 26 games over the 1976-1977 seasons and McKay, Jr. witnessed the toll it took on his father. "I think it was the worst thing that happened to him professionally. He left college as probably the pre-eminent college coach in the country and had to endure teams that were really, really bad football teams. Now they stock expansion teams pretty well, but back then you got nothing. They had number one draft choice Lee Roy Selmon, who was a really good player and then a bunch of players nobody wanted, myself included."

"We just didn't have any good players and didn't have any chance to win. It was really difficult on him, on me and on the players."

Unlike at USC, McKay, Jr. was viewed as being unworthy of his position on the team. Many would argue that if his last name wasn't McKay he wouldn't have been on the club. McKay won't argue that his Dad gave him a break by inviting him to camp, but doesn't accept that he didn't earn his spot.

"I didn't know it at the time," McKay said of locker room complaints, "But I've heard some talk from the professional level about my place on the team. Steve Spurrier (the starting quarterback) said a few things that I shouldn't have started in 1976. Maybe that's right, but I was doing the best I could, I knew I was a

fringe player. But in my defense there weren't a lot of great receivers on that roster with me. I don't think it would have made much difference who was starting. The guys playing with me didn't go on to have stellar NFL careers. It wasn't like if I hadn't been playing we would have won eight games."

When informed that he was the Buccaneers second-leading receiver for the three years he played in Tampa Bay, McKay, Jr. was surprised and laughed good-naturedly. "That is almost pathetic," he said while chuckling.

While the losing affected his father as a coach, it never hurt their relationship. In fact, McKay barely had a chance to speak to his father during the season because the elder McKay's coaching style was akin to a CEO. John McKay, Sr. devised the game plan, delegated practice duties to his assistants and then oversaw everything from afar. Very rarely would McKay, Sr. directly talk to a player on the practice field, he instead sent directions through assistants.

That style may have benefited the two McKay's. Other than the Wilson's in Miami, there was little in the way of precedent when it came to coaching your own son in the National Football League, so the elder McKay kept his distance from his son at the team's facility, treating him like any other player.

"Virtually none," McKay, Jr. answered when asked how much he and Dad could speak privately during the season. "Actually this went back to college. My Dad and I were very close throughout our lives but as SC and Tampa Bay we didn't interact at all. You don't even know what to call him. I couldn't call him 'Dad' at work and 'Coach' at home, neither one seemed right. We just took the tack we had to keep our distance."

"This didn't mean we didn't see each other and talk occasionally, but in order to keep it normal as far as a player-coach decision you had to keep your distance. That's how we went about it, but I don't know if there is any right or wrong way to do it."

The only thing about playing for his father that bothered McKay, Jr. was listening to the constant criticism and vitriol that his father endured during the 1976 and 1977 seasons. McKay, Jr. was constantly approached by reporters looking for insight about his father, but he wouldn't take the bait. "I felt it was inappropriate for me to comment on my Dad," he said. "It's hard not to try to defend your Dad when you feel he is being unfairly attacked. Luckily for my Dad he did turn things around when he got some players because great players make great coaches."

In 1978 the Buccaneers finished 5-11. McKay, Jr. had a solid year but hurt his hand late in the season. The injury didn't respond to treatment and as training camp

rolled around in 1979, both he and his father had a tough decision to make.

"I was asked by the team if I wanted to retire," McKay said about his departure from the game. "I told them I thought it more appropriate that you cut me and they did." Cutting his own son had to be hard on McKay, Sr. but he did have the knowledge that he did so with his son's blessing. "I told my Dad I wasn't going to be on the roster and should be cut like anyone else."

While the training camp decision was hard, McKay also knew that he had a roster full of players that could win and in 1979 the Buccaneers did just that, finishing 10-6 and one game short of a Super Bowl appearance.

McKay, Jr. has no misgivings about his time in Tampa Bay or the end of his career. "I did get an offer from Don Shula to try out with the Dolphins, but at that point in time I was going to law school and didn't have any more interest in playing."

In the years since his playing days ended McKay, Jr. has become a successful lawyer, passing the Bar Exam in both Florida and California. Today he is a partner with the law firm of Jeffer, Mangels, Butler and Marmaro in Los Angeles and for a short time held the position of General Manager of the LA Xtreme of the XFL. As the son of a coach, he still has a passion for the game but is content to practice law and follow the success of his younger brother Rich, the GM of the Atlanta Falcons. "Given the right circumstances I'd still love to be in football. My brother is doing a great job in Atlanta."

As the experiences of George Wilson, Jr. and John McKay, Jr. show, playing for your father in the National Football League may not be easy, but they did have a chance to create memories that most fathers and sons can only dream of.



## WHAT'S THE NFL GOT AGAINST THOSE GUYS FROM MILTON?

By Jim Campbell

Milton, Pennsylvania is a relatively small town about an hour and a half up the Susquehanna River (West Branch) from Harrisburg, the state capital. It has a long and storied high school football history, that could be even more storied.

You see, Bob Campiglio and Jack Hinkle both played for Milton High School. But you gotta be really old and/or a true student of the game to know much about them.

Campiglio, after graduation from Milton High did a postgraduate year at Mercersburg Academy before matriculating at West Liberty State in West Virginia in the late-1920s. In 1932, he was a rookie for the long-departed Staten Island Stapletons.

Playing all positions in the single-wing backfield, the 6-1, 183-pounder racked up 504 yards on 104 carries for a 4.8 yard per carry average. Both the yardage and the average were tops in the NFL that first season of "official" statistics. Lo and behold, in the 1971 the NFL "audited" its official stats and it was determined by someone that Campiglio wasn't the yardage leader. The honor now went to Hall of Famer Cliff Battles, whose stats are now listed as 576 yards on 148 carries for a 3.9 yard average. Fame is fleeting, Mr. Campiglio. Too bad! What is also of interest to stat-geeks, we assume, is that when Campiglio was listed as the 1932 rushing champion Battles was listed as the 1933 leader. Apparently, the same audit came up with Battles's 1933 Boston Redskins teammate Jim Musick as the "true" leader—809 yards to Battle's once-thought leading number of 737.

We're not done with how the NFL, or at least its stat bureau, "done wrong" by the Milton High boys.

In the 1930s, Jack Hinkle was another standout at Milton High. He went on to a nice career at Syracuse University. His first taste of pro ball was with the New York Football Giants in 1940. By 1943, Hinkle was with the combination of the Philadelphia Eagles and the Pittsburgh Steelers, known as the "Steagles" (Oh, how the sportswriting community loved that nickname!). Toward the end of the season, Hinkle was locked in a battle for the league rushing lead with rookie Bill Paschal of the Giants. Hinkle ended his season with 571 yards. It was considerably ahead of Paschal and everyone else. But Paschal had a game remaining after Hinkle's season was over. The publicity department of the Giants knew just how many yards the Georgia Tech rookie needed to catch Hinkle. He got that—and one more. Paschal 572 yards. Hinkle 571.

But wait! There's more. Hinkle made a 16-yard gain that was never recorded on the official stat-sheet, for whatever reason, in an early season game. At the time Hinkle noticed it, but never questioned it, even though New York *Times* writer Louis Effrat mentioned the run in his game story. Were it counted, Hinkle would have led the league—as many old-timers in Central PA still contend—with plenty to spare.

The question being asked over the years in Milton is: If the NFL can audit our Bob Campiglio *out* of the NFL rushing title, why can't they audit our Jack Hinkle *into* the rushing title?" Fair question....

# One on One with Ozzie Newsome, Part 2

By Roger Gordon

Originally published in the Orange and Brown Report

*The OBR recently conducted an exclusive interview with former Cleveland Browns Hall of Fame tight end Ozzie Newsome. In this, part two of the interview, “The Wizard of Oz” talks about the “meat” of his playing career, including Red Right 88, the blasé early ‘80s and the Kosar era. He also compares his Crimson Tide days to his Browns days, and touches on the Belichick years in which he coached, and worked in personnel.*

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**The Orange and Brown Report: On the Red Right 88 play, the ball was coming your way when the Raiders’ Mike Davis stepped in front of you and intercepted it. You could be seen pounding the field with your arm after Davis caught the ball. Explain exactly what was going on in your head at that moment.**

Ozzie Newsome: The play was called, it was executed properly because it was supposed to be a pass that was going to go to Dave Logan, but based on the read, if I came open early, then I was going to get the ball. So I was expecting the ball, the wind held the ball up, Mike was beat, and he did a great job of not quitting on the play and getting back in and making the interception.

**The OBR: Without the wind, you had it for a touchdown, huh?**

ON: Yeah, yeah. No question.

**The OBR: How cold were you that day?**

ON: The coldest I’ve ever been in my life. Don’t ever want to be that cold again.

**The OBR: It was almost like ice skating, wasn’t it?**

ON: Yep.

**The OBR: What happened in 1981?**

ON: ‘81 ... we were still living off of ‘80, and the team was aging.

**The OBR: When you say living off of ‘80, do you blame that more on the players or the coaches?**

ON: Both.

**The OBR: Talk about the seasons in the early ‘80s that were sort of sandwiched between the Kardiak Kids and the Kosar era. You seemed to be about all the team had on offense to go along with a steadily improving defense.**

ON: Well, yeah, if you start talking about the ‘81 year, whether we underachieved or whatever, ‘82 was the strike year, which was abbreviated, and then ‘83 ... ‘81 they started to build a defense because they drafted Hanford. Then, after that, they were committed to the defense because they ended up getting Chip Banks

and Donny Rogers, and picked up Frank Minnifield and Reggie Camp. So they started adding to the defense.

And as far as the offensive talent, it was guys that were left over. I mean, we were still playing Mike Pruitt. We had drafted Charlie White. I mean, we still had some guys on the offense, and the problem was that the transition from Sipe to McDonald didn’t work. So, as they were continuing to draft good defensive talent, the offensive talent was maturing, but we were lacking at the quarterback position, and the combination of Danielson and Kosar, along with the drafting of Langhorne, Brennan and Slaughter completed our football team.

**The OBR: What was the main problem with McDonald?**

ON: I think one of the main problems was the protection wasn’t as good, and I don’t think he had a great supporting cast.

**The OBR: What was the better combo, Sipe to Newsome, Rucker and Logan, or Kosar to Newsome, Slaughter and Langhorne?**

ON: I don’t know, but I could play with either one of them ... and I did.

**The OBR: When Ernie Accorsi got Kosar in the supplemental draft, were you aware of his talents? How big was that for Cleveland at the time?**

ON: No, I was just aware of him because I remain a college football fan, but I did not know anything about his football attributes. But the minute I got a chance to get on the field with him, I did notice there were two things. Number one, he was not in awe of being in the National Football League, and the other thing [was] he had great deep-ball accuracy, and poise.

**The OBR: Can you compare Kosar to Sipe?**

ON: Both were very heady football players, they both were extremely accurate and they both had great anticipation.

**The OBR: The Miami playoff loss in January 1986 ... how bad did that hurt?**

ON: We were the only team at that point that made it to the playoffs 8-8, and we didn’t know how to win, and

that game proved that. We played well in the second half, ran the ball unbelievable, got involved in a lot of our linebackers being hurt and ended up with some mismatches with Tony Nathan, and playing against a hot Dan Marino. But I think, as it is in developing a football team, that you have to learn how to win, and I think that game helped us to learn how to win, how not to ever quit, how you have to play for four full quarters.

**The OBR: Did you agree with Bernie Kosar speaking up after that Miami game and opining that the offense needed to open up?**

ON: Yes.

**The OBR: Did you believe the Browns still had a chance when they were trailing the Jets by 10 points late in the fourth quarter of that memorable playoff game in January 1987?**

ON: Yeah. Like I said, I talked about us losing against Miami. I think we grew up to know that you have to play for four full quarters, so we had seen what had happened to us the year before, so we felt like we could get it done. We never quit.

**The OBR: This question's a little on the lighter side. You, Ozzie, were on the cover of Sports Illustrated following that Jets game. Then the Browns lost to Denver in The Drive game. Was that the dreaded SI Jinx working?**

ON: I didn't catch a pass. I think that's what the dreaded SI Jinx ... I didn't catch a pass in that championship game. But I was hurt, I played hurt. Yeah, you could say that, but, then again, we lost two out of the next three years to Denver [in the conference title game], so ...

**The OBR: When Brian Brennan caught the touchdown pass from Kosar to put the Browns up 20-13 versus Denver in The Drive game, did you think you were on your way to the Super Bowl?**

ON: Yes, I did. But the reason why I did was because they ended up on the two-yard line, and they had 98 yards to go. And, knowing football, they say, "To have a 98-yard drive, you've got to have everything to go right for you," and everything went right for them.

**The OBR: And they had a third-and-18 near mid-field on that drive.**

ON: Yeah, and me and Hanford have talked about that a lot.

**The OBR: Which hurt more, Red Right 88, The Drive or The Fumble?**

ON: Well ... The Drive ... because Red Right 88, we still had to win ... that was the divisional playoff, so we still had to go and compete, and we would have went to San Diego to play against a high-powered San Diego team. The Drive ... if we stop them, we go to the Super Bowl. The Fumble ... Elway and them still had a chance, had time to take a drive. If we [score], that was

only going to tie the game, so the game was still in the balance, and the Broncos still had a chance. So, to me, it was The Drive.

**The OBR: Did Earnest Byner get a bad rap because of The Fumble? Was he forced out of Cleveland because of that?**

ON: I don't know if he was forced out of Cleveland because of that, but I think Earnest was the reason why we were in the game.

**The OBR: Talk about how tough it was for Kevin Mack when he had his run-in with the law in 1989.**

ON: It was one of the things that ... it happened ... I think the most surprising thing was that we did not anticipate he would get jail time. I think that's what we all got shocked about. And when he got the jail time, that caught us – caught *me* – off guard. But, I had went through the death of Donny Rogers, so we knew what drugs could do to you – you end up in jail or you end up dead if you take those two instances. But the thing about Kevin ... he came back and he helped us to get into the playoffs that year.

**The OBR: I forgot. He had jail time during the season?**

ON: Yeah.

**The OBR: If the Don Rogers death did not happen, does The Drive happen?**

ON: I can't say that, but I would have said Don Rogers would have went down as one of the best safeties in the league. You talk about Ronnie Lott, Kenny Easley. Donny Rogers was that type of player.

**The OBR: Hall of Famer?**

ON: You're putting him in another category. You can be a real, real good player in this league and not be in the Hall of Fame.

**The OBR: When Clay Matthews made that ridiculous lateral in the final regular-season game at Houston in '89, what was it like on the sidelines?**

ON: Well, I mean, it was like, "What is he doin'?" But then he was the same guy that intercepted the pass from Jim Kelly in the Buffalo game to win the playoffs, so that's the type of player he was.

**The OBR: Why did you return in 1990? Did you really think the team had a chance to get that elusive Super Bowl?**

ON: Yes, I did, and that was the only reason why I came back.

**The OBR: What happened in 1990? I know there were a lot of holdouts and retirements.**

ON: We weren't good enough. I think we made it in '89 ... we had a bunch of experienced guys, a bunch of guys that knew what it took to win in December and

into January, but I don't know if we all had enough in the tank to last for 16 games.

**The OBR: Who did you enjoy playing under more, Sam Rutigliano or Marty Schottenheimer? Compare the two.**

ON: Well, you have to realize, under Marty, we went to the playoffs four straight years. I always like winning. I had more *individual* success under Sam, but I always like winning.

**The OBR: Do you believe the Browns would have won any of the three Super Bowls had they beaten Denver in any of the AFC Championship Games?**

ON: Yes, because I think we were the team that matched up with the Giants and the Redskins the best because we were a physical team. As a matter of fact, we had beaten the Giants [the year before]. And so we were a physical team. Denver was a bit more finesse, so I think the matchup was better in our favor.

**The OBR: Now, I know you're a humble guy, but I was just curious. How important to you was your streak of 100 and something consecutive games with a reception. What did it turn out to be, 130-something?**

ON: 150.

**The OBR: 150. How important was that streak to you?**

ON: It was, but, more important, I'm the one that decided when it should've ended. I had hurt my ankle, and I was more concerned about playing the following week than to continue that streak, so ... the coaches asked me, and I said, "Nope, don't want to go back in."

**The OBR: It ended in about, what, '89?**

ON: I think it was '89.

**The OBR: Compare Crimson Tide fans to Browns fans.**

ON: Very similar. Very, very similar. One lived from Saturday to Saturday, the other one lived from Sunday to Sunday. In Alabama, it's two seasons – it's football season and spring training. And in Cleveland, they do have a chance to root for the Indians or root for the Cavaliers. In Alabama, like I say, it's football season, then it's the 20 days of spring training.

**The OBR: Compare game day in Alabama's Bryant-Denny Stadium to game day in old Cleveland Stadium.**

ON: Very similar again with the passion of the fans ... will stay there with you to the end.

**The OBR: Compare playing in the Sugar Bowl to playing in the AFC Championship Game.**

ON: Oh, it's a big difference. In the Sugar Bowl, that's your last game ... the Sugar Bowl is your reward. The AFC Championship Game? You're getting an

opportunity to go to the big bash, so there's a lot more pressure. No question. Playing in the Sugar Bowl is the reward, playing in the championship game, you're still fighting to *get* a reward.

**The OBR: Is the Sugar Bowl the only bowl you ever played in?**

ON: No, I played in the Orange Bowl and the Liberty Bowl.

**The OBR: Was it difficult to finally hang them up following the 1990 Season from Hell?**

ON: No, no. Once they made a coaching change, I knew it was time. It was going to be a team in transition, there was going to be rebuilding, and I had played the last two years to get to the Super Bowl, that was my motivation. So that was no longer there. I did speak to Belichick, and he talked about me playing another year before we started to talk about me working in coaching and in the front office.

**The OBR: You missed playing under Belichick by one season. Is that good or bad?**

ON: Well, right now, I consider it's good because the knowledge that I gained from just learning from him as a coach/quasi personnel guy has been invaluable. And I don't know if I would have been able to get that if I would have played another year.

**The OBR: Did Belichick get a bad rap in Cleveland?**

ON: I don't know if they appreciated how good a football coach he was, but I think some of his other skills were lacking, but at the end of the day he was being paid to be a football coach.

**The OBR: Any special memories from those five seasons?**

ON: Yeah, it was real rewarding working with Michael Jackson, Keenan McCardell, Mark Carrier, Derrick Alexander, working with those guys, being able to make the transition from the field to the front office and the coaching, and maintain the respect that I had with the players that I played with. It was invaluable.

**The OBR: Can you just say a few words about the Kosar-Belichick relationship?**

ON: Well, I think it was something where, today, that both of them, if they had a chance to do it over again, they both would do it differently.

**The OBR: There have been rumors for years swirling there were fisticuffs after the Denver game in '93 ... .**

ON: No, that was not the case, no.

\* \* \* \* \*

*(Part three will conclude "One on One with Ozzie Newsome" in the next issue)*

# WELL-OILED MACHINE

## THE POWERFUL HOUSTON OILERS OF THE EARLY 1960s

By Dr. Gregory Selber

Though they do not exist anymore, the Houston Oilers were the original powerhouse of the American Football League, winning the first two league titles and narrowly missing a third in 1962. In the late 1990s, the franchise moved to Tennessee, much to the chagrin of loyal Houston rooters, but their early legacy of exciting football exemplified the AFL penchant for offensive prowess. The team's entertaining brand of ball helped the new league to a television contract with ABC in 1962 that yielded more dollars per team than the arrangement the established NFL had at the time. The team's success played a large part in the eventual merger between the leagues that was arranged in 1966 and consummated with the onset of the 1970s.

### EARLY SPITTERS

With a roster stocked full of Southern stars, the Oilers scored at a record rate behind freewheeling quarterback George Blanda and an underrated defense.

That 1961 team stands as one of the most high-powered units in football history, piling on 513 points in 14 games as Blanda led the league in passing (3,330 yards and 36 touchdowns), Billy Cannon (the Heisman Trophy winner from LSU) paced the loop in rushing (948 yards) and the slight but speedy and shifty receiving tandem of Charlie Hennigan and Bill Groman tore up AFL secondaries all season. Hennigan set a record that year with 1,746 yards (on 82 catches) while Groman averaged 23.5 yards on 50 receptions, more than a third of which (17) ended in the end zone.

Though scoring was the team forte, the Oilers had some nasty defensive players, including defensive backs Tony Banfield of Oklahoma State (eight interceptions) and Jim Norton (nine, he also punted), who helped the Oilers amass 33 picks as a team, tops in all of football. Banfield and safety Mark Johnston made the AFL All-Star team along with defensive linemen Ed Husmann and Don Floyd, from TCU, joining the handful of offensive All-Stars. Tight ends Jim McLeod (Abilene Christian) and Willard Dewveall (SMU) were also key performers with veteran Bob Talamini and linemates Al Jamison and Bob Schmidt handling the blocking chores up front.

But their early reign as AFL kings almost self-destructed in 1961. After winning the first league

championship, in 1960, the Oilers started the '61 season just 1-3-1, whereupon owner Bud Adams fired Coach Lou Rymkus and replaced him with Wally Lemm. Houston then rebounded to win nine games in a row, clinching its second straight AFL crown with a 10-3 road win over the San Diego Chargers at Balboa Stadium on Christmas Eve, 1961.

### HOW IT HAPPENED, GAME BY GAME

Early in 1961, the team's title win of 1960 looked like a possible fluke. Rymkus's team opened with a 55-0 trouncing of Oakland at Houston's Jeppesen Stadium, a refurbished high school park that was the forerunner of the Astrodome. But then came losses at San Diego (34-24), in the Cotton Bowl to the Dallas Texans (26-21) and at Jeppesen against Buffalo (22-12). After a 31-31 tie in Boston against the Patriots, Adams pulled the trigger and elevated assistant Lemm into the head chair. Hennigan caught 13 balls for 272 yards but could not save his coach's job. Rymkus, a no-nonsense, drill-sergeant type, had worn out his welcome in town quickly.

The new-look Oilers then gained revenge against the Texans with a 38-7 win before 23,278 in Houston Oct. 22, scoring 38 unanswered points after falling behind 7-0. Blanda found Hennigan for a 66-yard TD and Groman hauled in scores from 18 and 80 yards out to pace the victory.

The next week, Houston bounced the Bills for another payback, winning at War Memorial Stadium on high-flying aerial TDs of 56 and 80 yards to Hennigan and 32 and 68 to Groman. Blanda threw for 464 yards in that one, a club record.

As November dawned, the Oilers went to 4-3-1 with a 55-14 whipping of Denver at Mile High Stadium, after leading 27-0 at the half. Blanda kicked a 48-yard field goal, one of 16 he would make in 1961, and Claude King, a local product out of the University of Houston, ran 17 yards for a TD in the rout.

Next Lemm's Legion scored revenge against the Patriots, with a 27-15 win Nov. 12 in front of a large crowd of 35,649 at Jeppesen Stadium. Dewveall's 6-yard pass from backup QB Jacky Lee sealed the deal after Boston had scored 15 in a row. Clemson linebacker Doug Cline showed that the Oilers weren't

one-dimensional by returning a fumble for a TD in the game.

With momentum behind them, the Oilers kept it rolling Nov. 19, piling up 35 points in the first half at home against the New York Titans for a 49-13 win, their fifth straight. Blanda became one of only four quarterbacks in league annals to throw for seven TDs in one game that day with Cannon – who later became a successful tight end after switching from halfback – snaring three of them. Blanda amassed 418 yards along with the seven sixes.

The following week it was Denver at home, and with 27,874 watching, Houston stomped the Broncos, 45-14, rallying from an early 7-0 deficit behind another defensive touchdown from Cline and a 62-yard missed field goal return from Johnston. King also contributed a 44-yard pass score, and bowling ball Louisianan fullback Charley Tolar, 5-foot-5 and well over 200 pounds, slammed in from the one in the triumph.

The Oilers then knocked off dangerous San Diego easily, 33-13 Dec. 3, behind a season-high home crowd of 37,854. Blanda booted a 55-yard field goal, the longest of the AFL season, as Houston scored 33 points in a row on the befuddled Chargers.

The last two games of the regular season came Dec. 10 against New York and Dec. 17 versus the Raiders. In the Polo Grounds, Houston destroyed the Titans 48-21 though just 9,462 showed up in the chill. Cannon had his best game of the season with 216 rushing yards and five combined touchdowns as the team went to 9-3-1 with the playoffs right around the corner.

In the finale, a measly 4,821 fans came out to Candlestick Park to see the Oilers crush the Raiders, 47-16. Cline sacked future Raiders coach Tom Flores in the end zone for a safety while Dewveall scored on passes of 35 and 66 steps.

### DEFENSE DOMINATES FOR THE CROWN

On Christmas Eve, it was out to the West Coast for a title game rematch with the Chargers, whom the Oilers had beaten, 24-16, on New Year's Day, 1961 in the inaugural AFL championship contest. Making it technically two championships in one glorious season, Houston controlled the game on defense to become king again.

It was a turnover-filled slugfest: Houston gave it away seven times, including five interceptions thrown by the mercurial Blanda, while San Diego coughed up six balls. Houston sacked quarterback Jack Kemp, later a U.S. senator and vice presidential candidate, on six separate plays and Blanda's 46-yard three-pointer was the only score of the first half.

The Oilers put together an 80-yard drive in the third period that culminated in a Cannon rushing TD to put the title away. As he'd done in the 1960 title game,

when he caught an 88-yard scoring from Blanda, Cannon came with his best in the big game. It came in handy, as Blanda was just 18 of 40 for 160 yards while Tolar (52 yards) and Cannon (48) crunched away inside. But the stoppers won the game for Houston, proving that though they averaged nearly 37 points per game in 1961, the Oilers could put up the defensive numbers when they had to.

### IT DIDN'T LAST

The next season, Houston would advance to the AFL title game for the third year in a row, only to lose a double-overtime heartbreaker to its state mates, the Dallas Texans, who later became the Kansas City Chiefs.

The bottom fell out quickly, though, as the Oilers suffered injuries to Cannon and the loss of Groman in 1963. An aging Blanda became less productive as well, throwing 103 picks the next four years before leaving for Oakland after the 1966 season.

Houston was 6-8 in '63 under Canadian Football League legend Pop Ivy, who replaced Lemm in 1962; the Oilers went 4-10 a year later under Texan great Sammy Baugh, and 4-10 again in 1965, with Hugh "Bones" Taylor as coach. In 1966 they finished just 3-11 but the pieces were beginning to come together for another successful run. In 1967, they returned to their winning ways as Hoyle Granger ran for 1,194 yards and led the team in receptions with patient QB Pete Beathard at the helm. Miller Farr intercepted 10 balls that season and future NFL Hall of Famer and native Texan Ken Houston ran back two INTs for scores in his rookie season.

Lemm had left the team after the 1961 title campaign to spend four seasons leading the St. Louis Cardinals, with Ivy, the Card coach at the time, taking the reins in Houston. But Lemm returned to Texas for 1966 to help resuscitate the team. The resurgent Oilers went 9-4-1 the next year before expiring in the AFL title game against Oakland and their old teammate, Blanda, who then went on to lose in the second Super Bowl, to Green Bay.

Despite the mid-decade drop off, the Houston Oilers remain one of the great outfits of the old AFL, and its three-year run at the top of the heap at the league's onset is undeniable. Their offensive production stands as an exemplar of the wide-open style of the upstart league that eventually made the grade.

## Troup's 'Luggin' the Leather': An Appendage

By Bob Irving

A very interesting and instructive story appeared in an earlier issue of The Coffin Corner (Vol 28, No 7 (2006)) {Bonus Issue}, by T J Troup, entitled, "Luggin' the Leather." The author presented a convincing case for the importance of the ground game in professional football. More specifically, he focused on the value of a ball carrier who could rush for 100 yards (or more) per game, using this as his criterion of excellence. Every follower of professional football would wholeheartedly agree with Troup's stated contention. It's absolutely a 'given' that every team needs an excellent ball carrier in order to force opponents to respect attack from the ground as well as from the air. To bolster his case, Troup presented three pieces of information: (a) the number of wins, losses and ties for 31 teams of the NFL who possessed a 100- yard rusher and (b) the same information for the same 31 teams when each had not had a 100-yard rusher, and © the information above converted to winning percentages for teams, both with and without 100 -yard running backs. Troup also included interesting information, undoubtedly not generally known, about teams which had garnered unusual achievements because they had had 100-yard runners.

Troup's article immediately drew my interest. In some general, vague sort of way, I agreed that an effective ball carrier was vital to any teams' success --- any coach would salivate at that prospect. Troup gave that vague thought indisputable mathematical proof --- he locked it down beyond challenge and illustrated it as well. His win and loss percentage columns for teams with 100-yard rushers was easily seen to be better than that for teams without. Immediately a question arose in my mind:

I wondered, to what degree was a team better when it had a 100-yard runner than when it did not? Way too often articles appear without the accompanying basic information upon which the story is based. Troup's article was an exception; he tabulated the number of wins, losses and ties and the winning percentages for each team by name and, using that information, contrasted each team's performance with a 100-yard runner to its own performance when lacking a 100-yard runner. Everything to answer my question was in the article. Troup's table showed, for example, how the Steelers had fared over the years with a 100-yarder

versus those years when they did not. Unfortunately, no mention was made of beginning and ending dates for the data presented but it was evident that it went back a long time in NFL history.

As I began to examine Troup's data I had a hunch it could reveal something more than what he had claimed for it. That subsequently turned out to be true --- in spades, beyond my fondest expectation! To analyze two entities for significance of difference (teams with and without the 100-yarder) when the data is presented in percent form is to invite criticism, perhaps unwarranted, but Troup had provided the actual numerical win loss information all those percents were based on! It was serendipity, so a follow-up was possible ----- piece of cake!

### Conclusions

Without presenting the dreary details of calculation suffice it to say that the data were analyzed in two different ways. First, it was found that in the case of every team, the difference between having a 100-yard running back and not having one favored the former by a highly statistically significant margin. In 29 of the 31 teams the chance that there was no difference between winning with a 100-yarder and winning without one, the odds favored the fonner well beyond 10,000 to one! The statistical odds for the other two teams were somewhat less but still very impressive. A minimum value of 11.51 was needed to support the 10,000 to one odds; the average value for the 29 cases reported above was 43.73 with the lowest at 14+ !

Second, the win 1 loss numbers given by Troup for the "with 100-yard rusher" and "without 100-yard rusher," were compared to values based upon what could be expected if their distributions were governed by chance alone for those two conditions. Interestingly, the first and second calculations (these two paragraphs), were almost identical, team by team, which was interpreted to mean that one procedure had pretty much validated the other. Just as important though, was that with the second procedure it was possible, to see by visual inspection, that portion of the total value attributed to the 100-yard runner as well as that portion which lacked the 100-yarder. Values for

those two conditions were conveniently "partitioned out", separated away from the total. (The accompanying table here is based on figures which arose from the second analysis, described below).

With that fact discovered it was just another step to determine the degree to which these separate portions of the total were statistically different from each other. Again, a simple count. Keeping in mind that this particular analysis is different from that shown in the first paragraph above, it was found that in 22 of the 31 teams the statistical odds favored the "with 100-yarder" over the "without 100-yarder", again by a margin of well over 10,000 to one! Odds for six of the remaining teams were somewhat less than that but still impressive. In the case of three teams no significant difference was found between "haves" and "have nots." All 31 teams were better with a superb runner than without one but in the case of three teams the odds favoring the team with one were less than 20 to one and so not considered statistically significant.

To conclude, Troup presented convincing data to confirm the importance to a team of a 100-yard running back. Using his data it was thought possible to determine the degree to which one condition prevailed over the other beyond that of a simple visual inspection. That was found to be true far beyond expectation. Troup's data contained much more information than he had perhaps realized. This paper has been an attempt that to show that his data has overwhelmingly 'made the case for the running back', perhaps way beyond what he had originally foreseen. Troup's original research however, presented so completely, deserves the credit for making available the basic information in the first place.

My hat is off to him.

**Buffalo's Forgotten Champions:  
The Story of Buffalo's First Professional  
Football Team and the Lost 1921 Title**  
was published in 2004 by Xlibris Corp

It is available at Amazon.com for \$21.99 (soft cover) or \$31.99 (hard cover).

It is also available through the publisher at Xlibris.com for \$18.69. 232 pages with demographics on all of the players from the Buffalo teams of the 1920s

**Chi Square Values**

(1) With & Without '100-yarder' and (2) Comparison Between With & Without.

	(1) 'With'	'Without'	(2) Comparison
Dolphins	32.3	7.45	15.22
Raiders	35.09	7.17	18.44
Steelers	75.23	25.0	25.2
Packers	48.3	22.64	27.02
Redskins	51.4	10.83	26.4
Browns	46.1	14.57	16.46
Broncos	38.09	9.96	16.94
Eagles	55.1	9.38	32.4
Seahawks	34.45	9.85	13.66
Cowboys	36.69	13.75	10.42
Oilers/Titans	47.4	12.88	19.76
Giants	34.77	6.39	19.56
Ravens	14.84	6.52	3.24 NS
49ers	25.0	5.59	12.32
Rams	39.5	12.53	13.98
Colts	20.57	9.02	18.36
Bills	52.3	16.63	18.46
Patriots	36.93	6.61	15.22
Chiefs	23.59	5.95	16.04
Bears	25.04	6.26	11.26
Vikings	11.88	2.45 NS	6.22
Chargers	29.4	7.78	12.56
Bengals	30.99	7.23	14.76
Panthers	15.45	2.29 NS	3.36 NS
Jaguars	4.73	1.92 NS	1.18 NS
Cardinals	51.38	8.71	30.3
Falcons	32.1	8.08	14.34
Buccaneers	21.33	4.52	11.28
Saints	24.8	5.24	12.73
Jets	16.99	4.08	7.92
Lions	18.24	3.67 NS	9.7

The narrative describes the outcome shown by (2) above, which in turn, is dependent upon the two values in (1)

Andy Piascik.

***The Best Show in Football:  
The 1946-1955 Cleveland Browns, Pro Football's  
Greatest Dynasty.***

Lanham, Maryland: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2007. Pp. xv, 396. Illustrations, appendices, index. \$24.95 hb.

# THE ORANGE COUNTY RHINOS

By Lee Elder

In December of 1959 the world of professional football had a very different landscape from the lush, rich garden it enjoys today.

The National Football League had a dozen teams, mostly clustered in the eastern third of North America. There was a 36-player roster limit and not much television exposure. The pro game had a following, but the great gains of the 1960s were still years away.

The pro world would change forever seven months later when the American Football League began play.

But the AFL's effect on the game was still in the future in December of 1959 and minor league football had a higher profile among fans than it enjoys now. Few minor league teams enjoyed a better reputation than the Orange County Rhinos of Southern California.

The Rhinos played their games in Anaheim, which would later become the home of the Los Angeles Rams.

In 1959, the Rhinos' roster included players who had been in and out of NFL tryout camps and a few who had actually played in the league. Some had played or would later play in the Canadian Football League. Chuck Fenenbock coached the Rhinos. Fenenbock had played in the NFL, the old All American Football Conference and the Canadian league.

According to newspaper accounts from the period, the Rhinos went 11-1 in their first dozen games that season, scoring 284 points and allowing just 84. Minor league football researcher Steven M. Brainerd said Rhinos played an independent schedule in 1959, facing other minor league teams in Southern California and several United States military service teams.

For some reason, the Rhinos wanted to play one more game before the end of the year and made a deal with a local college coach to put together a team for the Rhinos to play. This is the story of that game.

"We had some good players on that team that should have been pro football players," said Leonard Peden, who played for the Western College All-Stars that day. "The Rhinos had a guy who played in the NFL and has been a coach in the NFL. They had some other players who could have played," in pro football's major league.

Don Coryell, yes *that* Don Coryell, had just finished his third season as the head coach at Whittier College when he agreed to coach the collection of former

college players against the Rhinos. Coryell had taken the reigns of the Whittier program from the departed George Allen, yes *that* George Allen, and installed something he called the I-T Formation for his offense. We call it the I Formation today.

The results were a high-flying offense that the Poets used to run roughshod over their opponents. In his three seasons at Whittier, Coryell directed the Poets to a record of 23-5-1.

Coryell's stars at Whittier had been running back Max Fields, the first truly great I Formation tailback, and quarterback Gary Campbell. Fields graduated in 1958 and was drafted by the 49ers. A serious rib injury during the final pre-season game ended Fields' chances to join a roster that included Pro Football Hall of Famers Hugh McElhenny and Joe Perry. Campbell was drafted by the 49ers before the 1960 season, but could not beat out Y.A. Tittle or John Brodie for a spot on the roster.

A newspaper of the day quoted Coryell as saying, "I've wondered for two years how Campbell and Fields would go together in the same backfield."

Everyone found out when Coryell's All-Stars played the Rhinos at Long Beach Veteran Stadium on December 26, 1959.

Much of the All Stars roster came from Coryell's Whittier program. Those players already knew the playbook and that was important because the team practiced together for just one week prior to the game. The former Poets playing for the All Stars included Fields and Campbell, Dick Cate, Chuck McMurtry and Dave Fenton along with Peden, Dick Beam and Lou Vedova.

McMurtry, a defensive lineman, was drafted in the first AFL draft and went on to play four seasons in the league, two with the Buffalo Bills and two with the Oakland Raiders.

Beam would join the USC coaching staff and follow McKay to the NFL's Tampa Bay Buccaneers. He also worked for the Rams as an administrator and has worked for the NFL.

Peden coached at the high school and college levels from 1961 to 1983 before retiring from the sidelines. He also did some scouting for the Rams and recalls breaking down film on a college player from Southern Methodist named Eric Dickerson.

More players came to the All-Stars roster from UCLA, Washington State and other West Coast schools. Dean Phillipott, who later played running back for the Chicago Cardinals, came south from Fresno State to join the All-Stars.

The Rhinos had their share of stars as well. Among them was Hal Smith, a defensive lineman from UCLA who later played two seasons with the Patriots, Broncos and Raiders of the AFL.

Dick Larsen was the Rhinos quarterback. A former Fullerton Junior College star, Larsen also played at San Jose State and Long Beach State before joining the Rhinos. Larsen reportedly threw 24 touchdown passes for the Rhinos in 1959.

Sid Wingert, a defensive lineman, was the largest player on either roster. It's hard to imagine today, but Wingert's reported 310-pound heft was massive for the era. Hal Turner, another defender for the Rhinos, had played for the Detroit Lions.

Fields coached at the high school and junior college levels after serving as an assistant to Coryell at Whittier. He remains a student of the game and said recently, "I wish the NFL had 32 teams back then and a 50-plus player roster limit. I believe that both those teams, the Rhinos and our guys, were the caliber of the NFL-Europe teams that exist today."

Hard to argue that point, since players of the 1950s would frequently spend a season with a minor league club after failing to catch on with an NFL team, then try again in the NFL or Canada.

Once the Rhinos-Western College All-Stars game started, it was obvious that the teams were equally matched and that defense would rule the day. Neither team was able to generate as much as 200 yards in offense from the line of scrimmage.

The teams battled evenly through the first quarter before the All-Stars drove to the Rhino 11-yard line. The All-Stars came away empty when Dave Fenton missed a field goal. The Rhinos missed a chance when defensive back Chuck Morrell intercepted a Campbell pass at the All Stars 19 and a subsequent field goal attempt failed.

Late in the first half, the Rhinos drove into All-Stars territory but a Larsen pass was intercepted by former University of California star Darrell Roberts and returned 75 yards to the Rhinos 15-yard line. Fenton kicked a field goal on the final play of the half and the All Stars led 3-0.

Special teams keyed the game's only touchdown in the fourth quarter. The All-Stars blocked a Rhinos punt and recovered at the Orange County 11-yard line. Four plays later, Fields bulled in from two yards out.

Fenton's conversion made the score 10-0 with six minutes remaining and that was the final score.

"I had around 100 yards that day," Fields said recently. "That was mostly because of the offensive line and Dean Phillipott, who was an animal at fullback." Ironically, Fields would later play for the Rhinos.

Peden remembered the offensive line as well, one lineman in particular. Peden punted for the all-stars and Steve Palmer, the center from UCLA, was the long snapper.

"He snapped it so hard that it burned my hands, like an overhand pass might," Peden recalled.

Seven months after Palmer burned Peden's hands, professional football was a different game. The eight teams in the fledging AFL provided several hundred new jobs for professional football players. The quality of play in the minor leagues dropped slightly.

More cities had major league football teams and both leagues soon had significant contracts with television networks. So the residents of small towns, where minor league teams had been very popular, could watch NFL and AFL games without leaving the house.

Some things remain the same today. Minor league football does not have the same place in the sporting public's eye that it once had, but the game is still around. There are hundreds of teams competing in dozens of leagues around the country.

Long Beach Veterans Stadium still plays host to a myriad of games at different levels. It is the home of the minor league Long Beach Lions, the 2005 champions of the LaBelle Community Football League, which is named for benefactor Patti LaBelle.

Long Beach State's football program is gone and the Rams now play in St. Louis. But Whittier College's football program is still around, competing in the NCAA's Division III.

Coryell has long since retired from coaching. His career path, from Wenatchee Junior College in Washington to Whittier and then to San Diego State, the St. Louis Cardinals and the San Diego Chargers, was a long string of successful efforts.

The men who played in that game in Long Beach all those decades ago have reached their golden years. A few of them are sometimes brought together by college or high school class reunions and they share memories.

Those players know the football world changed shortly after the All-Stars played the Rhinos. It was the final game of an era.