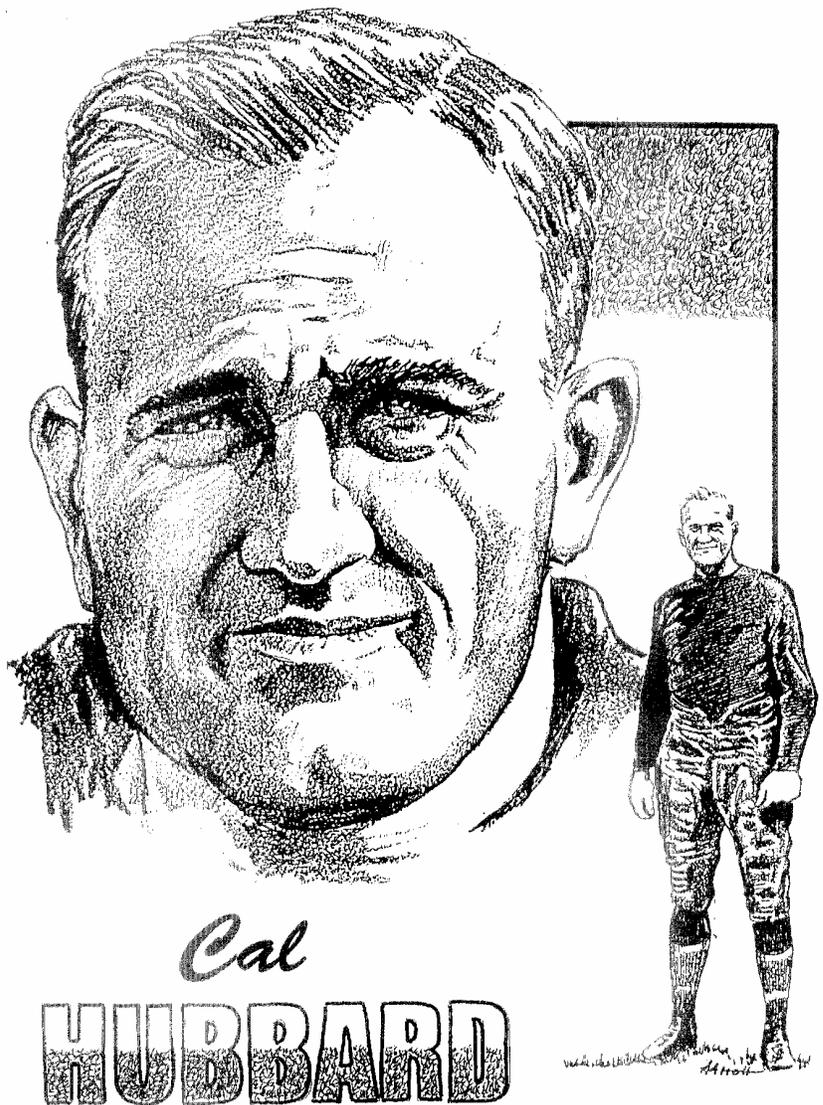


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Meeting of Researchers

By Ken Crippen

I am happy to report that we had a very successful meeting of researchers on June 21, 2008. Everyone seemed to have a good time and we were able to discuss a multitude of topics regarding the PFRA and football in general. Friday night, we went to dinner as a group. That gave us an opportunity to meet everyone and to get to know them in a social setting. After dinner, we met in Mark Ford's room to watch *Leatherheads*. We again met for dinner after the meeting on Saturday. Overall, it was a great weekend to socialize and to talk football.

The meeting started at 10AM on Saturday with an introduction to agenda for the day. At that point, we moved into the individual topics.

20yardline.com:

Aric Goodin runs a website called 20yardline.com. He is in the process of revamping that website and is looking to promote the PFRA on his website. As an organization, we are grateful for this additional exposure.

PFRAadio:

Mark Ford discussed the radio program that the PFRA is putting together. This topic was discussed in the previous issue of *Coffin Corner*, but we were able to discuss it in more detail at the meeting. The first show will be dedicated to the 1948 Cleveland Browns and their perfect season. Interviews with Art Statuto (1948 Buffalo Bills) and George Terlep (1948 Cleveland Browns) are in the hands of Mark Ford for editing. After editing of the interviews is complete, the remainder of the show will be put together. Once everything is complete, it will be broadcast on Mark's radio station, which has the ability to stream online (www.wtuk1051.com). No specific air date had been set at the meeting, but it will be advertised in *Coffin Corner*.

The discussion then moved to what people would like to hear in a historical football radio show. First-hand experiences from players, as well as game accounts were the main topics of discussion. Interviews with authors was also addressed.

It was also emphasized that there are no rules, expectations or deadlines for this project. Since we are breaking new ground as an organization with this project, we are experimenting with the subject to see the results. Podcasting of the show was also discussed. Mark Ford will be looking into the technology necessary to make that happen.

Leatherheads:

TJ Troup discussed his experiences working on the movie *Leatherheads* with George Clooney. Troup had a DVD with behind the scenes footage of several football scenes. This gave an interesting perspective on those scenes.

After the DVD, Troup started discussing his involvement with the film, from his initial call from the Hall of Fame to the wrap-up of production. He had almost complete autonomy to choose the football players and held a two-week training camp for those chosen. He had a chance to view the uniforms used, as well as the footballs. His total time on the film was from mid-January to the end of April.

Overall, Troup was pleased with the accuracy of the film's football scenes, but also commented that a lot of the football sequences ended up on the cutting room floor.

At that point, discussions turned to the greatest football movie ever made and should more football movies be created.

PFRA Committees:

The main focus of this discussion centered on the Hall of Very Good Committee and the All-America Football Conference Committee. Andy Piascik discussed the process at which the nominees were selected for the Hall of Very Good and the overall voting process. We also discussed the process in the past and how we modified the voting. The fact that participation from the membership has reached an all-time high was encouraging, but we still realized that the process can be improved.

The All-America Conference Committee is the largest and most active committee within the PFRA. The committee has several goals. First, the committee wants to create an oral history of the league. The committee has been working hard to locate and interview all surviving members of the Conference. This oral history will be invaluable for future researchers. Second, the committee wants to compile a list of memorabilia in the possession of the committee members. These items will be digitized and made available for researchers. These items are not easy to find and can be expensive to obtain. Combine this with the fact that a lot of items are very fragile due to age, and one can see the need to digitize them for future researchers. Finally, there is some talk within the committee to put together an encyclopedia of the All-America Football Conference. After all of the other

work is complete, the committee might address this topic.

McFarland Publishing:

Mark Durr from McFarland Publishing made a presentation on his company. McFarland is primarily known (at least in sports publications) for their baseball books. They now want to focus on football books and wanted to discuss what McFarland could do for PFRA members. A few PFRA members have already published with McFarland, so they have some familiarity with our organization and the quality of the work produced by our members.

PFRA Website and Forum:

Ideas were discussed on how we can improve our website and forum. One idea was to have a member's only section, in order to help PFRA members locate each other. We also discussed using a redirect from the old web address, in order to help ease the transition to the new website.

General PFRA topics:

The final topics of discussion related to general PFRA concerns and the future of the organization. With the spiraling costs of printing Coffin Corner and the

increased number of members writing longer research articles, web-only content will be utilized. This web-only content will give authors more flexibility to delve into their topics and to have it published and promoted by the PFRA. It will also help the PFRA publish more research without increasing costs. As a non-profit organization that is trying to keep dues steady, this is essential.

The PFRA corporate bylaws need to be overhauled. The issues surrounding the current bylaws were discussed. I will be forming a small committee to review and revamp the current bylaws for the PFRA. By the end of the year, the committee will have the new bylaws constructed and ready for board and membership approval. The goal is to have the new bylaws in place by the end of 2009.

The Next Meeting:

It was decided to have meetings every other year. The next meeting will be June 19, 2010 in Canton, Ohio. We hope that the attendance will continue to grow as we hold more meetings.

A special thank you goes out to all who attended and for making this meeting a success!!



Front Row (l to r): Aric Goodin, Mark Ford, Rupert Patrick, Lori Chase, Joe Page
Back Row (l to r): Ken Crippen, Sean Lahman, Mark Durr, Andy Piascik, TJ Troup, Denis Crawford
Photographer: Kristy Crippen

Hall of Very Good

By Hall of Very Good Committee

The results of the Hall of Very Good election are in and the members of the 2008 class are Dick Barwegen, Randy Gradishar, Bob Hoernschmeyer, Cecil Isbell, Buddy Parker, Spec Sanders, Jim Ray Smith, and Billy Wilson. Begun in 2002, the Hall of Very Good seeks to honor outstanding players and coaches who are not in the Hall of Fame and are not likely to ever make it. The PFRA does not promote any of the electees for the Hall of Fame nor does it view the Hall of Very Good as a springboard for the Hall of Fame. We simply recognize that there are many players and coaches who had great careers who deserve to be recognized.

Class of 2008:

Dick Barwegen
Randy Gradishar
Bob Hoernschmeyer
Cecil Isbell
Buddy Parker
Spec Sanders
Jim Ray Smith
Billy Wilson

Class of 2007:

Frankie Albert
Roger Brown
Timmy Brown
Marshall Goldberg
Jim Lee Howell
Glenn Presnell
Dick Schafrath
Jake Scott
Ed Sprinkle
Tank Younger

Class of 2006:

Charley Conerly
John Hadl
Chuck Howley
Alex Karras
Eugene Lipscomb
Kyle Rote
Dick Stanfel
Otis Taylor
Fuzzy Thurston
Deacon Dan Towler

Class of 2005:

Maxie Baughan
Jim Benton
Lavie Dilweg
Pat Harder
Floyd Little
Tommy Nobis
Pete Retzlaff
Tobin Rote
Lou Rymkus
Del Shofner

Class of 2004:

Gene Brito
John Brodie
Jack Butler
Chris Hanburger
Bob Hayes
Billy Howton
Jim Marshall
Al Nesser
Dave Robinson
Duke Slater

Class of 2003:

Gino Cappelletti
Carl Eller*
Pat Fischer
Benny Friedman*
Gene Hickerson*
Jerry Kramer
Johnny Robinson
Mac Speedie
Mick Tingelhoff
Al Wistert

*Member of the Professional Football Hall of Fame



Dick Barwegen, 1947-54 – G: Outstanding guard for four teams in two leagues. Powerful run blocker whose teams were first in rushing yards twice and average gain once. Unanimous all-league choice four straight years. Excellent defender in his early years as two-way player.



Randy Gradishar, 1974-83 – LB: Leader of Denver's Orange Crush defense that won the AFC in 1977. NFL Defensive Player of Year in '78. Never missed a game in 10 seasons. Broncos led NFL in numerous defensive categories in his prime years. 4 TD's and 20 INT's in career.



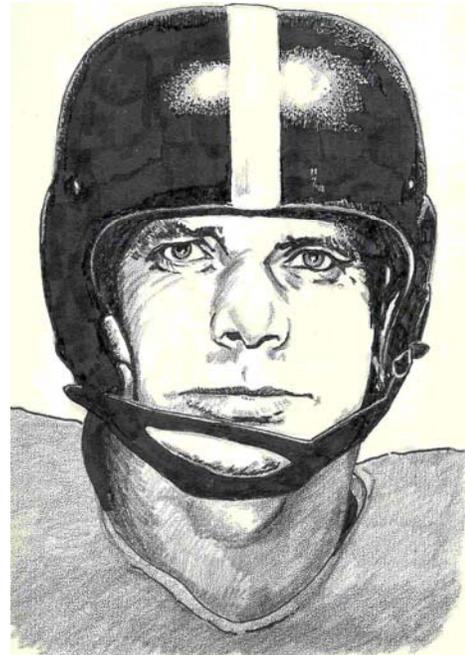
Bob Hoernschmeyer, 1946-55 – HB: Among top rushers in each of his first 8 seasons. Led Detroit in rushing four straight years while Lions were winning two NFL titles. Counting AAFC total, was 4th all-time in rushing when he retired.



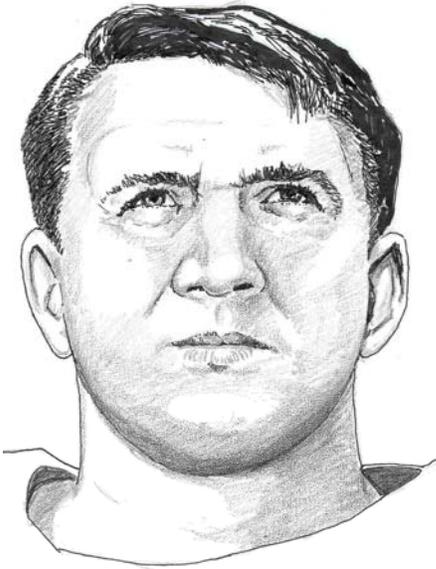
Buddy Parker, 1951-64 – Coach: Coached Detroit to three title games and two titles, compiling 50-24-2 record. Turned Pittsburgh into contender and ranks 3rd behind Noll and Cowher in wins among Steeler coaches. Also played 9 NFL years including on 1935 Lion title winners.



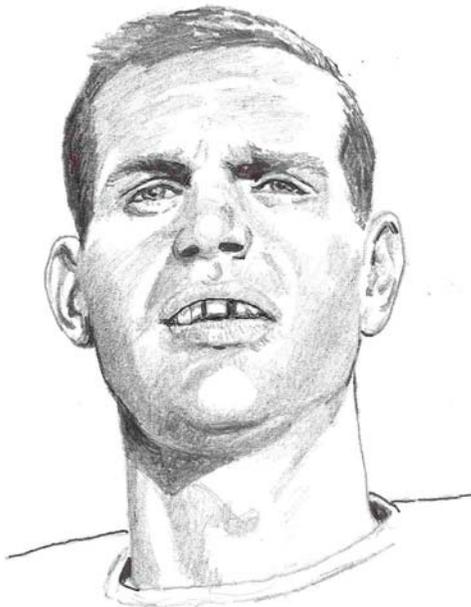
Cecil Isbell, 1938-42 – TB: Spectacular passer who led Packers to two Championship Games and one title. Set records for passing yards in 1941 and for completions, TD passes, and yards in '42. Also set marks with 5 TD throws in game and 22 straight games with TD pass.



Spec Sanders, 1946-50 – TB: Hard running tailback who established pro records with 1,432 rushing yards and 19 TD's in 1947 when he was AAFC MVP. Led Yankees to two AAFC title games. Set NFL record with 13 interceptions when he switched to defense full time in 1950.



Jim Ray Smith, 1956-64 – G: One of fastest guards ever who earned all-pro honors in five of the six full seasons he played. Browns led NFL in rushing yards and yards per carry twice each in his years with team. Had memorable game in '59 when he dominated Gene Lipscomb.



Billy Wilson, 1951-60 – WR: Thrice led NFL in receptions and was in top 7 seven straight years. 4th or better in receiving yards 5 times and also led league in TD catches once. Ranked 2nd all-time to Hutson in receptions and TD catches and 3rd in receiving yards when he retired.

This year's vote was extremely close; five players tied for the fourth spot, which resulted in a class of eight. Only three votes separated places 4 through 14. Despite a small technical glitch, this year's vote was the highest ever. Thanks to all members who participated.

Book Review:

'63: The Story of the 1963 World Champion Chicago Bears

Syracuse University Press (August 2004)
224pp.

Reviewed by Gino Malattia

Brothers Gary and Maury Youmans combined to write this story of the 1963 Chicago Bears. Gary wrote the text and Maury conducted the interviews. Maury was a member of the Bears' 1963 team, but a knee injury in the second exhibition game ended his season. Quotes, which include New York Giants owner Wellington Mara's philosophical reflection on George Halas' need to nudge a downed punt marker an insignificant distance to Pittsburgh Steelers coach Buddy Parker's hard-bitten analysis of watching film on the Bears' line play that was "so dirty that there was a ring around the screen" present an opponent's point of view. Others display the relaxed candor between old teammates.

The 1963 Chicago Bears went 11-1-2 in the regular season to win the Western Conference championship. At that point, they played the New York Giants in the title game. Intercepting Giant quarterback Y.A. Tittle five times, the Bears went on to win 14-10 for their eighth NFL championship.

The season is covered from the All-Star scrimmage to the championship game. Individual game box score facts are blended with quotes from and sketches of participants, as well as sidebars of NFL history. One item you will learn is that Bill Wade unknowingly held an NFL record for 35 years: A 66-yard touchdown run by a quarterback.

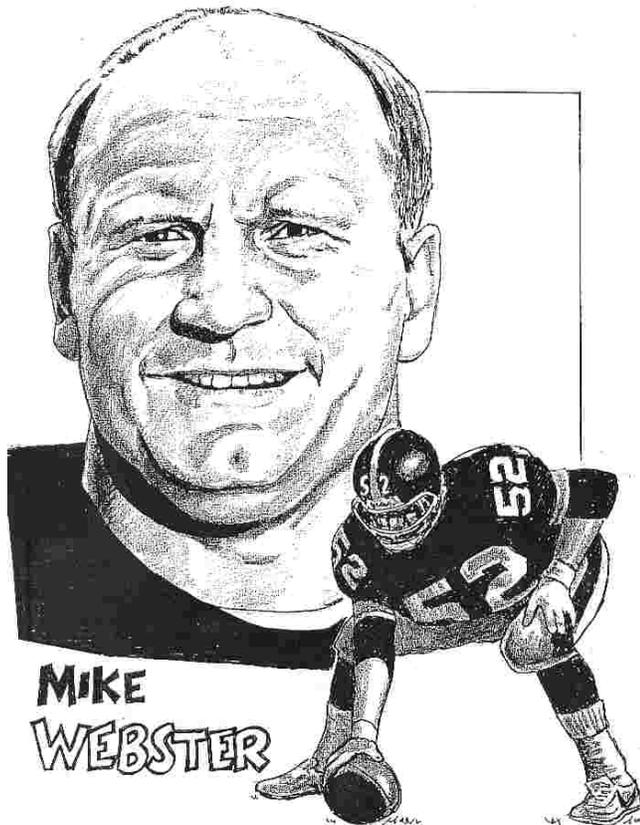
The protagonists of the story are respected and exasperating 'Papa Bear' George Halas, and his young assistant coach George Allen. Halas, part of the league since its inception, had survived the lean years when owners ran teams out of their back pockets. As the league embraced prosperity, he felt the past owed him a debt he intended to collect. In the competition between the players and owner for Bear revenue (a theme that runs throughout the book), Halas was never going to lose. Allen, a generation younger than Halas and his cronies, entered the NFL as it began to emerge into a dominant sport. Positive and personable, Allen was a player's coach. Ironically, neither man won another NFL crown. Halas' parsimony underwrote a failed (5-9) 1964 season. In 1983, death insured that '63 was his last championship. Allen, as Ram or Redskin, never was able to spend or finagle enough to win it all.

This book is more than simply a retelling of the 1963 Chicago Bears. Written in the idiom of the time, it reads well and true.

Steel City Ironman

The inspirational, and tragic, career and life of Mike Webster

By Ed Gruver



In a city celebrated for its production of steel, one of its more precious commodities turned out to be made of iron.

"Iron" Mike Webster anchored the offensive line on four Super Bowl championship squads during the Pittsburgh Steelers' dynastic run in the 1970s. He was, in a literal as well as figurative sense, the center of attention on the Steelers' trap-blocking O-line.

Named to the NFL's All-Rookie team in 1974, he went on to be named All-Pro seven times, All-AFC five times, played in nine Pro Bowls and was enshrined in the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1997. Though he practiced his trade in the Steel City, he was an ironman in every sense of the word. He established Steelers records for seasons played (15), games played (220) and ranks second in consecutive games played (177).

Black-on-white numbers, however, don't tell the full story of a man who forged an indelible image in black

and gold. Prior to the start of every play, the sturdy, 6-1, 255-pound Webster would be the first to wheel from the Steelers' offensive huddle. His muscular arms, which remained bare even in Pittsburgh's wintry weather, pumped like pistons as he approached the line of scrimmage.

Webster would bend forward at the line, grip the football in his right hand and rest his left hand on the knee pad of his bright gold football pants.

With Steelers QB Terry Bradshaw bent low behind him to receive the snap, Webster would fire the ball back in a hard snap and then fire out at the defense. More often than not, he engaged in memorable hand-to-hand battles with the outstanding defensive tackles of his era - Curley Culp of the Oilers, Randy White of the Cowboys and Jim Burt of the Giants.

The measure of opponents' respect for Webster was best exemplified by former Bengals' defensive lineman Tim Krumrie. Upon his retirement from the game, Krumrie asked Webster for one of his paint-scraped Steelers helmets as a reminder of their many head-to-head battles.

In many ways, Webster was the point man of the great Steelers offenses. He was the first to confront opposing defenses on each play, and his muscular frame personified the Steelers' physical strength.

"Mike was a symbol for our team," said Steelers' Hall of Fame defensive tackle Joe Greene, who warred with Webster in full-speed scrimmages that would have been worth the price of a ticket.

"When you saw that Pittsburgh offense, he was the first one you saw running up to the line, fists pumping," said Greene. "(The defense) knew what they had to deal with right off with Mike."

On a unit that included fellow future Hall of Famers Bradshaw, Franco Harris, Lynn Swann and John Stallworth, as well as standout performers in Rocky Bleier and Jon Kolb, Webster was the offensive captain. He was also, in many respects, the offensive leader, a man who made 150 consecutive starts from 1975-85 and delivered every offensive snap for six straight seasons.

"Mike was very much a leader by example," then-Steelers coach Chuck Noll told the Pittsburgh Post Gazette on the occasion of Webster's untimely passing at the age of 50 from what was ruled a heart attack on September 24, 2002.

"We had guys who were all mouth. Mike didn't say much, but what he did resonated... loudly."

Especially in the heat of battle.

"There were times in the huddle," Bleier said, "when Bradshaw would ask the offensive line what to run, especially if it was third-and-2 and he didn't like Chuck's call. We'd kind of all look up and Webby would say what to run. It was that kind of relationship. Everyone respected Mike for his knowledge."

Webster's football knowledge was hard-won. His physical workouts were legendary, and the results were easy to see when Webster took the field in his No. 52 Steelers jersey that was tapered so as to leave little to the imagination.

What few saw, except for those who study line play, was that Webster was as much a technician as he was a strongman. He played center in a way few had done before or since, a style that might best be described as "brute skill."

He made the difficult line calls in Pittsburgh's complex trap-blocking schemes, then muscled defenders away from the ball. In effect, he outthought and outfought the NFL's best defenses for the better part of two decades.

"(Webster) had great strength and quickness, that's what excited me," said Noll, who as an offensive guard with Paul Brown's Cleveland Browns in the 1950s played next to a similar type of center in five-time All-Pro and future Hall of Famer Frank Gatski.

"And (Webster) was very smart, a great technician."

And a great role model for teammates like offensive linemate Tunch Ilkin. The Steelers tackle would arrive at Three Rivers Stadium feeling good about himself because he was an hour early for workouts, only to discover that Webster and fellow strongman Kolb were already there, lifting weights. They had arrived two hours early.

"I thought I was a hard worker," Ilkin said. "(Webster) out-trained everybody."

Outworked them in the film room too. Following his strenuous lifting sessions, Webster and Kolb would study game film.

"To us younger guys, (Webster) was an ideal role model," Ilkin said. "He was like playing next to a coach. He knew everything that was going on out there. He knew what the wideouts were doing, what the offensive linemen were doing, what the defenses were doing. He just prepared like no one I've ever seen in my life."

Webster's preparation included adorning himself with a weight vest and then tirelessly running the steep steps of Three Rivers Stadium.

"I don't know when he didn't run those steps," Steelers offensive tackle Larry Brown said. "Mike was just driven. You would think, 'Well, that's enough work,' and Mike would still find time to go beyond that. It was extraordinary. Anybody who played with him had to look at him in admiration and for inspiration."

Webster no doubt drew some of his inspiration from his days growing up on a 640-acre potato farm outside Tomahawk, Wisconsin watching Vince Lombardi drive his Green Bay Packers through snow, ice and mud to five NFL championships. He idolized Packers' tough-guy fullback Jim Taylor, and later followed a weight training regimen that rivaled that of the rock-hard Taylor in his playing days.

Like Packers' Hall of Fame center Jim Ringo, Webster was undersized for his position. Because he weighed just 225 pounds at the University of Wisconsin, Webster wasn't drafted until the fifth round of the 1974 NFL Draft. The Steelers' draft that year is often considered the best in league history, since it included future Hall of Famers Swann, Stallworth and Jack Lambert.

Arriving at the Steelers' camp in the summer of 1974, the undersized Webster became practice fodder for the 275-pound Greene and his punishing linemate at defensive tackle, Ernie Holmes.

"Ernie and I used to beat up on him in practice pretty good for the first couple years," Greene said, "Then we couldn't do it anymore."

Webster became wedded to hard work; his front lawn had a blocking sled, his back yard a set of weights. Eventually, he built himself into the 255-pound physical specimen that awed teammates and opponents alike.

"He had those huge arms," Kolb said. "He'd play through injuries, and you'd see the highlight film and there would be Mike... his motor always running."

Webster's motor stopped abruptly in 2002, much too soon for a warrior who seemed indestructible, but perhaps mercifully for a man who endured so much

physical, mental and emotional pain in his post-playing career.

"He went through a lot of tough years," Bradshaw said, "but he never complained about anything."

It was the price Webster paid for his dedication to his craft.

"His focus, his toughness," Ilkin said. "They said he didn't miss a game in 10 years; I don't think he missed a play in 10 years."

Webster is missed now, by family, and friends, and by everyone who ever watched arguably the greatest center in NFL history perfect his craft.

"There never has been and never will be another man as committed and totally dedicated to making himself the very best he could be," Bradshaw said.

Added Noll, "He was the one position I never had to worry about."

High praise from a head coach who fielded a team with nine future Hall of Famers. But befitting a man who, in a city famous for its steel, was beloved for seemingly being cast from iron.

MIKE WEBSTER

C-OG

Webster, Michael Lewis

6-1, 255

Wisconsin

HS: Rhinelander [WI]

B: 3 / 18 / 1952, Tomahawk, WI

D: 9 / 24 / 2002, Pittsburgh, PA (50)

Drafted: 1974 Round 5 Pit

1974 Pit 14- 1	1975 Pit 14- 1	1976 Pit 14-14
1977 Pit 14-14	1978 Pit 16-16	1979 Pit 16-16
1980 Pit 16-16	1981 Pit 16-16	1982 Pit 9- 9
1983 Pit 16-16	1984 Pit 16-16	1985 Pit 16-16
1986 Pit 12-12	1987 Pit 15-15	1988 Pit 16-16
1989 KC 16-16	1990 KC 9- 7	245-217

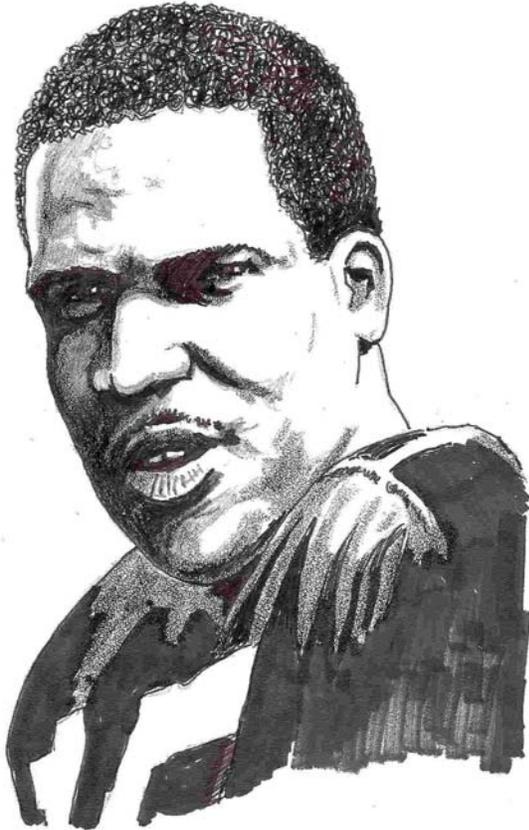
Pro Football Hall of Fame 1997

OFF. LINEMAN	Pos	PB
Bruce Matthews	G-C	14
Randle McDaniel	G	12
Jim Otto	C	12
Will Shields	G	12
Larry Allen	G-T	11
Tom Mack	G	11
Anthony Munoz	T	11
Jonathan Ogden	T	11
William Roaf	T	11
Jim Ringo	C	10
Roosevelt Brown	T	9
Forrest Gregg	T	9
Lou Groza	T	9
John Hannah	G	9
Mike Munchak	G	9
Orlando Pace	T	9
Walt Sweeney	G	9
Mike Webster	C	9
Ruben Brown	G	8
Winston Hill	G-T	8
Walter Jones	T	8
George Kunz	T	8
Ron Mix	T	8
Jim Parker (G-T)	G	8
Billy Shaw	G	8
Art Shell	T	8
Steve Wisnieski	G	8
Lomas Brown	T	7
Ed Budde	G	7
Alan Faneca	G	7
Chris Hinton	G-T	7
Stan Jones	G	7
Jon Morris	C	7
Jackie Slater	T	7
Gene Upshaw	G	7
Richmond Webb	T	7
Gary Zimmerman	T	7
Grady Alderman	T	6
Bruce Armstrong	T	6
Bob Brown	T	6
Joe DeLamielleure	G	6
Dan Dierdorf	T	6
Ken Gray	G	6
Gene Hickerson	G	6
Bob Kuechenberg	G	8
Mike McCormack	T	6
Nate Newton	G	6
John Niland	G	6
Bob Talamini	G	6
Fuzzy Thurston	G	6
Mick Tingelhoff	C	6
Rayfield Wright	T	6

For those who tend to rank players on their number of Pro Bowls (and AFL All-Star Games), here are the numbers for Offensive Linemen.

He Was a Contender: Hank Washington

By John Maxymuk



Hank Washington

Spencer Henry “Hank” Washington led a short, tragic life filled with irony that reflected the struggles of a generation of athletes striving against much resistance to become the first great black quarterback in pro football. Although he is not remembered at all today, Hank was a serious contender in the quest by African Americans to call signals in the NFL in the late 1960s. Although he did not fulfill his goal, his career was punctuated with triumphs, however small, and friendships, however brief.

Born to a school teacher mother and reverend father, Hank was orphaned at age six and raised by an aunt and uncle in Los Angeles. He made a name for himself as the All City quarterback at Los Angeles High in 1962 and then continued to excel on the playing field with Los Angeles City

College. In 1965, he transferred to West Texas State where he starred as a bomb throwing quarterback under coach Joe Kerbel for the next two seasons.

Hank was 6’3” 210 pounds and could throw the ball 90-95 yards on the fly. Kerbel had to work with his big-armed quarterback to ease off on the power of his shorter passes as the West Texas receivers were getting their arms bloodied trying to catch Hank’s fastballs. In his senior year of 1966, Washington was joined in the backfield by running back Mercury Morris, and Hank finished fourth in the nation in total offense and fifth in passing, while the team went 7-3.

Although most eyes were focused on Tennessee A&I’s fabulous junior quarterback Eldridge Dickey as the probable first star black quarterback, Washington turned some heads in his senior season by throwing for over 2,100 yards and 17 touchdowns. In his two years in Canyon, Texas, Hank threw for 3,510 yards and 26 touchdowns while completing 54% of his passes. He also threw 27 interceptions. Kerbel regularly praised him by stating, “If I was coaching a pro team, I would be after one quarterback – Hank Washington.”

Washington himself claimed, “I think the forward pass is the most exciting thing in football,” and confidently added, “I can do all the things they want a quarterback to do. The quick release is the difference between a passer and a thrower, and I can get rid of it quick.” He also admitted “I’d love to play pro ball if I get the opportunity.” The Raiders’ Al Davis was quoted by Brad Pye in the *Los Angeles Sentinel* as thinking Washington could very possibly be the first black quarterback.

However, despite playing in both the North South Classic and the Senior Bowl following his college career, Washington went undrafted by both the NFL and AFL in 1967. Soon afterwards, he signed with the New York Giants for a reputed bonus of \$40,000. There was some uproar in the black

press when it was said that Wellington Mara was pressing Hank to be open to switching positions because it was clear that he deserved a shot at quarterback.

Ironically, famed columnist Doc Young asserted that Washington “goofed when he signed with the New York Giants instead of the Oakland Raiders. With the Raiders, he probably would’ve played quarterback.” While Washington indeed would get his shot at quarterback in training camp with the Giants, the more celebrated Eldridge Dickey would not fare so well the following season when the Raiders drafted him number one and turned him into a flanker.

Washington reported to training camp in 1967 and impressed coach Allie Sherman and his staff with his arm, but not with his sophistication. Every pass was thrown with such velocity that the receivers dropped most of his passes. Sherman told the *New York Times*, “I guess he can throw the ball as far as anyone ever has. When it comes to timing and technique, I’d have to say he’s quite a way out. My, he has the perfect build for a quarterback.”

As expected, the Giants farmed Hank out to the Westchester Bulls of the Atlantic Coast League for seasoning. Both Hank and the Giants were said to expect it to take three years for Washington to develop as a quarterback. Unfortunately, the clock would run out on him.

He reported to the Bulls, but found himself as a backup to 5’10” John De Noia who did not have major league tools like Hank, but was more adept at running the offense as designed. Washington, it was said, was quick to improvise if the game plan bogged down and was more interested in throwing bombs than in directing drives. Bob Gill’s incomplete statistics for Washington’s three seasons in the ACFL bear this out with 35 completions in 91 attempts for 577 yards, 7 touchdowns and 6 interceptions.

Hank spent two seasons as a backup in Westchester before moving on to the Hartford Knights in 1969 where he backed up Benny Russell. One of his biggest highlights in Westchester was throwing a 26-yard touchdown to future Eagles’ and Jets’ coach Rich Kotite in the 1967 ACFL title game that the Bulls lost.

Through former Westchester Bull Dr. Ken Leistner, I heard from some of Hank’s teammates from the Bulls: guard Joe Tuths, receiver Tom Cassesse and receiver Roger Dennis. All four later became high school coaches. They remember him as a great guy with a wonderful personality who had a great arm and was fairly accurate, but could not develop any touch on his shorter passes.

While they agreed that he lacked “a quarterback’s finesse,” they all spoke highly of his work ethic. Cassesse, in particular, often stayed late after practice to work with Hank under the watch of coach Joe Walton. It was Cassesse’s impression that while Washington yearned to be an NFL quarterback, he was not seeking the added pressure of being the “first” black quarterback star.

Sadly, neither Hank nor any of his contemporaries had any choice in the matter. They were not granted the luxury of simply competing to play quarterback in the NFL; they all had to weather the added burden of competing to become the first black quarterback. Taken along with the prevalent racist attitudes of many NFL owners and coaches of the time, that helps explain why it took so long for a black quarterback to truly succeed in the NFL.

During the 1969 season with Hartford, Washington started having back problems that turned out to be cancer. He underwent surgery and did not play in 1970. In January 1971, Hank Washington passed away at age 25, leaving behind a widow, Rose, and a six year old son, Roy. In a final touch of irony, Roy was left fatherless at the same age that Hank was 19 years before.

His Hartford coach Fred Wallner remembered Washington as “a fine man, a fine quarterback. We had great hopes for him.”

Hartford owner Peter Savin commented, “He was just a great guy. He went out of his way for everyone. We’re just very sad about it. He represented the best qualities.”

While Hank Washington never reached his ultimate goal, he was a respected trailblazer who deserves to be remembered.

Book Review by John Vorperion

STRONG ARM TACTICS:

A History and Statistical Analysis of the Professional Quarterback

by John Maxymuk (McFarland)

If you're searching for the ultimate pro QB almanac, look no further. Sectioned into three spirited and detailed portions STRONG ARM covers the quarterback position better than any scout's report. Maxymuk's initial segment presents a comprehensive historical narrative of the signal caller from 1920 to now. Tables and categories abound as the chapter's theme Quarterbacks in Context attempts to answer a perennial gridiron query.

Where and how does STRONG ARM come about? Are they best found by exploiting undrafted free agency, trades, rival leagues? Viking skipper Bud Grant said, "A good coach needs a patient wife, a loyal dog and a great quarterback, but not necessarily in that order." The NCAA is the NFL's farm system. Maxymuk notes Football Factories. Notre Dame may lead the pros with 26, but if one starts at 1987, Bruins (UCLA) and Huskies (Washington), displace the Fightin' Irish at the top slot. But methodically and correctly he asks, who has produced the best talent? His thoughtful conclusion, cites four schools as best bets and indicts a BIG TEN school as a never pick. Honing the issue continues into the following section Quarterbacks in Time.

How do you size up Benny Friedman, Sammy Baugh, Otto Graham, or even a Johnny Unitas against today's STRONG ARM? Measurements of decade by decade League Passing Statistics and Individual Leading Passing stats shed some light on answers to the aforementioned tough, but fun, ponderable. Thinking about then and now pros and how they rank against one another is better than tailgating. The final section focuses on Quarterbacks by Team.

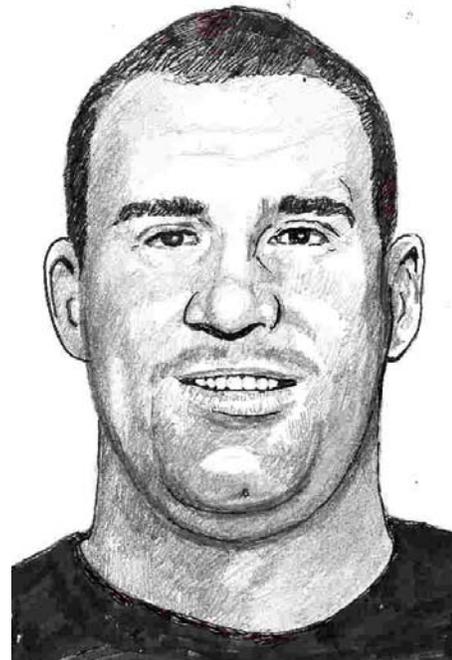
Past and present field generals for each active NFL franchise are assessed by categories. More entertaining than the Oscars, Maxymuk renders

lists such as, Oldest QBs, Black QBs, Most Accurate, Rookie Sensation, Worst Starter, Comeback King, Underrated, Highest football I.Q., and then some. My ah-ha moment? Would you believe, Motown's Pride, the Detroit Lions have had six QBs from the State of Utah? Bill Munson, Bob Gagliano, Eric Hipple, Tom Dublinski, Scott Mitchell and Ty Detmer were all NCAA schooled on the Beehive State's gridirons.

STRONG ARM TACTICS has more surprises than a quarterback sneak.

* * * * *

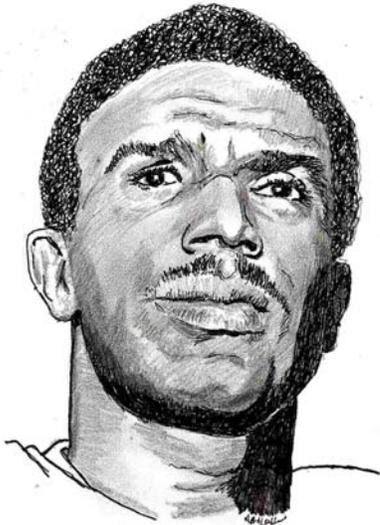
JOHN VORPERIAN is Host of BEYOND THE GAME, a sports history program cablecast in New York. Since March 2002 over 435 episodes have been produced, guests have included Hall of Famer, Harry Carson, Thomas "Hollywood" Henderson, Bob Wolff, and Bob Hyland.



How big is Big Ben?

A Gleam of Dawn: The Legendary Warren Wells

By Jacqueline Brannon Giles



A Big Game in 1970

In 1939, Duke Ellington gave Billy Strayhorn directions to get to Ellington's house by the New York City subway: "Take the 'A' Train." In December 1970, I gave Warren Wells the same directions to get to Brooklyn Heights to bring me tickets to one of the big games between the Raiders and Jets. Wells found his way to make the delivery on Orange Street in Brooklyn Heights. I found my way to Shea stadium to witness a professional football game.

Wells had told me that he had a great year in professional football and he wanted me to see him play. I had never watched him play at Texas Southern University in Houston, Texas. I was too busy struggling to make A's in mathematics, but I sensed there was something special about Warren. His eyes were dark, and he had a fearless gaze that was unsettling to those who did not know him.

At the game I personally witnessed one of the greatest catches in Wells' career. In Shea Stadium on December 6, 1970, on a cold, wet day the Jets were dominating the game. The stakes were high that day for the Raiders wanted a shot at first place in the Western Division, the playoff and a chance to go to the Super Bowl. Something miraculous happened at a time when the clock was showing eight seconds remaining. The score was 13-7 on the fourth down at the Jets 33-yard line. People started jumping, screaming and

yelling. I was too short and had to stretch to see what had happened. I knew Warren was far out close to the goal, for he always had that knack to get out there near the goal fast, but everyone was jumping and yelling all around me. Daryl Lamonica threw a long pass into the endzone and although there was a crowd in the area Warren Wells caught the football in what I recall was almost a horizontal position. After that, all it took was George Blanda's kick to win the game with a final score of 14-13 in the Raiders favor.

All state receiver in high school

Under the legendary coaching of Clifton Ozen at Beaumont Hebert High School in Texas, Wells was an all state receiver in 1959. So many talented high school athletes came from the Golden Triangle Area (Beaumont-Port Arthur, Texas) that Wells was considered average. According to a quote in 1997 in the *Austin-American Statesman* by Enous Minix, assistant to the late Clifton Ozen, "Wells was one of the dozens of talented athletes whose roots were in the old Prairie View Interscholastic League, once the governing body of Black high schools in Texas."

TSU Football led by Coach Alexander Durley

We encountered each other again in February 2007. He said to me quietly, for Wells always did have a quietness about him, "We met in the Nabrit Science building in 1962, and I was on my way to Mrs. Corinne Newell's mathematics class." I was amazed because I am analytical and he was both analytical and seemed to have photographic memory, even at 65 years old. He was an elementary education major with a football scholarship. The year we met was the year that Coach Alexander Durley led the TSU team to an overall 7-3-0 (W-L-T), and finished 2nd in the Southwestern Athletic Conference, followed by an overall 7-3-0, ranking 2nd again in 1963 in the Southwestern Athletic Conference. In 1963 Wells was the "Seasonal Scoring Leader" grabbing 71 points with those gifted hands. In Career Receiving, Wells ranks 13th in the TSU data with 21 TDs, 80 catches totaling 1398 yards. In 1963 Wells had 37 receptions, totaling 849 yards and 11 touchdowns. Herman Driver had more

receptions (39) that year, but Wells exceeded him in yards by 203, while Driver had 8 TDs in that year.

In 1964 Wells was drafted by the Detroit Lions, and I remember him coming to the TSU campus, telling me that he was going to give his bonus to his family so that they could purchase a new home. Behind those piercing eyes was a kind-hearted man who put his family first. He was born in Franklin, Louisiana, November 14, 1942. His loving parents Henry and Julia Wells raised four sons and a daughter. His brother Oscar Wells passed away in 1982, and that loss grieved him. He left Houston in 1982, and resides in Beaumont, Texas near his brothers, Russell and Tony and in regular fellowship with other members of his extended family. Some saw him as a man to be feared on the football field, and perhaps in life, but I always saw a gentle man, strong but sensitive.

Wells was drafted in the 12th round, pick 160 in 1964. His potential was not evident to Detroit, and the US Army interrupted his career. He was stationed in Alaska in 1965-1966, receiving an honorable discharge.

His determination and discipline prepared him for a position with the Oakland Raiders. Scout Lloyd Wells helped him get to the Oakland Raiders. Lloyd Wells, one of the first African American scouts in professional football, knew Wells at Texas Southern and had faith that Wells would emerge as an outstanding wide receiver. Wells played 56 games with the Raiders (9 with the Detroit Lions), scoring a career total of 258 points with 42 touchdowns.

The numbers tell a story

Now after more than 38 years Wells' statistics still look impressive. For example, in 1969 he had 1260 yards and 14 TDs. According to the data and videos, Wells career was short but illustrious; his moves were graceful and he could "cut" or change direction like no other player during his prime. His nickname was "War Horse" and his long, slender legs galloped to the goal line, making him one of the most respected wide receivers in professional football.

Wells had movie star looks, which attracted a lot of distractions and caused some legal and personal challenges. According to a January 17, 1982 article, written by Dwain Price, of the

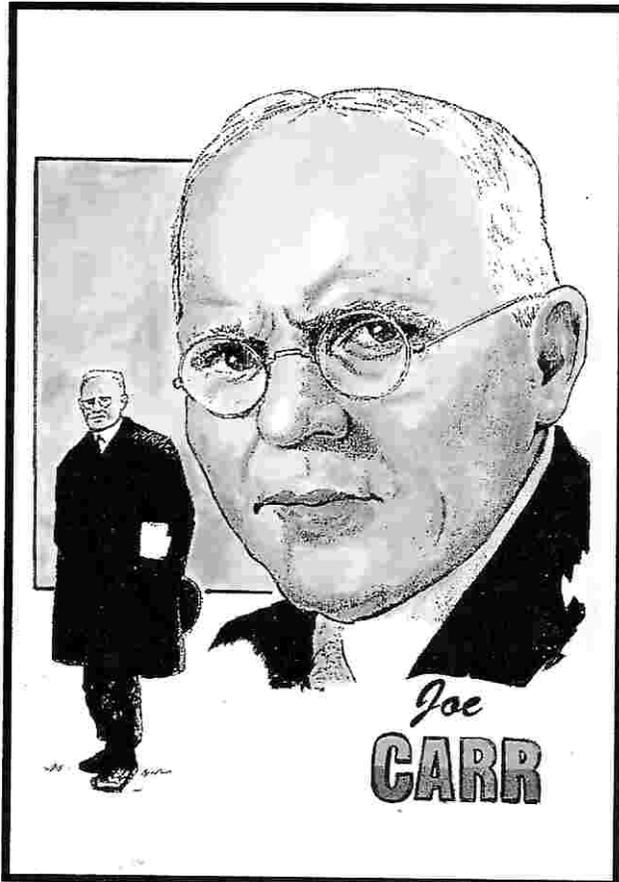
Beaumont Enterprise, "Warren Wells was a target, gullible toward (Oakland's) swift talkers. He met Jewel Barksdale, wife of former Baltimore Bullet Don Barksdale, one night at a party which she invited him to by calling his home. The article states "My wife said I'd gotten a call from Jewel and that I was invited to a birthday party." Mrs. Barksdale, whom he was aware was married at the time, displayed extreme interest in him." In the article Wells stated that the lady made advances toward him at a party and the two left in Warren's '69 Riviera and stayed out until 4 a.m. Don Barksdale was in the media and rather astute. He, too, was a professional athlete, who was successful in radio and who owned nightclubs in Oakland. Wells' nightmare began. The accusations and trauma of the event has taken a toll on him. The article continues, "Wells frequently cashed his checks at Don Barksdale club," and Barksdale's wife was bold enough to willingly leave the party with Wells. Bubba Smith is quoted as saying, "Everybody in Oakland knows about it (the actual truth contrary to Jewel's accusations)." The legal battles that ensued caused his career to be truncated. Others affirm that he has paid his dues to society, but the world ceases to forget, although it may forgive.

In 1971 Wells wife filed for and was granted a divorce, and the article quotes him, "That left me broke." "I fell about 25 feet overboard after that and had to start over from the bottom," he said in the article. Those close to him know that he has never completely recovered from those past episodes. Presently, Wells, at 65 years old, has a supportive group of friends and relatives who chauffeur him to church, to community activities, and to vote.

Wells' career was short, but spectacular. What is to be remembered is his contribution to professional football as a team-minded player with the Oakland Raiders. We salute the contributions of Mr. Warren Wells, whose main focus was to get to the goal and have a victory—a touchdown! Wells still ranks among the best wide receivers in professional football. His numbers tell the story, his record has stood the test of time. The robustness and radiance of his career statistics are a gleam of dawn in a life dimmed by shadows of social challenges, yet the dawn has illuminated the past, and may inspire some in the future. A final question posed to Wells on June 29, 2008: "Which game was the best in your career?" He retorted, with a stern gaze, "All of them."

1927: HERE'S YOUR HAT ...

By Bob Carroll



The year 1927 was one for accomplishing firsts. Charles Lindbergh became the first to fly the Atlantic solo. "Babe" Ruth became the first to hit 60 home runs. The National Football League had no individual exploits to hold against those achievements, but as a group they accomplished something rather unusual -- they surgically removed most of the weak franchises. For the league, this was a first. In the NFL's previous seven seasons, franchises had fallen as regularly as autumn leaves. Most of the departed went quietly, drowning in their own red ink. A few had been removed forcibly for failure to pay their league fees, but that was essentially the same thing. One -- Green Bay -- had been coerced to resign for breaking a league rule (although "Curly" Lambeau had bought a new franchise before the next season), and the Milwaukee owner had been forced to sell his franchise for committing another infraction. But never had a franchise owner been

told to go away simply because his team couldn't hack it and was, as a result, costing the other owners money. Until 1927.

One year earlier, it had been incumbent on the league to have as big a membership as possible. In New York, Brooklyn, Chicago, and Philadelphia, NFL teams scheduled directly against the Grange-Pyle American Football League upstarts. A variety of visiting teams provided competition, mostly weak. Every moderately strong NFL team deprived the AFL of a possible franchise. Every NFL game reported helped crowd AFL games off the sports pages. Every football player performing in the NFL was one less playing in the AFL.

But the crisis had passed. It was time to think of the future. Healthy franchises like the Chicago Bears, Frankford Yellow Jackets and New York Giants had lost money in 1926 because of the AFL War, but the prospects were good for 1927 if they could simply avoid being pulled into the abyss by such nonentities as the Canton Bulldogs, Akron Indians, Hammond Pros, and other such losers. The big three had refused to visit the lesser cities for years. A sell-out in Canton's bandbox Lakeside Park would earn the Bears less as visitors than the Halas men could reap from playing host before a modest crowd at Wrigley Field. Even Canton's visitor's share of a Chicago gate was usually more than they could earn at home. So, in 1926, the Canton Bulldogs had hosted such "stellar attractions" as the Columbus Tigers, Louisville Colonels, Akron Indians, and two traveling teams that would go anywhere there was a hundred-yard field -- the Los Angeles Buccaneers and the Nevers Eskimos. If the Bulldogs were to survive another season, it would only be with trips to Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia.

But Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia fans didn't want to see the Bulldogs. Certainly Canton would not be in the thick (or even the thin) of the 1927 championship race; no Bears fan would turn out expecting to see an important or close game. The Ohio team could offer no new gate

attractions. Jim Thorpe, Wilbur Henry, and Pete Calac were all past their prime, but worse, they were old news. For any of the big three to put Canton on its home schedule for 1927 would have been an act of charity. They'd done their charity work in 1926. In 1927, the Bears knew more fans would fly to Wrigley Field for a honey of a matchup against Green Bay than for the vinegar offered by Canton.

Teams in Green Bay, Providence, Cleveland (back yet again) were caught in the middle. Although they couldn't hope to draw the crowds of the big three, a strong attraction like the Bears could put 10-12,000 in the stands. That was good enough to get one or two of the big three as visitors. And the teams were good enough to draw okay home-and-home among themselves. But they certainly didn't want Canton mucking up their schedules. Whether home or away, they'd lose money on the Bulldogs.

Apparently, the Canton people got the message early. They didn't send a representative to the next league meeting, and, since they weren't marked as "absent," it can be assumed they had already dropped out of the league by then. But that left Akron, Dayton, Columbus, Hammond, Rochester, Minneapolis, Louisville, Kansas City, and a couple of other marginal teams to be dealt with. None of the potential winners cared if losers like Canton, Akron, Hammond and Dayton wanted to play games among themselves, just so long as the weaklings didn't get in the way of the serious business of the strong: winning football games and making money.

... There's the Door, Act One

By the time the NFL owners met at the Astor Hotel in New York on Saturday, February 5, 1927, the AFL was dead although no official obituary had been printed yet. The Rock Island Independents, the team that had jumped to the AFL in 1926, even applied for readmission to the NFL. The application never even made it to the floor, the Executive Committee rejecting it out of hand. Times had changed. It was soon made clear to the representatives from Akron, Rochester, and such that the league didn't need any more weak teams with unfilled 4,000-seat stadiums. Nor could it abide any more anemic road teams, whose only use was to show up in Chicago or New York on an odd weekend and provide exercise for the locals. Such clubs, once

useful, were now virtual parasites. They drew no fans themselves, yet took a percentage of the gate. Instead of addition, the NFL was about to grow by subtraction.

Shortly after the meeting began, Dr. Harry March, Tim Mara's figurehead president of the New York Giants proposed that President Carr appoint a committee of nine to consider the "reorganization of the league." This wasn't a bolt out of the blue for the owners of healthy franchises; they'd undoubtedly talked it over beforehand. Carr appointed a nice mix of representatives of the strong, the middling and the weak: the Chicago Bears, New York, and Frankford at one end of the spectrum; Kansas City, Akron, and Columbus at the other; and Providence, Pottsville, and Green Bay aligned in the middle. As soon as Frankford was officially declared the 1926 league champions, the committee took a fifteen minute break to "discuss" the matter. In truth, the time was probably spent in telling Akron, Columbus, and Kansas City they were about to be lopped off and kicking around ways to make it as painless as possible.

After the break, the committee reported through chairman Charles Copen of the Providence Steam Roller, that it felt the league should be divided into two classes -- "A" and "B." This was tantamount to saying "major" and "minor" leagues. Most of the owners of the lesser teams were immediately and understandably upset. After all, they'd paid for major league franchises. Copen added somewhat lamely that if this plan wasn't "feasible" the Executive Committee could consider a method of reorganization that would "serve the good of the league." In other words, take back your hot potato, gentlemen.

After some more discussion, it was decided to adjourn until the next morning. That would give the advocates of various solutions a chance to work toward becoming a majority. But a simple majority was not what was needed. The strong teams could not cavalierly expell the weaklings, who, after all, had committed no sin other than losing money. Teams like the Bears and Giants might refuse to schedule Akron -- the schedule was still being arranged by individual owners rather than the league -- but if the Akron owners chose to pay their dues and guarantee, they would remain in the league. Somehow a way had to be found to get the unproductive teams to agree, however grudgingly, to their own demise.

Because the Executive Committee had a heavy docket of monetary claims between clubs to resolve, the full membership didn't get together until two in the afternoon on Sunday. One interesting point the committee dealt with was the punishment to be meted out to the New York Giants for playing a game against the Philadelphia Quakers in December of 1926. Although every NFLer took satisfaction in the 31-0 thrashing handed to the AFL champions, the game had been played without league permission. Something had to be done. Playing such a game could result in fine, suspension, or even expulsion. But, of course, the New York franchise was a crucial money-maker. The Executive Committee voted to "condemn" New York. As a slap on the wrist, it wasn't even a near-miss.

When the second general session began, Coppen led off by saying his committee had been unable to arrive at a definite plan although they generally agreed that something had to be done. That part everyone agreed with. Surprisingly, the owners then voted unanimously to accept the "A" and "B" plan. The next problem was in deciding who was an "A" and who was a "B." Carr quickly appointed Coppen chairman of a new committee to solve that little dilemma. Joining him were Shep Royle of Frankford, Johnny Bryan of Milwaukee, Jim Conzelman of Detroit, and Jerry Corcoran of Columbus.

It came as no shock that, when the five-man committee reported after a brief recess, the only committee member in charge of a designated "B" team was Corcoran, Joe Carr's protege. The suggested "A's" were Providence, Frankford, Milwaukee, Detroit, New York, the Bears, the Cardinals, Cleveland, Green Bay, Buffalo, and Brooklyn. Duluth with Ernie Nevers and the strong Pottsville team were designated as traveling "A's" because they could draw well on the road. Kansas City was also a traveling "A," possibly as a compromise, although their "Cowboy image" might have been worth a few tickets at the gate.

The "B's" were Akron, Canton, Columbus, Dayton, Hammond, Hartford, Louisville, Racine, Rochester and Minneapolis. Note that this included the heart of the old "Ohio League" and most of the teams that had originally founded the league less than a decade before as a way of keeping their teams above water. Neither A.A. Young of Hammond nor any Racine representative were present, but

the other "B" owners voted docily for their own demotion. So far, so good. Carr immediately assigned committees for each group to discuss "ways and means of formulating the division."

A few minutes later, everything fell apart. Corcoran, who'd been appointed chairman of the "B" group, reported that the only thing his people would accept would be the sale of their franchises back to the league for the current franchise application fee of \$2,500 per. In some cases, that was \$2,400 more than had been paid for the originals. The ten "B's" were proposing to sting the league treasury for \$25,000, certainly more than resided there at that moment. The "A's," still the majority, quickly voted no.

The ball was back in Carr's court. He was instructed to come up with an acceptable plan by April 15.

There's the Door, Act Two

It took him until April 23, when the owners met again, this time at Cleveland's Hotel Statler. The only representatives of the previously-designated "B" teams who bothered to show all had other league connections: Minneapolis's Jack Dunn was NFL vice-president, Dayton's Carl Storck was secretary-treasurer, and Louisville's Aaron Hertzman was sergeant-at-arms. Jerry Corcoran, though nominally the Columbus manager, was actually Joe Carr's trouble-shooter.

Carr outlined a six-point plan to reorganize the league. Then the assembled solons raked it back and forth until they were satisfied. The final plan was an interesting blend of carrots and sticks:

- 1 - Each Club which so elects may suspend operation for the season of 1927 without the payment of dues and any club which desires to retire definitely from the League shall upon the surrender of its franchise certificate to the League President be refunded its pro-rata share of any money in the League Treasury at the time said certificate is surrendered.

A pro rata share of the league treasury, about a 20th, would have been a few hundred dollars at best -- a far cry from the \$2,500 the losers had asked for in February. Nevertheless, it was better than a sharp stick in the eye, which was about all they could hope for if they opposed the league once the plan had been voted in. The better part of the deal was the chance to remain a member of

the league without paying dues. A team could sit out a year for free, hoping for a better situation in 1928. This was so appealing, that a couple of "A" teams took advantage of it.

2 - In the event a club elects to suspend for the season of 1927 ... the League will give such clubs the privilege and right of selling any player's contract up to and including September 15, 1927, providing they are going to disband their team. If a club elects to withdraw from the League as per the above plan, but elects to operate an independent Club, the League will respect the rights of their players during the entire season of 1927. The above protection and privilege to sell players shall be restricted to such players as are under contract at present or on the reserve list of said club as of April 23, 1927.

Again the carrot: Although it would be a buyer's market, the losers could try to sell their players to the "A" teams before the next season to offset their 1926 losses. Or, if they wanted to continue operating outside the NFL, they'd have a season's grace before their rosters were raided. The stick: don't try to sign anybody coming out of college this year. They are ours!

3 - In the event a number of clubs elect to accept the above proposal to form a league among themselves, the National Football League agrees to respect their players' contracts and territorial rights, and to extend in every manner possible help in the organization and operation of their league, agreeing to play exhibition games with them whenever possible and extending such other courtesies that may be within its power.

This was a major carrot because Joe Carr really wanted a pro football minor league with some sort of working agreement with the NFL. He could envision an arrangement similar to baseball's minor league system, where players could be developed for the major league NFL. Significantly, the offers to respect territorial rights and to arrange lucrative exhibition games were not made to teams choosing to play as independents.

Carr's hope wasn't realized in 1927. An eight-team Ohio State League under the leadership of his trouble-shooter Jerry Corcoran was announced in pre-season, but it fell through. Several teams, including Johnny Bryan's Milwaukee Badgers, did operate as independents in '27 and were scheduled for a few exhibitions.

4 - In the event a club elects to suspend as per the foregoing, the League will agree to permit such club to retain its franchise certificate in the National Football League and to dispose of it to any new member that may be voted upon favorably by the League. The League further agrees that no new franchise will be issued until all suspended franchises have been sold or cancelled, and that an applicant for a franchise in the League who may be acted upon favorably by the League President or the Executive Committee will be referred to the clubs holding the suspended franchise certificates to purchase them. However, any such owner of said suspended franchise certificate shall be limited to asking as its purchase price the amount that shall be the application fee for the time said sale or transfer is proposed.

This wasn't as good as it sounded. Although in theory a team could suspend and then sell its franchise for \$2,500, the league had to approve the new buyer, and they weren't looking for new members. The only team that really benefitted by this clause in 1927 was the New York Giants.

5 - All the foregoing agreements which the League makes with any club which elects to avail itself of this voluntary retirement privilege is contingent upon said club refraining from having any connection, associating or friendly relation in any way, shape or form with any other Football League, or organization of any kind that does not have the approval or sanction of the National Football League.

The American Football League was presumed dead, but there was to be no resurrection involving any of the "B" teams. Mess around with C.C. Pyle or any neo-Pyles and all signals were off.

6 - All of the foregoing shall be operative for a period of one year from the date of the schedule meeting of 1927 or until the schedule meeting of 1928, at which time the foregoing agreements may be revised or broadened as the membership of the League decides.

In other words, take the deal within a year because its going to get worse.

Although the next move wasn't part of Carr's plan, it definitely added some incentive for the "B's" to drop out of the league. George Halas proposed that the guarantee fee that each club was to deposit at the schedule meeting in July be raised a thousand dollars to \$2,500. Storck suggested that it go all the way to \$5,000, which sounds like

a fit of pique. Of course, at the time, he probably figured his Dayton Triangles would be history by the schedule meeting. The league settled for Halas' proposed figure.

The NFL was still following the playing rules made by the colleges. No one had yet suggested that pro football make up its own rules. The new brainstorm of the collegians for 1927 was to move the posts off the goal line and set them on the back line of the endzone, ten yards deeper. The idea was to reduce the number of field goals and encourage teams to open up offensively. This made more sense for the college teams, who spent more time practicing their offenses than the pros, but it worked okay for the NFL in '27. Successful field goals dropped from approximately one every two games to one every three games, but scoring went up from 15.3 points per game (both teams) to 18.2 points per game. Although the new distance would eventually cause more ties to be played, that wasn't evident at first as the percentage of tie games in the NFL dropped from 12.1 to 8.3.

Providence couldn't comply with the new rule. The Cycledrome where the Steam Roller played had been built for bicycle races and the track cut across one endzone five yards deep. The league decided that the goalposts at both ends should be set at a depth of five yards.

Another odd rule change in 1927 allowed a team planning to punt from its own endzone to move the ball ten yards downfield. After the runback, the ten yards were given back to the receiving team. Fortunately, this oddity was shortlived.

And Yet More Meetings!

The scheduling meeting was held at the Hotel Northland in Green Bay on Saturday and Sunday, July 16 and 17. The first order of business was to find out who was in and who was out. The "ins" had to step forward and post their \$2,500 guarantees. Most of the "B" owners had sent word of their intentions. Out were Akron, Brooklyn, Columbus, Detroit, Hammond, Kansas City, the Los Angeles road team of 1926, Louisville, Minneapolis, Milwaukee, and Rochester. Brooklyn handed its dormant franchise to Tim Mara to settle some debts, giving the Giants owner two NFL franchises. No one seemed to object. Sam Deutsch had controlled

two franchises in Cleveland in 1924 and all it ever got him was a championship.

Milwaukee, as mentioned earlier, would operate as an independent under Johnny Bryan in 1927. Detroit decided to sell as many players as it could. Owner Jimmy Conzelman apparently profited by the sale of player-coach Jimmy Conzelman to Providence. Star tackle Gus Sonnenberg and guard Jack Fleischman were also peddled to the Steam Roller. Kansas City sold most of its roster to the new Cleveland team that was to be built around Michigan All-America Benny Friedman. Former K.C. coach-manager (and probably part-owner) Roy Andrews became coach of the Cleveland (what else?) Bulldogs. The other "outs" had in theory merely suspended operations for a year, but the only one to ever try to come back was John Dunn's Minneapolis club.

The "ins" were Buffalo, Cleveland, Chicago Bears, Chicago Cardinals, Dayton, Duluth, Frankford, Green Bay, New York, Pottsville and Providence. The surprise was Dayton. Carl Storck's Triangles were one of the weakest teams in pro football and strictly a "roader" around the NFL. He had apparently taken on a partner named Redelle to keep the Triangles going. Though Storck could call in some old debts among the other owners to schedule him a few games each season, there seemed to be no real reason for him to hang on and post his guarantee -- until the next day.

Before the teams began scheduling, Dewey Scanlon of the Duluth-Nevers Eskimos began discussing raising the visiting team's guarantee, a subject close to his heart in that the Eskimos were always visitors. The formula until then had been \$1,200 for salaries and \$100 for hotel and traveling expenses. Eventually it was decided to raise the guarantee to a flat \$2,500, although a visitor would still get its gate percentage should that prove larger. Under that system, Storck, whose payroll was surely the lowest in the league would make a nice profit on every game he could wheedle.

The owners then began arranging games. As each deal was made it was marked on a large blackboard set up at one end of the room. Storck was given a full plate for October when home teams could count on reasonable crowds for almost any game if the weather was good. If nothing else, a visit by the dreadful Triangles figured to help a team improve its winning percentage so it would be in the race in

November when crowds only showed for winners. Only Green Bay was willing to waste a Sunday on the Triangles in November.

Storck managed to come up with one new wrinkle in 1927 by signing Walter Achui, the former Dayton U. halfback, and the league's first Chinese player. Achui, called "Sneeze" for humorous reasons and "Chink" with less wit, was a ten-second dash man, but he seldom got a chance to show it with the Triangles' horrible blocking. If "Sneeze" wasn't exactly a drawing card, he was at least a curiosity. In 1928, Storck hired the league's second Asian, Art Matsu, a blocking back from William and Mary.

The owners left the scheduling meeting thinking their league work was finished for the year, but such was not to be. A month and a half later, on September 4, they trooped to Cleveland for a "special" meeting. Tim Mara had figured out what to do with his second, "Brooklyn" franchise. He'd rent it to C.C. "Cash and Carry" Pyle. The meeting had been called to okay the deal and to reorganize the schedules.

Mara disliked Pyle intensely, but he was no fool. Pyle still had "Red" Grange, a football team, and a lease on Yankee Stadium. By taking C.C. into the NFL, Mara effectively put a leash on him. As an outsider, Pyle could have scheduled independent teams into Yankee Stadium all season long, thereby cutting into attendance at the Polo Grounds. But once inside the NFL, Pyle was stuck with doing just about anything Mara wanted him to do.

A schedule was arranged that kept Pyle and Grange out of New York until November 8, Election Day. And that was the only date on which both the Giants and the Yankees were opposite each other in the Big Apple. On the other two November dates Pyle was allowed, the Giants were visiting somewhere else. In December, the two teams would play a home-and-home series, with the Giants hosting the preferable first game. For all the rest of the Yankees' schedule, Grange and company would visit and, hopefully, the Redhead's still-charismatic name would make everyone rich. Even Dayton agreed to host a game with Grange. Cleveland arranged two visits, one to be played in Detroit, where the combination of Grange and Benny Friedman figured to set a box office record.

The only hang-up was making some provision for Joey Sternaman. Apparently Pyle still owed Joey, and something had to be done before the Giants-Yankees arrangements could be made. At first it looked like Joey would be allowed to purchase an interest in the Cardinals, which would have put him in business against his brother Dutch, the half-owner of the Bears. Chris O'Brien of the Cardinals could have used almost any new money, but something queered the deal -- most likely Joey refusing to become part owner of a team headed for bankruptcy. The final arrangement found Joey re-joining the Bears, his old team. He wasn't given a part of the ownership, and whatever special consideration he got to sweeten the deal has been lost.

Newspaper reports of the agreement called it a "merger" of the NFL and AFL. Technically, that may have been true, at least in the same way a bass merges with a minnow. The Yankees were the only AFL team to retain any identity, although there was supposedly an arrangement made to divvy the Chicago Bulls between the Cardinals and Bears. In addition to Joey Sternaman, Bulls' fullback Buck White played for the Bears in 1927. Back Red Strader and tackle Abrey Goodman, Bulls' regulars, subbed for the Cards in '27.

With Grange aboard, along with Joey Sternaman and Paddy Driscoll with the Bears, "Wildcat" Wilson in Providence, Benny Friedman in Cleveland, and Ernie Nevers traveling around with his one-man show, the NFL had the most and the biggest stars in its history. And with a tighter, twelve-team league to divide the loot, everyone looked forward to 1927 being the best year ever.

This article can be read and downloaded at the PFRA website at www.profootballresearchers.org

John Morrow

By Roger Gordon

Originally published in *The Orange and Brown Report*

Most professional football players rarely receive the opportunity to play under a legendary head coach. John Morrow played under two - Sid Gillman and Paul Brown. He played under Gillman for the Los Angeles Rams and under Brown with the Cleveland Browns.

A 28th-round draft pick of the Rams in 1956 out of the University of Michigan, Morrow learned a great deal from Gillman, who actually would not achieve "legendary" status for a few more years as coach of the San Diego Chargers.

"Sid was a great innovator," Morrow says. "I just learned how to really play the game. It was almost like I didn't know anything before I got there in terms of execution and studying and understanding the game. There was a lot of film study, breaking it down."

The 6-3, 244-pound Morrow played both guard and center for Los Angeles before injuring his knee late in the 1959 season against the Green Bay Packers. Surgery followed, then the bombshell that he had been traded to Cleveland, coached by Brown at the time.

"It was rather startling," Morrow recalls. "It was like being thrown from one wolf pack into another. But it was the best thing that happened to me."

It was the best thing for Morrow, who replaced center Art Hunter, shipped to the Rams in the deal, because he went from a team that enjoyed just one winning season while he was there to a team with only one losing season, and two postseason berths, in the same period.

"To win most of the time was a little bit more fun," he says. "We had a great team."

The Browns came close in Morrow's first four years with the club but couldn't get over the hump and snag an Eastern Conference championship.

"We just barely missed in '63," he recalls. "It was frustrating."

Then came 1964. Morrow and the Browns rolled through their schedule and won the Eastern Conference

with a 10-3-1 record, their finest mark in seven years. No one, it seemed, gave them a shot against the vaunted Baltimore Colts in the championship game.

No one, that is, except the Browns themselves.

"We felt very confident," recalls Morrow. "We had a good team. We worked well together, and we respected each other as players."

The Browns shocked the football world by burying the Colts, 27-0, in frenzied Cleveland Municipal Stadium.

"The defense stymied (John) Unitas," Morrow says. "(The Colts) got frustrated and didn't recover."

The next year, Morrow and the Browns returned to the title game against Green Bay. Transportation problems on the way to Lambeau Field got the Browns off to a bad start on a day that ended in a 23-12 defeat to the Packers on a quagmire.

Morrow, a Pro Bowler in 1961 and '63, suffered a broken left leg toward the end of the 1966 season, prompting the Browns to leave him unprotected in the following year's expansion draft of the New Orleans Saints. He was chosen by the Saints, played one preseason game and was then released.

Morrow decided to call it quits but had a senior executive position to fall back on, for he had been employed by a paper packaging business during his last five years with the Browns. Since retiring from his post in 1995, the 74-year-old Morrow has kept busy. Besides enjoying golf and travel, he and his wife of 52 years, Gail, own two horses and several pets on their homestead in Sherwood, Wisconsin, 30 miles south of Green Bay. John and Gail have one grown daughter, Johnna.

Morrow has nothing but fond memories when looking back on his days in the Orange and Brown, especially the fans.

"Cleveland is a great city," he says. "Cleveland fans are so supportive, made it a joy to play there. To mingle with them after a victory was great.

"I salute their loyalty and devotion to the team. I remember being at those Hiram (College) reunions in the years there was no team. They kept coming back to support the new team in Cleveland. I salute their ability to stick with it."

PFRA COMMITTEES

By Ken Crippen

COMMITTEE UPDATES SINCE THE LAST ISSUE OF COFFIN CORNER:

All-America Football Conference Committee:

The AAFC Committee still needs to locate a few surviving members of the Conference. If anyone has current information on any of these players, please contact either me or committee chair Andy Piascik. Here are the players needed:

Ezzret "Sugarfoot" Anderson

Born: 02/10/20, Nashville, AR
High School: Langston (Hot Springs AR)
College: Kentucky State
Dons 47

Robert Francis "Bob" Callahan

Born: 09/26/23, St. Louis, MO
High School: Beaumont
College: Missouri/Michigan
Bills 48
Last Known Address: 818 Brae Court, Chesterfield,
MO 63017-1800
Last Known Phone: (314) 532-1436

Norman Lawrence "Norm" Cox

Born: 09/22/25, Stamford, TX
High School: Grandfalls-Royalty (Grandfalls, TX)
College: TCU
Rockets 46-47

Raymond L. "Ray" Evans

Born: 01/10/24, Electra, TX
High School: Odessa, TX
College: UTEP
49ers 49-59

Paul Edward Gibson

Born: 10/28/17, Winston-Salem, NC
High School: Mineral Springs
College: North Carolina State
Bills 47-49

Richard H. "Dick" Handley

Born: 05/22/22, Tulane, CA
High School: Corcoran, CA
College: College of the Sequoias/Fresno State/USC
Colts 47

Joe Winfred Morgan

Born: 10/23/28, DeRidder, LA
High School: DeRidder
College: McNeese State/Southern Mississippi
49ers 49

John Puckett North

Born: 06/17/21, Gilliam, LA
High School: Castle Heights Military Academy (TN)
College: Vanderbilt
Colts 48-50

James C. Summer "Jim" O'Neal

Born: 02/13/24, Anna, TX
High School: Anna
College: TCU/UTEP/Southwestern (TX)
Rockets 46-47

Dewey Michael Proctor

Born: 07/01/21, Lake View, SC
High School: Lake View
College: Furman
Yankees 46-47, 49 Rockets 48

Prince Arthur Scott

Born: 6/30/17, Grapevine, TX
High School: Grapevine
College: Texas Tech
Seahawks 46

Linwood Bookard "Lin" Sexton

Born: 04/16/26, Wichita, KS
High School: East (Wichita)
College: Wichita State
Dons 48

Gaylon Wesley Smith

Born: 07/5/16, Lonoke, AR
High School: Lonoke/Beebe, AR
College: Rhodes
Rams 39-42 Browns 46

Robert Lee "Bob" Sneddon

Born: 07/09/21, Ogden, UT
High School: Ogden
College: Weber State/St. Mary's (CA)
Redskins 44 Lions 45 Dons 46

Robert Porter "Buddy" Tinsley, Jr

Born: 08/16/24, Damon TX
High School: Barbers Hill (Mont Belvieu TX)
College: Baylor
Dons 49

Jack Gressert "Tex" Williams

Born: 08/21/19, Lancaster, PA
High School: GA Trade School (GA)
College Auburn
Seahawks 46

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If you would like to help out with a committee or if you want to form your own committee, contact Ken Crippen at:

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CLASSIFIEDS

2 STEAGLES BOOK: "Last Team Standing: How the Steelers and the Eagles – 'The Steagles' – Saved Pro Football During World War II" by Matthew Algeo is now available in bookstores and from Amazon.com and other online booksellers. Based on interviews with every surviving member of the team, it tells the incredible true story of the 1943 merger of the Steelers and the Eagles, includes eight pages of photographs. For more information, visit www.steagles.com

1 Wanted: Photo copies of Canadian Football League game-day rosters during the 1950s – all teams. E-mail: MLemongello@optonline.net / Home address: 5 Brookline Avenue, East Hanover, NJ 07936.

3 Wanted: Offering top price for 1962 book "Football Scouting Methods" by Steve Belichick. Sheldon Mulman, 5680 Rembrandt Ave., Apt 606, Montreal, QB, Canada H4W 3G3 idealseldon@aol.com

TAR – The Autograph Review -- \$14.95 annually, 6 editions. Special to PFRA members for new subscriptions 5/\$9.95. Payable to JW Morey, 305 Carlton Road, Syracuse, NY 13207. Publishing 18 years – Addresses, [info](#), [helpful to researchers...](#) Try us.

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