

**Vol. 31, No. 6  
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<b>PFRA-ternizing</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Bob Carroll Tribute</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Heidi-Ho!</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Looking Into Locals</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Dayton to Indianapolis</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Semi-Pro or Pro?</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Rating the Receivers</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>When Halas Covered The Draft</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Twass the Night...</b>	<b>24</b>



# PFRA-ternizing

## Bob Carroll

1936-2009

This issue of Coffin Corner is a tribute to Bob Carroll, co-founder of the PFRA and long-time Executive Director. Bob passed away August 25 after a long illness. For those of you interested in viewing his online tribute and signing the guestbook, visit:

<http://www.livingtributes.com/cobr/pittsburghlive/guestbook.php?action=signgb&memid=100204535&ltid=1031>

His legacy will live on with the PFRA. A tribute will be held at the PFRA Meeting in Canton on June 19, 2010. We will also toast Bob at dinner after the meeting.

Some have asked about the future of the PFRA now that Bob is gone. The PFRA will continue. Coffin Corner will continue to be published on schedule. The work that the PFRA is doing will continue. Steps were put in place to make sure that the PFRA would carry on after Bob passed away. Over the next few issues, we will be announcing several new things the PFRA will be doing going forward.

## Bob Carroll Self-Portrait

The cover image for this issue is a Bob Carroll self portrait. In it, you will see the following:

A Pittsburgh Steelers pennant.

A Pittsburgh Pirate pencil cup.

A stick-figure drawing. (Yeah, right)

His cat PFRA-D Cat (pronounced fraidy cat)

“My Hero” – Dr. Charles J. Gregory – Professor of Leisure History and Comparative Phrenology – Mountebank Uiveristy. This is the persona that Bob wrote under in *Oldtyme Baseball News*.

## PFRA Election Results:

President: Jack Clary

Vice-President: Joe Plack

Treasurer: Vince Popo

Secretary: Chris Willis

Ken Crippen will continue as Executive Director and Andy Piascik will continue as Assistant Executive Director.

## Membership

As you can see from the box below, all memberships will go through Joe Plack. As Vice-President, he is the chair of the Membership committee and will handle all new memberships as well as renewals.

## THE COFFIN CORNER

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**Illustrations by the late Bob Carroll**

# Bob Carroll

1936-2009

The best way to pay tribute to Bob is to show how he impacted the lives of those around him. A few long-time PFRA members weighed in on the influence that Bob had on their lives.

## **John Thorn:**

It is easy to reflect back on Bob's amazing knowledge and, more important, sweeping curiosity. Sure he knew pro football's history better than anyone, and wrote about it better than anyone. And his cartoons gave evidence that his brain was ambidextrous. And there was his mordant and delightfully cornball sense of humor, in evidence on his blog and in most everything he wrote.

But what sticks for me about my dear departed friend of three decades is his uncommon decency. He thought the best of people unless and until they repeatedly gave him reason to think otherwise. Bob was a generous man, to a fault. He and I worked together often, and he liked to say that I had done a lot for his career. And I always assured him that he had done more for me than I had done for him. And he's still doing it, as my model friend.

## **David S. Neft:**

Bob was a talented, dedicated, professional writer, researcher, artist and teacher. If you stop for a minute and think about your friends and colleagues you will realize how rare it is for someone to achieve his level of proficiency in four different areas of activity.

Moreover, he was a great guy with the most tolerant disposition. In the 36 years that I was privileged to have him as a friend he was never angry at another person. He only got upset at an inanimate object - his computer when it wasn't working properly. I deeply miss our frequent telephone conversations about sports, theater, art and politics.

## **Mark L. Ford**

I'll remember Bob for two things. He was a professional writer who helped aspiring amateurs (like me), to get published; and he had a great

sense of humor that added to the telling, and retelling, of pro football's history.

It would be overly dramatic to describe Bob as Prometheus of the sports pages, but the *The Coffin Corner* has been the place where we football fans got a chance to see our work in print, getting a small measure of immortality before returning to our mundane jobs. He helped bring these enthusiasts together, creating a market for publications about pro football history. Talented authors would have been published, even without PFRA; but I'm not sure that their books would have been about football. You needed no resume' to get published in the *The Coffin Corner*; Bob Carroll would accept your contribution to the CC, regardless of your background.

That leads me to the other topic, Bob Carroll the humorist, and he was at his best when he was responding to others. Some people at the PFRA Forum didn't like it, of course. I looked at it this way -- if Bob acknowledged what you were saying, then it was an obvious sign that he cared about what you were saying. It was an unwritten rule; let's wait and see how Bob deals with this guy, and it was fun to watch. As far as snappy comebacks that leave you saying, "I wish I'd thought of that", he was the master. In this issue, of course, are some of the best of Bob's *Coffin Corner* writings, most of which are punctuated with humorous observations. He was one of these guys who could see the funny side to just about anything. I think he would have appreciated the irony of a football publication discussing "the passing of Bob Carroll", without a single passing statistic. Thanks, Bob, for the ground you gained for us.

## **Pete Fierle:**

*(Posted on Pete's Blog on August 26, 2009)* We announced the senior nominees for the Class of 2010 yesterday. Normally on such a day, my phone would ring shortly after the announcement. On the other end would be Bob Carroll who would share his thoughts and opinions on the selections.

That call never came yesterday. That's because

Bob died in his sleep early yesterday morning. My heartfelt sympathies go out to Bob's family.

It was a rather strange feeling to read his obituary this morning. Because for many, many years he sent the Pro Football Hall of Fame's research staff hundreds of obits.

They were death notices and articles on the lives of NFL players. You see, Bob was one of the most knowledgeable pro football historians that ever lived. His devotion to researching the sport, while not known to the general public, was legendary in the circles of those of us who delve deep into the game's past. Bob is responsible for much of the accurate information we now have on the NFL's history, especially the early years.

In 1997, one of the most comprehensive publications on the NFL's history was published. It was called *Total Football* and it was edited by a team led by Bob. Inside the 1,652-page book was a voluminous player register. It included details on more than 17,000 NFL players. Thanks to the work of Bob (and many others), it included for the first time full names, birthdates, places of birth, and death dates on players. Bob had spent years and years digging to uncover these facts on players. Making the task so monumental was that it was common in the early 1920s for NFL players to play under assumed names to avoid problems with college eligibility rules of the time. It was a painstaking process to find this personal data.

But for those of us who knew Bob, we were never shocked by the amount of time he devoted to researching the sport for which he had such a passion. Our research staff regularly corresponded with Bob for information.

In fact, just two weeks ago I sought Bob's help for a project related to the oldest living NFL alumni. Ever since *Total Football* was published and revised a few years later as *Total Football II*, Bob continued to maintain the player records. He always sent us the latest obituaries so we could update our files in Canton.

But, there was lot more than just obits that Bob provided us. For nearly three decades, he unselfishly shared his labor of love with us. Our Archives & Information Center is filled with his compilations of accurate NFL history that he researched. Among his contributions were detailed feature articles on some of pro football's

most important moments, game accounts of early NFL games, and pick-by-pick lists of every NFL draft.

Bob, a retired school teacher, was also a talented artist. His drawings were featured in the *The Coffin Corner*, the newsletter of the Pro Football Researchers Association (PFRA) among other publications. In the late 1970s, Bob was one of the founders of PFRA and oversaw the organization until his death. PFRA members have worked to continually tell the story of the NFL's past in an accurate and thorough manner. It has been an incredibly valuable asset for the research team in Canton.

Bob will certainly be missed by all of us at the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

*This originally appeared in Pete's blog on the Pro Football Hall of Fame website. It is reprinted with his permission.*

#### **Vince Popo:**

I first met Bob back in 1978 or so. We were brought together as a group of people interested in football research. I was working at the Football Hall of Fame in Canton and was a friend of Joe Horrigan (but that is another story for another time) when Joe twisted my arm to help with this new organization called the Pro Football Researchers Association (PFRA). No one in this group ever thought it would last more than a few years. It is amazing that it lasted three decades. For the most part, it was due to Bob Carroll's dedication. Our first meeting was held in Canton at the HOF and I remember this clearly because we met for a cookout at my house and I was the chef. The menu consisted of barbecue chicken, corn on the cob, salad and beverages.

As I got to know Bob, three things stood out to me. The first was his dry sense of humor. Christmas cards the early years from Bob were always home made. My favorite was "Seasoning" Greetings featuring a salt and peppershaker in yuletide attire. What was sad, I had to have Joe Horrigan (the king of bad jokes and puns) explain it to me.

The second thing I remember about Bob was his artistic talent. I still have a set of early Canton Bulldog lithographs that Bob drew. My favorite was Pete "Fats" Henry.

The third thing I remember about Bob was his love of the Pittsburgh Steelers. In the 70's, Bob had a lot to crow about. Being a Browns fan I found this irritating. Not as irritated as I am today with the Browns but four Super Bowl trophies to the Brownies' none was a sore topic.

It is with great sadness that I say goodbye to Bob Carroll. I know that whenever the Steelers are playing, Bob and Myron Cope are sitting somewhere together waving those damn terrible towels. My only solace is that the Bengals (the closest thing to the Browns) pulled out a victory against the Black and Gold on September 27, 2009.

### **Ken Crippen:**

My first experience with Bob was through a telephone call in the early 1990s. I was calling to talk about football history in Western New York and he was in the middle of watching a Pittsburgh Pirates game. Anyone who knows Bob, knows that he was an avid baseball fan. He stopped watching the game in order to talk with me. We had never met before and he barely knew me. It was not until later that I realized how much he loved baseball, and it meant a lot to me that he would stop watching the game to help me with my research.

Bob appointed me Assistant Executive Director in December of 2006. Since that time, he and I worked closely together to make sure that the PFRA would continue after his passing. I have dedicated myself to making sure that the PFRA will continue to grow and flourish in the future.

I am honored to have had Bob as my mentor and friend.

### **Partial Bibliography:**

There is no way to accurately list all of Bob's work. Even Bob would have trouble listing every book and article he wrote. Below is a partial list of his books, as compiled by Sean Lahman.

#### Football and Baseball Books

100 Greatest Running Backs, Crescent Books, 1988

The Hidden Game of Football, 1988, Warner Books (with Pete Palmer John Thorn)

The Football Abstract, 1989, Warner Books (with Palmer & Thorn)

The Sports Video Resource Guide, 1992, Simon & Schuster

When the Grass Was Real, 1993, Simon & Schuster

Baseball Between the Lies, 1993, Perigee Books  
Total Football, 1997, HarperCollins Publishers (with Thorn, David Neft, et al)

Football Legends of All Time, 1997, Publications International (with Joe Horrigan)

Football Greats, 1998, Publications International (with Horrigan)

The Hidden Game of Football: The Next Edition, 1998, Total Sports (with Palmer, Thorn, & David Pietrusza)

Total SuperBowl, 1998, HarperCollins (with Thorn et al)

Total Quarterbacks, 1998, HarperCollins (with Thorn et al)

Total Browns, 1999, Total Sports (with Thorn et al)

Total Football II, 1999, HarperCollins (with Thorn, Neft, et al)

#### PFRA Publications

The Tigers Roar, 1990

Bulldogs on Sunday (multiple years), 1990

Pro Football from AAA to '03, 1991 (with Bob Braunwart)

The Ohio League 1910-1919, 1997

#### Books for Young Adults

The Official Baseball Hall of Fame fun & fact sticker book. 1989, Simon & Schuster (with Mark Rucker)

The Official Pro Football Hall of Fame fun & Fact Sticker Book, 1990, Little Simon (with Rucker)

The Official Baseball Hall of Fame Sticker Book of Records, 1990, Simon & Schuster (with Jim Trusilo)

The Major League Way to Play Baseball, 1991, Simon & Schuster

This Year in Baseball, 1991, Simon & Schuster

Napoleon Bonaparte, 1994, Lucent Books

Pancho Villa, 1996, Lucent Books

The Battle of Stalingrad, 1997, Lucent Books

1999 Super Sports Stars Book of Records, 1999, East End Publishing (with Palmer)

Football Legends of All Times, 1999, Forest House

You can also visit the PFRA website (<http://www.profootballresearchers.org>) to see the articles he wrote for *The Coffin Corner*.

# Heidi-Ho!

By Bob Carroll

There are exciting games, dull games, sloppy games, and memorable games. Occasionally, there are even great games. Very few games can be described as notorious. Or even infamous. Or worse.

Such a game took place on Sunday evening, November 17, 1968, and those who saw it -- or, to be precise, those who saw most of it -- will never forget. Or forgive.

The Raiders, in their first Oakland incarnation, needed to win. Al Davis's Black and Silver were locked into a tight race with the Kansas City Chiefs for the American Football League's Western Division title. Their opponents for the day were the New York Jets who were in the midst of an easy trek to the AFL East crown. Quarterbacking the New Yorkers would be Mr. Charisma himself, Joe Namath, at that time the most famous football player in the world as much for his high-living lifestyle as for his footballing. It was said that the passes Broadway Joe threw on the field were nothing compared to those he threw at the New York nightclubs.



**Joe Namath**

All told, it looked to be a bang-up game, and wasn't NBC the lucky network to be able to air it coast-to-coast? Millions of football fanatics tuned in at 4:00 EST expecting a game for the ages. Or, at least, a diverting late afternoon's entertainment.

What they got was a humdinger.

The first quarter got off to a Jets start on a Jim Turner field goal. Oakland came back with a Darryl Lamonica-to-Warren Wells pass to take the lead. Turner kicked a second field goal to make it 7-6 Raiders at quarter's end.

A bomb landed in the second quarter. Thrown by Lamonica, it nestled in the hands of Billy Cannon, the Raiders' tight end, and ended up as a 49-yard touchdown to widen the Oakland lead to 14-6. The Jets came back. Namath, who normally risked his oft-injured knees only under duress, sneaked one yard for the TD. When the conversion wasn't converted, the score stood 14-12 at halftime.

The first half had been good; the second half was better. New York moved in front on Bill Mathis' four-yard TD run. The Raiders retook the lead on Charley Smith's touchdown jaunt, then added a two-point conversion on a pass to Hewritt Dixon. 22-19 Raiders.

It looked like the Raiders were just about to put the game away on a drive in the fourth quarter, but Smith fumbled at the three. Namath immediately picked on Raiders' rookie defensive back Butch Atkinson, lofting a pass to Don Maynard that the future Hall of Fame receiver took to the 50-yard-line. On the next play, the Namath-to-Maynard combination clicked for the full 50 to return the Jets to the lead 26-22. Midway through the fourth quarter Turner cashed his third field goal: 29-22 Jets.

Oakland's turn. Lamonica's 22-yard touchdown completion to Fred Biletnikoff followed by George Blanda's kick knotted the score at 29.

As exciting as the game had been, it was far from a thing of beauty. It was rough, rugged, no holds-barred football, and penalties on the field were even more common than blood spatters. The passing, the scoring, and the penalties were making the game run a little longer than most, but who could complain when it was such a terrific contest? No one -- except a few people at NBC who were watching the clock.

Namath carefully guided his team down the field preserving the clock with precision use of the sidelines. The trick was to score but not leave the Raiders enough time to retaliate. Turner kicked a 26-yard field goal, his fourth of the day, with only slightly more than a minute left to play. 32-29 Jets.

The odds were stacked against them, but the Raiders had produced miracles before. Maybe .... They took the kickoff and ran one play. The clock read 1:05 left.

WHAT THE HELL? or words to that effect were screamed in front of every NBC-tuned TV set east of Denver. Blip! The game blinked off and on came this saccharine, blond muppet from the Swiss Alps. Heidi who?

NBC in its infinite wisdom had scheduled a special presentation of the Johanna Spyri children's classic for 7 P.M. (EST). That's seven on the dot. When the big hand nudged twelve, it was out with the old football game and in with the new sweet girl. Well, gosh-and-golly! If they stayed with that old football game, the bedtimes for millions of children would be set back a whole minute and five seconds!

Lord only knows how much child abuse took place in the U.S. east when daddies discovered their game was being bumped by a show for the kids.

NBC's switchboard lit up like a congregation of smokers coming out of church. It was too late of course. Only a few protest calls had gotten through before the game was over -- an apparent Jets victory. Still the calls kept coming. NBC ran the final score across the bottom of Heidi's screen -- Raiders 43-Jets 32! The switchboard nearly exploded with calls.

What a large part of America had missed was Lamonica's 42-yard strike to Smith for a go-ahead touchdown, followed by a Jets' fumble on the ensuing kickoff that was recovered for another Oakland TD. Nothing much in the Great Scheme of Things perhaps, but life's blood to a football fan.



**Daryle Lamonica**

The next day, in calling the whole screw up "a forgivable error committed by humans who were concerned about the children," NBC president Julian Goodman placed the number of protest calls at tens of thousands. "I missed the end of the game as much as anyone else," Goodman whined.

Since the Heidi debacle, the chastened networks know better than to interrupt a football game for anything short of the Second Coming. Even then, they might go to split screen.

# Looking Into Your Locals

By Bob Carroll

Looking for something to do? Time on your hands? Tired of watching reruns and waiting for the first game of the fall? Why not drift down to your old local library, dig out your old local newspapers and find out about that old local pro team?

If there's one area of pro football history that we really don't know much about, it's the pre-World War II, non-major league pro teams. Some of them, particularly in the '20s and early '30s, were on a par with many NFL teams. Others, while not so strong overall, employed some outstanding individuals. Yet, in many cases, we don't even know the names of the teams, much less the players. Yet, it seems, from what we do know, that virtually every community in America at one time or another took a shot at pro football. Probably yours did. We could argue forever about the distinctions among pro, semi-pro, independent, and sandlot football. For most of those dim names from the past, we don't know enough to even hang a label on them – if we have heard of them at all.

A few individuals have done a lot of work.

Bob Van Atta has carefully researched his home area of Westmoreland County, Pa., and is the main source of information about those Latrobe and Greensburg teams of the turn of the century. Bob Gill has studied west coast teams of 1935-45, as well as some other independents of the '30s. Bob Barnett has published articles on the Ironton Tanks and Portsmouth Spartans. Tom Nikitas has also looked into the Tanks' history. Vic Frolund is the source for information about the Youngstown (O.) Patricians of pre-World War I. Larry Names has come up with information on pre-WW I Green Bay teams. Joe Zagorski is delving into Pennsylvania coal region teams of the early '20s. Emil Klosinski wrote a whole book on early pro teams in Indiana. There are a few others. We won't try to name them all because we probably would miss some. The point is, we need a lot more.

If you decide to check out your own locale, let me make some suggestions as to how you might go

about it – although every researcher makes up his own rules and there are many who do it better than I.

Getting started. Most libraries have complete runs of local newspapers either on microfilm or bound. One advantage of microfilm is that photocopies of articles can be made. However, this can get expensive. I once spent \$25 at ten cents a copy in a single session at Canton. You may want to rely on pencil and paper. Some useful materials to take with you to the library: several pens and sharpened pencils; a supply of paper or index cards; a magnifying glass; something to carry it all in; and a pocketful of change.

If you don't know when or if a team operated, pick a year and check the Sunday and Monday sports pages at the end of October and beginning of November. If you start too early or too late in the season, you may miss a team completely. Few teams played during the week and it takes too long to go day by day, so the Monday paper is the most likely (or Sunday because of Blue Laws). Good years to start with: 1917, 1921, 1925, 1930, 1915, and 1912.



What kind of information should you look for?

1. Date, location (city and field), opponents and score of games. Sometimes approximate attendances are given, either in numbers or by such descriptions as "overflow," "sparse," etc.

2. Lineups, but be aware that spellings can vary from game to game. First names were rarely used in newspapers at the time, but it's worth scanning the story just in case. College affiliations, though not 100 percent reliable, are often given. Team captains are useful to know.

3. Scoring and unusual plays.

4. Coaches, owners, managers, involved public officials. This kind of information is most likely to turn up in week day papers which you can check later.

5. Always note the newspaper used and the date. I used to be careless about this and it's cost me a lot of trouble when I needed to go back and recheck a reference.

Other sources that have proved useful are county histories and old city maps (for ballpark locations) and memoirs. Sometimes telephone directories can be used. Some libraries have vertical files on local sports. Talking to oldtimers is great fun, but personally I'm always suspicious of memories and try to back them with printed contemporary accounts. Is there a local historical society?

Some newspapers have done feature stories many years later on the early local teams. It might be worth a phone call to the present sports editor to see if he knows of any such features. If he doesn't know of any, you might ask him if he's interested in publishing one.

Pitfalls to avoid:

Jot down anything that looks like you might want to have a record of later. I can't tell you how many times I've had to search through some papers I'd read months or even years before to find something I vaguely remember.

Don't try to do too much. If you try to cover ten years of football or ten teams in one session at the library, you'll likely end up with a very sketchy account. Take your time and concentrate on one thing at a time.

Don't get bogged down. Old sports pages are fascinating. It's tempting to sit there and read everything. Then, suddenly, it's time to go home! You have to be ruthless, and ignore all those great stories about other subjects. If I'm working

with a reader-printer (a machine that makes copies from microfilm), I usually only read headlines before copying. When I get home and read over what I've got, I usually find I've wasted a few cents, but I know how easily I can get lost using all my time at the library reading.

If you're working with microfilm, you'll find your eyes will get tired. Take a break. Come back later. If you force yourself to keep going, you won't have much fun.

Fun? Well, yes. You have the joy of discovery and the pride of learning about your home area. You'll probably also learn about three million fascinating things having nothing to do with football you never knew. You'll also gain a measure of respect from a few and find many more who will think you're some kind of nut. I wish I could say you'll get rich. Actually, you probably won't make expenses, but at least the outlay won't be very high.

Finally, what should you do with your accumulated information? If you write, you might like to put together some sort of readable account. If you don't feel up to that, you might prefer to simply keep everything in a big envelope. Certainly, The Coffin Corner would enjoy a copy. It well could wind up on these pages. Your local library will be delighted if you donate a copy for their vertical file. Likewise, your local historical society.

But most of all, once you have your research started, you'll have a source of pleasure for years.



## HOW TO GET FROM DAYTON TO INDIANAPOLIS BY WAY OF BROOKLYN, BOSTON, NEW YORK, DALLAS, HERSHEY AND BALTIMORE

By Bob Carroll

(Originally Published in *Ragtime Sports*)

Once upon a time -- well, in March of 1995, to be exact -- *Ragtime Sports* published Rick Hines' story on Y.A. Tittle, one of my all-time favorite bald quarterbacks. Maybe I enjoyed reminiscing about Y.A. too much because I read right past an error in the article without noticing it, an error that has since given rise to a series of letter-to-the-editor corrections that may have simply confused the issue further.

To remind everybody, what Rick wrote was "... the [Baltimore] Colts were one of four AAFC teams taken in by the NFL. The other teams from the defunct AAFC to merge with the NFL were the [Cleveland] Browns, New York Yankees and San Francisco 49ers."

The question seems simple enough: which teams and how many of them from the old All-America Football Conference (1946-1949) were taken into the National Football League in 1950? What Rick wrote was wrong. But also it was sort of right, as I will explain later.

Eric Minde, a reader who knows his AAFC potatoes (as my sainted grandpa used to say), jumped all over Rick. In Issue 4, Eric said: "... the article about Y.A. Tittle identifies the New York Yankees as an AAFC team that transferred to the NFL -- this is also wrong! The New York Yankees folded with the AAFC -- it was the Boston Yanks already in the NFL before the AAFC came into existence that became the New York Bulldogs, then later renamed the New York Yanks."

This is right as far as it goes. But, because it doesn't go far enough, it leaves us hanging. Telling us when the Yanks from Boston became the Bulldogs from New York and when they became the Yanks of New York would have helped. But we're still at sea about the Yankees.

You see, they really did merge into the NFL in a way.

We got through Issue 5 without seeing further comment about what happened with that long ago

merger. But just when it seemed safe to go back into the troubled waters ....

Those waters were really muddied by Albert Packman in Issue 6, writing: "The reader is mistaken -- the 1950 NFL New York Yankees -- were indeed the 1949 AAC Yanks." I certainly sympathize with anyone trying to get this straight. It's easy to mis-state. But, honest, Albert, there was no team in 1950 called the "Yankees" nor was there a 1949 AAC team called the "Yanks."

Earlier in his letter, Mr. Packman, correctly stated that the Boston Yanks' franchise lasted only from 1944-1948 but he also said that the Yanks "became" the Bulldogs in 1949, and that's subject to interpretation. He also suggests that similar rosters from season-to-season constitute "documented proof" that the 1949 AAC team and the 1950 NFL team were the same whatever they were called.

Not exactly.

Truthfully, I've got lots of things to do -- tend a sick cat, watch *Due South*, read an Ed McBain novel. Important stuff! Still, if this mess is ever going to get straightened out, I guess I have to do it myself. And, to give you the whole story, I'll have to go back to Dayton, Ohio, in 1913.

### THE TREK BEGINS

That was the year the Dayton Cadets, a semi-pro team made up for the most part of graduates of St. Mary's Institute, wrested the city independent football championship from the Dayton Oakwoods. Just for the record, St. Mary's Institute later became the University of Dayton. That has nothing to do with our story, but I thought you might be interested.

Or not.

The St. Mary's Cadets got stronger over the next couple of years by hiring players with other than St. Mary's backgrounds. In 1916 when they were given financial backing by several local

businesses, they changed their name to the Dayton Triangles. By then, apparently, the team was fully professional and the strongest pro grid aggregation in southern Ohio, though not yet in the class with the powerhouses up north in Canton and Massillon. When World War I and the influenza epidemic caused most teams to suspend operations in 1918, the Triangles kept playing against what was left, went undefeated, and can be considered the U.S. Pro Champs for that year. Their coach and star player was Earle "Greasy" Neale who later coached the Eagles to championships.



**Earle "Greasy" Neale**

Two years later on September 17, 1920, when most of the country's strong pro teams met at Canton to form an organization, the Dayton Triangles were front and center. What they helped form was the American Professional Football Association (APFA) and today the NFL considers it to be its -- the NFL's -- first year of existence. As a matter of fact, the APFA changed its name to National Football League in 1922.

For its first year or so, the NFL -- oops! APFA -- was a pretty loose operation with member teams drifting in and out. Dayton, under its manager Carl Storck, was quite dependable and one of the young league's better teams. The Triangles even

tied Jim Thorpe and the Canton Bulldogs 20-20 in a famous game that probably represents the high-point of its history. Carl Storck was elected APFA secretary-treasurer in 1921 and continued in that office after the league became the NFL. As a secretary, he kept terrible minutes but apparently he was an okay treasurer. At least he never absconded to Brazil.

In 1922 when it became the NFL, the league was on fairly firm financial footing. Instead of just saying teams that paid their dues were "members," it began awarding franchises. This franchise thing is important to our story, so pay attention.

A franchise was issued to an individual or organization who owned a football team. It was NOT issued to a city. So, for example, when Tim Mara received his New York Giants' franchise in 1925, it was his -- not New York's. In theory, if Tim had decided to pull up stakes and relocate his Giants in Ames, Iowa, he could have done so, and it still would have been the same team because it was the same franchise. Until Al Davis came along a half century later, a team owner had to get permission from the other owners to move, but the point is that when we start tracing teams, it's franchises that have to be considered first, not rosters, cities, or even club presidents.

I know this is a bit tricky, but consider what happened to the Dayton Triangles. As the 1920s rolled on, the original Triangles players got old and retired. Carl Storck's team grew weaker and weaker. In its last years, it played strictly on the road to collect the visiting club guarantee because no one in Dayton would come out to see them lose. After 1929, the franchise was sold to some investors in Brooklyn who hired a batch of new players and called their team the Brooklyn Dodgers. Clever name!

Now, even though the owners were different, the players were different, the team name was different, the uniforms were different, and the team's home base was different, the Dodgers were operating under what once was the Dayton Triangles' franchise, so the "team line" is intact -- the Dodgers were the Triangles.

#### **THE SECOND STEP**

One thing that hadn't changed was losing. Throughout the 1930s the Dodgers found themselves at the bottom of the standings nearly

every year. An energetic young sportsman named Dan Topping became owner in 1937 but it didn't help much. In 1940, Topping hired the legendary Jock Sutherland as coach and the team actually became competitive. Then World War II came along and drafted most of the best Dodgers. Back to the bottom.

By 1944, Topping was getting desperate. He changed his team's name to Tigers. Those few who showed up at Ebbets Field weren't fooled. "Same old Dodgers!" they said and seldom came back for seconds.

The really odd thing that happened in 1944 was that the NFL awarded a brand new franchise to Ted Collins, the manager of singing star Kate Smith. (The league always says it "awarded" franchises because it sounds so much nicer than "sold.") Anyway, this Ted Collins franchise is strange because there the country was in the middle of a war and NFL teams were scraping bottom to find enough 4-F's to get eleven players on the field. And then they turn around and start a new team!



**Ted Collins**

Maybe it shows that if you have enough money, you can get almost anything. Kate Smith was the

biggest female singer in captivity in those days, and that's not a joke about her waist size which was indeed quite ample. Hey, she didn't need to look like Madonna; she sang on the radio! Everybody just loved her. And when she sang "God Bless America," we all shivered from sea to shining sea.

Actually, money can't quite buy everything. Ted Collins really wanted to put a team into Yankee Stadium and call it the "Yankees." The Maras (remember Tim?) put their feet down by insisting on their franchise rights (there's that word again!) to exclusivity in the Big Apple. So Collins had to settle for a team in Boston which he called the "Yanks."

The most important thing a team owner got with his franchise was permission to play games with other league teams and to take part in such league activities as the player draft. But the second most important thing he bought was exclusive right to play in a particular territory. No other league team could come into that territory and start playing its home games there unless the franchise holder said it was okay. The Bears got into Chicago in 1922 only after the Chicago Cardinals gave them the nod. In 1960, the Cards got tired of being the second team in the Second City and moved to St. Louis. A couple of years ago, they moved on again, this time to Phoenix. With each move, the franchised territory changed but the team still operated on the same franchise. Therefore, the Chicago Cardinals, St. Louis Cardinals, Phoenix Cardinals, and now the Arizona Cardinals are all the same team.

#### **A SIDE TRIP TO PENNSYLVANIA**

I'll admit, sometimes things can get out of hand. It's largely forgotten today but back in 1940 Art Rooney sold his Pittsburgh franchise to Alexis Thompson who wanted to move the team to Boston. Then Rooney bought a half interest in Bert Bell's Philadelphia Eagles. The league wouldn't let Thompson go to Massachusetts and Rooney didn't really want to leave Pittsburgh. So Bell-Rooney and Thompson switched franchised territories. Bert and Art brought the Eagles to Pittsburgh and renamed them the "Steelers." Meanwhile, Thompson took the Steelers to Philadelphia and renamed them "Eagles." Most of the former Philadelphia players wound up in Pittsburgh and visa-versa. As late as 1945 the Steelers were officially owned by the Philadelphia Football Club, Inc. Apparently there was some

revision the next year when Bell left his partnership with Rooney to become the NFL Commissioner. To all intents and purposes, the Steelers' and Eagles' histories run continuously from 1933 when both teams entered the NFL. But technically it's Pittsburgh (1933-1940) to Philadelphia (1941-on) AND Philadelphia (1933-1940) to Pittsburgh (1941-on). Just about everybody ignores the technically correct descent, and it's probably best that they do. I mean, how convoluted do you want your pro football history to be?

As a sidebar, I should add that a lot of very good writers have writ that Pittsburgh team changed its name from "Pirates" to "Steelers" in 1941 as a result of the franchise switch. Wrong! The name change took place the year before.

#### **MEANWHILE, IN BOSTON ....**

But I digress. Back to Ted Collins and Kate Smith.

So, in 1944, Kate and Ted had a football team -- even if it was in the wrong place -- that won two whole games, which just happened to be two more than Dan Topping's Brooklyn Tigers put in the win column. Trying to make a silk purse out of a couple of sow's ears, the NFL allowed Collins' Boston Yanks and Topping's Brooklyn Tigers to merge for the 1945 season. Under the arrangement, the team split its games between Boston and Brooklyn and called itself simply the "Yanks." At least that's how it went until December.

About the time the NFL was playing its 1945 Championship Game, Dan Topping announced the honeymoon was over. He planned to take his team out of the NFL and put it in a brand new league set to open in 1946 -- the All-America Football Conference (or AAFC as people who never can remember whether it's "All-America" or "All-American" prefer to call it).

As far as franchising goes, that ends the Dayton-to-Brooklyn decadency. Topping couldn't take his NFL franchise to the AAFC; in that league, an NFL franchise was just a piece of wastepaper. He had to get himself a new AAFC franchise. Meanwhile, the NFL declared his Brooklyn franchise forfeit, ending it well and good. The league also awarded all of Topping's Brooklyn players to Collins' Yanks who went back to being the Boston Yanks. In point of fact, most of Topping's players jumped to the AAFC with him.

To really mess things up, Topping's new team was called the New York "Yankees" and played in Yankee Stadium -- where Ted Collins wanted to be with the name he wanted to use. And, another AAFC team was the Brooklyn Dodgers, completely unrelated to Dan Topping's old NFL club.

One might suggest the new AAFC Yankees were indeed descended from the old NFL Dodgers (nee Triangles). The switching of leagues negates the franchise argument in this case. Maybe so, but events were going to soon settle the blood lines once and for all.

The two leagues hated each other for three years, but as the 1949 season approached, the outlook was beginning to look bleak for the AAFC. In January, Collins was certain the NFL was about to become the only pro football league. Then he finally got permission to move to New York. But the way he did it is really weird. First, he had the league cancel his Boston franchise. (That ends the Boston Yanks.) Then he was awarded a NEW franchise for New York! Apparently, this strange maneuver was a tax thing, allowing him to write off the Yanks.

Collins still didn't get things the way he wanted them. It turned out he had to play in the Polo Grounds, splitting time with the Giants. And he ended up calling his 1949 team the New York "Bulldogs," a name that never worked anywhere except in Ohio. In his defense, he could hardly keep the name "Yanks" in 1949 what with Topping's Yankees also in the city. Fans wouldn't know which team's games they were staying home from.

Just why the Maras were willing to let Collins come into their territory isn't clear, but it may have been prompted by a strengthened AAFC presence in New York City.

Wait'll you hear this one!

It seems the AAFC Brooklyn Dodgers were just as bad as Dan Topping's old NFL Dodgers had been even though the two clubs were related only in ineptitude. The AAFC Bums had had it after the 1948 season. And so -- now get this -- they merged with Topping's AAFC New York Yankees. How's THAT for irony! The new Brooklyn-New York Yankees (that's what they were called at first) took a half-dozen-or-so competent players

off the Dodgers' roster and let the rest go. The upbeat was that the AAFC had a single strong team in New York in '49 while the NFL's Giants and Bulldogs won only seven games between them.

Even so, things didn't pan out for the AAFC. It gave up the ghost after the 1949 season, bringing about the merger that was originally mis-stated in *Ragtime Sports* and thus started us on this long road.

### THE MERGER AND BEYOND

Okay, the first part is easy. The NFL grabbed the Cleveland Browns, a strong team that could bring in the crowds. It also accepted the San Francisco 49ers, the AAFC's second strongest team and a second payday when NFL clubs went west to visit the Rams in Los Angeles. That made for a nice twelve team league. But the NFL also took in a thirteenth team -- the weakest in the AAFC -- the Baltimore Colts. The reason for this incredible move was that Washington Redskins Owner George Preston Marshall had a lot of clout. He thought maybe the Colts and Redskins might make a lucrative rivalry and besides the Colts owners were willing to pay him an arm and a leg to come into his franchised territory.

Here's another switching-leagues thing where "franchise" doesn't really apply. The Cleveland Browns of the AAFC were indeed the Cleveland Browns of the NFL. Likewise the San Francisco 49ers. And, unfortunately, the Baltimore Colts.

Just about everybody outside of Baltimore knew the Colts wouldn't work and after one year just about everybody was proved right. The 1950 season was barely dry when the Colts owner turned his franchise and his players over to the league for \$50,000.

Thus endeth the Baltimore Colts first habitation of the NFL.

But what about Dan Topping's New York Yankees? Well, it turns out they weren't quite dead when the AAFC went under in 1949. I told you ages ago that there was a "sort of" merger. The NFL announced that the Yankees were merged with the Bulldogs. Some people might say that constitutes a continuation of the Dayton-Brooklyn-Yankees line, but I can't see it. The league used the word "merged" okay -- nice word, "merged" -- but they lied.

Actually, Ted Collins bought the rights to most of the Yankees players. It was a player deal. If the Lions sell a quarterback to the Steelers, you don't say Detroit merged with Pittsburgh! By the way, Collins was snookered. He got the chaff; the Giants got the wheat. The Giants were given rights to six Yankees, but they included Hall of Fame tackle Arnie Weinmeister and three excellent defensive backs -- Harmon Rowe, Otto Schnellbacher, and Tom Landry (yes, THAT Tom Landry!). The new guys helped the Giants go 10-2 in 1950.

Collins team was stronger too. Even secondary Yankees were better than most of his old Bulldogs. Ted enjoyed the only winning season he ever had in the NFL, winning seven of twelve games. And, he finally was allowed into Yankee Stadium. Now he called his ballclub the "Yanks." I suppose that was to avoid confusing his new team with the old Yanks in Boston or the old Yankees in the AAFC. Or the Doughboys of World War I, I guess.

Ha! Fat chance!

Collins' winning streak was short lived. His Yanks collapsed in 1951 and Ted decided enough was enough -- he'd better cut his losses. After all, Kate wasn't getting any younger. He sold his franchise back to the league for \$100,000.

THAT was the end of the Bulldogs-Yanks. And, no matter how you slice it, it was also the final, absolute end of the Cadets- Triangles-Dodgers-Tigers-Yanks-Yankees. Personally, I still say they died in December of 1945.

### CLAP! CLAP! CLAP! DEEP IN THE HEART OF HERSHEY

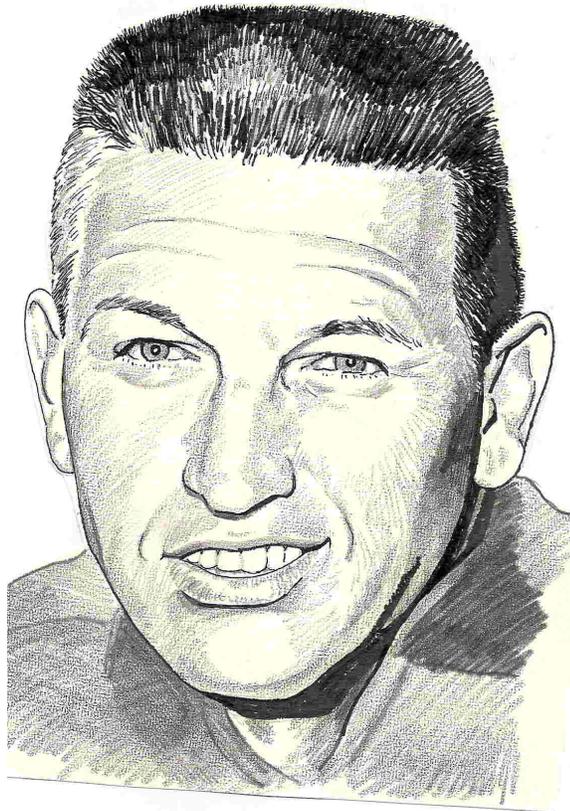
The league turned around and awarded a new franchise to some wide-eyed Dallas businessmen, reaping a nice profit. Please note, it was a new franchise, not that same old wrinkled piece of paper Ted Collins had been carrying around since 1949. The new owners bought a pristine franchise but the same old Yanks players, uniforms, equipment, and losing ways.

Halfway through their inaugural season the Dallas Texans hadn't won a game and the players outnumbered the fans at home games. The Texas owners shuddered and handed the franchise back to the league, taking a complete loss. Everybody figured it proved pro football

would never go in Texas. The NFL ran the team out of Hershey, Pennsylvania, for the last five games of 1952. Astonishingly, the Hershey Texans won a game, beating the Chicago Bears at Akron, Ohio.

When the season ended, so did the Texans.

Here we go again. In 1953, a group headed by Carroll Rosenbloom was awarded a new -- get that, new -- franchise and all the old New York Yanks-Dallas Texans players and stuff. He called his team the Baltimore Colts even though his team was as unrelated to the old team of the same name as Joe Montana is unrelated to Butte, Montana. Surprisingly, the new Colts made a go of it and won a championship six years later. You never can tell.



**Johnny Unitas**

Okay, one more headache. In 1972, Carroll Rosenbloom and Robert Irsay, who owned the Rams, "switched franchises." Does this mean that the line of descent goes Baltimore-to-Los Angeles?

No.

As nearly as I can understand the news releases of the time, Rosenbloom bought the majority of Rams stock and Irsay did the same with Baltimore. The actual franchises stayed put but the owners changed.

However, as we all know, in 1984 Mr. Irsay brought in the trucks and carted the Colts off to Indianapolis. Oh well, nothing lasts forever. Ask Georgia Frontiere.

**TO REVIEW**

There won't be a test, but I hope everybody's been keeping track. I'll try to keep this short.

1. Dayton Cadets (1913-15), Dayton Triangles (1916-29), Brooklyn Dodgers (1930-43), Brooklyn Tigers (1944), Yanks (Merger with Boston in 1945). End of NFL franchise.
2. Boston Yanks (1944), Yanks (Merger with Brooklyn, 1945), Boston Yanks (1946-48). End of NFL franchise.
3. New York Bulldogs (1949), New York Yanks (1950-51). End of NFL franchise.
4. New York Yankees AAFC (1946-48), Brooklyn-New York Yankees (Merger, 1949). End AAFC franchise. New York Yanks bought most of players.
5. Baltimore Colts I (1947-49 AAFC, 1950 NFL). End NFL franchise.
6. Dallas Texans (1952). End NFL franchise. Team played out of Hershey, Pa., for final five games.
7. Baltimore Colts II (1953-1983), Indianapolis Colts (1984- on). Franchise still active.

A final word. If you think you'll ever wonder about this again, please don't call me. I've got to get back to tending to my cat.

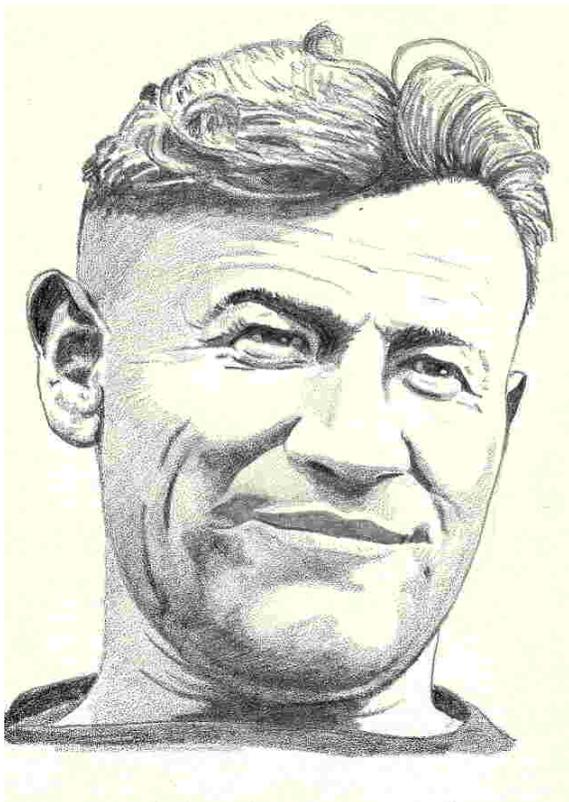
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Much of this article was based on original research by Joe Horrigan, historian for the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

## Semi-Pro or Pro?

By Bob Carroll

Out in Indiana, they take their football history seriously. The Warren County Historical Society is presently engaged in researching the famous Pine Village team of the early part of this century. The legendary Pine Villagers were supposedly undefeated for years but didn't turn pro (or seriously pro) until 1915. Jim Thorpe even played for them on Thanksgiving Day that year. We applaud the Historical Society's efforts.



**Jim Thorpe**

We recently received a question from Doris Cottingham of the society. It's a good one -- one that many of us have tried to figure out for years.

*"During that time period of P.V. [Pine Village] football what determined a professional team? Could a team rated as professional play teams rated semi-pro, amateur? Were teams shifting back and forth in their rating? I have noticed that reporters aren't consistent with rating different teams.*

*Doris Cottingham, Warren County  
Historical Society*

Dear Doris:

The term "semi-pro" as applied to athletes has been re-defined several times over the years. I believe it was first used in the late 1800s to denote an athlete who was NOT paid for his performance on the field (and thereby retained his amateur status) but who WAS paid for a non-athletic job with the understanding that to keep the job, he would perform as an athlete. For example, in 1902, Charles Follis, a superior runner and the first black professional football player, was given a job at a Shelby (OH) drug store so that he could perform for the local football team. At that time, he would have been considered a semi-pro by anyone who understood the connection between his work in the store and his work on the field. Technically, of course, he remained an amateur.

The only designations that had any meaning as far as eligibility to compete in sports was concerned were "amateur" and "professional." Only amateurs were allowed in the big track meets, football games, and other events under the Amateur Athletic Union. Semi-pros were regarded as full amateurs, not semi-amateurs. So, if Follis had wanted to hitchhike to New York to run in a relay race, no one would have complained. Two years later, he signed a contract to be paid for playing football, and that made him a professional.

Today, the term seems to be most often used to indicate a person who earns less than half his income from a particular endeavor. For instance, a few years ago I was a fulltime school teacher who often moonlighted as an actor. I was paid some of the time for my acting, but it was only a small portion of my income. (A VERY small portion and still some critics said I was overpaid. Even when I acted for free.) Therefore, although I was a professional teacher, I was only a semi-professional actor.

This definition works pretty well most of the time, but how does one categorize Michael Jordan who earns far more from endorsements than he does for playing basketball? A semi-pro athlete?



**Charles Follis**

You mentioned that writers during the time the Pine Village team played were inconsistent in "rating" teams professional or semi-pro. This indicates three things: first, the writers were unsure of the pro/semi-pro definitions; second, the writers probably didn't know how the players (especially those on visiting teams) were being paid, and, third, the teams themselves may have had a mixture of amateur, semi-pro, and pro players.

Incidentally, I wouldn't use the terms "rate" or "rating" when discussing this. Because of the various college football polls, "rating" has come to mean a "ranking" of teams from best to poorest. Perhaps "categorize" or "label" might work better.

Let me discuss the categories of players found on so-called "independent" (i.e. non-school sponsored) teams in the early part of this century.

**Amateurs.** These were usually local athletes, some of whom may have played high school ball. They were not paid in any way. In most cases when a team had been around for a few years, the regulars, even if locals only, received

something. Any players who still qualified as legitimate amateurs were probably substitutes. Many teams began as a banding together of strictly amateur players from a small town or, in larger cities, a particular neighborhood. The Rock Island (IL) Independents began this way as did the Rochester Jeffersons (Jefferson was apparently a neighborhood in Rochester), and both eventually became members of the NFL. Some started out as amateur "kids" teams. The Toledo Maroons began as a group of football-playing teenagers around 1908; by 1915, they were challenging for the Ohio state professional championship. But, by then, only a few of the original members were still on the team.

My guess is that the Pine Village team belonged in this category for its early years. It's likely that the team was originally made up all or mostly of teenagers and their first opponents were other Pine Village amateurs. Again this is only a guess based on the histories of other teams, but they probably played on an unenclosed field and charged no admission.

**Semi-pros (1).** As mentioned above, these might be players who were given jobs with the understanding that they would play for a particular team. Sometimes this was used to bring in a skilled outsider. For example, Charles Follis moved from Wooster to Shelby when he was given his drug store job. More often, it was used as a way to induce a local star to play for one neighborhood team instead of another. Such players are hard to pin down because there is seldom any record that their playing and their regular job were connected.

I doubt that many, if any, Pine Village players fit into this category. They seem to have cornered the local market on talented players making it unlikely a good Pine Villager would play for another local team. And the team does not appear to have imported players from outside the area in its early years.

**Semi-pros (2).** Even though many teams played on unenclosed fields and charged no admission, sooner or later someone was sure to "pass the hat." Spectators were urged to drop in change and some even threw in dollars. The money might be saved through the season and then used to throw a big party for the team or to help build or furnish a clubhouse. In such cases, the players still remained amateurs. However, if the players

divided the money among themselves, either after the game or after the season, they became in the strict sense pros at the time. The amount of money divided could vary depending on the size and generosity of the crowd. And because the amount of money the player was to receive for playing was not stipulated before the game such players are generally considered today to have been semi-pros.

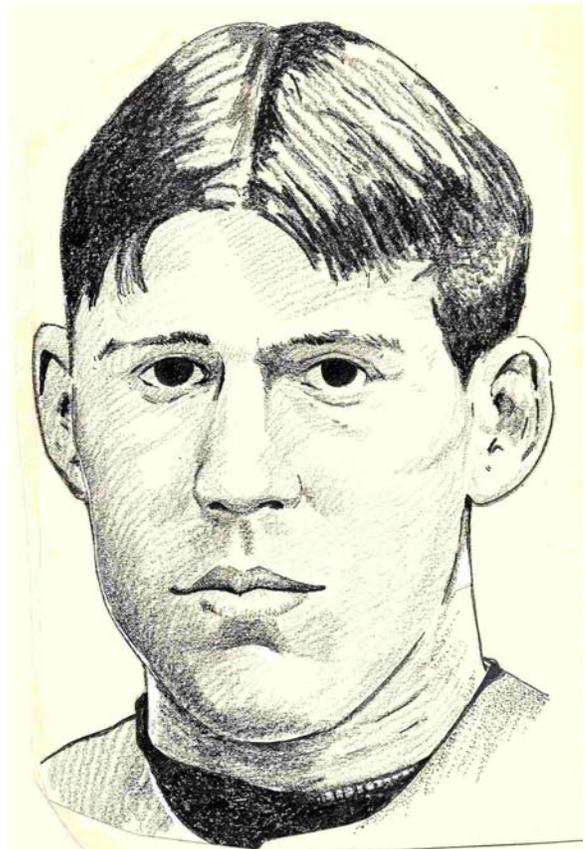
I imagine the Pine Village team got its first taste of professionalism this way.

**Semi-pros** (3). The next step, obviously, was to enclose the field and charge admission. If the players received shares of the receipts, rather than salaries, I would still consider them to have been semis although others might call them pros. My point again is that the amount they were to receive was not stipulated before the game. The unfortunate fact is that once expenses were paid, there often were no receipts left. Teams usually had to pay rent for the field (especially if it was enclosed), pay for tickets and sometimes posters for advertising, and often pay guarantees to visiting teams. It was not unknown for home teams to take up a collection among their own players in order to pay a visiting team's guarantee.

**Pros.** As far as I'm concerned, the line between semi-pro and pro at this time came when players agreed to play for a stipulated, specified salary in advance of a game. The amount itself was unimportant; it might be \$10, \$25, or \$50 per game. Jim Thorpe was paid \$250 per game by Canton in 1915, and Pudge Heffelfinger received \$500 for a single game in 1892. Most salaries before World War I were for less than \$100 a game. If a player was brought in from outside the area, his train ticket might be paid. He might also be fed after the game. Hiring a player for a season rather than by the game was not unknown, but such contracts were usually made with players who actually lived in the team's town. Outside "ringers" preferred to work from week to week in case a better offer came along.

As I understand it, Pine Village is regarded as full professional in 1915 because several players were promised specific salaries for games. This doesn't mean that all of the players knew in advance what they would be paid. Probably the roster was a mixture of pros, semi-pros, and

possibly even an amateur or two. After all expenses were paid (including the pros' salaries), the remaining players probably divided what was left.



William "Pudge" Heffelfinger

As to whether a team might be considered pro or semi-pro, the going definition seems to have been whatever the "worst" offender against the amateur code was. In other words, if there was one pro on the team and all the rest of the players were lily-white amateurs, the A.A.U. and other such bodies classified it as a pro team. If they worried about it at all.

In practice, whether they were regarded as semi-pro or pro would have no effect on a team like Pine Village. They could schedule other regional independent pro, semi-pro, or amateur teams without causing any stir. On the other hand, had the 1915 team lined up against the Purdue team, the university might have run afoul of the A.A.U. for taking part in a game with a pro team.

# Rating the Receivers

By Bob Carroll

Every once in a while, I get angry telephone calls from folks who wonder when I'm going to do something about the NFL Passer Rating System. "Hey!" they say, "when are you going to do something about the NFL Passer Rating System?" Then they hang up.

I think I wouldn't mind if they didn't call collect.

In the first place, I can't "do" anything about the System. I have less pull with the NFL than one of those dots does with Pac-Man. They completely ignored my last suggestion -- that Howard do his commentaries in sign language for the non-hearing-impaired -- even though I wrote it in a very nice letter with most of the words spelled right.

But, in the second place, I like the NFL's Passer Rating System, particularly at this time of year when I can peruse the little booklet the NFL puts out on rating passers and then turn for some light reading to the little booklet put out by the IRS on raping purses. One year I got them mixed up and paid the government two interceptions and a sack.

They were not amused.

However, the NFL's System is not really as difficult to comprehend as some people like to make out. To rate a passer, just take his completion percentage, average gain per toss, interception percentage, and touchdown percentage. Divide each figure by the square root of Pete Rozelle's home telephone number. Add in Frank Tripucka's chronological age at the time of his first communion, and multiply by George Halas' social security number. Stir thoroughly and boil for 45 minutes. Serves eight.

I think that's a great improvement over the old simple way of rating passers -- divide the QB's helmet size by his in-seam. You can rest assured that if you make a mistake in figuring a passer with the new system, no one will catch it until the fellow is retired and enshrined in the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

If we could only find enough percentages and averages, maybe we could do something just as nice for rushers and punters.

But don't do it for receivers. They are a special case.

Whereas runners and passers and kickers are subject to the tyranny of numerous numbers, great receivers are the product of fans' imaginations.

On any given Sunday (or Monday or Thursday or Saturday), you plunk yourself down in front of your TV to watch a game. By the fourth quarter -- according to the numbers flashed on the screen -- the quarterback has thrown 40 passes and completed 25 for 273 yards (if you are watching San Diego, these same figures may appear midway through the first quarter). The flashed numbers also tell you that your favorite runner has gained 104 yards on 27 carries. Now you know what kind of days these guys are having.

What about receivers? The numbers seem so insignificant! Three for 46? What's that? The Daily Lottery Number?

And to know statistically that a receiver is having a good season, you have to keep track of all those little numbers week after week. That's like rating a restaurant by counting the peas on your plate.

I doubt if many fans pay much attention to all those little receiver numbers, yet they'll tell you as gospel that so-and-so is a better wide receiver than such-and-such. Since they don't keep track of the numbers, how do they reach such decisions?

By the ring of the receiver's name! That's it. Receivers are rated (in the fans' minds) by the psychological impact of their monikers.

Think about it. Who ever heard of a famous receiver named John Doe? No one. But what about John Jefferson? Sure, you remember him! Why? Because his name recalls our great third

President and his initials look like a pair of buttonhook patterns. With that kind of impact Jefferson would be high-rated even if he had the hands of a hod carrier.

I happen to live in Steeler country where Lynn Swann (=graceful leap) and John Stallworth (=home of thoroughbred+high value) are the popular catchers. However, for the last two years the team's third wide receiver has been every bit as effective. Alas! his name is Smith (=blah). I think his first name is Jim. It matters not how many clutch catches Whats-Iz-Name Smith makes, he'll never be ranked with Lynn Stylishdive.



**Lynn Swann**

Consider the subliminal effects of these names:

Winslow (=eventual victory)

Largent (=big fellow)

Joiner (=keeps us together)

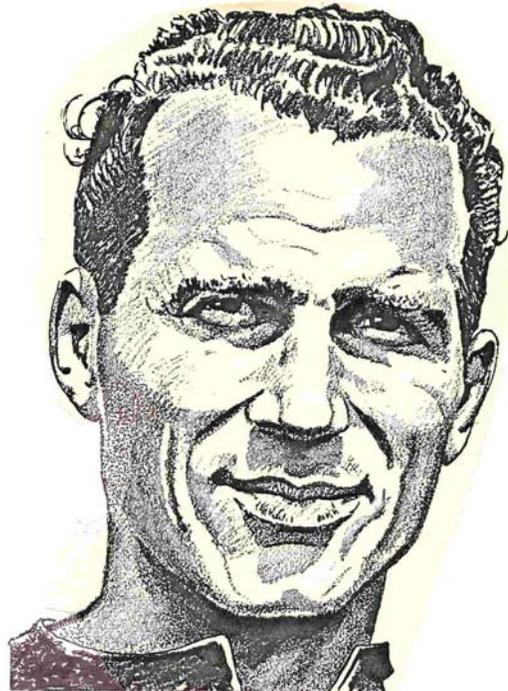
Butler (=he did it!)

Lofton (=high-flying heavyweight)

The list goes on. And it's always been so. Would Tom Fears have made the Hall of Fame as Tom Scaredycat? Who would have cheered for Elroy "Crazyelbows" Hirsch? Would Cleveland have loved Mac Slowpoke? Tommy McDonald would

not have got past training camp as Tommy Pizzahut.

Had not Don Hutson's name reminded fans of a popular motorcar of the day, I'm certain Green Bay's greatest end would have been Harry Jacunski. And why do we not honor the only men other than Hutson to lead the NFL in receiving between 1936 and 1945? Because they both had "turn-off" names! Gaynell Tinsley (41 catches in 1938) sounds like an effete riverboat gambler, and only folks on the funny farm could cotton to a name like Don Looney (58 receptions in 1940).



**Don Hutson**

This correlation of names and stardom does not seem to affect other positions. You can be a great quarterback whether your name is Starr or Tittle. A great defensive end can be robust (as in Robustelli) or just plain Jones (as in Deacon). But to make it as a receiver, you need a suitable name.

NFL teams should think about it at their next draft. If they see a guy who can do a hundred quicker than your wife can spot a blonde hair on your lapel, can catch anything thrown in the same state, and is so gung-ho he makes Pete Rose look like a slacker, they may have a good ballplayer.

But, if his name is something like Lance Klutchcatcher, they have a superstar!

# When Halas Cornered the Draft

By Bob Carroll

When it came time to hold the National Football League's annual draft for the 1941 season, the system was still in flux. Previously, five annual drafts had come and gone, starting with the 1936 season when each NFL club chose nine potential stars from that year's crop of graduating collegians. For 1941, each of the ten teams would choose 20 players.

At the time, the draft was not nearly the Must-See-TV National Event it has become in this age, but it was more than an afterthought. An account of the draft usually made the first page of the sports section in those cities with league teams.

And, despite all those stories about club owners walking into the meeting armed only with dog-eared copies of *Street and Smith* magazines, scouting wasn't quite that primitive. At least not for the better teams. Throughout the 1940 season, the names of college stars had been submitted to the league until there was a roster of about 400 young football players to be picked from. Some of those names came from news accounts of college games in the Sunday papers, but teams like the New York Giants and Green Bay Packers very likely had sent someone to actually look at most of the better players in their geographical areas. Moreover, as well-established, longtime winners, they had former players all over the country who tipped them to superior college players in out-of-the-way nooks.

No team had more loyal -- or discerning -- alumni than the Chicago Bears. Beginning with that first draft in 1936 when he picked two future Hall of Famers in Joe Stydahar and Danny Fortmann, George Halas -- with a little help from his friends -- had made the draft work for him.

At a distance, Halas seems to have been almost schizophrenic about the draft.

When Philadelphia owner Bert Bell first proposed the draft in the early '30s, it seemed a pie-in-the-sky idea. While having only one team bid for the services of a player was a good way to keep salaries under control, an idea that Halas could embrace wholeheartedly, the ultimate result -- if

all went according to the script -- would eventually be to cycle chronic losers like Bell's Eagles to the top of the standings and push annual winners like Halas's Bears to the bottom. Asking Papa Bear to willingly put his team at a disadvantage was like asking Patton to give up his tanks.

And nothing was likely to get done in the NFL in those days unless Halas agreed to it.

But, on the other hand, no one was more a booster of the league and few were more farsighted than Halas. Bell came up with the idea, but Halas let it happen. Possibly, he simply knew that the draft idea was good for the league and any idea good for the NFL would be good for the Bears in the long run. Or maybe he just knew he was smart enough to turn the system -- any system -- to his advantage. He'd really show his stuff in the '41 draft.

Halas tried his first end run with that first draft in 1936. Bell's pathetic Eagles led off the choosing in the worst-drafts- first manner we have all come to know and love. He chose the University of Chicago's Jay Berwanger, the first Heisman Trophy winner and certainly the 1935 season's Golden Boy. Everyone knew that Bell had as much chance of signing Berwanger as he did of signing Eddie Cantor to play linebacker. Then, lo and behold, Bell traded the right to sign Berwanger to the Bears. In effect, for a couple of players he didn't really need, Halas had the first pick of the draft.

It didn't work out the way Halas had planned. Berwanger decided to skip pro football altogether. Still with Stydahar and Fortmann captured, the Papa Bear couldn't complain.

In the '37 draft, Halas did it with Bell again. The bottom-dwelling Eagles drafted Nebraska's All-America fullback Sam Francis first. Sure enough, Francis opened the '37 season wearing Bears colors. This one cost, however. The Eagles got Hall of Fame end Bill Hewitt who played great for several seasons. Hewitt had told Halas he was retiring, so George didn't think he was really giving up anything.

After skipping a year, Halas hit a home run in the 1939 draft. On August 16, 1938, he sent Edgar "Eggs" Manske, a first-rate end, to Pittsburgh. For this act of kindness to his buddy Art Rooney, Halas received Pittsburgh's first draft choice in the '39 pickums. And who did that turn out to be? None other than Columbia's Sid Luckman, who went on to become the world's best quarterback in the early 1940s. Because Pittsburgh actually made the selection -- that was how they did it then -- Luckman was for many years listed in the Steelers' column as *their* draft choice even though they never really held rights to him. It made a heartbreaking footnote for Pittsburghers mourning the losses of Johnny Unitas and Len Dawson.

The Bears' 1940 draft was one of the best any team ever had. They chose center Clyde "Bulldog" Turner, ends Ken Kavanaugh and Hamp Pool, tackles Ed Kolman and Lee Artoe, and running back Harry Clark. All of them would gain all-pro recognition in their careers and Turner would wind up in the Hall of Fame.

But the biggest blast of all came from one of those patented Halas-Bell deals. The Eagles tabbed breakaway wonder George McAfee out of Duke and immediately packed him off to the Bears for a couple of long-forgotten tackles. For the next two seasons, McAfee would be arguably the greatest runner the NFL had ever seen. They called him "One-Play" because that's all it took to get him from anywhere on the field into the end zone.

Amazingly, Bell later explained, "We had [passing star] Davey O'Brien then and couldn't have used McAfee anyway." Like a skydiver couldn't use a parachute!

Up to this point, the other league owners weren't exactly thrilled with Halas's drafting machinations. But, after all, his deals had sometimes stung him, as in the case of Berwanger. In the Francis deal, he gave up more than he got in return. So, why worry?

But then ....

In the 1940 championship game on December 8, Halas's Bears destroyed the Washington Redskins 73-0. It still stands as the most one-sided NFL blow-out ever. In those days, the draft was held a day or two after the championship game in the same city, so, on December 10, it was goodies day for 1941.

And, in between, on December 9, came word that Halas would not only have his regular pick -- ninth in the first round -- but also enjoy the first pick *and* either the second or third! The mind boggled.

Here was a team that had just shown itself to be the most irresistible force since God went after Sodom and Gomorrah. Now they were to be allowed to add to their overflowing arsenal Michigan's great Tom Harmon, the back of the year, and possibly Texas A & M's mighty fullback, "Jarrin' John" Kimbrough, a line-smasher whose name could be reasonably coupled in the same sentence with Nagurski. Plus, they'd get yet another choice a few picks later!

The other owners asked themselves, "Is this the end of pro football competition in our time?"

Here's what Halas had done.

In the 1940 draft, Philadelphia picked Santa Clara center John Schiechl as their next selection after George McAfee. But Schiechl refused to report. Considering the state of the Eagles, who could blame him? In April, Bert Bell's good friend George opened his heart and sent the Eagles end Les McDonald and guard Dick Bassi for the missing Schiechl. Oh, and by the way, if Schiechl still didn't report, the Bears would get an Eagles '41 draft choice. The first one, as a matter of fact.

Well, surprise, surprise! The Bears couldn't sign Schiechl either. One wonders how hard they tried. When the Eagles finished predictably dead last, there was Halas drawing a bead on Tommy Harmon.

Then, just to wrap things up with a big bow, Halas went to Art Rooney and offered him Billy Patterson, a useful halfback due to be unemployed when Halas signed McAfee. The price was Pittsburgh's first pick in '41. Figuring a Patterson in hand was worth more than a draft choice he probably couldn't afford to sign, Rooney agreed. As expected, the Steelers (1940 was the former "Pirates" first year under that name) crumbled beneath the weight of playing real football teams and finished just ahead of the Eagles. However, the Chicago Cardinals had an equally awful record so the draft position -- second or third -- was to be determined by a coin flip between the two.

When they learned on the eve of the draft what Halas had wrought, the league owners marshaled a small counterattack. There wasn't anything they could do about 1941, but they passed a rule that starting in 1942 no team could trade its first or second draft choice until the player had put in a full season with the team. That certainly slammed the door on an empty barn. Eventually, the rule would be expanded to apply to any draft choice before sanity regained control.

On Draft Day, most of the team owners filed into the meeting room with trepidation. Halas was probably smiling -- at least on the inside.

All told, things worked out better than the other owners had any right to expect.

First off, Pittsburgh lost the coin flip to the Cardinals. Halas would have to content himself with the first and *third* picks.

Then, Tommy Harmon telegraphed NFL President Carl Storck that he wouldn't play for the Bears. "Pish tosh," said Halas figuratively, and nodded to Bert Bell who chose Harmon.

The Cardinals drafted Kimbrough to no one's surprise. Up stepped the Steelers drafting for the Bears. The choice was Stanford fullback Norm Standlee. Next to Kimbrough, Standlee was the most coveted fullback in the draft and had the additional benefit of having played in the T-formation, the Bears' offensive scheme. In fact, since Standlee had performed wonders at Stanford under Halas's friend Clark Shaughnessy, it's altogether possible that the Bears would have opted for him over Kimbrough anyway.

Cleveland took University of Washington center Rudy Mucha; Detroit grabbed Texas A & M triple-threat Jim Thomason; the Giants opted for Minnesota halfback George Franck; Green Bay nabbed Wisconsin fullback George Paskvan; Brooklyn named Washington's star back Dean McAdams; and the Bears expended their own pick on Ohio State All-America runner Don Scott. The Redskins rounded off the first round by choosing Forest Evashevski, the guy who had been Harmon's blocking back at Michigan.

Washington drafted last even though the Bears were league champs because the draft slots were

based on teams' win-lost records and the 'Skins had one more regular season win than Chicago.

Another oddity of the draft was that only the bottom five teams were allowed to draft in the second and fourth rounds. Furthermore, each team was allowed 20 choices no matter what. In effect, Pittsburgh and Philadelphia gave the Bears their positions but no players. The same thing happened in the eighth round; both Philadelphia and Pittsburgh had traded *those* choices to the Bears. As the rounds neared the end, the Cardinals, Rams, and Lions dropped out as they reached 20 players, but the Eagles and Steelers kept drafting (along with the top five teams) until they too had selected 20 players. Somehow, no one had noticed, but by then the Bears had 24 choices so their last four picks were disallowed, and those players, none of whom made a mark in the NFL, went technically undrafted.

All the worry about the Bears cornering the draft with three first round picks turned out to be unnecessary. Harmon didn't play in the NFL until after World War II and then only after he'd been traded to the Rams. Kimbrough also refused to sign with the Cards but had a couple of decent seasons with the Los Angeles Dons of the All-America Football Conference after the war. Standlee gave the Bears a great year in 1941 but then went into the service. When he emerged it was with the 49ers of the AAFC. Scott, the Bears' third first-round pick, was another who ignored the enticements of the NFL. Of the other first round picks, Evashevski went into coaching; Mucha, Thomason, Franck, and McAdams had short and generally uneventful pro careers.

The Bears didn't draft again until the third and fifth rounds but they came up with Hugh Gallarneau, a terrific halfback from Stanford, and Charley O'Rourke, Boston College's great passer.

In truth, the Bears had rounded up so much talent by 1941 that they were virtually a lock on winning the championship well into the foreseeable future. But, of course, the future is never really foreseeable.

The other owners couldn't thwart Halas's plans.

World War II did.

# 'Twas the Night Before the PFRA Meeting

Or The Curse of Worse Verse Than You'd Hear in a Hearse

By Bob Carroll

I had a nice dream the other eve  
(Caused by a late snack, I believe).  
EVERYONE came to the PFRA Meeting!  
(I've sure got to watch that junk I've been eating.)

Here's John Hogrogian, a Big Apple lawyer,  
But deep in his heart a Researching Warrior.  
The Jets and the Titans are grist for his milling.  
Hey, John, write some more. The *Corner* needs  
filling!

Here's the always-top-grade Jimmy Campbell,  
Who every few years gets urges to amble  
To new footballish spots of employment.  
Why does he do it? I guess for enjoyment.

Here's Joe Horrigan, at the Pro Football Hall,  
Among pro historians he stands very tall.  
I can't count the times that I've wanted to know  
Some obscure fact, and thought, "I'll ask Joe."

Here's Joe Plack, and here's some big news:  
Without good ol' Joe, we'd have to up dues.  
His printing our books keeps us in the black.  
Let's all say together: "Thank you, Mr. Plack!"

Here's our PFRA Prez, the busy Jack Clary,  
Whose books on pro football are must reading --  
very!  
His *Great Moments* series, his best-selling *PB*  
Are ALMOST as good as I'd 'a done. (Tee-hee!)

Here's Stan Grosshandler, a doc for the Ages,  
Whose various stories have filled up these pages.  
A wonderful memory, a wonderful fella.  
As editor, I'm most glad he's a wonderful spella'!

Here's Vince Popo, our treasurer treasure,  
Who banks all our checks and then, at his leisure,  
Pays all our bills. He does it so neat he  
Was rumored to've been last seen in Tahiti.

Here's the ubiquitous David S. Neft,  
Who researches sports with a style that is deft.  
A "Walking Sports Encyclopedia," you think,  
But if they should duel, the Ency would blink.

Here's our secretary Greg Kukish.  
Though well-read, he ne'er comes off bookish.  
A quick helping hand, a ready broad smile.  
If you're ever in jail, he'll send you a file.

Here's Bob Gill, Mr. Enthusiasm.  
Few have researched as much football as him.  
Those yellowed newspaper pages are right up his alley.

Have you read his book *Down in the Valley*?  
Here's Vic Mastro, who isn't from Yonkers.  
No, sir! It's the Bronx that makes him go bonkers.  
Anything footballly that hap't in that borough  
Will set him to researching it all good and  
thorough.

Here's Emil Klosinski, on whom we depend  
To tell tales of early pros in South Bend.  
Of Rockne and Hunk and Cofall and Slip  
And who could forget the mighty George Gipp?

Here's a favorite phone friend, Raymond Lee,  
Whose calls are always welcomed fondly.  
No matter how far we are in the dumps  
His cheerfulness always gets rid of our grumps.

Here's Bob Van Atta of west Pennsylvania,  
Greensburg-Latrobe is his football mania.  
The number one expert on his part of the nation,  
This ex-marine earns a standing ovation.

Here's Bob Sproule, the man who knows  
More Canadian football than any ten Joes.  
Ask him 'bout a "single" and he will proclaim,  
"It's a way to score in my favorite game!"

Here's that busy young writer Ed Gruver.  
Lombardi-ish stuff is right in his *oeuvre*.  
A fellow so kind, if the truth be tol',  
He wrote a whole book about a Nice Bowl.

Here's the Pro Football Hall's Peter Fierle.  
For his extra efforts, we thank him sincerely.  
And Trish and Saleem of the library staff,  
They're great, but that doesn't say it by half.

I dreamt to myself, "If this dream continues,  
I'll list every member who's paid in his dues!"  
But ere I could name the rest of the folk,  
My telephone rang and -- darn! -- I awoke.

I hung up without switching my long-distance  
service,  
And sat by my phone getting mightily nervous.  
Would Don, Jim, Ed, Tod, Mark and the rest  
Not finding their names here be very distressed?

So with nary a bit of flim-flam or flummery,  
Consider this as my "post-dream" summary:

For help, friendship, and support I thank

---

(Please put YOUR own name in the blank).