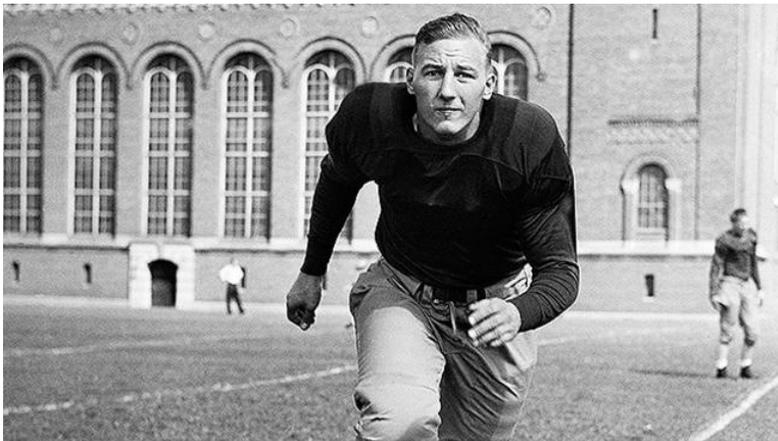




Player Profile: Al Wistert

INTRODUCTION

A dominant two-way tackle, Al Wistert captained two NFL Championship teams and won numerous consensus all-pro honors on his way to being inducted into the Philadelphia Eagles Hall of Fame. Wistert was responsible for the key block that sprung Steve Van Buren to the only touchdown scored in the 1948 NFL Championship game. He anchored the line to propel Van Buren to four rushing titles and help the team to a 20-3-1 record and two championships between 1948 and 1949. These were the only two consecutive NFL Championship games to have been won by a shutout.



Albert Alexander “Ox” Wistert was born December 28, 1920 in Chicago, Illinois. Following in his brother Francis’ steps, Al attended Michigan starting in 1940. According to brother Alvin, “If I am not mistaken, I think this is unprecedented in the annals of college football: that all three brothers would go to the same school, all played football, all played tackle, all wore the same number 11, and all made All-American. Two of us played on four national

championship teams. All were inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame” (Green, Jerry. “Wistert Brothers’ Fame Was Built on Hard Work.” *The Detroit News*, January 2, 2004).

The 6’1”, 214-pound Wistert earned consensus All-American honors in 1942, as well as being voted team MVP. In 1943, Wistert was named team co-captain of the 1943 College All-Star team. He was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in 1968 and University of Michigan’s Hall of Honor in 1981.

Wistert was drafted in the fifth round by the Philadelphia Eagles in 1943. From 1943 through 1951, he played every game for the Eagles, except for one: the 1950 opening game against the Cleveland Browns, where the Eagles lost 35-10. His number 70 was retired in 1952.

FILM STUDY AND ANALYSIS (By Ken Crippen and Matt Reaser)

Doesn't lose his balance, even on slippery fields. Has excellent instincts. He would occasionally get beat in both run and pass protection, but that was rare. He did a very good job on special teams and was regularly in on tackles. He occasionally gave up on an offensive play when run to the opposite side of the field

Run Blocking: Gets off the snap quickly to engage the defender. After releasing from the defender, he is looking for the second and third blocks downfield. Can pull in either direction and hits the defender with force. Can seal and wall off the defender in any direction to open a hole for the runner. Games were won based off of his blocking. Showed great agility in the open field.

Pass Blocking: Excellent lateral movement and agility. His head was on a swivel when he was not engaged with a defender. Always looked for the block and made great decisions. Quick enough to pick up missed blocks by teammates. When he played left guard, he showed enough agility to drop back and protect against the rushing right defensive end coming around the outside of the left offensive tackle.

STATISTICS

The Philadelphia Eagles did not have a 0.500 or better season in their history before Wistert joined the team. They had a cumulative winning record of 0.219. They finished 0.500 or better in eight of his nine seasons, with a 0.649 record during his career. The Eagles have won four NFL championships in their history. Two of them came during Wistert's tenure.

Offense

The Eagles led the NFL in rushing yards three times during Wistert's career (including 1943 as the Steagles). They never did so prior to Wistert joining the team and have only done so once in 60 years since he retired (2013).

The Eagles led the NFL in points scored three times during Wistert's career. They never did so before he joined the team and have never done so since.

Four times during Wistert's career, and Eagle running back led the NFL in rushing yards. No Philadelphia running back did so before Wistert joined the team and only one has done so since.

Defense

The Eagles led the NFL in fewest points allowed twice during Wistert's career. They never did that before Wistert joined the team. They also led the NFL in fewest yards allowed three times and led the NFL in fewest rushing yards allowed five times during his career. That had done neither before Wistert joined the team.

Interceptions					
<u>Team</u>	<u>Games Played</u>	<u>Games Started</u>	<u>Interceptions</u>	<u>Yards</u>	<u>Touchdowns</u>
1943 Philadelphia Eagles	9	1	-	-	-
1944 Philadelphia Eagles	8	7	-	-	-
1945 Philadelphia Eagles	10	10	-	-	-
1946 Philadelphia Eagles	9	9	1	27	0

1947 Philadelphia Eagles	12	12	-	-	-
1948 Philadelphia Eagles	12	12	-	-	-
1949 Philadelphia Eagles	12	11	-	-	-
1950 Philadelphia Eagles	11	10	-	-	-
1951 Philadelphia Eagles	12	12	-	-	-

Fumbles				
Team	Fumbles	Recovered	Yards	TD
1943 Philadelphia Eagles	-	-	-	-
1944 Philadelphia Eagles	-	-	-	-
1945 Philadelphia Eagles	-	-	-	-
1946 Philadelphia Eagles	-	1	0	0
1947 Philadelphia Eagles	-	2	0	0
1948 Philadelphia Eagles	-	1	0	0
1949 Philadelphia Eagles	-	-	-	-
1950 Philadelphia Eagles	-	1	0	0
1951 Philadelphia Eagles	-	3	0	0

HONORS

Wistert was named to at least one major first all-pro team six times (consecutively from 1944-1949), including five times as consensus all-pro (1944-1948). In the four seasons from 1946 through 1949, various major news agencies selected combined all-NFL/AAFC teams. Wistert was named first team on at least one of those teams all four seasons: 1946 (AP), 1947 (AP, Sportswriters Inc.), 1948 (Sportswriters Inc., *The Sporting News*), and 1949 (International News Service). No other player accomplished this feat, including the 16 Pro Football Hall of Famers who played all four of those seasons. Of the ten all-NFL/AAFC teams selected from 1946 through 1949, Wistert was named to six. Only Mac Speedie and Hall of Famers Steve Van Buren and Bulldog Turner were named to more.

- Pro Football Hall of Fame All-Decade Team (1940s)
- Inducted into the Professional Football Researchers Association's Hall of Very Good in the inaugural class in 2003
- Philadelphia Eagles Hall of Fame (2009). His 1948 and 1949 Championship Teams were inducted into the Philadelphia Eagles' Hall of Fame in 1999.
- Wistert's Number 70 Retired by Philadelphia Eagles (1952)
- College Football Hall of Fame (1968)
- University of Michigan's Hall of Honor (1981)

All-Pro:

- 1944: Consensus First Team (Associated Press, United Press, International News Service, *New York News*).
Honorable Mention (*Detroit Free Press*)
- 1945: Consensus First Team (Associated Press, United Press, International News Service, *New York News*,
Pro Football Illustrated, *Chicago Herald-American*, *Detroit Free Press*)
- 1946: First Team (Associated Press, United Press, *New York News*, *Pro Football Illustrated*)

- 1947: Consensus First Team (Associated Press, Sportswriters Inc., United Press, New York News, Chicago Herald-American – Offense). Second Team (*Pro Football Illustrated*).
- 1948: Consensus First Team (Sportswriters Inc., *Sport Magazine*, United Press, New York News, Official Team, Midseason United Press – Offense). Honorable Mention (Associated Press)
- 1949: First Team Offense (International News Service). Honorable Mention (Associated Press, United Press).
- 1950: First Team (Pro Bowl). Honorable Mention (Associated Press, United Press). Second Team Offense (New York News)

Testimonials

Hall of Fame coach George Allen listed Wistert as one of the 100 best pro players of all-time in his book *Pro Football's 100 Greatest Players* and also selected him as one of the ten best defensive linemen of all time. "He always played in perfect position and was seldom off his feet," Allen wrote of Wistert's defensive abilities. "He was a superb pursuit man and seemed somehow to get in on every play. He was a sure tackler. He was maybe best against the run, but he was among the good early pass rushers." Of Wistert as an offensive lineman, Allen wrote, "He was as fine a blocker as you could want. He didn't have the size to overpower people on the pass block, but he was a master of every kind of block."

In *The Hidden Game of Football*, football historians Bob Carroll, Pete Palmer, and John Thorn analyzed the Hall of Fame credentials of hundreds of players. They determined that of all two-way tackles not in the Hall of Fame, Wistert was the most deserving of enshrinement. Here are their top-ten two-way tackles:

- Al Wistert
- Turk Edwards*
- Bruiser Kinard*
- Ed Healey*
- Cal Hubbard*
- Pete Henry*
- Duke Slater
- Joe Stydahar*
- Link Lyman*
- George Christensen

*Members of the Pro Football Hall of Fame