

## BRONKO NAGURSKI

By Bob Carroll

Nagurski symbolized rugged line plunging to fans during the 1930's, and plenty of eyewitness still insist that for sheer brutal power-running, the great Chicago Bear fullback has never been matched. Never fancy, Nagurski didn't dance, jiggle or joke; he just plowed straight ahead -- right through people!

More than a great runner, Nagurski was a complete player. At the University of Minnesota he played four positions and was named All-America at both fullback and tackle.

His linebacking was as fearsome as his line bucking. When Beattie Feathers became the first NFL back to rush for over a thousand yards in 1934, Nagurski's blocking received much of the credit. "Feathers would sway in and out behind Bronko's shoulder blocks like a Fox Terrier frisking on the heels of a St. Bernard," said one appreciative observer.

Bronko's jump pass off a fake plunge was devastating. It went for the key touchdown in the Bears' 1932 playoff victory over Portsmouth for the league championship. The next year, in the first official championship game, he passed to Bill Karr for a third quarter touchdown. Then, in the final period -- with the Bears trailing 21-16 -- he threw to Bill Hewitt who later led to Karr for the game-winning TD.

His style was the stuff of legends:

- \* He blamed himself when an opponent scored after he'd made an error. "Gimme the ball!" He shouted in the huddle. On the next play he went 65 yards to a touchdown.
- \* New York Giants' Coach Steve Owen: "How do I plan to stop Nagurski? With a shotgun as he's leaving the dressing room."
- \* One day he blasted through the opposition, across the goal line, clear through the end zone, and into a stone wall. "That last guy hit me awfully hard," he admitted later.
- \* An opponent said, "I tackled him at the line of scrimmage and was congratulating myself on a good job until I hear the referee call, 'second and two!'"

### THE COMEBACK

He couldn't get a raise to \$6,500 in 1938, and Nagurski retired from football to follow a career in pro wrestling. But in 1943, when war demands left the Bears short on manpower, Bronko rejoined his old team as a tackle.

At age 35, he put in a strong season blocking and tackling. In the final scheduled game -- with the Bears needing a victory to clinch the Western Division -- the Bruins trailed the Cardinals, 24-14, after three quarters. The Bronk got the nod to take his old position at fullback.

It looked like old times as Nagurski slammed into the Card line again and again, keying a 62-yard drive to the tying touchdown. Later, he blasted six yards on a fourth and four to set up another TD.

When it was all over, the Bears had a 35-24 win. Nagurski had 84 yards and a touchdown to add to his career totals. "That Game," he said, "Gave me my greatest kick out of football."

He scored one more TD in the championship game victory over Washington and then retired for good.

Mel Hein, the great New York Giant star who faced Nagurski many times: "If you went at him low, he would stomp you to death. If you went at him high, he just knocked you down and ran over you."

### BRONKO NAGURSKI

**Born:** Rainy River, Ontario, Canada, 11 / 3 / 1908

**Hgt:** 6-2 **Wgt:** 225

**College:** Minnesota

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All-NFL: 1932, 1933, 1934

Pro Football Hall of Fame: 1963

## RUSHING RECORD

Year	Team	Att	Yds	Avg	TD
1930	Chicago Bears				5
1931	Chicago Bears				2
1932	Chicago Bears	111	496	4.5	4
1933	Chicago Bears	128	533	4.2	1
1934	Chicago Bears	123	586	4.8	7
1935	Chicago Bears	37	137	3.7	1
1936	Chicago Bears	122	529	4.3	3
1937	Chicago Bears	73	343	4.7	1
1938-42	retired				
1943	Chicago Bears	16	84	5.3	1
9 years		872	4031	4.6	25