

ALL-PRO: 1917

It seems a little minor to point out that World War I set pro football's progress back several years. After all, the war set many things and many people back permanently.

However, it is true that by 1917 pro ball had reached an organizational level that it would not again attain until quite a while after the shooting stopped in Europe. One measure -- perhaps 'symptom' might be a better word -- of pro football's growing importance was that at least three different All-Pro Teams were selected at the end of the '17 season.

In Indiana, sportswriter Heze Clark had been picking teams since at least 1913. His 1917 team was strictly a Hoosier affair:

Ends: Jess Reno, Wabash A.A., and Henderson, Hammond Clabby's.
Tackles: Ruffner, Hammond Clabby's, and Emmett Keefe, Pine Village.
Guards: Frank Rydzewski, Ft. Wayne Friars, and Redman, Wabash A.A.
Center: Frank Blocker, Hammond Clabby's.
Quarterback: Paddy Driscoll, Hammond Clabby's.
Halfbacks: Frank Bacon, Pine Village, and Charley Barrett, Hammond Clabby's.
Fullback: Gil Falcon, Hammond Clabby's.

Meanwhile, a Cleveland newsman showed an equal Ohio bias:

Ends: Bob Nash, Massillon Tigers, and Tommy Burrell, Akron Indians.
Tackles: Pike Johnson, Massillon Tigers, and Charley Copley, Massillon Tigers.
Guards: Al Nesser, Akron Indians, and Doc Spears, Canton Bulldogs.
Center: Bob Peck, Youngstown Patricians and Massillon Tigers.
Quarterback: Milt Ghee, Canton Bulldogs.
Halfbacks: Jim Thorpe, Canton Bulldogs, and Stan Cofall, Youngstown Patricians and Massillon Tigers.
Fullback: F.A. Dunn, Canton Bulldogs.

Although a Canton newsman argued against the Cleveland choices -- he wanted to substitute eleven Canton players -- it seems obvious that the problem for both these teams is that they are too narrowly sectionalist.

Toledo, by its location in the northwest of the state, saw teams from both Ohio and Indiana, as well as Michigan. The "All- Western Team of Professional Football Players" published in the Toledo *News-Bee* on December 11, 1917, had behind it a wider range of observation than the other two All-Pro Teams.

Ends: Greasy Neale, Canton Bulldogs, and Ray Whipple, Detroit Heralds.
Tackles: Doc Spears, Canton Bulldogs, and Steamer Horning, Detroit Heralds.
Guards: Frank Blocker, Hammond Clabby's, and Frank Nesser, Akron Indians.
Center: Ralph Waldsmith, Canton Bulldogs.
Quarterback: Milt Ghee, Canton Bulldogs.
Halfbacks: Pete Calac, Canton Bulldogs, and Norb Sacksteder, Detroit Heralds.
Fullback: Jim Thorpe, Canton Bulldogs.

Obviously, differences of opinion over the best players were as common in 1917 as they are in 1982.