

FABULOUS FATMAN

By Bob Carroll

Wilbur Henry loved to eat and loved to play football. The result was the biggest and best tackle of the NFL's early years. At 6-0 and 250 pounds, Henry looked like a roly-poly tub of lard, but his butterball build belied tremendous agility and surprising speed. He was a bulldozer on offense and a stone wall on defense. He could also slip into the back field as a super power- runner or race down the field on tackle-eligible pass plays.

He was called the best kick-blocker of his time. At the same time, his own kicking was legendary. In one game, he was credited with a 94-yard punt. In another, he connected on a 45-yard dropkick field goal and then came back with a second FG of 40 yards.

Henry was born October 31, 1897, at Mansfield, Ohio. He was a star at basketball and track, as well as on the gridiron. Newspapers nick named him "Fats," but his teammates always called him "Pete." After three All-American years at little Washington and Jefferson, he signed to play for the Canton Bulldogs on the same day the National Football League (then called the American Professional Football Association) was organized - September 17, 1920. Interestingly enough, Canton papers headlined Henry's signing and gave only scant attention to the historic meeting of team managers taking place in town.

Henry arrived in Canton just as the Bulldogs' most famous star -- Jim Thorpe -- was starting to slip. But, with Henry aboard, the team rose to new heights, going undefeated in 1922 and 1923. while winning NFL titles. Joining Henry on the Bulldog line were all-timers Roy "Link" Lyman and Guy Chamberlin.

Yet Canton couldn't draw. In 1924, the team was sold to Cleveland. Henry refused to go along, instead playing non-NFL football with Pottsville in Pennsylvania.

The next year, Canton returned to the league with Henry as both star player and club president. But the attendance continued to sag and 1926 saw the last of the Bulldogs in the NFL. Henry put in a few games with the New York Giants in 1927 and then went to Pottsville (by then a league member). He retired after the 1928 season.

Henry served as athletic director of his alma mater until his death at age 54 on February 7, 1952. In 1963, he was named a charter member of the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

WILBUR HENRY'S NFL SCORING RECORD

<u>Year</u>	<u>Team</u>	<u>TD</u>	<u>XP</u>	<u>FG</u>	<u>PTS</u>
1920	Canton....	2	0	0	12
1921	Canton....	0	0	0	0
1922	Canton....	0	4	2	10
1923	Canton....	1	26	9	59
1924					
1925	Canton....	0	5	1	8
1929	Canton....	0	3	0	3
1927	NY-Potts..	0	1	2	7
1928	Pottsville	0	0	0	0
	8 years	3	39	14	99