

Red's First Game

On Thursday, November 26, 1925 – Thanksgiving Day – a game was played in Chicago that was arguably the most important pro contest ever. It settled no championship nor set any records on the field, but pro football was never again the same.

It was the day that Red Grange turned pro.

With that fact, pro ball moved from the back pages of the sports section to the front. Reportedly, people lined up for blocks to buy tickets, and Wrigley Field (then called Cubs' Park) had its first pro football sell-out at 16,000.

According to legend, Grange was completely throttled by the clever punting of the Cards' Paddy Driscoll. However, as the following story from the Chicago *Herald-Examiner* shows, Red's performance was a little better than that.

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BEARS AND CARDS IN VALIANT GRID BATTLE

Paddy Driscoll Checkmates Efforts of 'Red' by Phenomenal Generalship; Both Teams Fumble Opportunities

By Harry MacNamara

Harold "Red" Grange, the Galloping Ghost of Illinois, did his stuff for the Bears at Cubs' Park yesterday. "Red," the unstoppable, played a great game offensively, but all his individual brilliance was not great enough to put over a score for his team and the Bears and the Cardinals battled to a 0 to 0 tie.

It was a brilliant, fiercely contested battle and the 39,000 fans, who were fortunate enough to get into the park, saw a great football game.

They saw the phenomenal brain of "Paddy" Driscoll, the veteran Cardinal star, stave off defeat for his team time and again against seemingly impossible odds.

Driscoll has not been playing football thirteen years for nothing. His uncanny faculty of doing the right thing at the right time undoubtedly saved an inferior team at least as far as yards gained was concerned from defeat at the hands of what is perhaps the mightiest football team that ever was assembled, the Bears.

Paddy's Brain Busy

Paddy was unable to gain with any degree of success through that ponderous forward wall of the enemy, but that didn't prevent him from outsmarting and outmaneuvering the Bears throughout the entire game. He never made a mistake.

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BEARS 0		CARDINALS 0
Hanny	LE	McInerney
Healey	LT	Evans
Fleckenstein	LG	Luntz
Trafton	C	Claypool
McMillen	RG	Brennan
Murry	RT	Gillies
Halas	RE	Anderson
J. Sternaman	QB	Mahoney
Grange	LH	Driscoll
Walquist	RH	Erickson
E. Sternaman	FB	Koehler

Score by periods

Bears	0	0	0	0	-	0
Cardinals	0	0	0	0	-	0

Substitutes – Bears: Knop for E. Sternaman; Mohardt for Grange; H. Anderson for Fleckenstein; E. Sternaman for Knop; Romney for Walquist; Mullen for Halas; Grange for Mohardt; Halas for Mullen; Knop for E. Sternaman; Walquist for Romney. Cardinals: None.

Officials: Referee – Cahn (Chicago); Umpire – Bohru (Chicago); Head Linesman – Vierling (Great Lakes).

Driscoll's repeated refusal to risk punting to the Phantom Flier unquestionably saved his team from defeat. Three times during the contest, when it was absolutely unavoidable, Paddy kicked to Grange. Three times he saw "Red" run wild through his entire team for brilliant and spectacular runs of 25 yards each.

Once he saw "Red" sweep through his entire team, with only himself remaining between "Red" and a touchdown. And Paddy succeeded in running "Red" out of bounds, but he had to reverse the field with him to turn the trick. That uncanny football brain gave Paddy the impulse that "Red" was going to reverse his field, and it saved the game for the Cardinals.

Watch "Red" Peril

Paddy deliberately refused to punt to Grange and was booed throughout the game by that football mad mob that came to see "Red" run. He stuck to his guns, however, and not until late in the fourth period did Grange have another opportunity to handle a punt after he tore through for the first 25-yard return in the second period. The Bears sent four men back on the kick in the fourth period so that Grange could take the kick. That was the only reason Paddy ever permitted him to handle another.

The crowd came to see "Red" run and he obliged them to the very best of his ability. He found it extremely difficult to get around Eddie Anderson, former Notre Dame star, and McInerney, a veteran pro player, who held down the ends for the Cardinals.

They refused to be boxed by the interference, and when they were, Gillies, former All-American of Cornell, and Evans of Harvard, the enemy tackles, were in on him. When he did manage to get past the line he bumped into Bob Koehler, former Northwestern star and as great a defensive fullback as ever stepped on a gridiron. Ike Mahoney of Creighton and "Swede" Erickson of Washington and Jefferson were also constant menaces to "Red's" progress through the Card secondary defense.

Not once during the game did Grange get away for a gain of startling length through this highly experienced post-graduate team. His longest gain from scrimmage netted but six yards. He found that there is a vast difference between a college defense and that of the pros.

He found no weak sisters in the Cardinal forward wall despite the fact that his interference was all that could be expected. Grange was stopped from scrimmage.

The Galloping Ghost

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It was a different story when Grange got out into the open. He only got out in the open three times when he handled those already mentioned punts but when he did he made the most of his opportunities. It was then that he was the Galloping Ghost of Illinois. It was then that he thrilled that mob. It was then and only then.

It took all of that truly remarkable Cardinal defensive strength to stop him then, as he smashed, drove, slipped, staggered and crawled his way down the field shaking off six or seven tacklers as he went. It was then that the mob saw what they came to see. They wanted more of this sort of business but the cunning, foxy Driscoll took great pains to see that it did not occur again. That is why the crowd booed him throughout the battle.

Fumbles Costly

Fumbles cost the Bears two golden opportunities which "Red" had given them by two of his brilliant returns. Small wonder why Driscoll, the fox, elected not to kick to him.

Late in the first period, Grange, the Phantom Flyer, received a punt on his own 20-yard line and from that point started his first electrifying return of 25 yards to the Bear 45-yard line. It was here that Driscoll was all that stood between him and a touchdown, but Driscoll was there.

Larry Walquist ripped through tackle for nine yards and a first down on the Cardinal 39-yard line after "Red" had punched through the line for three. Joe Sternaman added nine more around end as the quarter ended and on the first play of the second period Walquist drove through the line for a first down on the Cardinal 29-yard line.

Grange continued the march by slipping off tackle for 5 more precious yards and Joe Sternaman again swept around end for a 9-yard gain and a first down on the 12-yard line.

"Little Joe" fumbled on the next play, but recovered. Then he fumbled again. Luntz, Cardinal guard, pounced on the ball and the first opportunity was nullified.

Grange gave his team its second scoring opportunity late in the fourth quarter with another brilliant 25-yard return of a punt from the 50-yard line.

The Bears opened their drive from the Cardinal 25-yard line. Joe Sternaman started by driving through tackle for three yards. Then on the next play Walquist fumbled and Brennan, Cardinal guard, recovered and the second opportunity went glimmering.

"Red" did not fumble once in this game. Why he was not given the ball when a score was in sight will probably never be known.

The Cardinals had two opportunities to score via drop kicks. Driscoll attempted both in the third period, one from the 43-yard line and the other from the 50-yard stripe.

The first opportunity came when Hanny punted out of bounds on the Bear 48-yard line. A pass, Mahoney to Eddie Anderson, netted 11 yards and the Cardinals' initial first down of the game on the Bear 38-yard line. Mahoney hit through guard for 4 yards but on the next play the Bears (ed. note: Cards?) were offside and drew a 5-yard penalty. The Bears braced and held for three downs.

Then Driscoll stepped back to the 43-yard line and attempted the drop kick. He had plenty of carry behind the ball but lacked direction and the oval hit an upright and bounced back on the field.

A little later an exchange of punts gave the Cards the ball on the Bears' 40-yard line. They were stopped cold on an attempt to gain through the line and after two passes were incomplete, Paddy went back to the 50-yard line for another drop attempt.

Don Murry blocked the kick, however, and George Trafton recovered for the Bears and returned to the 50-yard line before he was stopped.

Grange's debut from an offensive standpoint was as good as could be expected. However, as an interferer for the other backs, he did not shine. Not once did he attempt to bowl over would-be tacklers

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when Joe Sternaman returned punts. He was also ineffective as a blocker when the other backs carried the ball from scrimmage.

He can learn something from the pros in this department of the play. He did intercept a pass just in front of his goal in the third period which robbed the Cards of their one and only chance to score a touchdown.

Another Fumble

It was a 28-yard shot from Driscoll. Another fumble by Joe Sternaman had given the ball to the Cards on the 32-yard line previously.

He returned 8 yards after intercepting the pass, and the Bears punted immediately out of danger.

The Bears achieved four first downs during the game, all from scrimmage. The Cardinals made only two first downs, and one was the result of a pass.

The Bears attempted seven passes. One was completed for a loss of one yard and three were intercepted. The Cardinals attempted five passes, all in the third period. Two were completed and one was intercepted.

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The Chicago Tribune downgraded Red's yardage on his three punt returns to 56 (20, 16, and 20), and credited him with 36 yards on 13 rushing attempts. The headline read: "Grange Gains 92 Yards for His Pro Debut."

The importance of the game, of course, was not what Grange did or did not do. It remains a landmark in pro history simply because he was there.