

## **ADAM WYANT**

**By Robert B. Van Atta**

Who was the first professional football player to become a United States Congressman?

Adam Martin Wyant! And who was Adam Martin Wyant?

Adam Wyant played collegiate football for Bucknell and the University of Chicago from 1890 through 1893, and as a paid professional for Greensburg (Pa.) Athletic Association from 1895 through 1897.

He then served as an educator at Greensburg, studied law, was an attorney and coal operator, and was elected to Congress in 1920. Wyant served six terms, a total of 12 years, in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Adam M. Wyant was born September 15, 1869, on the family farm in the rural village of Montgomeryville in Armstrong County, Pa. His formal education included completion of studies at Reid Institute at Reidsburg, Clarion County, Pa., after which he was graduated in 1890 from Mt. Pleasant (Pa.) Classical and Scientific Institute. He then attended Bucknell for three years, playing on pioneer football teams there with his brother Andrew.

When Andrew moved on to the University of Chicago to attend Divinity School, Adam followed him and played guard for the young, new coach there, Amos Alonzo Stagg.

In 1894-95, Adam returned to western Pennsylvania to teach at Mt. Pleasant Institute. Then, with a widely known reputation for his football skill, the six foot, 196-pound Wyant, a big man in his day, was one of four college stars signed to play for pay with the Greensburg team in the fall of 1895.

His fellow pros on that team, incidentally, included school teacher Lawson Fiscus from Indiana (Pa.) Normal and Princeton, and Charles Atherton and Fred Robison, recent Penn State grads who starred on the gridiron there. Atherton, the son of the Penn State president, lettered for five years.

On that highly successful Greensburg team which attracted widespread publicity with its games with the Pittsburgh clubs and Latrobe, Wyant played quarterback, a position not too much different from guard in the style of play at that time. In 1896, while still playing football, he became the first principal of Greensburg High School and soon thereafter the city's first superintendent of schools.

During the summers while in the Greensburg school administration, he studied law at the University of Pittsburgh and dropped out of football as an active player. Wyant was admitted to the bar and began the practice of law in 1902.

He became quite involved in developing coal mining enterprises in an area where that industry flourished during the early years of the 20th century, and became an officer and/or director of a number of industrial and financial corporations.

In 1910, Wyant married Katherine N. Doty, daughter of a veteran Westmoreland County judge.

He was elected to Congress in 1920 from the state's 22nd District with the largest majority given a Republican candidate in the district's history. Wyant went on to serve six terms in Congress, until 1933, while continuing his law practice and business operations.

His long career as an educator, football player, lawyer, Congressman, and business entrepreneur came to an end when he succumbed to cancer, January 5, 1935, at his home in Greensburg.

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During the 1895 season, Wyant was outstanding defensively in a scoreless tie with the powerful Pittsburgh Athletic Club at P.A.C. Park, as Greensburg compiled an 8-2-1 record against the toughest schedule available.

Wyant played through the 1897 season, Greensburg's greatest with a 10-1 record, primarily at quarterback but also at times as a guard.

Adam's brother Andrew became the second football captain at the University of Chicago, succeeding Amos Alonzo Stagg. Andrew graduated from Divinity School there and served as a Baptist minister, then attended medical college and became a physician. He lived until 1963, dying in California after a 96-year lifetime of achievement as a scholar, athlete, minister, physician, lecturer, and writer.

The two brothers combined education, athletics, the professions, business, and public service to an extraordinary degree. But one distinction that Adam achieved was the noteworthy one in football annals - he was the first pro football player to be elected to Congress.