

# DEAR CAL

*[Ed.: On October 4, 1962, Ole Haugsrud wrote to A.W. "Cal" Calhoun of the Green Bay Press-Gazette, one of the most important men in keeping pro football in Green Bay. In his letter, Haugsrud reminisced about his days with the Duluth team in the 1920's. The following is excerpted from that letter.]*

Dear Cal:

I always recall when Green Bay, Chicago and Philadelphia [ED. Frankford] were called the Big 3 they seemed to be able to corral the best of the material and those were the days when getting a schedule was catch as catch can. A team could play you if they wanted to and did not have to schedule any certain teams as long as they played seven games during the season. They were counted in the championship. The draft that was put into effect by the late Bert Bell was certainly a life saver in dividing up the material.

As you recall, the Duluth franchise was owned by 11 of the ball players in 1922, 23, 24 and 25 and I was their Secretary and Treasurer without funds. The first three years things went along fine and the crowds were good but the fourth year bad weather set in and the boys took on some obligations of teams that came from a distance that did not prove out very successful. One day they paid \$33.00 to play and another Sunday they paid out \$11.00 so that at the end of the 1925 season they were very dissatisfied and wondering what to do with their Franchise.

After seeing what George Halas, C. C. Pyle and Red Grange did on the cross country tour of about 20 games after the regular season of 1925, I made the suggestion that they should try and get a Nationally known star. Several of the boys suggested that they sell the franchise to Dewey Scanlon and myself for the price of \$1.00. We made the purchase and proceeded on other transactions on an optional basis.

I had known Ernie Nevers who played in High School with me in Superior, Wisconsin, where I was born 59 years ago. Ernie Nevers at that time was with the St. Louis Browns baseball team and he had a very attractive offer from C.C. Pyle and Co. in the other League [Red Grange's American Football League] so his figures were very high but we took an option on his service for 1926 and from there on we went to the League meeting where only one person knew that we had Ernie Nevers on option.

C.C. Pyle and Grange had Wildcat Wilson under contract in the other League. We did not have a Nationally known Star so Mr. Mara's advice was to go along as though we did not have Nevers and we got about half way through making the schedule and Duluth had two games. About this time Mr. Mara suggested that I bring the contract of Nevers up to Mr. Joe Carr who was then president of the league and Mr. Carr informed the 22 members who were at the League meeting that we had Ernie Nevers under contract.

Everybody was very happy and Mr. Mara suggested that the schedule we had been working on be torn up and a new schedule made. We started a new schedule and Duluth had 19 League games and 10 exhibition games.

Cal, I think the unique thing about this team was that the boys who sold the franchise to me for a \$1.00 made their own contract for 1926.

Before I went to the League meeting I had a meeting with the former owner-players, Underwood, Method, Carlson, Cobb Rooney, Joe Rooney, Bill Stein, Gilbert, Williams and Doc Kelly and I asked them what they thought would be a fair salary for the coming Season. They suggested \$50.00 a game lose, \$60 tie and \$75 win which I thought was very fair and I took the same on an optional basis until we finalized the schedule at the meeting.

We also operated in 1927 as Ernie Nevers Duluth Eskimos and in 1928 Ernie wanted to help Pop Warner at Stanford. The League gave us the option of drawing a bye that year. In 1929 we sold the franchise to

## **THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 10, No. 1 (1988)**

---

Orange N. J., to Piggy Simandl whom I still think to this day was representing George Marshall as the franchise remained several weeks in Orange and was moved to Boston and from Boston to Washington. [*Ed.: Orange played all of 1929 in the NFL; Marshall did not operate in Boston until 1932.*] I always remember the discussion we had over the price in the transfer of our franchise to Orange. They did not want to give us what we asked for, however, we took their offer and retained our players contracts.

I also had a promise from the National League that whenever a franchise was to be granted in Minnesota again, I would have the first option to buy the same so today we are the Minnesota Vikings in the National League. The price however was not \$1.00 it was six hundred thousand.

In 1929 the Cardinals were going down very fast so we took our Eskimo ball players and Ernie Nevers to Chicago. Those days the rivalry between the Chicago Bears and the Cardinals were great but we defeated the Chicago Bears by a score of 40 to 6. Ernie Nevers made all the points. Dr. Jones and Dr. Bunderson were the owners of the team.

Ole