

## **Mini Bio: Mel Blount**

Blount was the prototype cornerback of his era and a major reason why the Steelers were the dominant team of the National Football League in the 1970s. The 6-3, 205-pound star had size, speed, quickness, toughness and the mental ability to adjust his coverage tactics to rule changes that favored receivers.

Born April 10, 1948, in Vidalia, GA, Blount played his college ball at Southern University in Baton Rouge, LA, where he was team MVP in both his junior and senior seasons. In 1970, Pittsburgh made him a third-round draft choice. Although he excelled on the kickoff return team as a rookie with a 29.7-yard average, it took him a while to become a top corner. By 1972, he was ready: he didn't allow a single TD pass all season. In 1975 he was named the NFL's most valuable defender by the Associated Press.

Even after rule changes took away his favorite "bump-and-run" strategy, Blount continued to be named to All-NFL teams and the Pro Bowl. He finished his 14-season career with a Pittsburgh record 57 interceptions.

## **Mini Bio: Terry Bradshaw**

Probably no pro football superstar ever experienced the lows and ultimate highs during his career that Bradshaw endured. Selected by Pittsburgh as the first player chosen in the 1970 draft after a stellar career at Louisiana State, he was proclaimed the "franchise quarterback" who would lead the team to its first championship. Although he never lacked the physical tools, Bradshaw struggled through four mediocre seasons before finally coming into his own in 1974.

The 6-3, 210-pound quarterback was born September 2, 1948, in Shreveport, LA. Once he matured as a signal caller, there was no stopping him. He led the Steelers to victories in Super Bowls IX, X, XIII, and XIV. In the latter two he was named MVP. Always at his best in big games, Bradshaw passed for 3,833 yards and 30 touchdowns in post-season play.

For his 14 NFL seasons, Bradshaw threw 3,901 passes, completed 2,025, for 27,989 yards, and 212 touchdowns. His final pass in 1983 was for a TD.

## **Mini Bio: Art Shell**

During his 15-season career from 1968 to 1982 with the Oakland/Los Angeles Raiders, left offensive tackle Shell was recognized as the NFL's premier performer at his position. Although he played on a team famed for its awesomely-effective forward walls, the 6-5, 285-pound giant was considered by many close Raiders observers to be the most outstanding among the many talented linemen who played for the Silver-and-Black. He combined a delicate balance of speed and agility, pride and dignity, along with brains and strength to excel.

Shell was born in Charleston, SC, on November 26, 1946. He attended Maryland State and was drafted in the third round by the Raiders in 1968. All-NFL in 1973, 1974 and 1978 and All-AFC from 1973 through 1978, he played in 8 Pro Bowls. In Super Bowl XI, as the Raiders triumphed over the Minnesota Vikings, Shell had a "perfect game," as his primary blocking target on each play failed to get a single tackle or assist.

After retiring as a player, Shell joined the Raiders as an assistant coach. In 1989, he was promoted to the head job – the first black to hold the head coaching reins in the NFL in modern history.

## **Mini Bio: Willie Wood**

Wood was overlooked in both the NFL and AFL drafts of 1960. As Southern California's quarterback, he was not considered to have pro potential as a signal-caller. In truth, his future lay in defending against passes. The 5-10, 190-pound speedster joined Green Bay as a free agent in pursuit of a defensive back position, winning a roster spot over 24 other candidates.

By 1961, he was ensconced as the Packers' free safety, a position he held through five Green Bay NFL championships and two Super Bowl victories. Willie was named All-NFL seven times between 1964 and 1971 and played in 8 Pro Bowls between '62 and '70. Known as a "big play player." He led the league in punt returns with a 16.1 average in 1961. In 1962, his 9 pass interceptions led the NFL. By the time he retired after the 1971 season, he had 48 interceptions.

Wood was born December 23, 1936, in Washington, DC.

## **Mini Bio: Fred Biletnikoff**

Biletnikoff had a decided handicap as a receiver – lack of breakaway speed. Nevertheless, his great hands and dedicated work ethic made him into one of the great pass catchers in pro football history. When he retired after the 1978 season, he ranked fourth all-time in NFL career receptions.

The 6-1, 190-pound Biletnikoff was born in Erie, PA, on February 23, 1943. He attended Florida State University where he won All-America honors. The Raiders made him their second draft pick in 1965, but his lack of speed kept him mostly on the bench during his first two seasons in Oakland. Even a 7-catch game during his rookie season couldn't convince the Raiders he had a future, but once he became a regular in 1967, he reeled off 9 straight seasons of 40-or-more catches. He was named MVP of Super Bowl XI when three of his four catches led directly to touchdowns.

In 14 seasons, Fred caught 589 passes for 8,974 yards and 76 touchdowns.

## **Mini Bio: Mike Ditka**

Iron Mike Ditka is better known today as the Chicago Bears' gruff head coach, but from 1961 through 1972 he established new standards for tight end play. A bulldozing blocker, his exceptional pass-catching ability set him apart from other NFL tight ends.

The 6-3, 225-pound Ditka was born in Carnegie, PA, on October 18, 1939. He was a consensus All-America at the University of Pittsburgh where he played end on offense and linebacker on defense. The Bears made him their number one draft choice in 1961, and he responded by winning Rookie of the Year honors with 56 receptions, 1,076 yards, and 12 touchdowns. All-NFL in each of his first four years, Ditka hit a personal high with 75 catches in 1964. He spent 1967-68 with Philadelphia, then finished his career with Dallas from 1969-72.

For his 12 NFL seasons, Ditka caught 427 passes for 5,812 yards and 43 touchdowns.

## **Mini Bio: Jack Ham**

Ham was the near-perfect outside linebacker for the Pittsburgh Steelers' four Super Bowl winners of the 1970s. In 1971, Jack was a second round draft choice out of Penn State. State has had so many fine linebackers that it's sometimes called "Linebacker U.," but Ham is valedictorian.

The 6-1, 225-pound star was born in Johnstown, PA, on December 23, 1948. As a rookie with Pittsburgh, he won a starting slot in his final pre-season game with three interceptions against the New York Giants. Throughout his career, the quiet, unassuming Ham showed a penchant for making big plays. When he retired after the 1982 season, Jack had 32 pass interceptions and 19 opponents' fumbles recovered.

A sure-tackler and excellent pass defender, he had such a knack for blocking kicks that for much of his career, he played on the Steelers' special teams.

## **Mini Bio: Alan Page**

Although smaller than virtually any defensive lineman of his era, Page used exceptional speed in pursuit and superior intelligence in diagnosing enemy plays to become one of pro football's greatest defenders.

An All-America defensive end for Notre Dame's 1966 national champions, Page was drafted number one by the Vikings in 1967. He earned a starting tackle position in his fourth NFL game and remained so throughout his 15-season career. His statistics include 24 opponents' fumbles recovered, 28 blocked kicks, 164 sacks, and 1,431 tackles. He was the NFC's Defensive Player of the Year four times, and in 1972 he was the first defensive player ever to be named the NFL's Most Valuable Player. He was chosen to nine straight Pro Bowls from 1968 through 1976.

In the midst of 1978, his 12th Viking season, he was let go to the Bears where he continued to excel through 1981. When Page was named to the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1989, he became the first native of Canton, OH, to be enshrined. The 6-4, 225-pound defensive tackle was born in the Hall of Fame city on August 7, 1945.