

QUIZ: MILESTONES

By Bob Gill

1. Let's start with an easy one. He was the NFL's first 1,000-yard rusher, averaging an unbelievable 9.9 yards per carry in 1934 with the Bears. It was his rookie year, and he played through 1940; but a string of injuries limited this Tennessee All-American to only 975 more yards after his amazing debut.

2. In 1963 this end from Rice broke Don Hutson's career records for receptions and yardage, but it didn't get him into the Hall of Fame. He broke the records while wearing a Cowboy uniform, but most of his career was spent with Hutson's old team. One thing that hurt our man is that Raymond Berry broke his records soon afterward.

3. You may remember that Steve Young was the first man to gain 300 yards passing and 100 yards rushing in a single game; he did it in 1984 with the L.A. Express of the USFL. But more than three decades earlier, a Hall of Fame quarterback missed achieving that feat by a mere three yards when he passed for 298 yards (and four TDs) and ran for 99. What makes his effort really stand out is that it came in a championship game - one of the best ever played, in fact. Who are we talking about?

4. The first soccer-style kicker in pro football, he broke in with Buffalo in 1964. He bowed out ten years later, having scored 863 points and blazed a trail for many others to follow. In addition, his signing by the Giants in 1966 escalated the war between the leagues and forced both sides to get serious about a merger.

5. The first man to average 100 yards rushing per game did it in 1947 -- and it wasn't Steve Van Buren. Our man also passed for more than 100 yards a game, and nobody else has ever done both in one season. He threw for 14 touchdowns and scored a record 19 himself. And there's more: He punted 46 times for a 42-yard average, ran back kickoffs for 593 yards, and averaged 27 yards on six punt returns. It all adds up to one of the best all-around seasons anyone ever had; but despite his heroic efforts, his team fell just short of the AAFC championship, losing out to the Browns. Who was he?

6. His 51.4-yard punting average in 1940 is still the best ever, as is his career mark of 45.1. He also set a pair of interception records in 1943, with eleven for the season and four in one game. He had less luck with these - the former mark has since been surpassed, and the latter has been tied many times, though never beaten.

7. This former Tulsa All-American has a higher career punting average than the last man, but he's not in the NFL record books because he played his whole four-year career in the AAFC. He averaged 46.4 yards on 231 kicks, including a 49.1 mark with the Los Angeles Dons in 1948, a year in which he also led the league in completions and gained 2,403 yards through the air. In 1946, playing for Brooklyn, he was the league's MVP. A knee injury forced him out of the game in 1950, but he returned to play three seasons in Canada, winning another MVP award up north in 1951.

8. Jim Brown, of course, was the first to average 100 yards rushing a game in the NFL. He did it seven times, the first coming eleven years after our last man turned the trick. The next two to cross that barrier did it in 1962 and 1966, respectively. Both were bruising fullbacks; one played for an NFL dynasty that was winning its second straight title, the other for a Boston Patriots team that finished second in the AFL's Eastern Division. The former finished his career with the Saints; the latter was last seen with Shreveport in the WFL.

9. He retired after the 1979 season with 82 career interceptions, a record that still stands. Even without that mark, you'd think seven years as a first-team all-pro and eight appearances in the Pro Bowl would guarantee him a spot in the Hall of Fame; but it's been more than a dozen years now and he's still waiting. He played in four Super Bowls, but never on a winning team, and led in interceptions twice, once with the Redskins and once with the Vikings.

10. When he retired after the 1939 season, he was listed as the NFL's career rushing leader. Later research revealed that he wasn't, and anyway all rushing records from those days have been shattered.

THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 15, No. 3 (1993)

Still, for eight years he was one of the game's best power runners. Playing at the same time as Nagurski and Hinkle, he rarely made any all-pro teams, but he did play on a championship team with Detroit in 1935. In his best individual season, 1936, he gained 827 yards, but missed the last couple of games and saw Tuffy Leemans pass him to win the rushing title by three yards.

ANSWERS: 1. Beattie Feathers. 2. Billy Howton. 3. Otto Graham, in 1950 against the Rams. 4. Pete Gogolak. 5. Spec Sanders. 6. Sammy Baugh. 7. Glenn Dobbs. 8. Jim Taylor and Jim Nance. 9. Paul Krause. 10. Ace Gutowsky.