

## Mini-Bio: Russ Letlow

LETLOW, Willard R. "Russ" (b. 5 October 1913, Diulba, CA; deceased), college and professional football star, was an outstanding lineman during the 1930s. A four-year letterman at left tackle for the University of San Francisco from 1932-35, he was chosen to the All-Pacific Coast Team in 1935 and selected to play in the East-West Shrine Game at season's end. In 1936, the first year of the National Football League player draft, the six foot, 214-pound Letlow became the first player ever drafted by the Green Bay Packers. The Packers of this period, coached by Earl "Curly" Lambeau, were led by the great pass receiver Don Hutson, fullback Clarke Hinkle, and passer Arnie Herber. But they also fielded a number of unusually strong linemen, including tackles Ernie Smith, Bill Lee, and Buford "Baby" Ray, guards Lon Evans, Charles "Buckets" Goldenberg, and Pete Tinsley, and centers George Svendsen and Charley Brock.

Switched to guard, Letlow became an immediate mainstay of the Packers' 1936 NFL championship team, a club that went 10-1-1 and defeated the Boston Redskins in the Championship Game, 21-6. In 1938, Letlow was named to the Official All-NFL Team selected by the league coaches as well as to several other "all" teams. The 1938 Packers won the league's Western Division with an 8-3 record but lost the Championship Game to the New York Giants, 23-17. They rebounded in 1939 to post a 9-2 mark and win the title game from the Giants, 27-0. Following the 1939 and 1940 seasons, Letlow was picked to play in Pro Bowl games in Los Angeles. Green Bay lost only one game during the 1941 season, but that produced only a tie with the Chicago Bears for the Western Division crown. Chicago won a post-season playoff, 33-14, and went on to take the NFL title.

Letlow entered the U.S. Navy in 1943. He was chosen to the All-Service Team in 1943-44. After the war, he returned to Green Bay for one final season with the Packers. In 1972, Letlow was elected to the Green Bay Packer Hall of Fame.

## Mini-Bio: Jim Poole

POOLE, James Eugene "Jim" "Buster" (b. 9 September 1915, Gloster, MS) was the oldest of three brothers, all of whom starred at end for the University of Mississippi and went on to become outstanding professional players. Ray Poole captained Ole Miss in 1946 and played six years with the New York Giants; Barney Poole, who also played six seasons in the NFL, was an All-America at Army during World War II and at Mississippi in 1947-48. A cousin, Oliver Poole, also played end for Mississippi and as a pro for three seasons.

When his father, a Mississippi farmer and saw mill operator, died, Jim Poole became "the man of the family" at age nine. The Poole brothers grew up playing baseball and basketball, but there were no facilities for football in their small town. A high school coach from Natchez spotted Jim and convinced him to come there for high school so he could play football. He won an athletic scholarship to the University of Mississippi where he became a three-year regular in football, basketball, and baseball. As a junior, he scored one of Mississippi's touchdowns in a 20-19 Orange Bowl loss to Catholic U. The next year, he received the Norris Trophy, presented to the outstanding Ole Miss scholar-athlete.

The 6'3", 218 pound end was drafted by the New York Giants on the seventh round of the second annual NFL player draft in 1937. He became a starter in his first year. Though an adequate pass receiver, Poole was most valuable to the ground-oriented Giants for his blocking and defense. In 1939, when he was named to the Official All-NFL Team, he caught only seven passes. His fondest football memory was blocking a punt that helped New York win the 1938 Championship Game against Green Bay. In addition to that victory, Poole played in three title games lost by the Giants: 1939, 1941 and 1946. After the 1941 season, Poole entered the Navy and served through 1944. He spent the first part of 1945 with the Chicago Cardinals and then returned to the Giants. In 1946, his final pro season, he caught a personal high of 23 passes. He was chosen All-NFL by the Associated Press.

When John Vaught became head football coach at Ole Miss in 1947, the first assistant he hired was Poole. Jim held that position until his retirement.

## Mini-Bio: Luke Johnsos

JOHNSOS, Luke A. (b. 6 December 1905, Chicago, IL; d. 10 December 1984, Evanston, IL), college and professional player and professional coach, spent nearly 40 years with the Chicago Bears as one of George Halas' most trusted assistants. During his years with the team, Chicago won six National Football League titles.

Johnsos was a quarterback at Schurz High School in Chicago but became an end at Northwestern University. Although he won nine varsity letters in football, baseball, and basketball at Northwestern, he only received a contract to play for the Bears for \$100 a game in 1929 as a condition to their signing Wildcat teammate Walter Holmer. Holmer received a \$5,000 bonus but never became a star; Johnsos went on to win All-NFL honors in 1930, 1931, and 1932. He also signed a contract to play professional baseball with the Cincinnati Reds but poor eyesight ended his diamond hopes. His vision, however, did not keep him from being one of the NFL's top pass receivers. According to unofficial statistics, he caught nearly 100 passes in eight active seasons (1929-36), one of the highest totals for the time. At six-two and 195 pounds, he could also hold his own on defense. He played for the Bears' NFL championship teams of 1932 and 1933, as well as the Western Division winners of 1934. In 1935, he was voted the Bears Most Valuable Player.

Johnsos retired as an active player after the 1936 season and joined the Bears' coaching staff. When George Halas entered the navy in 1942, Johnsos, Heartley "Hunk" Anderson, and John "Paddy" Driscoll became co-head coaches for the duration of World War II. They took Chicago to a division title in 1942 and a league championship in 1943. When Halas returned in 1946, Johnsos went back to his position as assistant.

He specialized in "press-box" coaching, sitting high above the field where he could spot chinks in opponents' defenses. In the 1963 Championship Game, it was his call of the "Ditka special" that helped bring the Bears victory. The New York Giants led 10-7 in the third quarter, but the Bears had third-and-nine at the New York 15. Johnsos called for Bear end Mike Ditka to run a short pattern over center. His reception put the ball on the Giants' one-yard-line where quarterback Bill Wade sneaked over for what proved to be the winning touchdown.

During the off-season, Johnsos was a printing executive in Skokie, IL.

## Mini-Bio: Ray Bray

BRAY, Raymond Robert "Ray" (b. 1 February 1912, Caspian, MI; d. 26 December 1993, Mesa, AZ), college and professional player, attended Vulcan High School and then enrolled at Western Michigan University where he was a three-year letterman in football and track. He was named Little All-America in football as a senior and was later named to Western Michigan University Hall of Fame. He earned a degree in physical education at WMU and later a masters degree in education at the University of Michigan. He and his wife Juanita had four children.

Bray, a six foot, 235 pound guard, was drafted on the seventh round by the 1939 Chicago Bears of the National Football League. He became a regular with the NFL championship team of 1940, but missed the historic 73-0 Bear victory over Washington in the Championship Game because of a knee injury. He played on a second championship team in 1941 and on the 1942 Western Division champion Bear team that was upset by Washington in the title game. During World War II, he spent three years in the service where he was a physical fitness instructor for Navy pre-flight and starred for the Jacksonville, Florida, Navy service team. He returned to the Bears in 1946 and played on his third NFL championship team. Although he played both offense and defense most of his career, Bray became a defensive specialist in his last seasons. In 1952, he was traded to the Green Bay Packers where he played his eleventh and final pro season.

One of the NFL's strongest players during his day, Bray was a champion arm wrestler and could do 50 one-arm pushups. He was one of the first pro players to seriously enter into weight lifting. Overshadowed

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in his early years by established Bears all-pro linemen Danny Fortmann and Joe Stydahar, he was finally recognized as one of the league's top guards after World War II. All-NFL in 1946, 1948, 1949 and 1950, he was chosen to the Pro Bowl following the 1950 and 1951 seasons. Only Fortmann and Stan Jones, both members of the Pro Football Hall of Fame, have been more honored among Bear guards. After his retirement from pro football, he worked in the sales division of Cadillac motors in Chicago until his retirement to Phoenix, Arizona, in 1973.