

## **WHEN REAL FOOTBALL PLAYERS KICKED FIELD GOALS**

by Stan Grosshandler

During the 1930s and '40s, the few field goal attempts tried were usually by members of the backfield. On rare occasions a guard or tackle would drop back from the trenches in their filthy uniforms with dirty faces, bloody noses, and bruised shins to try for the three point play.

This was when REAL football players kicked the field goals.

The first lineman to achieve some notoriety as a place kicker was Armond Niccolai, a two way tackle on the 1934 Pittsburgh Pirates. Out of the local school, Duquesne, Armand played for Pittsburgh through the 1942 season. He is credited with a career total of 34 FG's. It was not until 1938 that attempts were recorded; and his record shows he was successful on only 31% of his tries; nevertheless he was the fourth most productive kicker during the 1932-45 period behind Ward Cuff (43), Jack Manders (40), and Ken Strong (35).

Contemporary guards and tackles who were place kickers were Augie Lio, Chet Adams, Tiny Engebretsen, Ernie Smith and Regis Monohan.

Guard Augie Lio came to the Lions as a highly touted former Georgetown player in 1941. During his freshman season Augie kicked extra points, did some punting, and attempted, without success, five field goals. Augie played three years with the Lions, two with Boston, and one each with the Eagles and Colts of the AAFC. He had his best field goal season as an Eagle in 1946, connecting on six of eleven tries with a career record of 52-17 for 33%. Following his football career he became a noted east coast sports writer.

Tackle Chet Adams joined the 1939 Cleveland Rams, played with the Packers in '43 and after two years of military service played two seasons with the Cleveland Browns of the AAFC plus two more with Buffalo and the New York Yankees. Adams was a place kicker only seven of his ten NFL seasons and posted a career record NFL of 40-13 for 33%.

Between 1933 and '45 Tiny Engebretsen who played both guard and tackle for the Bears, Pirates, Cards, Dodgers and Packers logged a total of fifteen field goals. On the 1936 Packers three linemen, Ernie Smith, Ade Schwammel, and Tiny all kicked field goals as the Packers led the league with a total of ten.

Regis Monohan, a guard who received tremendous publicity while at Ohio State, played from 1935 through '39 with the Lions and Cards totaling ten FG's; however only two of his five seasons did he kick.

The first interior line man to gain considerable fame as a place kicker was Lou Groza who joined the Cleveland Browns in 1946. Playing through 1967 (he did not play in '61) Lou made many AAFC and NFL records, most of which have been broken; however, he still is the only man to lead the NFL five times in FG's. In his first four seasons Groza went both ways and it was not until 1950 he was listed as an OT. He continued to be carried on the Browns roster as an OT through 1961. Lou Groza's career record was 481-264 for 55% and there are no stats that can attest to his excellence as an OT. He is a member of the Hall of Fame.

Cliff Patton, an Eagle from 1946 through 1950, spent six years in the NFL trenches. In his rookie season he was a two way guard and did not kick; however his next three seasons he handled all the FG attempts. In 1950 he became an OT and during his final season as a Card he was listed as OT-LB. His career record is 69-32 for 48%.

Two very versatile linemen who also kicked FG's were Jim Martin and Jerry Perry. Martin, an All-American end at Notre Dame joined the Cleveland Browns in 1950. He was the only lineman listed on both offense and defense (OT-DE) and he did not place kick. Sent to the Lions the next season he played OT and DE and the following year was at OG-LB. He was not a kicker his first three seasons. In 1952 and '53 Martin was listed OG-LB and shared place kicking with Doak Walker. Through 1961 he played only LB and at various times shared the kicking duties with Bobby Layne, Jerry Perry, and Wayne

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Walker. Jim Martin sat out 1962; but joined Baltimore as strictly a kicker in 1963 followed by a year as the Redskins kicker. His career stats are 192-92 for 48%.

Jerry Perry whose career spanned from 1954 through 1962 was not only a versatile interior lineman; but a talented place kicker with a career record of 58-32 for 55%. During his first three seasons as a Lion he was a DT with no kicking responsibilities. For the '58 season he played DT and DE plus handled some of the placements. In '59 he played DT and again shared the kicking; however when traded to the Cards in 1960 he settled at DE and did most of the placement attempts. In 1961 the Cards shifted him to OT and then the next season OG. Both years he was their principle place kicker.

Guards Jerry Kramer and Bob Khayat were kicking guards of the 1960's. While Kramer has a reputation as a great kicking guard, it comes as somewhat of a surprise to find that of the 11 seasons ('58-'68) he spent with the Packers he only attempted FG's in three of them. In 1962 he shared the role with Paul Hornung who lost time to military duty. He was the sole kicker in '63 the year of Hornung's suspension, and then shared the role with three others in 1968. His career record is 54-29 for 54%.

Khayat connected on 38 of 74 attempts (51%) during a brief career with the Redskins, the first two seasons as an OG and the third and final as a kicker.

Four top defensive men Pat Summerall, Les Richter, Lou Michaels, and Wade Walker not only starred on the defense; but were fine place kickers.

Pat broke in with Detroit in 1952 as an OE and DE and did not kick. In 1953 he joined the Cards as a DE and place kicker. Joining the Giants in 1958 he had his best seasons kicking. In '58 he was listed as a DE and his FG and PAT's played a critical role in the championship game. The following two years he was listed as an OE and his final season of 1961 as a kicker. His best year was 1959 when he hit on 20 of 29 (69%) and hit three three pointers in the title tilt. His career record is 212-100 for 47%.

Les Richter who came to the Rams for a dozen players in a 1954 trade played LB and placekicked his first three years; however his remaining six he did not kick at all. His record is 55-29 for 53%. Lou Michaels was the fine DE for 13 years. He joined the Rams in 1958, concentrating on the defense; then the next two seasons, he shared kicking duties. His next stops were the Steelers for three seasons and the Colts for six where he handled all the FG kicking. After sitting out 1970 he returned for a season as a kicker only with the Packers. His record is 341-187 for 55%.

Wade Walker was a slick Lion LB from 1958 through 1972. His kicking years were 1958 through '65 when he did all the FG work and '66 through '68 when he shared the duties. His career stats are 131-53 for 40%.

Two linemen who were generally considered top FG kickers of their times pale considerably when their records are reviewed. Phil Martinovich a G on the 1939 Lions, '40 Bears, and 1946-47 Dodgers connected on but 13 of 38 for a 34% average.

Steve Myhra, hero of THE GAME in 1958, was listed as OG/LB in his five years as a Colt. During the entire 1958 season Steve made four of ten attempts and Bert Rechichar one of four. His career stats are 91-44 for 48%, hardly legendary.

The last position players to also kick were David Ray of the Rams listed as a WR in 1973 and George Blanda who was always listed as a QB through 1975.

While the attempts and percentages have soared over the past two decades, there is something missing for the purist when teams play for the FG and some soccer player in a spotless uniform, clean face, and shined shoes comes out for the attempt.