

MINI-BIO: ABE GIBRON

By Bob Carroll

Round Abe Gibron was an outstanding guard with Cleveland's championship teams of the 1950s. At 5'11" and 250 pounds, he was unusually large and fast for a guard at the time, and is often cited as one of the three or four best at his position during the decade. Though gruff on the field, he was a strong family man, taking pride in his wife and three children.

Abe was born September 22, 1925, in Michigan City, IN. After beginning at Valparaiso, he lettered two years at Purdue University. He was the first draft choice of the Buffalo Bills of the All-America Football Conference in a secret draft held on July 8, 1948 -- before his final season at Purdue. The AAFC hoped to get the jump on the rival National Football League in signing college seniors. In the 1949 NFL draft, he was selected on the sixth round by the New York Giants, but he signed with Buffalo and became an immediate starter with the Bills. But, when the AAFC merged with the NFL after the 1949 season, the players from defunct AAFC clubs like Buffalo were thrown into a general pool to be drafted by the remaining NFL teams. The Cleveland Browns had joined the NFL as part of the merger, and Cleveland Coach Paul Brown remembered Gibron "had the fastest and quickest charge I ever saw. He was very spirited and played at 250 pounds." He grabbed Gibron.

The roly-poly Gibron became one of the Browns' "messenger guards," linemen who alternated in taking each play called by the coach into the quarterback. Eventually, he was deemed too valuable to play part time and he stayed in the lineup while the "other" guards ran messages. He was selected for the Pro Bowl four times from 1952 through 1955 and was named All-NFL by the United Press in 1955. In the meantime, Cleveland played in six straight championship games, winning three. In the middle of the 1956 season, he was traded to Philadelphia, and in 1958, he joined the Chicago Bears, retiring after the 1959 season.

Gibron became an assistant coach with the Washington Redskins in 1960. In 1965, he returned to the Bears as an assistant. He served as head coach of the Bears from 1972-74, compiling an 11- 30-1 record. In 1975, he was head coach of the Chicago Wind of the World Football League, and from 1976-84, he assisted John McKay at Tampa Bay.