

MINI BIO: BILLY WADE

By Bob Carroll

BILLY WADE

William James Wade

QB 6-02 202

Vanderbilt

HS: Montgomery Bell Acad., Nashville, TN

b: 10/04/1930, Nashville, TN

College All-Star Game 1952

Drafted as Bonus Pick (1st Player) Los Angeles Rams 1953

All-NFL: 1962 TSN-West; 1963 TSN-West

Pro Bowl after 1958, 1963 seasons

As the Bonus Pick, the first player chosen, in the 1952 NFL Player Draft, Billy Wade had a lot to live up to. Anything short of a Hall of Fame career was certain to be considered a disappointment. But first, before he could even begin, he had to wait two years while he served in the military. Once he joined the Rams, he got mixed reviews at QB in the wide-open L.A. offense of the 1950s. He had some big yardage seasons, but he threw too many interceptions. What he accomplished mostly was a quarterback debate (Wade vs. Norm Van Brocklin) among fans. In 1958, Van Brocklin opted out and was traded to Philadelphia, leaving Wade in charge. Now his competition was the fans' memories of Van Brocklin ... and Bob Waterfield before him. Probably no quarterback could have won that debate.

After the 1960 season he was traded to the Bears in a complicated three-way deal. L.A. received defensive back Erich Barnes and quarterback Zeke Bratkowski; then L.A. traded Barnes and linebacker John Guzik to the New York Giants for defensive back Lindon Crow.

Wade put his rocky Rams experiences behind him and worked to become, in his words, "the best Bears quarterback ever." Those who remembered Sid Luckman knew Billy was in another impossible competition. Still, he made a good try at it. With the Bears, Wade wasn't locked into the deep passing game favored by L.A. Chicago excelled on defense. The main job for the offense was to avoid critical mistakes. Wade had the chance to show what he could do with a disciplined, short-passing game. In 1963, he led the Bears to the NFL championship and scored both touchdowns in the title game win over New York on quarterback sneaks. He even tied the NFL Championship Game record for fewest passes intercepted for a career, 20 or more attempts, with one interception in 31 attempts.

PASSING-----

| YEAR | TEAM | LG | GM | ATT | COM | PCT. | YDS | AvgG | TD | IP |
|----------|------|----|-----|------|------|-------|-------|------|-----|-----|
| 1954 | LA | N | 10 | 59 | 31 | 52.5 | 509 | 8.63 | 2 | 1 |
| 1955 | LA | N | 7 | 71 | 31 | 43.7 | 316 | 4.45 | 1 | 3 |
| 1956 | LA | N | 12 | 178 | 91 | 51.1 | 1461 | 8.21 | 10 | 13 |
| 1957 | LA | N | 5 | 24 | 10 | 41.7 | 116 | 4.83 | 1 | 1 |
| 1958 | LA | N | 12 | 341 | 181 | 53.1 | *2875 | 8.43 | 18 | *22 |
| 1959 | LA | N | 12 | 261 | 153 | *58.6 | 2001 | 7.67 | 12 | 17 |
| 1960 | LA | N | 11 | 182 | 106 | 58.2 | 1294 | 7.11 | 12 | 11 |
| 1961 | ChiB | N | 13 | 250 | 139 | 55.6 | 2258 | 9.03 | 22 | 13 |
| 1962 | ChiB | N | 14 | *412 | *225 | 54.6 | 3172 | 7.70 | 18 | 24 |
| 1963 | ChiB | N | 14 | 356 | 192 | 53.9 | 2301 | 6.46 | 15 | 12 |
| 1964 | ChiB | N | 11 | 327 | 182 | 55.7 | 1944 | 5.94 | 13 | 14 |
| 1965 | ChiB | N | 5 | 41 | 20 | 48.8 | 204 | 4.98 | 0 | 2 |
| 1966 | ChiB | N | 2 | 21 | 9 | 42.9 | 79 | 3.76 | 0 | 1 |
| | | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 13 years | | | 128 | 2523 | 1370 | 54.3 | 18530 | 7.34 | 124 | 134 |

* - Led league