

BRUISER

By Jim Campbell

Call a guy "Bruiser" and everyone flashes on a King Kong-thug who breaks legs for a living. Bruiser Kinard didn't fit the picture – too small, a Southern gentleman, and if he broke any legs it was in the legitimate pursuit of football victory.

F.M., as Frank Manning Kinard was known in his early childhood, was the son of Henry A. ("Major") Kinard, a farmer and Pearl Wooley Kinard, a housewife. He was one of seven children -- brothers Ernest, Henry, George and Billy; sisters Dean and Juanita. All brothers except Ernest also played football at the University of Mississippi; George (a teammate in 1941-42 and 1946) and Billy also played in the National Football League (NFL).

Kinard first played organized sports at Rolling Fork (Mississippi) High School and later at Jackson (Mississippi) Central as a tackle and acquired his nickname. As a freshman during one of the first practices, Kinard collided enthusiastically with an older teammate, Dave Ferguson. Picking himself up, Ferguson said, "You're a real bruiser." It evolved into a life-long nickname. When Kinard was asked how he wanted his Pro Football Hall of Fame ring to read, he said, "Better make it Bruise, if it said Frank, no one would know it was mine."

Before graduation from Central, where he was an all-around athlete (basketball and track & field, in addition to football) in 1934, he married his high school sweetheart Midge Frances Kirk of Jackson on December 10, 1933. They would eventually have two sons -- Frank, Jr. and John Major.

Kinard then matriculated at the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss). He was an outstanding player on the freshmen team. As a sophomore, Kinard made an immediate impact on the varsity. His coach, Ed Walker, said at the time, "He is the best lineman ever to play the game." Not especially big, even in his era, at 6-1, 205 pounds, Kinard was extremely durable (he once played 562 consecutive minutes and 708 minutes out of a possible 720) and fast (he was clocked in full uniform in the 100-yard dash in 10.4 seconds.) In his sophomore season (1935), Kinard and the Ole Miss Rebels posted a 9-2 record and lost the Orange Bowl to Catholic University 20-19. Ole Miss had mediocre teams the next two seasons, but Kinard was still outstanding. Despite a 5-5-2 record in 1936, Kinard earned consensus All America honors. The Rebels slipped to 4-5-1 in 1937 but his rugged, dominating style of play earned him repeat consensus All-America honors. While at Mississippi, Kinard was a regular guard on varsity basketball team and a quarter-miler in track. He took a bachelor of science degree from the university in 1938. He also left Mississippi with several "firsts." He was the first Rebel gridder to earn All-Southeast Conference recognition, the first Ole Miss All-America, and the first Rebel to play in the prestigious College All-Star game in Chicago. In 1938, Kinard and the collegians defeated the previous season's NFL champion Washington Redskins, 28-19.

Kinard was taken in the second round of the NFL's player-draft by the Brooklyn Dodgers, a pro football team named after their major league baseball counterparts. The Dodgers struggled in Kinard's first two seasons, but Kinard was chosen as a tackle on the All-Pro team in his first season, 1938. The only other rookie so honored was Pittsburgh Steelers halfback Byron ("Whizzer") White, a future U.S. Supreme Court justice.

Kinard's smothering style of defense and rugged defensive blocking would earn him repeat All-Pro accolades in each subsequent year of his nine-year career. He brought to the NFL the same durability he exhibited at Ole Miss. Midway through the 1939 season, the Dodgers waived a considerable number of players and did not replace them. Kinard played the full sixty minutes in about a half-dozen games. While this was the single-platoon era, it was still unusual to play an entire game.

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It was during the 1939 season that Kinard and his fellow Dodgers were unsuspecting participants in the first NFL telecast. The Dodgers' game at Ebbetts Field versus the Philadelphia Eagles on October 22 was televised by the National Broadcasting Company (NBC). With television in its infancy, the Dodgers' 23-14 victory was beamed, via one stationary camera only to the approximate 500 receivers that existed only in New York at the time.

In 1940 the Dodgers' fortunes changed with the hiring of University of Pittsburgh coach Dr. John ("Jock") Bain Sutherland. The famous coach made his mark with a precision Single-Wing attack. The power formation was ideally suited for Kinard's aggressive, speedy style. While continuing to excel as an all-encompassing defender, Kinard's exceptional speed elevated his offensive game under Sutherland. The dour, Scots dentist designed special plays to skirt the opponents' flanks with Kinard as a lead-blocker, "pulling out" from his tackle position.

Said the Chicago Bears' Joe Stydahar, "Once Bruiser threw the lead-block, there was daylight for the ballcarrier -- and Bruiser never missed throwing that block." Ironically, it was Stydahar, like Kinard a member of the Pro Football Hall of Fame, who caused Kinard to miss the only game in his career as a pro. During the 1940 season, "Jumbo Joe" stepped on Bruiser's forearm opening a nasty gash. Kinard bandaged it and practiced all week, but gangrene set in and he sat out the next Sunday's game. While the Dodgers were never champions, they did finish second to the New York Giants in 1940 and 1941 -- thanks in great part to Kinard's All-Pro play.

Wartime manpower shortages eroded the Dodgers but because he was a welder at a shipyard, Kinard was still able to play with Brooklyn on Sundays for the 1942, 1943, and 1944 seasons. He continued his high performance level.

Kinard entered the navy in 1945 and played on the storied Fleet City Bluejackets service team. He earned All-Service honors.

Discharged in time for the 1946 season, Kinard joined the New York Yankees of the upstart All-America Football Conference (AAFC). Again, Kinard helped make his team a viable contender, but the Yankees of 1946 and 1947 could not supplant the dynastic Cleveland Browns as league champions. Kinard, still not weighing above 218 pounds was All-Pro in both of his final seasons -- his last as a player-coach. Kinard was the only one of 100 players who jumped from the NFL to the AAFC to have earned All-Pro recognition with both pro leagues.

He retired as a player before the 1948 season and returned to his alma mater as a line coach, and in 1971 became Director of Athletics. He retired from Ole Miss in 1978. Seven years later he died of Alzheimer's disease and is buried in Jackson's Lakewood Cemetery.

The honors Kinard attained speak to his greatness as one of football's true "immortals." He served as captain of his high school, freshmen, and varsity teams, also with the Dodgers and Yankees, and with his World War II service team. It is doubtful that any other athlete has been so honored by captaincies at so many levels of the game.

In addition to his induction into the Pro Football Hall of Fame (1971), Kinard is a charter member of the College Football Hall of Fame (1959.) He was also named to two college All-Time All-America teams.

Once nearly universally regarded as "the South's finest lineman," there are still many who think he has retained that honor.

Frank Manning Kinard

Tackle

6-01 216

Mississippi

Jackson Central HS [MS]

Born October 23, 1914, in Pelahatchie, MS

Died September 7, 1985, at Jackson, MS

National Football Foundation Hall of Fame 1951

Pro Football Hall of Fame 1971

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Year	Team	Lg	G
1938	Bkn	N	11
1939	Bkn	N	11
1940	Bkn	N	9
1941	Bkn	N	11
1942	Bkn	N	11
1943	Bkn	N	10
1944	Bkn	N	10
1945	Military		
1946	NY	AAC	14
1947	NY	AAC	14
9 years			73