

ALL-PROS

FROM THE DETROIT NEWS, 1958-72

Part 2

By Bob Gill

1966 All-NFL

Offense

SE Bob Hayes, Dal*
TE John Mackey, Bal*
T Bob Brown, Phi*
T Ralph Neely, Dal
G John Thomas, SF
G Jerry Kramer, GB*
C Mick Tingelhoff, Min*
QB Bart Starr, GB*
HB Gale Sayers, Chi*
FB Leroy Kelly, Cle
FL Pat Studstill, Det*
K Charlie Gogolak, Was*

Defense

E Willie Davis, GB*
E Deacon Jones, LA*
T Bob Lilly, Dal
T Alex Karras, Det*
LB Lee Roy Caffey, GB*
LB Ray Nitschke, GB*
LB Wayne Walker, Det
CB Herb Adderley, GB*
CB Cornell Green, Dal
S Larry Wilson, StL*
S Willie Wood, GB*
P David Lee, Bal

Player of the Year: *Bart Starr, Green Bay

Coach of the Year: *Tom Landry, Dallas

Rookie of the Year: *Karl Sweetan, Detroit

1966 All-AFL

Offense

SE Art Powell, Oak
TE Fred Arbanas, KC
T Jim Tyrer, KC*
T Sherman Plunkett, NY
G Billy Shaw, Buf*
G Bob Talamini, Hou
C Jim Otto, Oak
QB Len Dawson, KC
HB Clem Daniels, Oak
FB Jim Nance, Bos*
FL Lance Alworth, SD
K Gino Cappelletti, Bos

Defense

E Jerry Mays, KC
E Tom Day, Buf
T Buck Buchanan, KC
T Houston Antwine, Bos*
LB Mike Stratton, Buf
LB Nick Buoniconti, Bos
LB Bobby Bell, KC*
CB Butch Byrd, Buf
CB Dave Grayson, Oak*
S George Saimes, Buf
S Johnny Robinson, KC
P Bob Scarpitto, Den*

Player of the Year: Jim Nance, Boston

Coach of the Year: Hank Stram, Kansas City

Rookie of the Year: Mike Garrett, Kansas City

In honor of the merger announced in 1966, the *News* expanded its scope, picking an all-NFL team, an all-

AFL team and a combined all-pro team (those players are marked with an asterisk), and adding punters and kickers to the mix. Probably the most notable inclusion this year was Ralph Neely, who was destined to be a consensus all-pro from 1967-69 but was passed over or relegated to the second team by the major selectors in 1966 in favor of Forrest Gregg.

Another interesting choice, this one in the AFL, was Tom Day, never chosen as a first-team all-pro by a major selector in his career. His only other all-pro mention in 1966 was a second-team selection on the official AFL team published in *The Sporting News*.

Alex Karras, chosen ahead of Merlin Olsen, who was a unanimous choice of the major selectors, also merits a brief note. Always an outstanding player, Karras received all-pro mention every year of the '60s (except of course 1963, when he was suspended). But he never showed up on an all-pro first team after 1965 -- except in the *News*, which made the hometown hero virtually a perennial choice.

Much harder to justify is the selection of Karl Sweetan as "the best first year player in all pro football." Atlanta linebacker Tommy Nobis was the most popular choice in 1966, and UPI chose St. Louis running back Johnny Roland. Both of them had fine years. Sweetan, on the other hand, averaged less than six yards per pass and threw for four touchdowns with 14 interceptions. According to the story that accompanied the all-pro teams, "Green Bay's Vince Lombardi, Baltimore's Don Shula and Los Angeles' George Allen were among coaches praising Sweetan as a poised rookie."

To digress for a moment: Sweetan was no better in his second year, and in 1968 was shipped to New Orleans, where he was terrible. At that point George Allen, probably remembering his impression of Sweetan as a rookie, brought him to Los Angeles, where he played two years as a backup to Roman Gabriel (throwing only 13 passes each season, since Gabriel hardly ever missed a down). His career ended when Allen left L.A. after the 1970 season. All this is just to point out that Allen, at least, must have been sincere in his comments about Sweetan in 1966.

The AFL rookie of the year, Mike Garrett, was also a minority opinion, since everyone else chose Bobby Burnett, a Buffalo running back. Their seasons were very similar, though, and since Burnett hurt his knee a year later and was never the same, Garrett looks like a better selection today.

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1967 AII-NFL

Offense: SE Charley Taylor, Was; TE Jackie Smith, StL; T Ralph Neely, Dal; T Forrest Gregg, GB; G Jerry Kramer, GB; G John Gordy, Det; C Bob DeMarco, StL; QB John Unitas, Bal; HB Leroy Kelly, Cle; FB Gale Sayers, Chi; FL Bernie Casey, LA

Defense: E Deacon Jones, LA; E Willie Davis, GB; T Merlin Olsen, LA; T Bob Lilly, Dal; LB Dave Robinson, GB; LB Tommy Nobis, Atl; LB Chris Hanburger, Was; CB Bob Jeter, GB; CB Lem Barney, Det; S Eddie Meador, LA; S Willie Wood, GB

1967 AII-AFL

Offense: SE George Sauer, NYJ; TE Willie Frazier, SD; T Sherman Plunkett, NYJ; T Jim Tyrer, KC; G Bob Talamini, Hou; G Walt Sweeney, SD; C Jim Otto, Oak; QB Daryle Lamonica, Oak; HB Hoyle Granger, Hou; FB Jim Nance, Bos; FL Otis Taylor, KC

Defense: E Ben Davidson, Oak; E Pat Holmes, Hou; T Buck Buchanan, KC; T Dave Costa, Den; LB George Webster, Hou; LB Nick Buoniconti, Bos; LB Mike Stratton, Buf; CB Miller Farr, Hou; CB Dick Westmoreland, SD; S Jim Norton, Hou; S Johnny Robinson, KC

In 1967 the *News* was unable to print its annual all-pro team because a strike that shut down the paper (and the Detroit *Free Press* too) from November 1967 until August 1968. Apparently the staff did make selections as usual, and it was published in incomplete form in *Football Digest* -- all-NFL and all-AFL teams, omitting punters and kickers and the combined all-pro team. Also missing were the choices for player, coach and rookie of the year.

The selections listed here are different in a few respects from the 1967 team listed in the PFRA all-pro book and mistakenly attributed to the Detroit Press. Apparently the discrepancies are the result of transcription errors, but I don't know which is the correct version. So I won't say anything about this year's teams, except to note that Chris Hanburger (who appears in both sources), a perennial all-pro in the 1970s, made his first appearance on any all-pro team courtesy of the *News* staff, and that flanker Bernie Casey (also in both sources) never made a major all-pro team, even as a second-team choice, in his whole career. (He did go to the Pro Bowl that year, though.)

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1968 AII-NFL

Offense

SE Bob Hayes, Dal*
TE Milt Morin, Cle*
T Bob Vogel, Bal*
T Ralph Neely, Dal*
G Gene Hickerson, Cle*
G Howard Mudd, SF
C Ed Flanagan, Det
QB Earl Morrall, Bal*
RB Leroy Kelly, Cle*
RB Gale Sayers, Chi
FL Clifton McNeil, SF
K Mike Clark, Dal*

Defense

E Deacon Jones, LA*
E Carl Eller, Min
T Alex Karras, Det*
T Merlin Olsen, LA
LB Dave Robinson, GB
LB Tommy Nobis, Atl*
LB Wayne Walker, Det
CB Lem Barney, Det*
CB Bobby Boyd, Bal*
S Paul Krause, Min*
S Rick Volk, Bal
P Billy Lothridge, Atl

Player of the Year: *Earl Morrall, Baltimore
Coach of the Year: *Don Shula, Baltimore
Rookie of the Year: Charlie Sanders, Detroit

1968 AII-AFL

Offense

SE George Sauer, NY
TE Jim Whalen, Bos
T Ron Mix, SD
T Jim Tyrer, KC
G Walt Sweeney, SD*
G Gene Upshaw, Oak
C Jim Otto, Oak*
QB Joe Namath, NY
RB Paul Robinson, Cin*
RB Robert Holmes, KC
FL Lance Alworth, SD*
K Jim Turner, NY

Defense

E Gerry Philbin, NY*
E Jerry Mays, KC
T Buck Buchanan, KC*
T Houston Antwine, Bos
LB George Webster, Hou*
LB Willie Lanier, KC
LB Bobby Bell, KC*
CB Miller Farr, Hou
CB Johnny Sample, NY
S Dave Grayson, Oak
S Johnny Robinson, KC*
P Jerrel Wilson, KC*

Player of the Year: Joe Namath, Jets
Coach of the Year: Weeb Ewbank, Jets

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Rookie of the Year: *Paul Robinson, Cincinnati

The *News* gave its teams a strong hometown flavor in 1968. Besides the customary addition of Karras, who received a couple of second-team mentions elsewhere, this year's selections included Ed Flanagan and Wayne Walker, two Lions who were completely ignored by the major all-pro selectors. A couple other idiosyncratic picks were Milt Morin, who played in the Pro Bowl but was bypassed by the other all-pro teams, and Paul Krause, a second-team choice by the Associated Press. (To be fair, though, Krause was a first-team all-pro quite a few times before and after 1968.)

Mick Tingelhoff, John Mackey, Bob Lilly and Larry Wilson were chosen by all the major teams this year but passed over by the *News*.

The most notable selection this year was the Lions' Charlie Sanders as rookie of the year. Everyone else picked another Lion rookie, wide receiver Earl McCullouch, but the succeeding years made it clear that the *News* staff, having watched both players all year, chose the right man.

The AFL selections weren't very unusual. The only players here who had no other first-team mentions were Johnny Sample and Robert Holmes, but each appeared on a few second teams. They replaced consensus choices Willie Brown and Hewritt Dixon, respectively.

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1969 AII-NFL

Offense Defense

WR Gene Washington, Min	E	Deacon Jones, LA
WR Dan Abramowicz, NO*	E	Carl Eller, Min*
TE Charlie Sanders, Det*	T	Alex Karras, Det*
T Ralph Neely, Dal	T	Alan Page, Min
T Bob Brown, LA*	LB	Dave Robinson, GB
G Tom Mack, LA*	LB	Dick Butkus, Chi*
G Gene Hickerson, Cle	LB	Chuck Howley, Dal
C Ed Flanagan, Det	CB	Lem Barney, Det*
QB Sonny Jurgensen, Was*	CB	Bobby Bryant, Min
RB Gale Sayers, Chi*	S	Mel Renfro, Dal*
RB Calvin Hill, Dal*	S	Paul Krause, Min
K Fred Cox, Min*	P	David Lee, Bal

Player of the Year: *Joe Kapp, Minnesota

Coach of the Year: *Bud Grant, Minnesota

Rookie of the Year: *Calvin Hill, Dallas

1969 AII-AFL

Offense

WR Fred Biletnikoff, Oak*
WR Don Maynard, NYJ
TE Alvin Reed, Hou
T Jim Tyrer, KC*
T Harry Schuh, Oak
G Walt Sweeney, SD*
G Ed Budde, KC
C Jim Otto, Oak*
QB Daryle Lamonica, Oak
RB Dickie Post, SD
RB Matt Snell, NYJ

Defense

E Rich Jackson, Den*
E Gerry Philbin, NYJ
T John Elliott, NYJ*
T Buck Buchanan, KC
LB George Webster, Hou*
LB Willie Lanier, KC
LB Bobby Bell, KC*
CB Willie Brown, Oak
CB Emmitt Thomas, KC*
S Dave Grayson, Oak*
S Johnny Robinson, KC

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K Jim Turner, NYJ

P Paul Maguire, Buf*

Player of the Year: Daryle Lamonica, Oakland

Coach of the Year: John Madden, Oakland

Rookie of the Year: Greg Cook, Cincinnati

Once again, the *News* all-NFL team included three Lions who were making their only first-team appearance, though all were named to second teams by major selectors. Alex Karras and Ed Flanagan were repeaters from 1968, but Charlie Sanders was new. Flanagan turned up on a few first teams in 1970 and '71, and Sanders was a consensus choice for those seasons. Similarly, Paul Krause, chosen by the *News* again despite being ignored or relegated to the second team by the major selectors, was a perennial first-team choice from 1970-75.

Oddly enough, the *News* team omitted Merlin Olsen and Bob Lilly, both virtually unanimous all-pro selections at defensive tackle, plus two other near-unanimous choices: tight end Jerry Smith of Washington and safety Larry Wilson.

In the AFL, Dickie Post, a second-team choice on most other teams, replaced Floyd Little, the consensus choice. And Butch Byrd, a consensus choice at cornerback, was replaced by Emmitt Thomas, whose only other appearance was on the second team chosen by *The Sporting News*.

The most idiosyncratic and interesting of this year's choices was Joe Kapp as player of the year. Everybody else picked Roman Gabriel, and even the *News* made Sonny Jurgensen the all-pro quarterback, but Kapp was named the year's outstanding player by virtue of his leadership and his will to win. Fans who remember the 1969 season will probably admit there was some merit to that argument, even if you don't agree with the choice.

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In the first year of the realigned NFL, the *News* all-pro teams included four players who didn't receive any first-team mention from the major selectors: Dick LeBeau, Karl Kassulke, Manny Fernandez and Mike Curtis. LeBeau was a second-team pick by the Pro Football Writers Association; Fernandez was on the NEA's second team; and Curtis was a second-team selection by UPI. Kassulke wasn't mentioned on a single all-pro team other than this one.

Conspicuous by their absence were a couple of consensus all-pros, cornerback Roger Wehrli of the Cardinals and linebacker Willie Lanier of the Chiefs.

The selection of Alan Page as NFC player of the year is very interesting, since defensive players are cited so rarely and everyone else picked John Brodie for that award. Meanwhile, Brodie's teammate, defensive back Bruce Taylor, was the consensus choice as NFC rookie of the year. But the *News* certainly made a reasonable selection with Duane Thomas, and by the end of the following season it must have looked even better.

1970 All-NFC

Offense

WR Dick Gordon, Chi*
WR Gene Washington, SF
TE Charlie Sanders, Det*
T Rockne Freitas, Det
T Ernie McMillan, StL*
G Tom Mack, LA*

Defense

E Deacon Jones, LA*
E Carl Eller, Min*
T Merlin Olsen, LA
T Alan Page, Min*
LB Chuck Howley, Dal
LB Dick Butkus, Chi*

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G Gale Gillingham, GB	LB Paul Naumoff, Det*
C Ed Flanagan, Det*	CB Jimmy Johnson, SF
QB John Brodie, SF*	CB Dick LeBeau, Det*
RB Larry Brown, Was*	S Karl Kassulke, Min
RB Ron Johnson, NYG*	S Larry Wilson, StL
K Erroll Mann, Det	P Julian Fagan, NO

Player of the Year: Alan Page, Minnesota
 Coach of the Year: Joe Schmidt, Detroit
 Rookie of the Year: *Duane Thomas, Dallas

1970 AII-AFC

Offense

WR Fred Biletnikoff, Oak
WR Marlin Briscoe, Buf*
TE Alvin Reed, Hou
T Jim Tyrer, KC
T Winston Hill, NYJ*
G Gene Upshaw, Oak*
G Gene Hickerson, Cle
C Jim Otto, Oak
QB Daryle Lamonica, Oak
RB Floyd Little, Den
RB Hewritt Dixon, Oak
K Jan Stenerud, KC*

Defense

E Rich Jackson, Den
E Bubba Smith, Bal
T Joe Greene, Pit*
T Manny Fernandez, Mia
LB Bobby Bell, KC*
LB Mike Curtis, Bal
LB Andy Russell, Pit
CB Jim Marsalis, KC*
CB Willie Brown, Oak
S Jerry Logan, Bal*
S Johnny Robinson, KC*
P Dave Lewis, Cin*

Player of the Year: *George Blanda, Oakland
 Coach of the Year: *Paul Brown, Cincinnati
 Rookie of the Year: Dennis Shaw, Buffalo, and Raymond Chester, Oakland (tie)

At first glance, the choice of Joe Schmidt as coach of the year might suggest hometown bias, but after a 4-8-2 record in 1968 his team had posted records of 9-4-1 and 10-4. And, as the *News* pointed out, in 1970 "None of the other seven National Football League playoff teams was forced to overcome the caliber of opposition the Lions did... The Lions opposed first-place teams in nine games and won seven of these. They had to win a succession of four games with divisional leaders in the final five weeks." Not bad credentials for a coach of the year, I'd say. (The popular choices were Alex Webster of the Giants and Dick Nolan of the 49ers -- a third San Francisco award-winner shunned by the *News*.)

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1971 AII-NFC

Offense

WR Gene Washington, SF
WR Roy Jefferson, Was
TE Charlie Sanders, Det*
T Ron Yary, Min*
T Cas Banaszek, SF
G John Niland, Dal*
G Tom Mack, LA
C Ed Flanagan, Det*
QB Greg Landry, Det
RB John Brockington, GB*

Defense

E Carl Eller, Mia*
E Claude Humphrey, Atl
T Alan Page, Min*
T Bob Lilly, Dal
LB Jack Pardee, Was
LB Mike Lucci, Det*
LB Chuck Howley, Dal
CB Jimmy Johnson, SF*
CB Mike Bass, Was
S Charlie West, Min

THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 22, No. 3 (2000)

RB Steve Owens, Det S Bill Bradley, Phi*
K Curt Knight, Was P Tom McNeill, Phi

Player of the Year: *Alan Page, Minnesota
Coach of the Year: *George Allen, Washington
Rookie of the Year: John Brockington, Green Bay

1971 All-AFC

Offense	Defense
WR Otis Taylor, KC*	E Bubba Smith, Bal*
WR Paul Warfield, Mia*	E Elvin Bethea, Hou
TE Raymond Chester, Oak	T Joe Greene, Pit*
T Winston Hill, NYJ*	T Buck Buchanan, KC
T Jim Tyrer, KC	LB Bobby Bell, KC*
G Larry Little, Mia*	LB Willie Lanier, KC
G Walt Sweeney, SD	LB Ted Hendricks, Bal*
C Bill Curry, Bal	CB Emmitt Thomas, KC*
QB Bob Griese, Mia*	CB Willie Brown, Oak
RB Floyd Little, Den*	S Ken Houston, Hou*
RB Larry Csonka, Mia	S Jake Scott, Mia
K Garo Yepremian, Mia*	P Dave Lewis, Cin*

Player of the Year: Bob Griese, Miami
Coach of the Year: Don Shula, Miami
Rookie of the Year: *Jim Plunkett, New England

The *News* selections for 1971 followed the consensus closely, except for Mike Bass and Charlie West, two players who got no all-pro mentions from anyone else. West took the place of his teammate Paul Krause, the consensus all-NFC choice; Bass took the place of the Cardinals' Roger Wehrli, who was snubbed again. Note the second straight selection of Alan Page as player of the year, this time for the whole NFL. This year the *News* was not alone in recognizing Page; AP named him the NFL player of the year, and UPI named him the NFC's best.

In case you're wondering about the selection of Detroit's own Greg Landry as all-NFC quarterback over Roger Staubach, the UPI poll came up with the same result.

1972 All-NFC

Offense	Defense
WR Gene Washington, SF*	E Claude Humphrey, Atl*
WR John Gilliam, Min	E Larry Hand, Det*
TE Ted Kwalick, SF*	T Bob Brown, GB
T Rayfield Wright, Dal*	T Alan Page, Min
T Rockne Freitas, Det*	LB Fred Carr, GB
G John Niland, Dal*	LB Dick Butkus, Chi*
G Tom Mack, LA	LB Chris Hanburger, Was*
C Forrest Blue, SF*	CB Lem Barney, Det*
QB Billy Kilmer, Was	CB Ken Ellis, GB
RB Larry Brown, Was*	S Jim Hill, GB
RB Ron Johnson, NYG	S Bill Bradley, Phi*
K Chester Marcol, GB*	P Dave Chapple, LA

Player of the Year: Larry Brown, Washington
Coach of the Year: *Dan Devine, Green Bay
Rookie of the Year: Chester Marcol, Green Bay

1972 All-AFC

Offense	Defense
WR Fred Biletnikoff, Oak*	E Elvin Bethea, Hou
WR Otis Taylor, KC	E Vern Den Herder, Mia
TE Raymond Chester, Oak	T Joe Greene, Pit*
T Winston Hill, NYJ	T Mike Reid, Cin*
T Bob Brown, Oak	LB Jack Ham, Pit*
G Larry Little, Mia	LB Willie Lanier, KC
G Bruce Van Dyke, Pit*	LB Ted Hendricks, Bal
C Jim Otto, Oak	CB Emmitt Thomas, KC
QB Daryle Lamonica, Oak*	CB Willie Brown, Oak*
RB O.J. Simpson, Buf*	S Jim Kearney, KC
RB Larry Csonka, Mia	S Jake Scott, Mia*
K Don Cockroft, Cle	P Jerrel Wilson, KC*

Player of the Year: *O.J. Simpson, Buffalo
Coach of the Year: Don Shula, Miami
Rookie of the Year: *Franco Harris, Pittsburgh

The *News'* final all-pro choices differed from the major selectors at eleven spots, the most ever. Two of the safeties, Jim Hill and Jim Kearney, received no mention at all on any other all-pro teams. (They replaced consensus choices Paul Krause of Minnesota and Dick Anderson of Miami.) John Gilliam, Detroit's Larry Hand, the Packers' Bob Brown, Fred Carr and Emmitt Thomas all showed up as second-team choices on just one major all-pro squad, though Gilliam was a Pro Bowl starter. Carr took the place of the 49ers' Dave Wilcox, a unanimous choice of the major selectors; Brown replaced consensus choice Bob Lilly.

The others who didn't show up on any major selector's first team were Rockne Freitas of the Lions, replacing the Vikings' Ron Yary, the consensus all-NFC choice; Ron Johnson of the Giants, replacing the Packers' John Brockington; Daryle Lamonica, who slipped in ahead of Joe Namath, the consensus all-NFL quarterback; and Jack Ham, tapped by the *News* a year before beginning a string of seven straight years as a first-team choice by major selectors. Freitas, Johnson, Lamonica and Ham were all second-team choices on more than one major team. Ham, incidentally, beat out his own teammate, Andy Russell, a unanimous all-AFC choice by the major selectors.

As far as I can tell, the *News* stopped picking all-pro teams after 1972. (It's possible, though, that later teams were chosen, but published, say, in January rather than the customary time in late December.) In fifteen years the paper's selections had included quite a few Lions who didn't impress any other all-pro selectors, but the *News* might also deserve credit for recognizing perennial all-pros like Jim Ray Smith, Henry Jordan, Merlin Olsen, Deacon Jones, Chuck Howley and Jack Ham before the major selectors did. And to be fair, that also applies to a few Detroit players like Alex Karras, John Gordy and Charlie Sanders. Taken all together, I'd say the *News* did a fine job, and the results are still interesting today.

