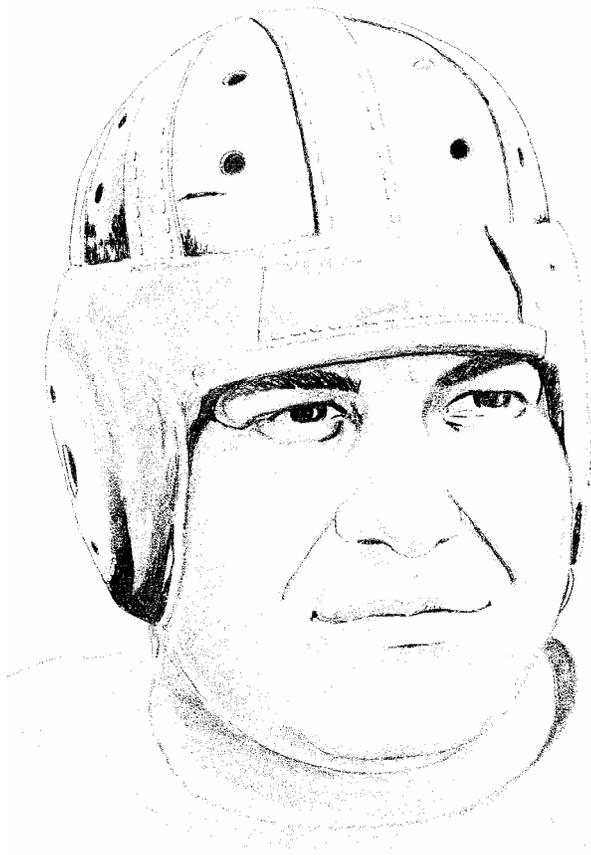


TURK EDWARDS

By Michael Richman
Redskins Weekly Correspondent



TURK EDWARDS

In the 1930s, pro football was a small world compared with today's game – on and off the field. Turk Edwards was literally a large reflection of that.

Edwards, a 6-foot-2, 265-pound tackle, was gigantic for his day. Called the "Rock of Gibraltar" and the "bouncing boulder," among other nicknames, he played eight seasons (1932 to 1939) for the Boston Braves-Boston Redskins-Washington Redskins franchise.

Edwards was a tremendous blocker and tackler at a time when players often stayed on the field for 60 minutes. He toyed with opponents using overwhelming strength and power, yet he had the speed to chase down ball-carriers. He claimed All-NFL honors in 1932, 1933, 1936 and 1937, and was instrumental on the 1937 Washington Redskins team that became NFL champions in its first season in the nation's capital.

In 1969, Edwards was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame, which noted that he "played with such immovable and impregnable tendencies and, thus, became the best of his era."

Vincent X. Flaherty wrote in the *Washington Times-Herald* on Jan. 19, 1940: "At his best, Turk Edwards was one of the fastest men in pro football, despite his exceptional tonnage. He used to spill many of the league's fastest halfbacks after they had outdistanced all others."

Albert Glen Edwards was born in Mold, Wash., in 1907. He played football at Washington State University, becoming an All-American tackle as a junior. That season, he blocked a punt and returned it for a touchdown, helping the Cougars preserve an unbeaten season and gain a trip to the 1931 Rose Bowl.

No NFL draft existed, and Edwards received offers in 1932 to play for the New York Giants, Portsmouth (N.H.) Spartans and Boston Braves. He chose the Braves, who submitted the highest offer: \$1,500 for a 10-game season. From Washington state, he even drove a busload of players to Boston for tryouts with the Braves.

One of eight NFL teams, the Braves were kicking off their inaugural season. Edwards proved to be one of the prized catches for founder and owner George Preston Marshall and coach Lud Wray. The massive lineman established himself as a dominant force on offense and defense for the 4-4-2 Braves. He opened holes for rookie halfback Cliff Battles, who led the league with 576 yards rushing.

Before the 1933 season, the Braves moved to Boston's Fenway Park, home of baseball's Red Sox, and Marshall changed the team's nickname to "Redskins." Edwards was a fixture on the front line, playing 710 of a possible 720 minutes. He was a key for fullback Jim Musick to gain an NFL-high 809 yards and for Battles to tally 737.

But the Redskins struggled as a team. They finished 5-5-2 in 1933, 6-6 in 1934 and 2-8-1 in 1935. They crafted a 7-5 record in 1936, which was good enough for an Eastern Division title and appearance in the NFL

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championship game. The Redskins lost to the Green Bay Packers, 21-6.

By then, Marshall planned to relocate the Redskins to Washington. He was disgruntled with Boston fans and sportswriters, whom he accused of virtually ignoring his NFL franchise.

In 1937, their maiden season in the nation's capital, the Redskins finished 8-3 and captured the NFL title with a 28-21 victory over the Chicago Bears. Edwards was one of four future Hall of Famers on the Redskins, joining Battles, end Wayne Millner and a rookie halfback with a rifle passing arm, "Slingin" Sammy Baugh. The lineman provided a shield for Battles to lead the NFL in rushing yards (874), and for Baugh to throw for an NFL-high 1,127 yards and set a league record for completions (91).

The Bears devoured the Redskins, 31-7, in a 1938 rematch, when tempers flared and fists flew from kickoff to the final gun. The post-game scene in the Redskins locker room resembled a hospital ward, as a host of players were treated for injuries. Edwards never forgot the brutality of that game.

"It was the toughest, meanest game I've ever played in my seven years in the pro league," he said at the time. "But I think the Bears have got a few souvenirs, too."

By the 1940 season, Edwards and fullback Erny Pinckert were the only remaining players from the 1932 Braves. Edwards was named to replace Roy Baker as the team's chief assistant to coach Ray Flaherty.

"Considered the smartest man on the squad, Edwards will be an invaluable asset as an assistant," one newspaper wrote, "for his knowledge of line play is second to no contemporary in pro football."

Edwards would also continue as a player on the Redskins reserve list. Despite being bruised and battered in his career, he was confident about his effectiveness on the field.

"I feel as good as ever," he said in *The Evening Star* on Aug. 16, 1940. "Can I stand up throughout the season? Well, you know that because of our two-team system, a Redskin hardly ever plays a full game and, although I can't move as fast as I did, I think my legs will carry me through. Until we started training, I played 36 holes of golf every day since July 10, and my legs are in good shape. All in all, I'm as anxious to get started again as I've ever been."

Edwards played well in the season-opener, a 24-17 Redskins victory over the Brooklyn Dodgers. But his career then ended suddenly in a bewildering incident.

During the coin toss before the second game against the New York Giants, Edwards was standing at

midfield with Giants center Mel Hein, another future Hall of Famer. After shaking hands with Hein, Edwards whirled to trot toward the Redskins bench. But his spikes got stuck in the turf, and his often-injured knee gave way. The seemingly indestructible man never played another down in the NFL.

But Edwards didn't relinquish his ties to the burgundy and gold. He served as a full-time assistant from 1940 to 1945, when the Redskins were one of the NFL's elite teams. They reached four league championship games and won once, 14-6 over the Bears in 1942. It was sweet revenge for the Bears 73-0 rout of the Redskins in 1940.

Before the 1946 season, Redskins coach Dudley DeGroot quit so he could coach the Los Angeles Dons of the new All-America Football Conference. The Redskins handed the head coaching job to Edwards, who didn't sign a new contract with George Preston Marshall.

"And I don't intend to," Edwards said. "I've been with the Redskins 14 years and hope to be with them 14 more. George Marshall's word is as good as a signed contract for me."

Edwards' coaching tenure was uneventful. He went 5-5-1 in 1946, 4-8 in 1947 and 7-5 in 1948, with no playoff appearances. He then left football after spending 17 seasons with the Redskins. Corrine Griffith, Marshall's wife, cited Edwards' commitment to the team in her 1947 book, "My Life with the Redskins."

"Nice, big, loyal, Turk, 15 years with the Redskins," she wrote. "He had always been nice and loyal, but he hadn't always been as big; the longer he stayed with the Redskins the more he expanded. Most people think Turk's big body is full of flesh and bones, but they're wrong; his body has to be that big to carry around all that loyalty."

Edwards died in 1973 in Seattle. But to the Washington Redskins, he will always be immortal.

TURK EDWARDS
Edwards, Albert Glen
Tackle 6-2, 255

NFF HOF 1975; PF HOF 1969

Washington State HS: Clarkston [WA]

B: 9 / 28 / 1907, Mold, WA D: 1 / 12 / 1973, Seattle, WA (65)

Yr., Team, Game

1932 Bos 6	1933 Bos 12	1934 Bos 12	1935 Bos 11	1936 Bos 12
1937 Was 11	1938 Was 9	1939 Was 11	1940 Was 2	

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