

# Elvin Bethea

Elvin Bethea, an outstanding prospect from North Carolina A&T, was the Houston Oilers third-round pick in the 1968 AFL/NFL Draft. Most observers agree that for a third-rounder, he was a steal. In hindsight, and after 16 seasons of outstanding play with the Oilers, it's safe to say he was more than a "steal," he was clearly one of the best players selected, and that in a draft that produced three future Hall of Fame players, Larry Csonka, Art Shell, and Ron Yary.

An eight-time Pro Bowl selection, Bethea played in 210 games during his long career in Houston. He was named first- or second-team All-AFL/AFC six times and second-team All-Pro four times.

Considered a leader both on and off the field, Bethea was durable and dependable. He started at defensive end in the 1968 season opener and didn't miss a game until breaking his arm in a game against the Oakland Raiders on November 13, 1977. When he retired - which was put off by a year per the Oilers' request - he held three team records relating to career service: most seasons (16), most career regular season games played (210), and most consecutive regular season games played (135). He also saw action in eight Oilers playoff games.

Although sacks were not an official National Football League statistic until 1982, Elvin's unofficial 105-career quarterback sack total still ranks as the best in Oilers/ Tennessee Titans history as are the 16 sacks he recorded in 1973. Six times he led his team in that department. His best single game performance as a pass rusher came in a game against the San Diego Chargers in 1976 in which he recorded 4 sacks and one fumble recovery.

More than just a pass rusher, Bethea was also effective against the run. Even though 1974 was the first year such statistics were compiled by the Oilers, his 691-career tackles, are still among the best in franchise history, even excluding the first six years of his career.

Elvin Bethea  
Defensive End - 6'2", 260  
North Carolina A&T

Elvin Lamont Bethea. . . Oilers' third-round draft pick, 1968. . . At time of retirement, held three team records relating to service: most seasons (16), most career regular season games played (210), most consecutive regular season games played (135) . . . Although not an official NFL statistic until 1982, unofficial 105-career sack total still ranks as team best, as are the 16 sacks in 1973. . . Selected to play in eight Pro Bowls. . . All-AFC and All-Pro (second team) four times. . . Born March 1, 1946 at Trenton, New Jersey.

1968 Houston 14	1974 Houston 14	1980 Houston 14
1969 Houston 14	1975 Houston 14	1981 Houston 15
1970 Houston 14	1976 Houston 14	1982 Houston 9
1971 Houston 14	1977 Houston 9	<u>1983 Houston 7</u>
1972 Houston 14	1978 Houston 16	
1973 Houston 14	1979 Houston 14	16 yrs      210

#### All-League Teams

All-Pro Second Team: 1973 (NEA), 1975(AP,NEA), 1978(NEA), 1979 (AP)

All-AFL Second Team: 1969 (UPI)

All-AFC: 1971 (PW), 1972 (SN), 1974 (PW), 1978 (UPI, PW)

All-AFC Second Team: 1971 (UPI), 1972 (UPI), 1973 (UPI), 1974 (UPI)

#### Pro Bowls

(8) - 1970, 1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1979, 1980

#### Oilers' records held by Bethea at the time of his retirement

[1st] Most Seasons - 16

[1st] Most Games Played, Regular Season - 210

[1st] Most Consecutive Games Played, Regular Season - 135

Two pronunciations have been commonly used for Bethea. For the record, Elvin's surname has just two syllables with the "a" remaining silent: BA-THAY.