

# All-America Football Conference

By Stan Grosshandler

Two days prior to D-Day, 1944 a group described by the A.P. as "men of millionaire incomes" met in St. Louis to organize a new professional football league. They had been called together by Arch Ward, the innovative sports editor of the Chicago *Tribune* and organizer of the college and baseball All-Star games. Ward reasoned that the end of World War II would provide the professional gridirons with a brand new crop of players. In addition to experienced pros, there would be high school and college players who had competed with the pros while in the service, plus the players who had remained in college during the war.

The initial meeting, attended by representatives of Buffalo, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, Chicago and Cleveland (for whom Ward carried a proxy) led to a second organizational meeting on September 3, 1944 in Chicago. John Keeshin, a trucking executive, represented Chicago; oilmen James Breuil and Ray Ryan were from Buffalo and New York respectively; boxer Gene Tunney sought a team for Baltimore; actor Don Ameche wanted one for L.A.; Tony Morabito, a lumber executive, was from San Francisco; and Arthur McBride, a Cleveland taxi man, came from that city. Also present was Mrs. Eleanor Gehrig, widow of the baseball Hall of Famer, who later became a league executive. It was reported that Detroit, Philadelphia and Boston were also interested in the new league.

The name All-America Football Conference (AAFC) was chosen. Resolutions were passed stipulating that no club could sign a coach or player under contract to any NFL team nor could a player with remaining college eligibility be signed.

Apparently at this time it was felt that a relationship could be made with the NFL and a "World Series" of pro football played. This idea was crushed when Elmer Layden, the NFL Commissioner, issued the scornful statement: "Let them get a ball, draw a schedule, and play a game. Then I will talk to them." At the September meeting Mr. Ryan announced he had signed college stars Glenn Dobbs of Tulsa, Martin Ruby of Texas A&M, Jack Russell of Baylor and Bob Daley of Minnesota and Michigan. A commissioner -- Jim Crowley -- was picked Nov. 22, 1944. Curiously both the AAFC and the NFL commissioners were now former members of Notre Dame's famed Four Horsemen.

A state of flux existed in 1945 as there were some changes in ownerships and Baltimore decided not to field a team. McBride pulled a big surprise by signing Paul Brown as coach even though Paul was still in the navy. Brown was a second choice after the president of Notre Dame asked McBride not to ask Frank Leahy. A

major break came in December when Dan Topping took his Brooklyn team out of the NFL and put them in Yankee Stadium and in the AAFC.

By Jan. of 1946 the league was set: West - Cleveland, McBride owner, Brown coach, Municipal Stadium; San Francisco, Morabito, Buck Shaw, Kezar Stadium; Los Angeles, Ben Lindheimer, Dudley DeGroot, L.A. Coliseum; and Chicago, Keeshin, Dick Hanley, Soldiers Field. The East had New York, Topping owner, Ray Flaherty coach, Yankee Stadium; Buffalo, Breuil, Sam Cordovano, Civic Stadium; Brooklyn, Bill Cox, Mal Stevens, Ebbets Field, and Miami, Harvey Hester, Jack Meagher, Orange Bowl.

The league signed the biggest air charter ever negotiated with United Airlines, made plans for a secret draft (which never came off), went on record as being against the free substitution rule, and added a fifth official, the sideline judge.

Soon turmoil hit the league with a rash of litigations. L.A. started a suit over Angelo Bertelli and Cleveland over Chet Adams. In the meanwhile, Cordovano resigned as coach of Buffalo before ever sending in one wrong play. He was replaced by Red Dawson. Bertelli was considered a real trophy for the new league. He had been Notre Dame's first T-formation quarterback and won the Heisman Trophy. However, he never lived up to expectations in the AAFC.

The league mounted a publicity campaign stressing diversity (the Browns would use the T, the Yankees the single wing, Buffalo the winged T, and Chicago the spread double wing) and color (the red, white, and blue of San Francisco would characterize the snappy uniforms the teams would use).

Now came the signing war. The first established NFL star to sign with the AAFC was Chicago Bear tackle Lee Artoe who jumped for \$15,000. This and other signings eventually raised all salaries and ultimately cost both leagues over five million dollars. Roughly 100 former NFL players joined the AAFC. 44 of the 60 players chosen to play in the 1946 College All-Star Game went AAFC. "The men who had signed with the AAFC received all the publicity during the All-Star training camp," recalled Pat Harder who had chosen the NFL. "It was as if we had two different camps, an NFL camp and an AAFC camp. As you know, Arch Ward was the AAFC and the All-Star Game. I even doubted that I would get to play in the game. The big news was that my former teammate Elroy Hirsch and his El Toro mates had signed with the Chicago Rockets whose coach was Dick Hanley, the El Toro Coach."

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Training got underway as the Dodgers flew to Bend, Oregon, and the Rockets to Santa Rosa, Calif. The first exhibition game pitted these teams against each other and resulted in a 14-14 tie.

The AAFC was for real on September 6, 1946, when 60,135 fans at Cleveland saw the Browns blow the Seahawks into Lake Erie, 44-0. A Cliff Lewis to Mac Speedie pass was the first TD scored in the AAFC. That crowd was the biggest ever to see a regular season pro game up till then. Later that season Cleveland set a new record while beating L.A. before 71,134. The Miami franchise was a disaster with owner Harvey Hester losing his life savings. Late in the year their debts were paid by the other clubs and the franchise transferred to Baltimore.

New York won the East in 1946, followed by Brooklyn, Buffalo and Miami. The Browns took the West, followed by San Francisco, Los Angeles and Chicago. The first title game was won by the Browns who beat the Yankees, 14-9. Yankee kicker Harvey Johnson kicked a field goal to put New York into the lead. A one-yard plunge by Marion Motley sent the Browns ahead. Spec Sanders scored from the two and the Yankees were back on top. Then an 18-yard Graham to Lavelli pass became the margin of victory. Graham iced the game when he intercepted a desperation New York pass at the end.

The zenith of the AAFC was 1947. However, even then there were signs of problems. The Miami franchise had been replaced by Baltimore, but the Chicago Rockets were in trouble. They could not compete with the established Bears and Cardinals. Jim Crowley left the Commissioner's office to become part owner and coach of the troubled franchise. He was succeeded by Admiral Jonas Ingram. The schedule used the year before of having a game almost every day had not worked out, so the league went to playing on weekends.

Again it was Cleveland in the West, followed by San Francisco, Los Angeles and Chicago. The Yankees repeated in the East, followed by Buffalo, Brooklyn and Baltimore. The Browns once more won the title game, 14-3.

The handwriting began to appear on the wall in 1948. Numerous ownership changes occurred, one of which found Branch Rickey taking over the Dodgers in Brooklyn. It was hoped that baseball's wizard could perform some football miracles. Branch even tried the old Gashouse Gang hero Pepper Martin as a place kicker. Early in the year peace overtures had been made to the NFL but were turned down. The AAFC "Haves" were asked to give to the "Have Nots" and Cleveland gave Y.A. Tittle to the Colts.

That fall a secret draft was proposed. Available at the end of the 1948 college season were Lou Kussesrow (a prominent TV producer today), Abe Gibron, Chuck Bednarik, Frank Tripuka, Pete Elliott, Terry Brennan and Bill Fischer. Cleveland went undefeated. The 49ers, losers of only two games to the Browns, finished second. L.A. and Chicago followed. The East was a farce. The Yankees and Dodgers trailed badly. Buffalo and the Colts tied for the lead at 7-7. The Bills won a playoff only to have the honor of getting trounced 49-7 by the Browns in the title game.

O.O. Kessing became the third Commissioner in 1949. There was a ray of hope for the AAFC when Ward tried to get the NFL out of the College All-Star game and replace it with the AAFC. But Bert Bell of the NFL went over Ward's head and the NFL had another victory in the war. The Brooklyn franchise failed and merged with the Yankees. Only seven former Dodgers stayed in New York and the rest went to Chicago. Cleveland finished on top of the seven club league, followed by San Francisco, Brooklyn-New York, Buffalo, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Baltimore. In the first round of the playoffs, the Browns beat Buffalo 31-21 and San Francisco beat the Yankees 17-7. In the final championship game the Browns beat the 49ers 21-7. There was talk of a championship game with the NFL but Bert Bell argued it would be in violation of the older league's constitution.

On December 9, 1949, Cleveland, San Francisco and Baltimore were taken into the NFL. The rest of the players were divided among NFL teams. Although Baltimore was not a particularly successful team, they got in because George Preston Marshall felt they would be a natural rival for his Washington Redskins, Buffalo, a success both at the gate and on the field, was denied entry and owner Jim Breuil had to settle for a share of the Cleveland team. One of the odd facts of the war is that the loser, the AAFC, averaged 38,310 a game while the NFL averaged only 27,602.

## AAFC 1946 ALL-LEAGUE TEAM

E - Dante Lavelli, Cleveland  
E - Alyn Beals, San Francisco  
T - Bruiser Kinard, New York  
T - Martin Ruby, Brooklyn  
G - Bruno Banducci, San Fran.  
G - Bill Willis, Cleveland  
C - Bob Nelson, Los Angeles  
Q - Otto Graham, Cleveland  
H - Glenn Dobbs, Brk (M.V.P.)  
H - Spec Sanders, New York  
F - Marion Motley, Cleveland

## AAFC 1947 ALL-LEAGUE TEAM

E - Dante Lavelli, Cleveland  
E - Mac Speedie, Cleveland  
T - Lou Rymkus, Cleveland  
T - Nate Johnson, New York  
G - Bruno Banducci, San Fran.  
G - Bill Willis, Cleveland  
C - Bob Nelson, Los Angeles  
Q - Otto Graham, Cleve. (M.V.P.)  
H - Spec Sanders, New York  
H - Chet Mutryn, Buffalo  
F - Marion Motley, Cleveland

## AAFC 1948 ALL-LEAGUE TEAM

E - Mac Speedie, Cleveland  
E - Alyn Beals, San Francisco  
T - Lou Rymkus, Cleveland  
T - Bob Reinhard, Los Angeles  
G - Dick Barwegan, Baltimore  
G - Bill Willis, Cleveland  
C - Bob Nelson, Los Angeles  
Q - Otto Graham, Cleveland  
H - John Strzykalski, San Fran.

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H - Chet Mutryn, Buffalo  
F - Marion Motley, Cleveland  
M.V.P. - Graham, Cleve. and Frank Albert, San Francisco

## AAFC 1949 ALL-LEAGUE TEAM

E - Mac Speedie, Cleveland  
E - Alyn Beals, San Francisco  
T - Arnie Weinmeister, New York  
T - Bob Reinhard, Los Angeles  
G - Visco Grgich, San Francisco  
G - Dick Barwegan, Baltimore  
C - Lou Saban, Cleveland  
Q - Otto Graham, Cleveland  
H - Frank Albert, San Francisco  
H - Chet Mutryn, Buffalo  
F - Joe Perry, San Francisco

## CLEVELAND BROWNS

One of the most successful franchises ever seen in football was the Cleveland Browns of the AAFC. Coach Paul Brown showed that a return to fundamentals could produce a successful team. He brought organization, discipline, and the messenger guard system into the pro game. It has been said, with great error, that Paul was the first to employ black players; but he did give them a chance to become integral parts of a team. If a player gave his best he got to play for Paul Brown.

Brown had been a successful coach at Massillon, Ohio, and again at Ohio State; therefore it was not surprising to see his teams loaded with Ohians. His first team had George Cherokee (G), Jim Daniell (T), Lindell Houston (G), Dante Lavelli (E), Gene Fekete (FB), Lou Groza (T), and Bill Willis (G). All had played for him at Ohio State. He had seen Marion Motley as a high schooler at Canton against Brown's Massillon Tigers. Later Paul got Horace Gillom and Tommy James, both of whom had played for him at Massillon.

His biggest masterpiece was the conversion of single wing tailback, music major, Otto Graham into one of the great T- quarterbacks. Brown used Motley to set up the pass. The Graham/Motley draw play became devastating. Another feature of the Brown attack was the use of the halfbacks as both runners and receivers. In the early years, most of his players went both ways, but ends Mac Speedie and Dante Lavelli played only offense as George Young and John Yonaker came in on defense.

"When I got out of the service," Dante Lavelli recalled, "I stopped off to see a pro game and decided I wanted to play professionally. I also realized it was best for you to have some sort of gimmick, something you did better than anyone else. I hit upon the sideline pass and it became our trademark. We practiced constantly and it paid off."

Eleven players from the 1946 squad enjoyed their first NFL title in 1950. They were Graham, Groza, Lavelli, Motley, Willis, Speedie, Young, Rymkus, Houston, Cliff Lewis, and Frank Gatski.

The '47 club went 12-1-1. New players included Lou Saban, a great linebacker, Weldon Humble, one of the first messenger guards, and linebacker Tony Adamle. Another addition was punter Horace Gillom, whom many consider the greatest booter ever.

In 1948 the Browns were undefeated. Chubby Grigg, Alex Agase, Ara Parseghian, Ollie Cline and Dub Jones came on board. Jones, father of Colt QB Bert, was the epitome of the T halfback, able to go off tackle, sweep the ends or go deep for a pass. He is one of only three pros to have scored six TDs in a single game. "I would always listen to Dub in a huddle," said Graham. "When he said he could beat the defense I had the confidence that he could do it and would call his play. The day he scored six TDs Brown sent in a running play near the end of the game. I knew Dub needed one more TD and so I asked him if he could beat their man. He said he could, so one of the few times I disobeyed Brown I called a pass. He got it and had six touchdowns."

On October 10, 1948, Cleveland had an odd situation. That afternoon the Indians played the Braves in a World Series, then at night the Browns beat the Dodgers, all in Municipal Stadium.

In 1949 Darrell Palmer and Warren Lahr were added to the roster, and the team went 9-1-2.

The Cleveland Browns were a two-edged sword for the AAFC. They showed the world that the AAFC was indeed a major league and there is no doubt that in any of the four years the Browns would have been a top contender in the NFL. But ultimately they hurt the AAFC. Their record of 51-4-2 indicated a tremendous lack of balance. When there was no competition the fans ceased to show up. Crazy Legs Hirsch said, "When I was with the Rockets and we played Cleveland, it was not whether we would win or lose, but just how bad they were going to beat us that day."

## NEW YORK YANKEES

For two seasons the New York Yankees gave the Browns some competition. Under coach Ray Flaherty the Yanks won the East 10-3-1 in their first season. Flaherty used the single wing and had signed some impressive names for his triple threat tailback. He had Ace Parker, Frank Sinkwich and Spec Sanders lined up for 1946. The Ace gave Flaherty one last good year before he retired, but Sinkwich, who had been an NFL MVP with Detroit, failed in New York. "I had had a good year with the Lions and then went into the service," Sinkwich recalled. "However, I'd hurt my knees at Georgia and again while playing service ball. I was foolish to try to come back and play in the AAFC. I couldn't do a thing. I've always thought what might have been had I been able to play with a set of good knees."

Sanders, who had been Pete Layden's backup at Texas, led the AAFC in rushing in '46. The rest of the backfield and Lloyd Cheatham at blocking back, Bob Sweiger at wing, and fullbacks Eddie Prokop, Bob Kennedy and Pug Manders. Young Jack Russell and Bruce Alford and vets Perry Schwartz and Bob Masterson held down the ends. Nate Johnson and Bruiser Kinard were the tackles. The specialist was just beginning to emerge and kicker Harvey Johnson was one of the tops.

The 1947 team went 11-2-1 with Sanders rushing for 1,431 yards, the only man who ever exceeded 1,000 in the AAFC. The new fullback was 5'5", 170 lb. Buddy Young. Sanders explained, "In our system we did not need a bruising fullback so Buddy's weight was not against him. His speed and deception made him the ideal man

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for our system and we complemented one another." The late Dick Barwegan took over a guard position and proved to be one of the best.

On Friday night, October 24, Spec Sanders had one of the greatest games any runner ever enjoyed. He rushed for 250 yards on only 24 attempts against the Rockets. He scored a TD on a 20-yard run, using a "vicious" straight arm, passed for another TD, and accounted for still another when he faded to pass, found his receivers covered, and ran 70 yards through the entire Rocket team. Oddly, Sanders remembered little of the game. He recalled that Buddy Young opened the second half with a 95-yard TD return of the kickoff, and that he sat out most of the second half because the game was one-sided.

Sanders was nagged by injuries in 1948 and the team fell to 6-8-0. Red Strader replaced Flaherty. "I would consider Spec Sanders one of the five or six truly great players I have seen," said Buddy Young. "He was in a class by himself. You could say he was a late maturation factor. At Texas he played behind Pete Layden and then spent several years in the service. He really came of age when he got to the Yankees." Ironically, when Layden joined the Yankees in 1948 he backed up Sanders.

"We all felt that the way Spec ran he would burn himself out fast," recalled Elroy Hirsch. "His hard, reckless way of running certainly shortened his career."

An injury put Sanders out for the entire '49 season. The team had switched to the T, with Young, Sherman Howard and Lou Kusserow the runners. Brad Ecklund, Martin Ruby, Arnie Weinmeister and Joe Signiogo were in the line, and three outstanding defensive backs -- Tom Landry, Otto Schnellbacher, and Harmon Rowe -- guarded the air lanes. Unfortunately for the Yankees, quarterback Don Panciera did not rate with the league's top signal callers. The team went 8-4-0 and lost to San Francisco in the first round of the playoffs.

## CHICAGO ROCKETS

The greatest disappointment of all was the Chicago Rockets. They were stocked with former All-Americans yet could never put it all together. The 1946 Rockets started out with Dick Hanley as coach, but he lost control of his former Marines after three games. Sid Luckman was approached as coach. When he turned down the offer, a triumvirate of players -- Bob Dove, Ned Mathews and Willie Wilkin tried to run the team. After five games of that, Pat Boland took over. Boland, along with Ernie Nevers, had been one of Hanley's assistants. Overloaded with All-American offensive stars such as Hirsch, Billy Hillenbrand, Bob Hoernschemeyer and Max Morris, the Rockets had little defense. They were bombarded with such scores as 51, 48 and 35 points.

Jim Crowley took over as coach in '47 and lasted but 10 games before he turned the club over to Hamp Pool. The team finished 1-13-0. A bizarre trade saw MVP Glenn Dobbs go from Brooklyn to L.A., Angelo Bertelli from L.A. to Chicago, and Hoernschemeyer to Brooklyn. Bertelli threw seven passes in combat, hitting on only two, as Sam Vacanti and Al Dekdebrun ran the offense. Bill Daley was the best rusher as Ray Ramsey and Elroy Hirsch spent most of the season injured.

Hirsch was sidelined again in '48 as the team used its third straight group of owners and still another coach, Ed McKeever. Jesse Freitas was the new QB and Julie Rykovich was a good runner. Again, 1-13-0.

1949 brought a fourth set of owners, yet another coach in Ray Flaherty, and a new name -- the Hornets -- but the same old brand of football. The attack centered around the returned Hoernschemeyer and Johnny Clement. Dan Edwards was a good receiver and John Rapacz emerged as a top center. The 1949 team had a member who is in the trivia annals. Linebacker Hardy Brown, along with itinerant kicker Ben Agajanian who played for L.A., played with the AAFC, the NFL, and the American Football League.

## SAN FRANCISCO FORTY-NINERS

By far the second most successful team was the San Francisco 49ers. They were a spectacular unit on the field and did well at the box office. Their first season was 9-5-0 under coach Buck Shaw who built his offense around the brilliant lefthanded QB Frank Albert. Albert, a scrambler before the word was coined, had his old Stanford teammate Norm Standlee at fullback and two fantastic halfbacks in John Strzkalski and Len Eshmont. His receivers were Alyn Beals who specialized in TD receptions and Nick Suseoff. Joe Vetrano was a gifted kicker, and the line boasted John Mellus, John Kuzman, John Woudenberg, Bruno Banducci, Dick Bassi and Visco Grgich. In '47 the team went 8-4-2.

Probably their strongest team was in 1948 (when the Browns went undefeated). Joe "The Jet" Perry joined the club, and took his first handoff 58 yards to the end zone. Also added were center Bill Johnson and guard Riley Matheson. The club had two backfields of almost equal quality. Albert, Standlee, Eshmont and Strzykalski rushed for 2,122 yards and Bev Wallace, Perry, Verl Lillywhite and Forrest Hall logged 1,016.

The final edition of the 49ers in the AAFC went 9-3-0 but lost again to the Browns in the final championship game. Their finest moment came on October 9 when they ended the Browns' 27-game winning streak, 56-28. The 49ers were a stable team, using the same nucleus throughout four years. Once they joined the NFL they continued their high grade of play.

## LOS ANGELES DONS

The Los Angeles Dons' battle with the Rams (transplanted from Cleveland) in Los Angeles proved costly to both clubs. The Dons were a colorful team and were just beginning to draw when the AAFC closed up shop. The first team under Dud DeGroot went 7-5-2. They were a fine offensive club that allowed as many points as they scored. At tackle the Dons had Lee Artoe, the first man to flee the NFL for the new pot of gold, and Gil Duggan. Guards were Ray Frankowski, Bill Radovich and Al Lolotai. In the backfield were Charlie O'Rourke and John Kimbrough, two of the most famous players of the time, and Harry Clark and Chuck Fenenbock. Bob Reinhard was a star tackle who also punted, and Bob Nelson was a perennial all-league center. Dale Gentry, a rookie, enhanced a fair group of veteran ends including Bob Nowaskey, Al Krueger, and Joe Aguirre.

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The 1947 team was a razzle-dazzle bunch that put on an interesting game and began to attract fans. This was not reflected in a 7-7-0 record and coach DeGroot was replaced by Ted Shipkey and Mel Hein. New additions were guard Len Levy and end Burr Baldwin, while O'Rourke and Kimbrough carried the offense.

Jimmy Phelan moved in as coach in 1948 and the team was again 7-7-0. This season they added Herman Wedemeyer at a reported salary of \$12,000. Len Ford was another new man. Glenn Dobbs, obtained the previous season, had another big season. Kimbrough, Walt Clay and Wedemeyer provided the running and Aguirre, Ford, Gentry, Baldwin and Bill Fisk were fine receivers.

Although the attendance improved in 1949 the record sank to 4-8-0. Their generous owner Ben Lindheimer not only kept his own team afloat but paid part of Wedemeyer's salary when he was traded to Baltimore and helped support Chicago. Dobbs was again the offense, supported by George Taliaferro, Hosea Rodgers, Billy Grimes and Ford. Bob Reinhard and Bob Nelson remained two of the leading linemen in the game.

With the merger the Dons sank from sight along with the fact that they were one of the first to bring major league pro football to the West Coast.

## BROOKLYN DODGERS

The name *Brooklyn Dodgers* opens the gates of nostalgia to both baseball and football fans. There were the "daffiness boys" of baseball lore and Jock Sutherland's NFL Dodgers. The initial AAFC Dodger coach was the famed orthopedic surgeon-coach Mal Stevens. He lasted seven games and was replaced by Cliff Battles. The keystone of the club was the single wing triple threat tailback Glenn Dobbs. Other than Dobbs, Martin Ruby at tackle and Saxon Judd at end, the Dodgers were a lackluster team that finished 3-10-1.

The next year saw no improvement and another 3-10-1 record. Dobbs was traded away and his place taken by Bob Hoernschemeyer. Mickey Colmer switched from blocking back to fullback and was the top ground gainer.

In 1948 Branch Rickey took over and Carl Voyles became coach. Despite some assistance from Bob Chappuis and Dan Edwards the cast was still much the same and the record was worse, 2-12-0. At the end of the season the club was merged with the Yankees.

## BUFFALO BILLS

The one club really shortchanged in the NFL-AAFC merger was Buffalo. The team was successful both on the field and at the box office. Red Dawson took the first club to a 3-10-1 record. It was pretty much of a land team as Harry Hopp, Vic Kulbitski, Steve Juzwik and Chet Mutryn carried the mail. Fay King was a good receiver and Hal Lahar a top guard.

George Ratterman joined the club in 1947 and they moved to an 8-4-2 record. George zipped passes to King and Al Baldwin, and Chet Mutryn developed into one of the best ground gainers in the

game. Julie Rykovich and Vic Kulbitski also contributed to the solid ground game.

The 1948 squad ended 7-7-0, yet tied Baltimore for the Eastern Division lead. In the playoff with the Colts, the Bills came from behind to win only to be demolished by the Browns in the title game. A guard on this team was Ed King, present governor of Massachusetts.

Under Clem Crowe the 1949 Bills went 5-5-2. They tied the Browns twice to become the only AAFC club to go through a season without losing to the Browns. This season Abe Gibrion joined the club; Ratterman, Mutryn, Ollie Cline, Rex Bumgardner, and Baldwin provided thrills. When the team was dismantled, Gibrion, John Kissell and Bumgardner joined the Browns.

## BALTIMORE COLTS

The Miami team proved to be an embarrassment to the AAFC, going down in a blaze of red ink that the rest of the league had to bail out. Jack Meagher was the first coach, but he was soon replaced by Hamp Pool as the team went 3-11-0. Marion Pugh made a valiant attempt to play quarterback. However, the ability of the line can be appraised by the fact that all five players who attempted to play QB ended up with minus rushing marks. Somehow, Lamar Davis managed to catch 22 passes at end.

Baltimore replaced the sunken Seahawks in 1947 with Cecil Isbell as coach. The Colts went 2-11-1 on the season. Bud Schwenk, acquired from the Browns, gave the team a passing attack, throwing to Davis and Billy Hillenbrand.

The '48 team tied Buffalo for first place but lost the playoff. This club had Y.A. Tittle as an outright gift from Cleveland. Dick Barwegan, acquired from New York, was the top lineman. Prior to the playoff, the players threatened a strike. This was only averted when management offered an extra game salary.

The final edition went 1-11-0 with Isbell being replaced during the season by Walter Driskill. What little good that occurred stemmed from Tittle's passing. Despite their poor record, the Colts were taken into the NFL with the merger. However, they failed to improve and disappeared after one season. The present-day Colts are not their descendants.

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Many reasons have been offered for the demise of the AAFC. Perhaps the nation was not ready for a new pro football league; it was the zenith of college football interest, with Notre Dame, Michigan and Oklahoma riding high.

The teams played few exhibition games, depriving themselves of an important source of revenue.

Buddy Young has suggested mismanagement. He also points out that, except for Paul Brown and Buck Shaw, the best coaches were in the NFL.

Many experts have suggested that the AAFC suffered because it had no television revenue (which was such an important factor in

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the later success of the American Football League), but the NFL had no TV money to speak of at this time either.

Finally, there were the Browns. In their success they were the AAFC's greatest triumph; in their dominance they were its greatest failure.