

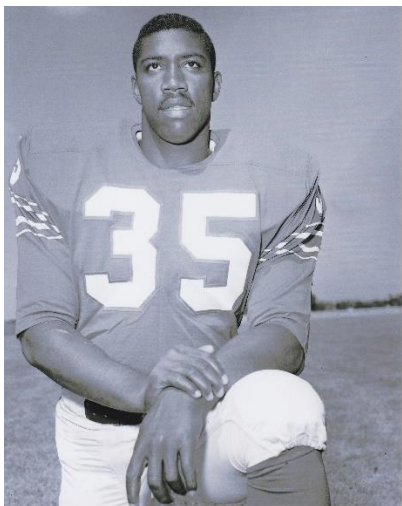


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Doug Goodwin

This article was written by Greg D. Tranter

Doug Goodwin was a strapping 6-foot, 3-inch 230-pound fullback/linebacker with 9.7 speed in the 100-yard dash. He starred at Maryland State (today known as Maryland Eastern Shore University), played briefly in the National Football League with Buffalo and Atlanta and finished his football career playing three seasons of minor league football in the Atlantic Coast Football League, hoping to return to the NFL.



Douglas MacArthur Goodwin was born on March 11, 1942 in Charleston, South Carolina. Doug was one of eight children, four sisters and three brothers. He grew up in Charleston. Goodwin played football, basketball, and track in high school. He also raised and raced pigeons. Upon graduation from high school, Goodwin entered Maryland State in the fall of 1960.

He made a name for himself as a sophomore helping Maryland State win the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) District 31 track championship. He was one of two dual winners, as he won both the 100-yard dash and the 220 while also running the opening leg in the 440-yard relay that his team won. As a junior he broke the Delaware State track record with a 9.1 in the 100-yard dash, he ran in the Penn relays and had a 9.7 100-yard dash in the NAIA National Championships. Maryland State won the

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1963 NAIA National Track Championship. His Dad died during his junior year from a fatal heart attack.

Goodwin was the speediest man on the football team, despite his imposing size. He lettered in both his freshman and sophomore years playing end. He was switched to fullback and linebacker as a junior and was voted honorable mention to the All Maryland Small College Football team. He helped lead the young Hawks to a 4-4 record. He also scored a touchdown on a 2-yard run in their opening game victory versus Livingstone.

In his senior year he led the Hawks football team to a 4-2-1 record and a fourth place finish out of 18 in the Colored Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA). He was the team's MVP starring at both linebacker and fullback. He shared the backfield with future New York Jet All-Pro Emerson Boozer. Goodwin was voted to the second team All Maryland Small College team as senior.

The Baltimore Sun on October 29, 1964 assessed Goodwin's chances of getting drafted into professional football, "Goodwin isn't a ball of fire on offense, but the pros could care less. On defense, Doug has that rare ability to diagnose plays. He knows whether to red-dog the quarterback or float back to cover a receiver, and the Hawks have been a tougher team because of it."

On November 28, 1964 he was selected by the Buffalo Bills in the eleventh round, with the 88th pick in the 1965 American Football League Draft. On the same day, the Green Bay Packers picked Goodwin in the fifth round of the NFL draft, the 66th player chosen.

Goodwin decided to sign with Buffalo as he heard that Green Bay was not a welcoming place for African American players and was a prejudiced town. He inked his contract with Dick Gallagher, Buffalo Bills General Manager, on April 15, 1965. He graduated from Maryland State later that spring.

Goodwin injured his knee early in the Bills 1965 training camp and was lost for the season. His knee surgery was successful, and he was excited for the Bills 1966 training camp with Buffalo coming off back to back AFL Championships.

The Bills played their first preseason game for the 1966 season on August 7 with Goodwin wearing jersey #35. It was his first exhibition game experience with Buffalo, after having missed most of the previous training camp. His first game action occurred on the first series of the second quarter. On first down from the Bills 22-yard line, Goodwin

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took a hand-off from quarterback Daryle Lamonica and bulled his way for seven yards. Later in the quarter he carried the ball again for two yards, fumbling the ball, but the Bills recovered. A few plays later he hauled in a 17-yard pass from Lamonica, only to have the ball stolen out of his arms by a Patriot defender. He did not carry the ball in the second half and finished his first game with two rushes for 10 yards, one pass reception for 17 yards and one fumble lost, in the Bills 19-13 victory.

Goodwin dislocated his shoulder, did not play in the following preseason game on August 12 versus Denver and was released on August 16. When his injury healed, he was placed on the Bills taxi-squad. He was activated for the Bills game at the Kansas City Chiefs on October 2. He played in that game, the following week versus the Boston Patriots and one other game during the 1966 season. He played primarily on special teams in the three games he was on the active roster.

Goodwin spent most of the season on the taxi-squad but was activated when an injury replacement was necessary. The Bills won the AFL East Division championship with a 9-4-1 record but lost the AFL Championship game to the Kansas City Chiefs on January 1, 1967, missing out on a chance to go to Super Bowl I. Goodwin was not active for the AFL Championship game.

Goodwin was back again for his third training camp with Buffalo in 1967. The Bills 67 yearbook described him as a running back, he “has fine maneuverability for a big back and boasts good power.” Goodwin reported along with 65 other players to the Bills training camp on August 18. He lasted less than two weeks, being released on July 31. He was placed on their taxi-squad and midway through the season he was waived as injured. He sat out the rest of the 1967 football season. His three years in Buffalo were disappointing as every time he was making progress to be able to get into the line-up another injury derailed him. He cherished his 1965 AFL Championship ring and still does.

He signed with the Green Bay Packers, who had selected him in the 1965 NFL draft, on April 16, 1967. The Atlanta Falcons had contacted Goodwin looking to sign him, but since the Packers had drafted him, they had to release Goodwin for the Falcons to sign him. Goodwin contacted Vince Lombardi, Packers General Manager, requesting his release. Instead of releasing him, Lombardi signed Goodwin for the Packers. After signing with the Packers, Goodwin talked about being waived by the Bills and his new opportunity with Green Bay saying, on being released, “it’s the best thing that’s ever happened to me.” I’m glad I got the injury, so I got a chance to come to Green Bay.”

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He had an uphill battle in Green Bay as the 1966 World Champion Packers had several good players in their backfield including Elijah Pitts, Donny Anderson, Jim Grabowski, Travis Williams, and Chuck Mercein.

Goodwin received an excellent opportunity in the Packers intra-squad scrimmage on July 27. He rushed six times for 21 yards, as the offense defeated the defense 10-0. He also contributed a fumble recovery on special teams.

With the loaded Packers backfield, Goodwin got limited opportunities once the Packers preseason games began. He received his most extensive action in the Packers fourth preseason game, a 31-27 victory over Dallas. He carried the ball three times for six yards with a costly fumble. He also caught one screen pass from Zeke Bratkowski for a five-yard loss.

On September 2, with the Packers needing defensive help they traded Goodwin and wide receiver Bob Long to the Atlanta Falcons for defensive end Leo Carroll and a future draft pick.

Goodwin joined the Falcons and played in the teams' final preseason game on September 8 versus the Miami Dolphins. He played on special teams and ran the ball once for a loss of a yard in the Falcons 19-13 loss. Goodwin, wearing jersey #30, played special teams in Atlanta's first two regular season games. The Falcons were drilled by the Minnesota Vikings 47-7 in their opening game at Metropolitan Stadium in Minneapolis. They also lost the next week, in their home opener, to the Baltimore Colts 28-20 with Goodwin making two special teams tackles. A couple days following the Colts game embattled Falcons head coach Norb Hecker released Goodwin.

Baltimore, who was impressed with Goodwin's play on special teams in their most recent game, signed him on September 27 to their "Band Squad." Baltimore's "Band Squad" was a fancy name for their taxi-squad. They were interested in converting him to play linebacker, a position he played in college.

Goodwin, as part of the "Band Squad" practiced with the Colts during the week but also played for their minor league affiliate, the Atlantic Coast Football Leagues (ACFL), Harrisburg Capitols on the weekend.

His first game with the Capitols was October 5 versus the Pottstown Firebirds. Goodwin started and played linebacker in the Capitols 17-7 loss. He played in the final seven

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games of Harrisburg's season, but the club was a dismal 1-6. However, Goodwin received a lot of playing time to hone his linebacking skills. The highlight of his season with the Capitols is that he intercepted passes in back to back games. In a 26-7 loss to Hartford on November 9, he picked off a Manch Wheeler pass in the end zone, thwarting a Hartford drive. The following week in a 19-10 victory over Richmond, Goodwin intercepted a pass setting up a key touchdown.

Goodwin participated in the Colts 1969 training camp but was waived on September 4. He signed a contract with the Philadelphia Eagles affiliate, the Pottstown Firebirds. With the Firebirds he returned to his more normal fullback position and was also utilized in returning kicks. He saw his first action carrying the football for Pottstown on September 27, rushing the ball seven times for 28 yards in a 49-3 romp over the Quincy Giants.

The following week versus the Roanoke Buckskins, Goodwin took the opening kick-off 96 yards for a touchdown. It was the longest kick-off return in ACFL history. It helped catapult the Firebirds to a 20-10 victory.

On October 10 with the game tied 14-14 between Pottstown and Quincy, Goodwin came up with the biggest play of the game. Quincy had just scored to tie the game and on the ensuing kick-off, Goodwin raced 58 yards to the Giants 32-yard line. Five plays later, Pottstown scored the go-ahead TD and was back in the lead 21-14 on their way to a 28-14 victory. Firebirds Head Coach Dave DiFilippo said in the postgame locker room, "Goodwin's runback was the deciding factor in the ball game." Goodwin was awarded the Outstanding Player of the Game award by the Firebird Quarterback Club.

Goodwin continued to contribute to the Firebirds success as they roared to a 10-2 regular season record and were Southern Division Champions. Goodwin finished second in the league in kick-off returns with 16 returns for 427 yards and a 26.7 average.

Pottstown defeated the Hartford Knights 20-0 in the ACFL Championship game. Goodwin returned the opening kick-off 29 yards and carried four times in the game for 17 yards as he and the Firebirds were crowned ACFL Champions.

He returned to the Firebirds to start the 1970 season but left the club on September 8 and did not return. He went back to Charleston, SC as his teammate Jim Baughn said, "he has family and job problems." Sadly, Goodwin's pro football career was over. He very much wanted to get back to the NFL but was never able to get the right chance and stay injury free to prove his worth.

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Goodwin was elected to the Maryland Eastern Shore University Athletic Hall of Fame in 2004.

Following his football career, he returned to South Carolina and taught Math for a few years. He relocated to New York City where he was a Director of a Youth Center and then had multiple construction management jobs.

In 1993 he was diagnosed with congestive heart failure and battled heart disease for several years while his declining health led to several near-death experiences. In 2001, it was determined that his kidneys were failing and desperately needed a heart transplant but there was limited time to find a matching donor. As time went on, he was given a mechanical device, keeping him alive. Another problem, Goodwin had limited insurance, enough to cover the \$300,000 operation, but not money to cover the significant after care and drug costs.

When former Bills quarterback and teammate Jack Kemp heard of Goodwin's predicament, he felt compelled to help. Even though he had not seen Goodwin in over 35 years, he stepped forward with a significant donation and helped rally other Bills Alumni and team owner Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. to provide financial support, to ensure Goodwin could go forward with the heart transplant. Wilson said, "He was part of the Bills franchise, and whenever we can step forward and help in some sort of way, I think it's a privilege to do it."¹

With time ticking on the life of Goodwin, finally on September 10, a matching donor was found in Boston. Goodwin's doctors were immediately off to Logan Airport to retrieve the heart and bring it to Columbia Presbyterian Hospital in Manhattan, where Goodwin would be waiting.

The heart was removed from the donor at 6:30am in Boston on Tuesday September 11. It was packed with a preservative for the flight, maintaining the heart for about four to five hours. The plane, with the heart on board, took-off for New York at 7:50am and arrived in Teterboro airport at 8:35am, one of the last flights to arrive. Simultaneously, other planes heading for New York were hijacked and American Flight 11 and United Flight 175 crashed into the World Trade Center at 8:46am and 9:03am.

At 9:15am, the ambulance carrying the heart destined for Goodwin crossed over the George Washington Bridge, three minutes later the bridge was closed to all vehicular

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traffic. The ambulance with Goodwin's heart was one of the last vehicles to cross over the bridge. At 10:05am, the South Tower collapsed and shortly after the North Tower collapsed, all while Goodwin was receiving his new heart.

At about 3pm, Dr. Yoshifuma Naka completed the successful surgery. Goodwin's cardiologist, Dr. Ulrich Jorde said "If this heart had been held up at any point, at the airport, before the bridge, even not being able to leave Boston, then we don't know whether Douglas might have been transplanted. He might have died."ⁱⁱ

When Goodwin awoke, he felt much better and knew he had a new lease on life, however, he was stunned at what had transpired during his operation. This is one of the positive stories to come from that horrible day.

Kemp said "The word heartwarming is a metaphor, but it is a wonderful one. I'm extremely conscious of the donor, the doctors, the nurses, the hospital, my teammates, the Bills, Mr. Wilson—I think it's one of the greatest stories of my life."ⁱⁱⁱ "There are a lot of memorable moments in my life, of football games, of politics, but this stands out because it saved a human being's life."^{iv}

Goodwin has lived an additional 19 years and counting since his operation. He is married to Gwendolyn and they have one child, Doug Jr. who was born in 1982. Doug Jr. played college football at Boston College. Doug and Gwen live in North Charleston today.

End Notes:

ⁱ Garber, Greg, Within a heartbeat of tragedy, <http://www.espn.com/gen/s/2002/0909/1429645.html>

ⁱⁱ Garber, Greg, Within a heartbeat of tragedy, <http://www.espn.com/gen/s/2002/0909/1429645.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ Garber, Greg, Within a heartbeat of tragedy, <http://www.espn.com/gen/s/2002/0909/1429645.html>

^{iv} Garber, Greg, Within a heartbeat of tragedy, <http://www.espn.com/gen/s/2002/0909/1429645.html>