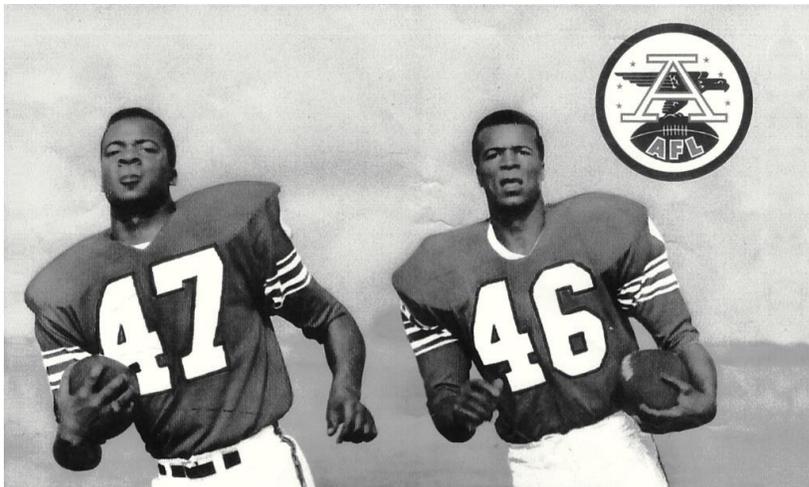


Tony King

This article was written by Greg D. Tranter

Tony King and his brother Charlie made pro football history by becoming the first African American brothers to play in the same professional football game. It happened in 1967 at War Memorial Stadium in Buffalo. Before that groundbreaking game Tony played college football at Findlay College, earning all-star status and helping lead it to the NAIA playoffs. He was drafted by the Buffalo Bills in the American Football League, playing one year with them and then went on to multiple stops in AFL/NFL training camps and some time playing minor league football for the Sacramento Capitols and the Long Island Bulls.



Charlie #47 and Tony #46 were honored by the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 2009 for their groundbreaking milestone.

Tony Emanuel King was born on May 6, 1944 in Canton, Ohio. He grew up at 1422 Pike Street in nearby Alliance with his older brother Charlie. Both boys played sports from a young age and had a natural competitive spirit. Tony played football at Alliance High School for legendary coach Mel Knowlton, who had a career record of 150-86-6.

Tony attended Findlay University in nearby Findlay, Ohio. It's a private Christian university well regarded for its academics. Tony played offensive end and safety for the Oilers. During King's sophomore year in 1964, Findlay was the Eastern Regional Champion and runner-up in the NAIA playoff with a 9-1 record. In 1965 Findlay started out like gangbusters, winning their first six games and earning the #1 NAIA national ranking. They lost two of their next three games, by two points and seven points, and finished just out of the playoffs with a 7-2 record. At the conclusion of the season Tony was named to the NAIA District 22 All-Star team at offensive end.



Tony had a year of eligibility remaining and was planning on returning to school. He was not as highly regarded as his brother Charlie was when he was coming out of college, and thought another year at Findlay would help him. However, when his father was negotiating a contract for his brother Charlie with Buffalo Bills general manager Dick Gallagher, he suggested that he should also draft his other son Tony and have them both play for the Bills. Charlie signed a contract with the Bills on November 25. Three days later, Gallagher drafted Tony, with their third-round selection of the 1966 AFL Redshirt draft. Gallagher signed Tony shortly after the draft for the 1966 Bills squad.

Tony participated throughout the 1966 Bills' training camp and played competently at cornerback when given the opportunity. He played in each of the Bills' four preseason games and acquitted himself well, while sometimes playing alongside his brother. Tony was a surprise cut at the end of camp, but he was immediately signed to the Bills' taxi squad. He spent the season practicing with the team throughout the year.

The Bills' 1967 yearbook said about Tony: "A real hitter with good speed. Will be worked at safety ... was tried at cornerback last year after playing several positions in college."ⁱ

Tony was again in the Bills' training camp in 1967. He played in each of the Bills' five preseason games and again played reasonably well throughout. Despite his solid play he was again relegated to the taxi squad at the end of camp. However, the Bills suffered some injuries to their receiving corps and Tony was activated during the October 16 bye week and made his debut on November 5. Since he played wide receiver in college and had good speed, the Bills activated him to play that position instead of his normal safety spot.

The Bills hosted the Miami Dolphins at War Memorial Stadium on November 5 in what became a history-making and groundbreaking game. Tony and his brother Charlie became the first African American siblings to play in the AFL on the same team at the same time and no other African American siblings in NFL history had done it. In this historic game, they both played and contributed to the Bills 35-13 victory.

In front of 31,622 fans at War Memorial Stadium, Buffalo jumped to a quick lead. On the opening kickoff Joe Auer returned the Mike Mercer boot 20 yards to the 25-yard line but fumbled and Tony recovered for the Bills. Four plays later Wray Carlton ran 6 yards for the touchdown and only 1:57 into the game Buffalo was ahead 7-0.

Later in the game, after the Dolphins had scored a touchdown to cut the Bills lead to 21-7, brother Charlie returned the ensuing Miami kickoff 36 yards to the Miami 49-yard line



Professional Football Researchers Association

www.profootballresearchers.com

setting the Bills up in great field position. Tom Flores relieved Jack Kemp at quarterback and drove the Bills to the Dolphins' 17 yard-line but on third and four, he threw an ill-advised pass into the end zone that was intercepted by Dick Westmoreland of the Dolphins. Despite the miscue Buffalo went onto a 35-13 victory in the historic game.

The King brothers played together for the final six games of the regular season. Though the Bills won only one of those final six games, the brothers made history. They were honored by the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 2009 for this milestone.

Following the season, the Bills traded Tony to Denver for a conditional sixth-round pick and the King brothers' show in Buffalo was over. Tony did not make the Broncos' roster. He then tried out with the Oakland Raiders. He did not make the big club there either, and was assigned to the Raiders' minor league club, the Sacramento Capitols of the Continental Football League. Tony snared three interceptions, returning them for 103 yards and his only professional TD for the 5-7 Capitols.

Tony caught on with the Long Island Bulls of the Atlantic Coast Football League in 1969 after he was released by the New York Giants. The Bulls were affiliated with the Giants and Tony was hopeful he would get called up to the NFL squad. He played two years with the Bulls in 1969 and 1970 but never got the call. In his two seasons with the Bulls they finished 5-6 and 2-10. He decided to hang up his spikes after the 1970 season.

After retiring from football, he was influenced by former professional football players Jim Brown and Fred Williamson who were involved in movies and acting and decided to give that profession a shot. Tony filmed over 25 commercials including national commercials for Coca Cola and Budweiser. He won a CLIO and CEBA award and began to have much success in modeling and acting. He became a member of the Nation of Islam and changed his name to Malik Farrakhan. His acting career catapulted, and he has had acting roles in *Shaft*, *The Godfather*, *The Toy*, *Hell up in Harlem*, *Bucktown*, *The Last Hunter*, and the remake of *Sparkle*, among others. He currently is chief of security for the rap group Public Enemy.

Tony was enshrined in the Findlay College Hall of Fame in 2004 for his football achievements at the school.

Tony also created a documentary in 2014 called *The Long Road to the Hall of Fame*, telling the story of the two brothers and their claim to football fame - the first African American siblings to play for the same team in the same game in pro football history.



Professional Football Researchers Association

www.profootballresearchers.com

End Notes:

ⁱ *Buffalo Bills 1967 Yearbook*, Buffalo Bills, Inc., p33