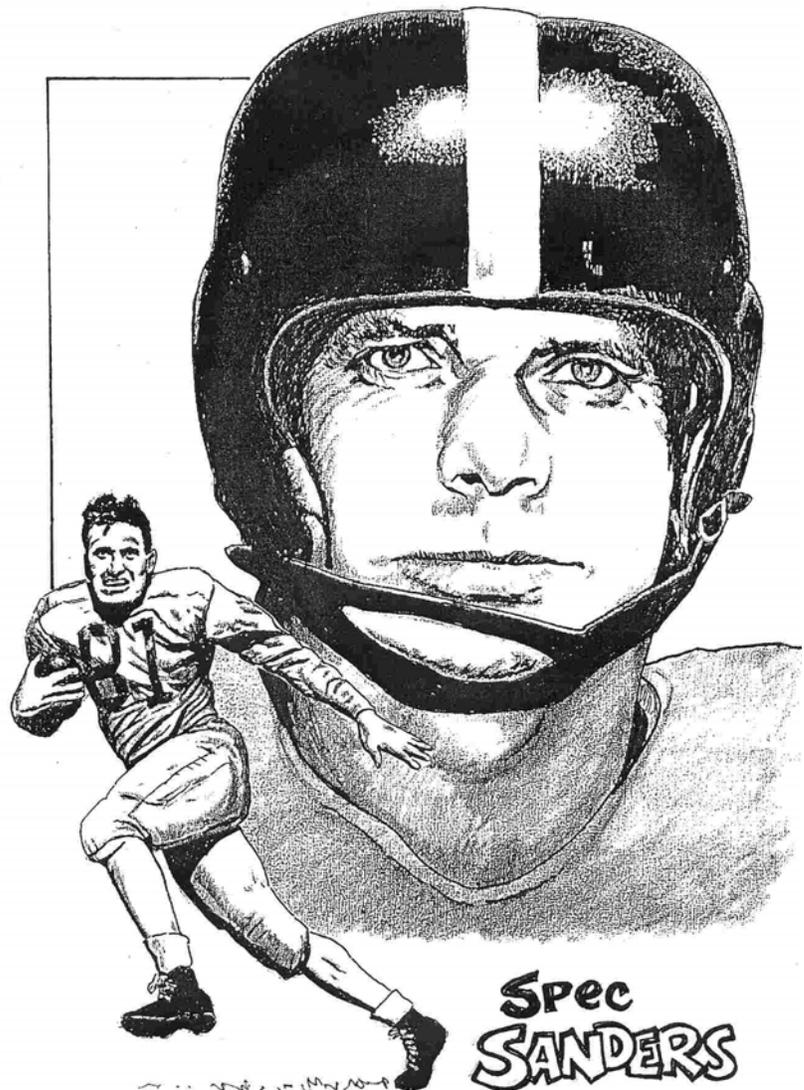


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PFRA-ternizing

Chris Willis was a guest speaker at the annual Nesser Family reunion at the Ohio Historical Society and later did a book signing. Chris' book, "The Columbus Panhandles: A Complete History of Pro Football's Toughest Team, 1900 - 1922" is available at Barnes and Noble Book Stores.

At times, the Panhandles' lineup was nearly all Nessers. The brothers John, Phil, Ted, Fred, Frank, Al, and Raymond plus Ted's son Charles all performed for the team in its long history. They were famous in Ohio and a strong gate attraction. In the pre-NFL days, most of the brothers found time to hire out to other teams for particularly big games.

The team's name – Panhandles – had nothing to do with "panhandling" or begging. Instead, it referred to the Panhandle Section of the Pennsylvania Railroad. Most of the Nessers worked as boilermakers for the railroad. That gave them an advantage over other teams in that they could ride to and from away games for free.

* * * *

In 1979, your editor wrote an article about the Panhandles for the Coffin Corner. Recently, I took a few moments to re-read what I wrote 28 years ago. I discovered that Chris Willis has made me a liar. Early in the article I wrote: "No one ever wrote a book about them. They were not the stuff of which legends were made."

This seems like a good time to remind members that **all articles from the Coffin Corner (1979-2006) are available to members at no charge via e-mail (limit 5 per week). Print-outs are \$1 each.**

You can receive a complete list either by e-mail (free) or regular mail (\$1).

* * * *

Surprisingly, the only Panhandle to be elected to the Pro Football Hall of Fame is team manager Joe Carr. He was elected for his service as NFL President. One reason, of course, is that the Hall has no electees from

before the advent of the league. Thorpe, Guyon, Chamberlin, Halas and Driscoll all played before 1920, but were elected (with the possible exception of Thorpe) for what they did in the NFL.

If the Hall ever gets around to acknowledging pre-1920 contributors, it might consider:

John Brallier, the first admitted pro, he was the quarterback and coach for strong Latrobe (PA) teams of the 1895-1905.

George "Peggy" Parratt, quarterback with Massillon in 1906, he went on keep pro football alive in Ohio during the early 1910s while managing championship teams in Shelby and Akron.

Jack Cusack built championship teams as manager of Canton Bulldogs. Made one of the most important moves in pro football history when he hired Jim Thorpe.

Ted Nesser, the leader of the Nessers over a 20-year career. Played all positions and coached the team.

No doubt there are others deserving of note..

THE COFFIN CORNER

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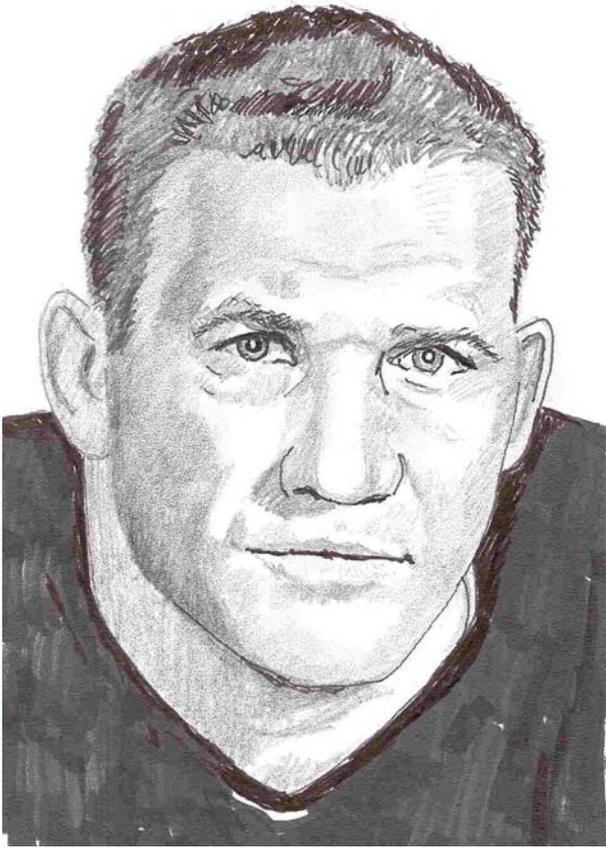
Bob Carroll, Editor

Melissa Thomas, Assistant

Ken Crippen, Assistant Editor

Frank Henkel, Website Editor

Check the label on your CC envelope for the state of your membership. Member thru 2007 (to 29-6) means you are a paid-up member for this year.



GENE HICKERSON

Pro Football Hall of Fame - Class of 2007
Guard

Hickerson, Robert Eugene 6-3, 248
Mississippi HS: Trezevant (Memphis, TN)
B: 2 / 15 / 1935, Trenton, TN

1958-1973 Cleveland Browns

Selected as future choice by Browns, 1957 draft. . .A tackle in college, shifted to guard as a rookie to better utilize speed. . .Lead blocker for three Hall of Fame running backs – Jim Brown, Bobby Mitchell, and Leroy Kelly. . . All-NFL five consecutive seasons, 1966-1970. . .Voted to six straight Pro Bowls. . .Browns posted 1,000-yard rusher in 9 of Hickerson's first 10 seasons, featured league's leading rusher seven times. .

Gene Hickerson, who was an outstanding fullback in high school, became a tackle at the University of Mississippi. He was regarded as one of the best, if not the finest, linemen in the Southeastern Conference during the end of his collegiate career.

The Cleveland Browns wasted little time in securing him for their offensive line. The Browns

selected him as future choice in the 7th round of the 1957 NFL Draft.

Hickerson joined the Browns in 1958 and was promptly shifted to guard to better utilize his speed. He had to pay his dues by first serving as one of Hall of Fame coach Paul Brown's "messenger" guards. Hickerson quickly went from delivering plays to the huddle to establishing himself as the steady lead blocker for three future Hall of Fame running backs – Jim Brown, Bobby Mitchell, and Leroy Kelly.

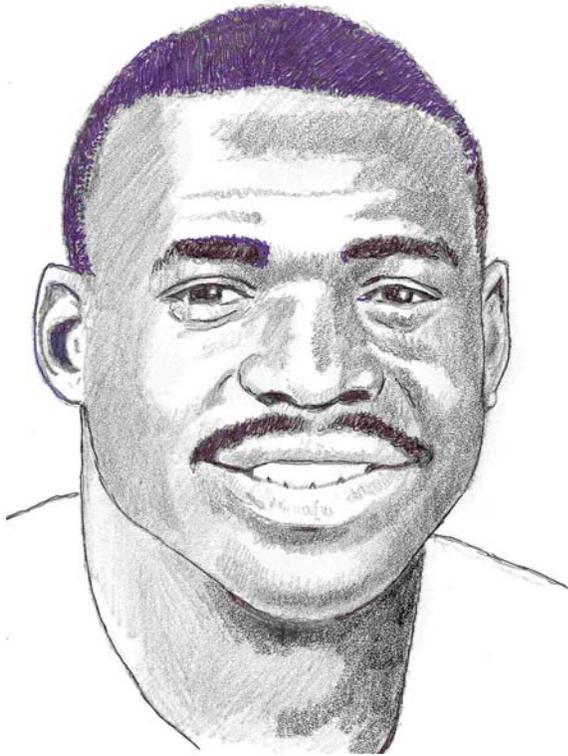
After just three seasons in the NFL, Hickerson's career was slowed when he suffered a broken leg in the 1961 pre-season opener. He fractured the leg again late in the year when he was hit while watching a game from the sideline.

He rebounded fully by the following season. After sitting out two games in 1962, he never missed another game for the remainder of his stellar career. Along the way, he gained the reputation as the lead guard for Brown, regarded as one of the game's greatest runners. But, the official accolades really did not come until after Brown retired and Leroy Kelly became Cleveland's featured back. Hickerson earned first-team All-NFL acclaim five straight seasons, 1966-1970, and was voted to six consecutive Pro Bowls from 1966 to 1971.

By the time Hickerson retired following the 1973 season at age of 38, his accomplishments on the football field were unquestioned. During his tenure, the Browns never experienced a losing season. In all, he played in 202 games during his career and started at right guard in four NFL title games that included the Browns' 27-0 win over the Baltimore Colts in the 1964 NFL Championship Game.

Prior to Hickerson joining the Browns, there had been just seven runners in the entire history of the NFL to reach 1,000 yards rushing in a season. With Hickerson paving the way, the Browns featured a 1,000-yard rusher in every season but one during Gene's first 10 pro seasons. Furthermore, Cleveland featured the NFL's leading ground gainer in seven of those seasons. Hickerson's contribution in helping that happen was recognized when he was named to the NFL's All-Decade Team of the 1960s.

--- Courtesy Pro Football Hall of Fame



MICHAEL IRVIN

Pro Football Hall of Fame - Class of 2007
Wide Receiver

Irvin, Michael Jerome 6-2, 207
Miami (FL)
HS: St. Thomas Aquinas (Ft. Lauderdale, FL)
Born March 5, 1966 in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.

1988-1999 Dallas Cowboys

Cowboys' first round pick in 1988 draft. . .Led league with 1,523 yards on 93 catches, 1991. . .Selected to five straight Pro Bowls. . . Recorded 1,000-yard seasons in all but one year from 1991-1998 . . . Set NFL record eleven 100-yard games, 1995. . 750 career receptions for 11,904 yards, 65 TDs. . .Named to NFL's All-Decade Team of the 1990s.

Year	TM	G	Receiving			TD
			Rec	Yards	Y/R	
1988	Dal	14	32	654	20.4	5
1989	Dal	6	26	378	14.5	2
1990	Dal	12	20	413	20.6	5
1991	Dal	16	93	1523	16.4	8
1992	Dal	16	78	1396	17.9	7
1993	Dal	16	88	1330	15.1	7
1994	Dal	16	79	1241	15.7	6
1995	Dal	16	111	1603	14.4	10
1996	Dal	11	64	962	15.0	2
1997	Dal	16	75	1180	15.7	9
1998	Dal	16	74	1057	14.3	1
1999	Dal	4	10	167	16.7	3
TOTAL		159	750	11904	15.9	65

Wide receiver Michael Irvin joined the Dallas Cowboys in 1988, following a stellar collegiate football career with the Miami Hurricanes. Selected as the 11th player overall in the first round of the 1988 National Football League Draft, Irvin quickly developed into one of the elite receivers in Cowboys and NFL history.

As a rookie, Irvin offered a glimpse of what was to follow during his 12-season career with the Cowboys. He became the first rookie wide receiver to start a season opener for Dallas in more than 20 years. He caught his first of 65 career touchdowns in that game. Irvin's 20.4 yard per catch average during his rookie year led the NFC.

Early in his career, Irvin and the Cowboys suffered through some lean years. The team finished 3-13 during Irvin's first season and then fell to 1-15 the following year. The team's misfortunes would not last long. Help came first in 1989 with the addition of quarterback Troy Aikman and then in 1990 with the drafting of running back Emmitt Smith. The two players complemented Irvin's talents and bolstered the Cowboys' offense.

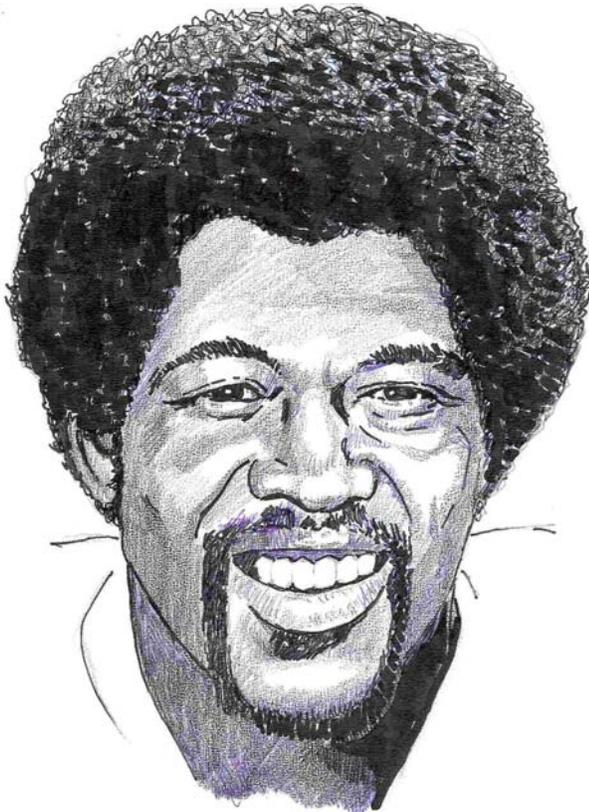
Almost instantly, the team became a contender and Irvin's play, which rose to a new level, was a major factor. In 1991, he helped the Cowboys to an 11-5 record and a return to the playoffs by hauling in 93 passes for a league-leading 1,523 yards and 8 touchdowns. He received consensus All-Pro honors that year and earned the first of five straight Pro Bowl trips.

From 1991 through 1998, Irvin recorded 1,000-yard seasons in all but one year. Along the way, the Cowboys made four straight appearances in the NFC championship game (1992-1995) and captured three Super Bowl titles with back-to-back wins over the Buffalo Bills in Super Bowls XXVII and XXVIII, and the Pittsburgh Steelers in Super Bowl XXX.

In 1995, Irvin recorded his finest season as he caught 111 passes for 1,603 yards. He also established an NFL record with eleven 100-yard games, and scored 10 touchdowns. His outstanding play continued during that year's post-season. In the Cowboys' 38-27 win over the Green Bay Packers in the 1995 NFC Championship Game, Irvin had seven receptions for 100 yards and two touchdowns. He capped off the year with five catches for 76 yards in Dallas's 27-17 victory over the Steelers in Super Bowl XXX.

In all, Irvin accumulated 750 receptions for 11,904 yards. A member of the NFL's All-Decade Team of the 1990s, he had 100 or more yards receiving in a game forty-seven times during his 159-game career.

--- Courtesy Pro Football Hall of Fame



CHARLIE SANDERS

Pro Football Hall of Fame Class of 2007
Tight End

Charles Alvin Sanders 6-4, 230
Minnesot HS: James B. Dudley (Greensboro, NC)
Born August 25, 1946 in Richlands, North Carolina.

1968-77 Detroit Lions

Third round pick by Lions, 1968. . Combined great leaping ability, big hands, strength, speed and elusiveness. . Seven Pro Bowls. . All-NFL three straight seasons. . Recorded 30 or more receptions seven times, 500-plus receiving yards six seasons. . Lions' all-time reception leader (336) at time of retirement. . Team's leader or co-leader in receptions six of his 10 seasons. . Named to NFL's All-Decade Team of the 1970s. . .

Year	Team	Gm	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD
1968	Detroit	14	40	533	13.3	1
1969	Detroit	14	42	656	15.6	3
1970	Detroit	14	40	544	13.6	6
1971	Detroit	13	31	502	16.2	5
1972	Detroit	9	27	416	15.4	2
1973	Detroit	14	28	433	15.5	2
1974	Detroit	14	42	532	12.7	3
1975	Detroit	13	37	486	13.1	3
1976	Detroit	13	35	545	15.6	5
1977	Detroit	10	14	170	12.1	1
10 SEASONS		128	336	4817	14.3	31

Additional Career Statistics: Rushing: 4-(minus-6)

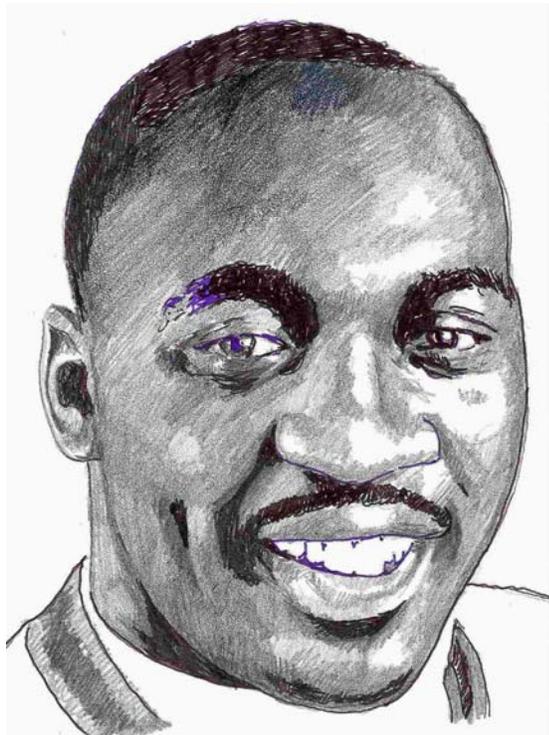
Charlie Sanders was a collegiate star in both football and basketball at the University of Minnesota. His athletic prowess drew the attention of the Detroit Lions who selected him in the third round of the 1968 draft. Not surprisingly, Sanders enjoyed instant success in the National Football League. In an era where the tight end served more as a blocker than as a pass catcher, it did not take long before he became the Lions' secret weapon. Opposing defenses were caught off guard as Detroit quarterbacks Greg Landry and Bill Munson made Sanders one of their favorite targets. Sanders combined his great leaping ability, big hands, and strength with unusual speed and elusiveness to help fuel the Lions offense in the late 1960s and the 1970s.

As a rookie in 1968, the 6'4", 230-pound tight end hauled in 40 passes for 533 yards and scored one TD. His single greatest game of his career came in that season's finale when he had 10 receptions for 133 yards against the Washington Redskins. Sanders was the lone rookie to earn a Pro Bowl selection that season.

More prolific play continued the following year as Sanders recorded the finest season of his career. He caught 42 passes for 656 yards and 3 TDs. For his efforts, he was named first-team All-NFL, the first of three straight all-league selections for Sanders. Following his run of all-pro years, Sanders suffered a broken shoulder during a 1972 preseason game that forced him to miss action during the regular season. However, he quickly rebounded and returned to all-star form.

Sanders recorded 30 or more catches in a season seven times and amassed more than 500 receiving yards in six seasons. By the time he retired following the 1977 season, Sanders ranked as the Lions' all-time leading receptions leader with 336 career grabs. His 4,817 receiving yards was second in the team's record book. He also scored 31 touchdowns during his 128-game career.

Sanders, who was the Lions' leader or co-leader in receiving six times during his 10 seasons in Detroit, was voted to seven Pro Bowls. He earned first- or second team all-conference selections in 1969, 1970, 1971, 1974, 1975, and 1976. Regarded as one of the best tight ends of his era, he was named to the NFL's All-Decade Team of the 1970s.



THURMAN THOMAS

Pro Football Hall of Fame – Class of 2007
Running Back

Thomas, Thurman Lee 5-10, 198
Oklahoma State HS: Willowridge (Sugar Land, TX)
B: 5 / 16 / 1966, Houston, TX.

1988-1999 Buffalo Bills, 2000 Miami Dolphins

Bills' second round pick in 1988 NFL Draft. . .Led NFL in total yards from scrimmage a record four consecutive seasons. . .NFL's Most Valuable Player, 1991. . .Rushed for 1,000 yards in eight consecutive seasons. . .Career numbers include 12,074 yards rushing and 16,532 all-purpose yards. . .Selected to five consecutive Pro Bowls. . .First- or second-team All-Pro five straight years. . .All-AFC 1989-1993, All-AFC Second Team 1994.

Career		RUSHING				RECEIVING				
Year	TM	G	Att	Yard	Y/A	TD	Rec	Yard	Y/R	TD
1988	Buf	15	207	881	4.3	2	18	208	11.6	0
1989	Buf	16	298	1244	4.2	6	60	669	11.2	6
1990	Buf	16	271	1297	4.8	11	49	532	10.9	2
1991	Buf	15	288	1407	4.9	7	62	631	10.2	5
1992	Buf	16	312	1487	4.8	9	58	626	10.8	3
1993	Buf	16	355	1315	3.7	6	48	387	8.1	0
1994	Buf	15	287	1093	3.8	7	50	349	7.0	2
1995	Buf	14	267	1005	3.8	6	26	220	8.5	2
1996	Buf	15	281	1033	3.7	8	26	254	9.8	0
1997	Buf	16	154	643	4.2	1	30	208	6.9	0
1998	Buf	14	93	381	4.1	2	26	220	8.5	1
1999	Buf	5	36	152	4.2	0	3	37	12.3	1
2000	Mia	9	28	136	4.9	0	16	117	7.3	1
TOTAL		182	2877	12074	4.2	65	472	4458	9.4	23

Thurman Thomas slipped to the second round of the 1988 National Football League Draft due to concern about a knee injury he had suffered during his senior year at Oklahoma State. The Buffalo Bills, who had no first round pick that year, selected Thomas, an All-America running back, in the second round with the 40th overall pick.

In 1989, after an impressive rookie season that included a division title for the Bills, the multi-dimensional Thomas rushed for 1,000 yards, caught 60 passes, and scored 12 touchdowns in his second season.

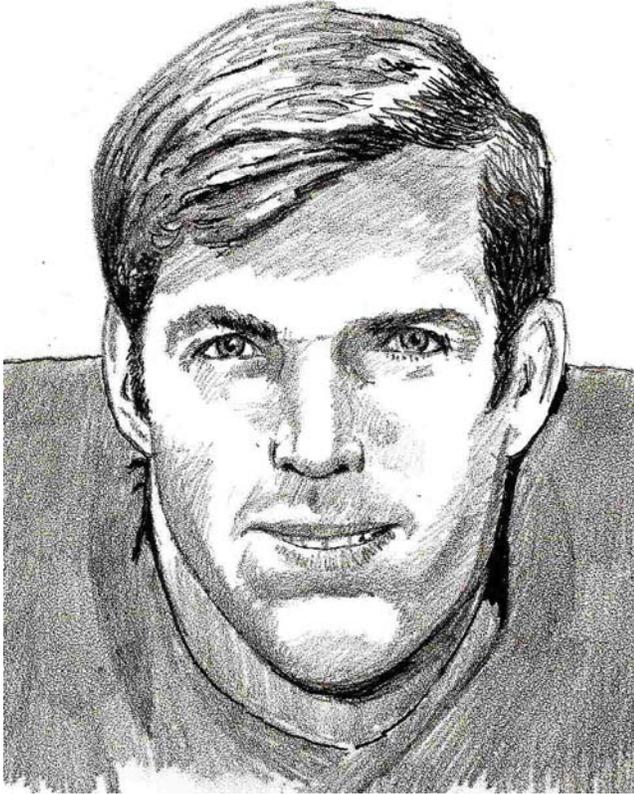
His ability to catch the ball as well as run with it was a key ingredient to the Bills' "No Huddle" offensive attack. The team improved to 13-3 in 1990 as Thomas led the NFL in all-purpose yards. He rushed for 1,297 yards and scored 11 touchdowns while catching 49 passes for 532 yards and two touchdowns. With the versatile back leading the way, the Bills marched through the playoffs to the first of their unprecedented four straight Super Bowl berths.

Thomas rushed for 100 yards in each of the playoff games that post-season including Super Bowl XXV when he gained 135 yards on just 15 carries and scored on a 31-yard run early in the fourth quarter. He also had 5 receptions for 55 yards.

In 1991, Thomas amassed more than 2,000 all-purpose yards, just the 11th player ever to do so. His league-leading yardage output included 1,407 yards on the ground and an additional 631 yards on a career-high 62 receptions. He scored 12 touchdowns. He reached the 2,000-yard total again the following season which marked a record fourth straight season of leading the NFL in yards from scrimmage.

Named to the NFL's All-Decade Team of the 1990s, Thomas was selected first- or second-team All-Pro and All-AFC five times, and was voted to the Pro Bowl five straight years. Thomas retired as the NFL's ninth ranked rusher with 12,074 yards and added another 4,458 yards on 472 catches. He scored 65 rushing and 23 receiving touchdowns in his 13-season career.

--- Courtesy of the Pro Football Hall of Fame



ROGER WEHRLI

Pro Football Hall of Fame – Class of 2007
Cornerback

Wehrli, Roger Russel 6-0, 190
Missouri HS: King City (MO)
B: 11 / 26 / 1947, New Point, MO.

1969-1982 St. Louis Cardinals

Cardinals' first round pick, 1969. . .Earned starting role as rookie. . . Led or tied for lead in interceptions for Cardinals four times. . .Amassed 40 career interceptions, recovered franchise record-tying 19 fumbles. . . Picked off career-high six passes, 1970 and 1975. . .Named to NFL's All-Decade Team of 1970s. . .All-Pro and All-NFC five times. . .Selected to seven Pro Bowls. . .

The St. Louis Cardinals bolstered their secondary with the selection of cornerback Roger Wehrli in the first round of the 1969 draft. An All-America at Missouri, Wehrli picked off 10 passes as a senior as well as led the nation in punt returns that year.

Wehrli, utilizing his speed, finesse, and strength, easily made the transition to the NFL and for the

next 14 seasons was a steady force on the Cardinals defense. His reliable and durable play at the right cornerback position forced opposing quarterbacks to avoid his area.

He earned a starting role with the Cardinals as a rookie and contributed three interceptions and led the team in punt returns. The following season, he picked off a career-high six passes - a feat he would match in 1975 - to earn his first All-Pro and All-NFC honors. He also was named to the first of seven Pro Bowls that year.

Wehrli led or tied for the lead in interceptions for the Cardinals four times during his career. He registered an interception in all but two seasons during his career and amassed a total of 40 interceptions that he returned for 309 yards. Two of his steals he returned for touchdowns – one on a 53-yard return in 1974 against the Washington Redskins and the other against the Minnesota Vikings in 1979.

From 1974 to 1976, Wehrli picked off 12 passes as the Cardinals put together a string of three straight double-digit win seasons (10-4 in 1974, 11-3 in 1975, and 10-4 in 1976) that included back-to-back NFC East titles in 1974 and 1975. He intercepted three Roger Staubach passes, including two in the fourth quarter, during a key 31-17 win over division rival Dallas on December 7, 1975. In doing so, he was the first Cardinals player since Hall of Famer Larry Wilson in 1966, to record three picks in one game. In 1977, Wehrli again led the Cardinals in interceptions with five that included an interception in four straight games – all St. Louis wins.

In 1981, with the Cardinals defense struggling, Wehrli was moved to the left cornerback position. In his first start on the left side, he made four tackles and broke up two passes as the Cardinals shutout the Buffalo Bills, 24-0, to begin a four-game winning streak.

Besides his ability to cover receivers, Wehrli had a knack for finding the ball and recovered 19 fumbles during his career. That total is a franchise record that still stands today. Wehrli was named to the NFL's All-Decade Team of the 1970s, earned first-team All-Pro recognition five times (1970, 1974, 1975, 1976, and 1977) and was named All-NFC five times.

--- Courtesy of the Pro Football Hall of Fame

COMPARING THE NFL, AFL, and AAFC

By Andy Piascik

The American Football League of the 1960's has a secure place in the annals of pro football history. Nine of ten of the AFL's franchises remain in the same locales as in the 1960's, three of the original owners still control their teams, and partisans like Al Davis continually beat the drum about how good and important the AFL was. In addition, numerous books have been written about the AFL, and they keep coming at a steady pace.

Historically speaking, the All-America Football Conference, on the other hand, has not fared well. There are obvious reasons for this. Among the most important are that almost 60 years have passed since the AAFC ceased to function as an independent entity and that only two AAFC franchises remain in existence. Perhaps the most important, though, was the resentment of the AAFC by George Halas, George Preston Marshall, the Maras, and others influential in the NFL, resentment that was so strong that it won the day over historical accuracy.

The differences in the legacies of the AFL and AAFC also stem from the different eras in which each existed. The AFL, for example, began play when there were far more people in the United States with much more expendable income than during the time of the AAFC. Many of those people lived in rapidly growing parts of the country where there were no football teams. That helped the AFL on a local level. Television had become a potent social force by 1960, so much so that many more people would watch games in their living rooms than would ever see them in person. That helped the AFL on a national level. In fact, television was crucial to the AFL's survival.

Ironically, it was partly because of the NFL's battle with the AAFC that so many markets were open to the AFL. There was no team in Buffalo, for example, because of NFL short-sightedness and spite that doomed the AAFC Bills. Other cities were available largely because the NFL of the 1950's was weighed down by memories of the 1946-49 financial bloodletting, a period that was actually just one episode in the NFL's overall instability prior to 1950.

Halas, Marshall, the Maras, Art Rooney, Commissioner Bert Bell, and others had lived through that instability and thus proceeded cautiously regarding television and even more so when it came to expansion. Aside from two teams in California, the NFL remained entrenched in the country's northeastern quadrant. In fact, there were actually fewer NFL teams at the end of the 1950's than at the beginning.

Once the AFL was formed, it turned out not to be necessary that the talent of its teams or the attendance at its games be equal to that of the NFL. When it attracted the attention of television executives and secured a contract, it had a fighting chance at survival. When it signed its second, far-larger contract that began in 1965, some form of a merger with the NFL was virtually assured.

After six years of the NFL doing much better in the competition for college playing talent, a merger meant a common draft. That allowed the AFL to get stronger quickly, which soon led to two victories in the Super Bowl after two one-sided losses. And that led to the notion, a notion that seems to have grown stronger with time, that by 1968-69 the AFL was equal to and perhaps even stronger than the NFL.

Things were very different for the AAFC. With television in its infancy in the late 1940's, the AAFC was dependent almost entirely for financial success on how it did at the gate. Such success proved elusive as both AAFC and NFL teams lost a ton of money. Even though the AAFC won the four-year attendance war, the NFL held most of the cards once merger talks commenced. For example, the AAFC had put franchises in New York City, Chicago, and Los Angeles specifically to compete with the NFL, which the Yankees and Dons did quite successfully. Despite that success, ironically, there was no room in the NFL for either team precisely because of where they were located.

One thing that the AAFC had right from the beginning that the AFL most definitely did not have was playing talent equal to the NFL's. In that regard, the timing of the AAFC's founding was beneficial. Because of World War 2, dozens of outstanding players had gone straight from college into the military instead of to the NFL. The AAFC successfully outbid the NFL for many of these players and began play just as they were being discharged. Although AFL teams outbid the NFL for some high-profile players

like Billy Cannon, it was mostly a losing battle and the AFL didn't sign away anywhere near as many as the AAFC had.

The AAFC was also much more successful in signing established players away from the NFL than the AFL. These were not NFL castoffs like George Blanda and Jack Kemp but players who had a proven track record as being among the NFL's best. The vast majority of those lured away by the AFL, including many like Blanda, Kemp, Don Maynard, Len Dawson, Babe Parilli, Lionel Taylor, Art Powell, Frank Tripucka who became AFL stars, had done virtually nothing in the NFL. Tobin Rote, Bud McFadin, and Walt Michaels were the only AFL players who had ever been named as first or second team all-pro in the NFL (Michaels was actually a coach who played exactly one game in the AFL).

The AAFC, by contrast, signed numerous players who had been NFL standouts. Among them were Parker Hall, Wee Willie Wilkin, Bruno Banducci, Lee Artoe, Norm Standlee, Lou Rymkus, Harry Clarke, Joe Aguirre, John Mellus, Don Greenwood, Riley Matheson, Dick Bassi, Mo Scarry, and numerous others. In addition, Dan Topping's NFL Dodgers jumped leagues and became the AAFC Yankees. Their roster was a combination of Brooklyn's best and others who were signed away from other NFL teams - Bruiser Kinard, Ace Parker, Perry Schwartz, Bob Masterson, Pug Manders, and Frank Sinkwich among them. In all, 26 AAFC players (compared to the AFL's three) had been a first or second team all-pro in the NFL at least once, and Hall, Parker, and Sinkwich had been NFL MVP's.

When comparing the AAFC and the NFL, a lack of preseason games or Super Bowls has fed an assumed sense of NFL superiority. It has become almost a circular argument: the NFL was superior because the AAFC never beat them on the field, besides which the NFL never deigned to play the AAFC because everybody knew it was superior. No evidence is necessary because, well, because everybody knew the NFL was superior and that's that. As we shall see, not quite.

In the case of the AFL and the NFL, there are the first four Super Bowls, but those games hardly tell us as much as a number of years worth of regular season games would. Still, there is evidence regarding all three leagues that is rarely invoked. Those four Super Bowls are a part of the picture but by no means all of it.

What follows is an attempt, with what we do have, to compare the AFL and the AAFC to the NFL, quantify how strong each was relatively, and then see how the two upstart leagues compare to each other. It's imperfect to be sure but it's more substantive than many of the assumptions that have dominated such discussions over the years. Considering that all of the best evidence comes down overwhelmingly in favor of the AAFC over the AFL, it leads to a fairly definitive conclusion about those two leagues. In addition and more significantly, that same evidence indicates that for a four-year period anyway, the NFL was not pro football's strongest league.

Beginning in 1967, the AFL and NFL played three seasons worth of pre-season games. Because of the bitterness on both sides, these games were unlike any preseason encounters in the history of football. One measure of that is the fact that Kansas City Chiefs' head coach Hank Stram counted the 66-24 preseason thrashing the Chiefs administered to the Chicago Bears in 1967 as one of the finest moments of his distinguished career.

How did teams from the two leagues fare in these grudge matches? Here's the breakdown (ties counted as half a win and half a loss):

AFL-NFL PRESEASON GAMES, 1967-69					
	AFL	NFL	TIES	AFL share	NFL share
1967	3	13	0	18.7%	81.3%
1968	13	10	0	56.5%	43.5%
1969	13	19	1	40.9%	59.1%
Total	29	42	1	40.8%	59.2%

The AFL did win one season series in 1968, although it was by a margin smaller than the NFL's in either 1967 or 1969. Altogether, it was a fairly decisive victory for the NFL, which won two season series, plus the overall by a factor of almost 50%.

A second way in which the leagues can be compared is by looking at the number of Hall of Fame players that were active in each during the AFL's ten seasons. Again, it's not the most solid of ground but the number of players from each that are considered to be among the game's best can tell us something

THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 29, No. 4, (2007)

about the AFL's strength relative to the NFL. Because the AFL always had fewer teams and roster spots, the comparison is made in terms of Hall of Famers per team, although the percentages for each league are also included. All Hall of Famers through the class of 2007 are included:

	AFL			NFL			AFL per team +/-	AFL +/- as a rate
	HOFers	%	# per team	HOFers	%	# per team		
1960	4	8.2	0.5	45	91.8	3.5	-3.0	-600%
1961	5	9.3	0.6	49	90.7	3.5	-2.9	-483%
1962	8	14.0	1.0	49	86.0	3.5	-2.5	-250%
1963	11	19.0	1.4	47	81.0	3.4	-2.0	-143%
1964	11	17.4	1.4	51	82.6	3.6	-2.2	-157%
1965	13	21.3	1.6	48	79.7	3.4	-1.8	-113%
1966	14	23.7	1.6	45	76.3	3.0	-1.4	-87.5%
1967	19	30.6	2.1	43	69.4	2.7	-0.6	-28.6%
1968	21	35.6	2.1	38	64.4	2.4	-0.3	-14.3%
1969	24	36.9	2.4	41	63.1	2.6	-0.2	-8.3%
Total	130	22.2	1.5	456	77.8	3.1	-1.6	-107%

(Obviously, there were not 130 AFL and 456 NFL Hall of Famers in the 1960's. Those two numbers are included simply because they are the basis for all of the other totals).

For the ten year period, the NFL averaged more than twice as many Hall of Famers per team. These rates and percentages will change as new players from that era are enshrined but it's unlikely they will change very much either way, however, since all players from the 1960's are in the senior category. The AFL improves year by year, except for a slight step back in 1964. Equality is almost achieved by 1969, but not quite. What's really striking is the vast discrepancies in the early years.

Some may protest that the Hall of Fame selectors have unfairly slighted the AFL. That hardly seems the case. Such objections seem, rather, to be just another form of partisanship, the kind you get when you ask fans of any team from any league who they think belongs in the Hall of Fame. Invariably, the answer will be several players from their favorite team.

More importantly, the assertion of an anti-AFL bias doesn't hold water by any objective analysis. Any list of players from the 1960's for whom a strong case can be made would include some from the AFL (Johnny Robinson, Walt Sweeney, Ed Budde). It would, however, also include two or three times as many from the NFL (Del Shofner, Chuck Howley, Mick Tingelhoff, Jerry Kramer, Chris Hanburger, Jim Ray Smith, Alex Karras).

The first combined all-NFL/AFL team appeared in *The Detroit News* in 1966. The *News* went on to select teams in 1968 and 1969, missing 1967 because of a strike. *Pro Football Weekly* and the Pro Football Writers Association picked teams in 1968 and 1969, while the Hall of Fame and the Newspaper Enterprise Association did so in 1969. Here is the tally of first teamers picked to those teams in each year (the 37.5% figure is based on 9 AFL teams and 15 NFL teams in 1966; 38.5% is based on 10 AFL and 16 NFL teams in 1968 and 1969):

	AFL	NFL	AFL share	If equal would've been	AFL +/-
1966	7	17	29%	37.5%	-8.5
1968	24	45	35%	38.5%	-3.5
1969	49	70	41%	38.5%	+2.5
Total	80	132	37.7%	38.2%	-0.5

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As with the Hall of Famers, the AFL gets better relative to the NFL with each year and actually noses ahead in 1969. Again, AFL partisans might protest that the combined all-pro teams prior to 1969 underestimated the AFL. The majority of those who voted assumed that the NFL was vastly superior, such an argument might go, and the selections reflect that bias.

That hardly seems the case, as we will soon see. Rather, what's clear is that the AFL would have been poorly represented in its early years. Had combined all-pro teams been picked beginning in 1960, a line on a graph representing the AFL would have started near the very bottom left and gotten steadily higher as it crossed the page toward 1969.

Well, how about 1969, AFL partisans might say. The point is not whether the AFL was weak in the first half of the decade but that the AFL had at least achieved equality, maybe superiority, by the end of the decade. The fact that the AFL did better than the NFL proportionately in 1969 as represented by the last column on the right seems to substantiate that notion. However, the evidenced that follows - evidence that is probably the most important that we have available - pretty much demolishes that argument.

The following chart is of the all-pros from 1970, 1971, and 1972, the first three seasons after the AFL-NFL merger, and does not include any player whose career started after 1969. That is, only holdover players from the time of two separate leagues are counted, and players like Ken Houston and Paul Warfield are counted toward where they were playing before 1970:

ALL-PROS, 1970-72					
	AFL	NFL	AFL share	If equal would've been	AFL +/-
1970	39	94	29%	38.5%	-9.5
1971	56	118	32%	38.5%	- 6.5
1972	45	102	31%	38.5%	-7.5
Total	140	314	30.8%	38.5%	-7.7

In 1970, the AFL did worse than it did in 1968 and far worse than in 1969. The level for 1970-72 as a whole (30.8%) is actually *lower* than the 35% in 1968. That indicates that rather than underestimating the AFL before 1969, all-pro selectors actually overestimated it in 1968 and *drastically* overestimated it in 1969 (swayed in large part, no doubt, by the Jets win in the Super Bowl the previous season).

That conclusion is further bolstered if we look at AFL-NFL regular season games in the first three years after the merger, with ties counted as half a win and half a loss:

AFL vs. NFL, 1970-72					
	AFL	NFL	Ties	AFL	NFL
1970	19	39	2	33%	67%
1971	19	35	2	36%	64%
1972	25	34	1	42%	58%
Total	108	63	5	37%	63%

For the three seasons, NFL teams won almost two thirds of the head to head games. Anyone inclined to downplay the NFL's all-pro superiority of 1970-72 as just something involving individual players or as the result of a lingering anti-AFL bias comes smack up against the fact that the NFL's dominance in head to head games was even more pronounced.

One last bit from the post-merger years concerns the Super Bowls of the 1970's. Granted that the further from 1969, the less meaningful the results, as more and more pre-1970 players retired, but the NFL's dominance of that decade's worth of Super Bowls is at least somewhat relevant. Beginning with the 1970 season, NFL teams won seven Super Bowls, AFL teams three. Five of the games featured two NFL teams and no AFL team. And although it covers too long a period of time to impact a discussion of the 1960's, consider this: after the Dolphins victory over the Vikings at the end of the 1973 season, NFL teams won 21 of the next 24 Super Bowls. Only one of the AFL's ten teams - the Raiders - won a Super

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Bowl for 24 long years. At minimum that tells us a little about the comparative state of the franchises of the two leagues in the years after the merger.

Turning to a comparison of the NFL and AAFC, the picture is very different. As the information below shows, the AAFC *began* at a level of at least equality and stayed at that level throughout its existence. In fact, once the two leagues began playing each other, *all* of the measures indicate AAFC superiority.

In that sense, the AAFC case is the opposite of the AFL's in several crucial ways: it was never anything close to a minor league, as its detractors are inclined to argue and as the AFL was in its early years (if anything, the AAFC was pro football's major league for four years); and its legacy suffers from a very real *underestimation* of its strength, while largely on the basis of two games, the AFL's has been *overestimated*, perhaps grossly so.

There were no AAFC-NFL preseason games so the first chart is a Hall of Fame chart just like the previous one:

HALL OF FAMERS, 1946-49

	AAFC			NFL			AAFC per team +/-	AAFC +/- as a %
	HOF'ers	%	# per team	HOFers	%	# per team		
1946	9	45	1.13	11	55	1.1	+0.02	+0.02
1947	8	40	1.0	12	60	1.2	-0.2	-.20
1948	11	42	1.4	15	58	1.5	-0.1	-.07
1949	10	34	1.4	19	66	1.9	-0.5	-.36
Total	38	40	1.2	57	60	1.4	-0.2	-.17

Again, the most important columns are the last two. The AAFC actually comes out on top in its very first year and is very competitive the other three seasons. Comparing this chart with the NFL/AFL Hall of Fame chart, every AAFC season is better than every AFL season in the last column. In the second column from the right, three AAFC seasons are equal to or better than every AFL season and the fourth is better than eight of ten. But as well as the AAFC does in this comparison, there's much that follows that indicates that it was actually shortchanged regarding the Hall of Fame.

First of all, and in another contrast to the AFL, there are more AAFC players who belong in the Hall of Fame (Mac Speedie, Dick Barwegan, and Bruno Banducci) than there are NFLers from this period (Al Wistert). If borderline NFL candidates like Pat Harder are thrown in the mix, they are matched and even trumped by the number of AAFCers (Lou Rymkus, Frankie Albert). If all deserving players from these years were enshrined, the ledger in the above chart would shift in favor of the AAFC for 1947 and 1948.

In addition, some of the worst Hall of Fame choices are NFL players from this period. Alex Wojciechowicz and Charlie Trippi are the two most prominent examples, but it could be argued that the list is far larger (see, for example, my article *World War 2 and the Hall of Fame* in *The Coffin Corner*, Volume 27 #4).

Here are the combined AAFC/NFL all-pro teams from 1946-49 which, significantly, were selected right from the beginning of the AAFC. Although there is a great deal of evidence that those who selected these teams seriously underestimated the AAFC, the fact that such teams were chosen right from the AAFC's beginning indicates that the AAFC was *perceived at the time by knowledgeable observers to be at about the same level as the NFL*, something that no national news organization thought about the AFL until its ninth season (44% is based on eight AAFC teams compared to ten NFL, and 41.2% is based on seven to ten):

COMBINED ALL-PRO TEAMS, 1946-49

	AAFC	NFL	AAFC share	If equal would've been	AAFC +/-
1946	8	14	36.4%	44%	-7.6
1947	10	12	45.4%	44%	+1.4

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1948	14	19	42.4%	44%	-1.6
1949	20	24	45.5%	41.2%	+4.3
Total	52	69	43.0%	43.7%	-0.7

The AAFC bests the NFL in two of four seasons and is about even for the four-year period as a whole. That's a performance that any league just starting out would be proud of and is one that is vastly superior to what the AFL would have done had all-AFL/NFL teams been picked starting in 1960. However, again, there is significant post-merger evidence that suggests the AAFC would have done much better given an accurate evaluation of its strength.

The two most important comparisons are the two that follow because these are based on how each side did when teams and players from the two leagues took each other on on the playing field. In each, the AAFC's advantage is huge. The first is basically the same as the AFL/NFL one that measured how players from the rival leagues did on the all-pro teams after they merged. Only players active before 1950 are included. (Again, the 41% figure in the second to last column is based on seven AAFC teams and ten NFL teams in 1949; averaging out for the entire 1946-49 period would increase that figure to 44% and would slightly alter the results in the last column):

ALL PROS, 1950-55

	AAFC	NFL	AAFC rate	If equal would've been	AAFC +/-
1950	20	20	50%	41%	+9.0
1951	34	19	64%	41%	+23.0
1952	20	15	57%	41%	+16.0
1953	37	6	86%	41%	+45.0
1954	18	16	53%	41%	+12.0
1955	19	12	61%	41%	+20.0
Total	148	88	63%	41%	+22.0

In all of the first six seasons after the 1950 merger, the number of all-pro slots received by AAFC players was far higher than the "equality" line. More impressively, in five seasons the AAFC topped the NFL in the *total* number of all-pro slots and tied in the other even though there were fewer AAFC players than pre-1950 NFL players. In 1953, **86%** of the all-pro slots that went to pre-1950 players went to AAFC veterans.

And although the dynastic Browns were well represented in all of these seasons, the AAFC totals are by no means the result of one great team. Many of the AAFC slots are accounted for by players from other AAFC teams: Dick Barwegan, Joe Perry, Arnie Weinmeister, Bruno Banducci, Bob Hoernschmeyer, Otto Schnellbacher, Len Ford, Tom Landry, Y.A. Tittle, Elroy Hirsch, Spec Sanders, Abe Gibrion, Bill Johnson, Billy Joe Grimes, Joe Signaigo, John Kissell, John Rapacz, Dan Edwards, Bob Smith, among others. For the six-year period, AAFCers accounted for almost two-thirds (63%) of the all-pro slots earned by players whose careers began before 1950. That's a clear expression of superiority. When the smaller size of the AAFC is factored in, it's an expression of domination.

That's significant because, again, this is one of the two most important comparisons, along with the tally of head to head games between NFL and AAFC teams that follows. That's because it's not speculative, it's based on what happened when players from the two leagues actually met on the field. In 1953, for example, experts watching pre-1950 players who were still active determined that those from the AAFC were better than the ones from the NFL by a factor of 86 to 14, *or more than 6 to 1*. That's about as dominating as it gets.

And by no means is the AAFC's dominance a result of just that league's best players who were still active during those years. At least 41% of the pre-1950 players - the line for equality - were AAFCers in more years than not. That suggests that top to bottom the AAFC and NFL had been equal, while the best players in the AAFC were significantly better than the best in the NFL.

Here is how the AAFC teams did against the NFL in head to head games:

AAFC vs. NFL, 1950-55

	AAFC	NFL	Ties	AAFC	NFL
1950	11	19	0	36.7%	63.3%
1951	17	4	1	79.5%	20.5%
1952	15	9	0	62.5%	37.5%
1953	19	3	0	86.4%	13.6%
1954	16	7	1	68.8%	31.2%
1955	12	9	1	56.8%	43.2%
Total	90	51	3	63.5%	36.5%

In a word, the AAFC dominated. To those who would say the results are skewed because the AAFC was not taken in en masse and that after 1950 only the Browns and 49ers were still playing, that's true but only to a point. There's also an important countervailing factor: every team that the Browns and 49ers were playing against was strengthened by AAFC talent, some significantly so. The Bears added perennial all-pro Barwegan, Julie Rykovich, Billy Stone, and others. Among those the Lions added were Bob Smith, Bob Hoernschmeyer, and Ollie Cline. The Rams added Bob Reinhard, Vic Vasicek, Art Statuto, and Hirsch, who actually jumped in 1949 after three seasons with the Chicago Rockets.

Where the talent infusion was most dramatic, however, was with the NFL's two New York teams, as both the Giants and Yanks used AAFC talent to completely revitalize themselves. After a three-year record of 12-22-2 in 1947-49, the Giants improved to 10-2 by adding Weinmeister, Schnellbacher, Rapacz (all all-pros in 1950), Tom Landry, Harmon Rowe, John Mastangelo, and Dick Woodard. The Yanks improved from 1-10-1 to 7-5 by adding 1950 all-pros Edwards, Sanders, and Signaigo, plus Jack Russell, Buddy Young, George Taliaferro, Martin Ruby, and many others, 22 AAFCers in all.

The 1950 Yanks are an excellent case that proves the AAFC teams not included in the merger would have more than held their own. Made up mostly of the 1949 AAFC Yankees, the Yanks finished 7-5 in 1950 and were actually in first place through eight weeks. What makes that accomplishment more impressive is that it was actually the 1949 Yankees *minus* five of their best players, the five who were taken by the Giants - Landry, Weinmeister, Schnellbacher, Rowe, and Mastrangelo. Put those five on the Yanks roster and the NFL might very well have faced the embarrassment of a 1950 Championship Game between two AAFC teams. Yet even *with* those five outstanding players, the 1949 Yankees were only able to finish 8-4 and in third place in the AAFC.

Unless new data is unearthed or an analysis that leads elsewhere is put forward, the information in this article is about the best we have. In lieu of anything new coming forward, it leads to a number of rather definitive conclusions:

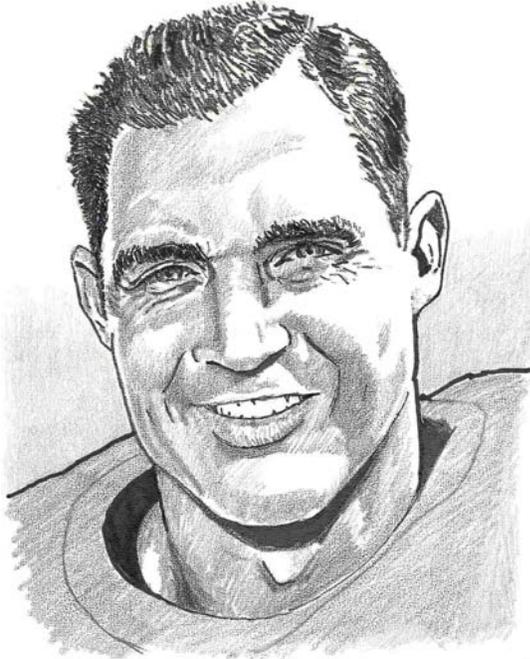
- in its early years, the AFL was more a minor league than a major league competitor to the NFL;
- the AFL never achieved equality with the NFL, let alone superiority, its victories in the third and fourth Super Bowls notwithstanding;
- at any point in its history, the AAFC was better than the AFL at its best;
- looking at the entire histories of the two leagues, beginning to end, the AAFC was vastly superior to the AFL;
- the AAFC as a whole was at least as good and probably better than the NFL, and its best players were definitely better than the NFL's best players;*
- the NFL prefers the "powerful say whatever they want" version of history to historical accuracy. If historical accuracy were to win the day, as it still can, the AAFC's place in history would be secure, its contributions lauded, its records recognized, and its equality to the NFL, at minimum, acknowledged.

*And as I have argued elsewhere, its best team was also better than any team in the NFL. See pages 202-218 in The Best Show in Football: The 1946-1955 Cleveland Browns, Pro Football's Greatest Dynasty.

Tobin Rote

By John Maxymuk

Adapted from *Packers By the Numbers*, Prairie Oak Press, 2003.



Today, running quarterbacks are common and celebrated with popular stars such as Vince Young, Michael Vick and Donovan McNabb as the latest embodiments of the “quarterback of the future” who have both the calibrated arm to hit a receiver at any distance as well the speed, size, and strength to stray far from the safety of the pocket. The origins of the running quarterback are often said to date to the Sixties when scrambling Fran Tarkenton tried to stay alive behind the porous offensive line of the expansion Minnesota Vikings. However, with apologies to Otto Graham, Frankie Albert and Johnny Lujack, the first *running* quarterback played for the Packers, Tobin Rote.

In the 1940s the teams in the NFL set aside the single wing offense and moved to the T Formation, and the increase in passing led to an explosion of points. Tobin Rote was a throwback single wing tailback in his talents and a throwback in general for his toughness.

In one game, he had his nose broken, left the field for one play, and came back for the next play with blood streaming down his face. In another game, he threw a pass to Ray Pelfry 10 yards downfield. As the defense converged on Pelfry, he lateraled back to Rote who was trailing on the play, and Tobin went for the first down. He could run and throw with equal skill, and he had a long successful career in, remarkably, three professional football leagues.

Rote was a tall tough Texan born January 18, 1928, in San Antonio. He was a record-setting passer for Rice Institute from 1946 to 1949 and was drafted in the second round of the 1950 NFL draft by the Packers. It was his misfortune to play for some of the poorest teams in Packer history from 1950 through 1956. In those years, the 6-foot-3-inch 210-pound quarterback led the league twice in attempts, completions, and touchdown passes and once in passing yardage. In addition, he was the first quarterback to lead his team in rushing yards which he did initially in 1951. He repeated that achievement in 1952 and 1956 while finishing second on the team two other times. All this with a yearly rushing average that never fell below 4.5 yards per carry. In 1951, Coach Gene Ronzani installed an early version of the shotgun formation against the Bears to take advantage both of Rote’s throwing and running skills. He ran for 150 yards in the second Bears game that year, but also fumbled twice inside the Bears 15 yard line as the Packers lost. Of course, to fit in on a team that never finished better than 6-6, he led the league in fumbles twice as well.

His second Packer coach, Lisle Blackbourn, referred to Rote as “the greatest competitor I

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ever saw.” However, Blackburn also noted the signal caller’s inconsistency, “When Tobin Rote is hot he is positively the greatest of them all, and when he is cold, well... “ This is borne out by Rote’s statistics. In 1952, he completed 52% of his passes and threw 13 touchdown passes against only 8 interceptions for a passer rating of 85.6. The next year he completed only 39% of his passes, threw 5 touchdowns and 15 interceptions for a rating of 32.4. After his finest year in 1956 when he led the league in passes, completions, yardage and touchdowns, Blackburn traded him and Val Joe Walker to Detroit for tackles Ollie Spencer and Norm Masters, guard Jim Salsbury and halfback Don McIlhenny, no stars but four future starters.

In Detroit, Bobby Layne (another running quarterback) got hurt in 1957, and Rote led the Lions to a tie for the Western Conference title with the 49ers. After trailing at halftime 27-7 in the playoff, Rote led the Lions back in the second half to win 31-27. In the championship game against the Browns, Rote ran for one score and passed for four others as the Lions trampled Cleveland 59-14. Two years later, though, Rote completed only 38% of his passes and threw 19 interceptions for a passer rating of only 26.8. In 1960 he found himself with the Toronto

Argonauts of the Canadian Football League topping the league in passing with 38 touchdowns and leading his team to a divisional title although they did not reach the championship game. After three successful years in Canada, Rote had his final hurrah with the San Diego Chargers in the American Football League. In 1963, he led the AFL in passing percentage at 59% and threw for two touchdowns in the Chargers 51-10 drubbing of the Patriots in the championship game. In 1964, he once again quarterbacked the Chargers in the title game, but came up a loser 20-7. He finished his career with a brief appearance for Denver in 1966.

When he died in 2000, he was survived by his wife and three of their four children. Although his career completion percentage is under 46%, he passed for 148 touchdowns and ran for 37 more. His career rushing total of 3,128 yards was a record for quarterbacks later broken by Fran Tarkenton in 1972 and is now held by Randall Cunningham with 4,928. The 2,205 yards Rote rushed for with Green Bay is still the most of any Packer quarterback. While his greatest triumphs occurred with better teams in larger cities, Tobin Rote’s most athletic years were spent in Green Bay where he set the original standard for the Running Quarterback that continues to evolve today.

Year	TM	G	Passing								Rushing			
			Comp	Att	PCT	Yard	Y/A	TD	INT	Rate	Att	Yard	Avg	TD
1950	Green Bay	12	83	224	37.1	1231	5.50	7	24	26.7	27	158	5.9	0
1951	Green Bay	12	106	256	41.4	1540	6.02	15	20	48.6	76	523	6.9*	3
1952	Green Bay	12	82	157	52.2	1268	8.08	13	8	85.6	58	313	5.4	2
1953	Green Bay	12	72	185	38.9	1005	5.43	5	15	32.4	33	180	5.5	0
1954	Green Bay	12	180*	382*	47.1	2311	6.05	14	18	59.1	67	301	4.5	8
1955	Green Bay	12	157	342	45.9	1977	5.78	17	19	57.8	74	332	4.5	5
1956	Green Bay	12	146*	308*	47.4	2203*	7.15	18*	15	70.6	84	398	4.7	11
1957	Detroit	12	76	177	42.9	1070	6.05	11	10	60.2	70	366	5.2	1
1958	Detroit	12	118	257	45.9	1678	6.53	14	10	69.5	77	351	4.6	3
1959	Detroit	10	62	162	38.3	861	5.31	5	19	26.8	35	156	4.5	2
1960-62	CFL													
1963	San Diego	14	170	286	59.4	2510	8.78*	20	17	86.7	24	62	2.6	2
1964	San Diego	14	74	163	45.4	1156	7.09	9	15	49.5	10	-12	-1.2	0
1965	Retired													
1966	Denver	3	3	8	37.5	40	5.00	0	1	14.6	0	0	0.0	0
TOTAL		149	1329	2907	45.7	18850	6.48	148	191	56.8	635	3128	4.9	37

* = League leader

Hall of Fame Presenters

By Patrick Gallivan

Most baby boomers probably recall Ed McMahon's announcement of "Heeeeeere's Johnny!" followed by Johnny Carson's entrance and opening monologue. This signature event was how McMahon introduced Carson every evening on "The Tonight Show." Even though they might not match McMahon's flair, every new member of the Pro Football Hall of Fame inductee needs an Ed McMahon of their own to present them on the big day.

The choice of a presenter is a big decision. The person selected to introduce the inductee has usually played a significant role in their life and career to be selected for that honor. In fact, the role of the presenter is a long-standing tradition beginning with the first class inducted to the hall.

In the inaugural 1963 class, the 17 enshrines selected the presenter in a great achiever to great achiever scenario. The first group of presenters was well known in their field. The sponsors in the first group included the President of the United Steelworkers of America, a Special Assistant to the President of the United States, a Supreme Court Justice and a United States Senator.

The Supreme Court Justice was Justice Byron "Whizzer" White who won fame for his running on the gridiron prior to his judicial career. After graduating from the University of Colorado, White joined the Pittsburgh franchise, under coach Johnny "Blood" McNally. The infamous player and coach of the early NFL asked White to be his presenter in Canton. Justice White returned in 1966 to present Walt Kiesling.

The relative youth of the professional game and the looming influence of the college

game was clear as all four members of the fabled "Four Horsemen" of Notre Dame presented enshrines for membership into the Professional Football Hall of Fame for that inaugural class. Harry Stuhldreher presented Sammy Baugh, Jimmy Crowley presented Curly Lambeau, Don Miller presented Bronko Nagurski and Elmer Layden presented Jim Thorpe.

In 1964, seven new members joined the Hall of Fame. Three honorees selected former players to handle the introductions, but there still was the influence of personalities who made their mark outside of the sporting world. David Lawrence, who presented George Halas in 1963, returned to introduce Art Rooney. Justice William O. Douglas presented his long-time friend Jimmy Conzelman and Capp Timm, a professor at Iowa State, introduced Mike Michalske. As the years rolled on, more enshrines chose former players and coaches to present them to the hall.

Prior to the 2007 induction, 81 coaches have been selected to introduce their players. Most of those (53) coached the player at the professional level. Other nominees asked their college (17) or high school (11) coach to introduce them. In some cases, the individual coached the player at the college and professional level. For example, Jerry Burns coached Paul Krause both at University of Iowa and with the Minnesota Vikings. Al Davis has been the presenter for eight Pro Football Hall of Fame inductees -- Lance Alworth, Jim Otto, George Blanda, Willie Brown, Gene Upshaw, Art Biletnikoff, Art Shell, and Ted Hendricks.

Some of the enshrines and their presenters had long-term relationships. An example is

the Class of 2003 when Chiefs quarterback Len Dawson introduced coach Hank Stram. Sixteen years before, Stram introduced his quarterback to the Hall. Their relationship dated back to the fifties when Stram, quarterback coach at Purdue, recruited Dawson.

Two hall of fame members served as presenter three times. Both Mel Hein and Jimmy Conzelman have done that. Conzelman holds the distinction of having been on stage during each of the first four induction ceremonies. He was part of the Class of 1964 and presented "Red" Grange in 1963, "Paddy" Driscoll in 1965 and Joe Guyon in 1966.

In another strange twist, John Stallworth and John Stallworth, Jr. both have served as presenters. The senior Stallworth presented Lynn Swann and Junior presented his father.

In more recent years, the presenters have had family ties with the football enshrine. Since 2000, fourteen of the 36 inductees have asked a family member to present them. The first family member to present a player for induction was Herb Hannah who presented his son John for enshrinement in 1991.

Boston Herald columnist Joe Fitzgerald tells a story about John Hannah's selection of his dad to be his presenter. "When I asked him," John confided later, "he didn't say anything. It was like there was nobody on the other end of the line. I kept saying, Dad? Dad? Nothing. Finally my mother took the receiver and said, 'You touched him, John. He's crying.'"

Herb was not a man who cried easily, but the significance was clear. Herb Hannah, who had lettered in football at Alabama and played one season with the New York Giants in 1951, perhaps knew that a father had not introduced his son. In the past, inductees had selected coaches, owners and teammates, but no one had ever picked his father until John made a call home.

"You're supposed to pick someone who meant a lot to you, someone who's had a major influence on you, right?" John said, in providing the reasons for selecting his father. "Well, there's nobody I know who can fill that bill better than he can. There's not a day in my life when I don't see myself doing something my daddy either taught or did. So I never had a second thought about who I was going to pick."

Two years after Herb Hannah introduced his son, Walter Payton asked his son Jarrett, who was twelve at the time, to present him. "Not only is he a great athlete, he's a role model – he's my role model," Jarrett said in his brief two-minute introduction.

The induction ceremony for the Class of 2004 could be considered the family class. Four inductees were honored and all four selected family members to introduce them. John Elway was the featured honoree on that day. Elway said he had wanted his father to present him. Since his father had passed away three years before, Elway turned to his daughter, Jessica, to introduce him. "The greatest honor in my life is that you have chosen me to speak for him," said Jessica Elway, who became the first daughter to present her father.

The family member most often chosen to present is a son. Prior to the 2007 class, twenty-one family members have introduced a family member during the induction ceremony but only once each has that person been a brother (Jimmy Johnson presented by Rafer), daughter (John Elway presented by Jessica Elway) or wife (Mike Singletary presented by Kim).

Since Herb Hannah introduced his son, John, to the Hall, four other fathers have been selected for that honor. The latest was Steve Young's father "Grit," who presented the former 49ers quarterback in 2005.

After Jarrett Payton introduced his father, Walter, in 1993, twelve more sons have had

that honor. In 1997, Don Shula's two sons, David and Mike, shared the duty.

One of the more interesting selections for presenter happened in 1964 when Clarke Hinkle selected Bronko Nagurski to introduce him. Hinkle and Nagurski had notorious clashes on the football field as they had faced each other as members of the Packers and Bears respectively. In those days, Hinkle and Nagurski both played fullback and linebacker, so they butted heads on nearly every play.

Despite giving away 30 pounds to Nagurski, Hinkle held his own. Hinkle's strategy was to "get to the Bronk before he gets to me." One of their most famous head-to-head duels came in a 1934 contest. Nagurski had Hinkle trapped near the sidelines and was moving in to make the tackle. Hinkle lowered his shoulder and drove into and over Nagurski. Nagurski had to be helped from the field with a broken nose and fractured rib.

Despite these rough on-the-field collisions, the two developed a strong relationship based on mutual respect. "They said I was hard to tackle, but here was a guy who didn't have too much trouble," Nagurski said of his Green Bay foe.

Actor Pat O'Brien, who received fame for his role as Knute Rockne in the movie about the Notre Dame star, introduced Bob Waterfield, who was married to actress Jane Russell. O'Brien played football with Jimmy Conzelman and Paddy Driscoll at Great Lakes Station during World War I. Waterfield grew up in Southern California and later played for the Los Angeles Rams so it is only fitting that the Hollywood quarterback had an actor who played a legendary football coach present him.

Some hall of fame enshrines pick a fellow coach to present them. Mike Michalske coached with Iowa State after his playing career ended. He didn't go far to find Leroy C. "Capp" Timm as his presenter. Timm had been head coach of Iowa State's baseball teams from 1937 to 1974.

Sports agents have been called into duty twice. Most recently Leigh Steinberg introduced Warren Moon when he was inducted last year. Former Raider and Patriot defensive back Mike Haynes was introduced by his agent during his playing days, Howard Slusher.

It is interesting that the commissioner was called into presenter duty the same amount of times as sports agents. Pete Rozelle introduced Tex Schramm in 1991 and Paul Tagliabue introduced John Riggins in 1992. Rozelle and Schramm went back to the fifties. Schramm had dealt with Rozelle while the future commissioner was at the University of San Francisco and later, while Schramm was the General Manager of the Rams, he hired Rozelle to join the Rams' front office.

Prior to the induction of the Class of 2007, there were 235 members of the Pro Football Hall of Fame. Presenters are selected for a variety of reasons. One-third of the honorees have honored a former coach. Twenty-two percent of the time the members had another player introduce him. Thirteen percent of the time, an owner is selected and nearly ten percent of the time a family member introduces the honoree. Regardless of whether it is a memorable coach or a family friend or celebrity, each inductee has a personal or meaningful reason why the presenter was selected.

The last time the commissioner was a presenter might have been for an unusual reason. During the 1992 induction ceremony, NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue presented John Riggins. The former Redskin and Jet said he chose Tagliabue, whom he had only recently met, to present him because: "When you're getting married, you get a priest; when you're getting inducted, you get a commissioner." The former running back, who is now an actor, found an opportunity for humor. "Besides," he continued, "Madonna had a headache and couldn't make it."

Review by Harold Aurand Jr.

All Things Being Equal: The Autobiography of Lenny Moore.

By Lenny Moore with Jeffrey Jay Elish.
Champaign: Sports Publishing LLC, 2205-226. Pp. 209. Pbk. \$16.95.

Lenny Moore was one of the most recognizable players during football's golden age. The white tape around the outside of his shoes, the high-kneed running style, the blazing speed and nose for the end zone all set him apart. Today, after almost sixty years at Penn State, Joe Paterno still considers Moore to be the greatest player he ever coached. His career with the Baltimore Colts earned him a spot in the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

It makes sense that someone as unique as Lenny Moore would have an autobiography that's a little different too, and *All Things Being Equal* is clearly a little different. What football fans will probably like most about this book is how Moore puts his career in context. He covers every year he played, beginning with a few words about his teams' prospects, then moving through the season game by game, with a brief summary of the action, some of his statistics, and how the result affected the standings. Moore and Elish both deserve some credit for this. I've read a lot of other sports autobiographies where the writers relied too much on the players' memory and not enough on going back and checking the facts. *All Things Being Equal* is well researched.

Unfortunately, what the book doesn't contain is much personal insight into the game. Moore doesn't talk much about his teammates and what they were like, or the emotional aspect of the games. Partially, this is by design. The real topic Moore wants to discuss is racism, and just what the pioneering African-American players went

through. Decades before *All Things Being Equal* was written, Moore was traveling the country with a tape recorder, talking to retired players, trying to get their feelings on race. Here everything comes out, from Moore's belief that the media and their refusal to portray sufficient African-American role models cause African-American children to feel no sense of direction and lose themselves in self-destructive pursuits, to the institutional racism he sees to today's colleges and universities. Moore's old backfield mate at Penn State, Charles Blockson, is a recognized expert on African-American culture, and no doubt helped form some of Moore's insights.

The story of racism in the NFL needs to be told. I hope Moore has donated his old tapes to an archive somewhere. I'm not sure he's telling the story in the right place, though. Sports Publishing LLC is best known for its books about particular teams. Their Stadium Stories and Tales from the Sidelines series are maybe the best examples. They market their books regionally. I live in Pennsylvania, for example. So when I go to my local bookstore I see the books about the Philadelphia Eagles, Pittsburgh Steelers, and Penn State. Other areas of the country get different books. Most of the people who buy them are local fans, who want to hear good things about their local teams, not sociological discussions of racism. Moore might have been better served by a more academic type of press and more academic ghost writer, maybe his old teammate Blockson.

--- Harold Aurand Jr.

PFRA COMMITTEES

By Ken Crippen

Several committees have updates for this issue of *Coffin Corner*. The Stadium Committee is rolling along, as well as the Hall of Very Good. Central New York has put the finishing touches on their first book and we have an update on a meeting of researchers.

Stadium Committee: Several people have been in touch with the Stadium Committee with very useful information and offers of help: Andy Hernandez of Sunnyvale, CA, has offered to serve on the Committee. Andy has an excellent collection of pro football images, ranging from stadium views to logos to field diagrams and more, and knows a great deal of football history. His contributions will greatly enhance the project. Either Andy or Bill Pepperell can be contacted with questions on or offers of help to the Committee. Joe Cronin of Citrus Heights, CA, pro football historian *emeritus*, has sent along some excellent, very hard-to-find stadium diagrams. Mike Lemongello of East Hanover, NJ, has sent to us some fine aerial views of some of the old ballparks of the 1940s and 50s, e.g., Forbes Field, as well as views of the newer stadiums, and numerous stadium diagrams. Richie Aurigemma of Hawthorne, NY, is a man specializing in stadia memorabilia, e.g., actual seats used in the old stadiums, as well as other memorabilia, and has contributed not only a treasure trove of stadium images, but an enormous amount of football expertise. Bill Pepperell, committee chair, would like to thank everyone for their help to date.

Hall of Very Good Committee: The Hall of Very Good Committee is still accepting nominations for the class of 2008. Send no more than ten nominations to Andy Piascik. His mailing address and e-mail address are listed below.

Central New York Committee: The Central New York Committee has finished their first book and it has been submitted to the publisher. *From Championships to Turmoil: The History of the Syracuse Athletic Association Football Team (1890-1900)* is due to be available by the end of the year. The committee website has been updated with game summaries, covering all ten years of the association.

Meeting of Researchers: There has been some talk of having a PFRA Meeting or Convention. It has been decided that a meeting of researchers will take place, but not sponsored by the PFRA. The meeting will take place the weekend of June 20, 2008 and several PFRA members have already stated that they will attend. The final location is still being determined, but it will be in

the Pittsburgh area or a nearby town. As more details are available, they will be published in *Coffin Corner*. Anyone interested in attending is encouraged to contact me at Ken_Crippen@billsbackers.com.

Hall of Very Good Committee:

Committee Goal: To solicit and sort through nominees, to prepare all HOVG-related materials for *Coffin Corner* and to prepare write-ups on the nominees.

Contact Information:

Andy Piascik
25 Cartright St.
Bridgeport, CT 06604
andy@nflhistory.net

Membership Committee:

Committee Goal: To find ways to make it easier for PFRA members to contact each other and to know who is working on what research.

Contact Information:

John Fenton
11184 Hendrix St.
Philadelphia, PA 19116
(267) 235-2164
jffenton@comcast.net

Pre-NFL Pro Football Committee:

Committee Goal: To research all semi-professional and professional games played prior to 1920. This would include line scores, game summaries and rosters.

Contact Information:

Roy Sye
708 W. Braeside Drive
Arlington Heights, IL 60004
(847) 577-1442
syeroy@wowway.com

Team Radio and TV Commentators Committee:

Committee Goal: To document the play-by-play announcers, analysts and field reporters for every single broadcast of NFL and AFL games (regular season and post season) from 1939 to the present.

Contact Information:

Tim Brulia
14 Altoona Avenue
Enola, PA 17025
(717) 728-9739
coolbrul@yahoo.com
tbrulia@state.pa.us

Uniforms of Past Teams Committee:

Committee Goal: To document every uniform design and color (helmets, jerseys, pants and socks) for each NFL, AFL and AAFC team from 1933 to the present.

Contact Information:

Tim Brulia
14 Altoona Avenue
Enola, PA 17025
(717) 728-9739
coolbrul@yahoo.com
tbrulia@state.pa.us

All-Pros and Awards Committee:

Committee Goal: To generate a complete listing of All-Pro teams from all sources. For the Awards Committee: generate a complete list of all AP and UPI awards and the voting for each of them.

Contact Information:

John Hogrogian
580 84th Street
Apt. 3-l
Brooklyn, NY 11209
(718) 680-1710
jhogrogi@msn.com

or

John Turney
2615 18th Street
Alamogordo, NM 88310
jturney@totacc.com

Stadiums Committee:

Committee Goal: To document and publish information on all stadiums used by professional football teams. The stadium Committee has started and is concentrating on the stadiums in use since 1946. This would include all AAFC, NFL and AFL teams. For each stadium, the committee would like to gather the following:

- A) An aerial view
- B) An exterior view (a view taken of the stadium at street level)
- C) An interior view (a view taken from the stands)
- D) An action view (a view of a game being played in the stadium, which shows both players and some portion of the stadium from the field level)

Along with this information, factual data on each stadium will be compiled. This data would include construction dates, dates of use, anecdotal history, etc. The committee would also like to work on stadiums from other eras (pre-1946), but they will start with post-1946 stadiums. The goal of the committee is to compile book to be published.

Contact Information:

Bill Pepperell
3427 Overland Drive

Holiday, FL 34691
(510) 776-5649
billpepperell1@yahoo.com

Andy Hernandez
andyhdz@gmail.com

Empire Football League Committee:

Committee Goal: To research and document the history of the semi-professional Empire Football League.

Contact Information:

Dave Burch
1016 Irving Ave.
Endicott, NY 13760
(607) 748-7140
EmpireFoot@aol.com

Western New York Committee:

Committee Goal: To research and document all amateur, semi-professional and professional teams that played in the Western New York Area. The committee would like to publish an encyclopedia when the research has been completed.

Rochester Jeffersons Subcommittee:

Subcommittee Goal: To publish a book on the complete history of the Rochester Jeffersons. This book will contain scores, rosters, game summaries and biographies of all of the players.
<http://www.RochesterJeffersons.com>

Contact Information:

Ken Crippen
740 Deerfield Road
Warminster, PA 18974
(215) 421-6994
<http://www.wnypfra.org>
Ken_Crippen@billsbackers.com

Central New York Committee:

Committee Goal: To research and document all amateur, semi-professional and professional teams that played in the Central New York Area. The committee would like to publish an encyclopedia when the research has been completed.

Contact Information:

Ken Crippen
740 Deerfield Road
Warminster, PA 18974
(215) 421-6994
<http://www.wnypfra.org/CNY/>
Ken_Crippen@billsbackers.com

Ken Crippen is responsible for oversight of the PFRA Committees. If you would like to help out with a committee or if you want to form your own committee, contact him at: Ken_Crippen@billsbackers.com.

CLASSIFIEDS

Old Pro Football Films (1944-1969) are now available on ultra high-quality video and DVD! Call 1-800-603-4353 for FREE LISTING of over 50 different titles! Doak Ewing, 1126 Tennyson Lane, Naperville IL 60540. www.rareportsfilms.com

TAR – The Autograph Review -- \$14.95 annually, 6 editions. Special to PFRA members for new subscriptions 5/\$9.95. Payable to JW Morey, 305 Carlton Road, Syracuse, NY 13207. Publishing 18 years – Addresses, info, helpful to researchers... Try us.

WANTED: Game films or highlight films from Washington Redskins games 1970-76, especially need 1974 Miami Dolphins game. John Jacob / P.O. Box 4155 / Merrifield, VA 22116 / (703) 909-6395.

EARLY AMERICAN & CANADIAN 'FOOTBALL': BEGINNINGS THRU 1883-84. Mel Smith / 1st Books Library 2959 Vernil Pike / Bloomington, IL 47404

Need the following NFL team photos from the 1950s to complete my research: 1950, 1953-1957 Baltimore Colts; 1950-51 NY Yanks; 1952 Dallas Texans; 1953 NY Giants; 1957 Redskins; 1951 Bears; 1951 Lions; 1958 Rams. Michael Lemongello / 5 Brookline Ave. / East Hanover, NJ 07936. Tel. 973-428-3752. Fax 973-844-1433.

LOOKING for AFL video/film footage, 1960-1969. Please contact John via e-mail at jerart@sbcglobal.net.

"Pride & Poise: The Oakland Raiders of the American Football League is the most takes a definitive look into the formation and turbulent early history of the American Football League." For info please visit www.raidershistory.net

FOOTBALL BOOKS FOR SALE: My latest catalog lists over 300 football books for sale, including over 100 priced at \$10 or less. Biographies, histories, pictorials & more, plus a special section of guides, programs & miscellaneous memorabilia. Catalog also includes books on basketball, boxing, hockey & sports in general. PFRA members receive a 10% discount off all orders. To receive catalog send \$3 to R. Plapinger, PO Box 1062, Ashland, OR 97520, call (541) 488-1220, or E-mail baseballbooks@opendoor.com. Catalog fee is refundable with 1st order. If there are specific books you seek, but you don't want to order the catalog, please feel free to write (SASE guarantees response), call (11am – 10pm EST) or e-mail.

WANTED: Any Philadelphia Eagles items from 1933-43. Programs, contracts, wire photos, newspapers, etc. Photo copies work but I may ask to buy the original if it is for sale. Also interested in 1902 Athletics, Frankford Yellowjackets, 1926 Quakers, Allentown Demons and Bethlehem Bulldogs. E-mail Steve at homebuilder@epix.net

"Keep A-go'in': the life of Lone Star Dietz" by Tom Benjey. Softcover \$19.95, hardback \$32.95, s&h \$6.00. Put PFRA on order for a 5% discount. Benjey Media / 546 E. Springville Rd. / Carlisle, PA 17015. 717-258-9733 voice / 717-243-0074 fax / www.LoneStarDietz.com

Cleveland Brown A to Z by Roger Gordon. 500 A to Z items on Browns history. 7x10 h/c. 230 pgs. Nearly 150 b/w photos. Signed copy: money order \$24.95 to: Roger Gordon, Box 2443 North Canton, OH 44720. For more information, call 330-371-1661 or e-mail gordon425@yahoo.com

WANTED

8x10 Black/White or Color Photographs of:

- * Charlie "Choo Choo" Brackins
- * Kelvin Bryant
- * David Mays
- * Jackie Robinson
- * Woody Strode
- * Burl Toler
- * Willie Totten
- * Tank Younger

Collegiate or Professional Shots
Call, e-mail or write with prices to

Larry Lester
P.O. Box 380146
Kansas City, MO 64138
816-358-0475

NTRresearch@comcast.net

Collage/Poem: "Glory of the Black and Gold" (Steelers first 4 Super Bowls) or "Seven Blocks of Granite, the Golden Rams of Yesteryear" (Fordham Football Golden Years, 1929-42). For a copy of illustrated color collage poem, 8 1/2 x 11 \$5, 11 x 17 \$10, laminated add \$5, plus \$2.50 shipping. Send check or money order to: Victor Mastro, 1907 Narragansett Ave., Bronx, NY 10461.

Researcher's Delight on thousands of rookie and first-year pro players of NFL, NFL Europe, CFL, and Arena of 2006 season with their career transactions. After 20 years, now on Internet. Please look: www.cutsandkeeps.com / 2005 season disc and publication available. Unique, comprehensive and definitive information for quick facts.

WANTED: Information on the backgrounds of the players on the rosters of the 1917-1926 Akron Pros and Canton Bulldogs teams. Specifically interested in where they worked and where they lived. Please contact Lee at (805) 981-8678 or speedylee@sprynet.com

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WANTED: Stadium views of venues used in the regular or post-season, from 1946 to the present, by the AAFC, AFL, and NFL. Aerial, exterior, and interior views needed. Postcards, photos, clips from programs and magazines, etc., are all desirable. Will purchase or trade from my collection. Contact Bill Pepperell at 3427 Overland Dr., Holiday, FL 34691, or billpepperell1@yahoo.com

BOOK: "McKay's Men: The Story of the 1979 Tampa Bay Buccaneers," published by Seaside Publishing of Palm Harbor, FL. Written by Denis Crawford, 218 pages with photos. Tell how John McKay led the Bucs from 0-26 to the brink of a Super Bowl in just two short years. Contains first hand accounts from Lee Roy Selmon and Doug Williams. Book is available for \$14.95 (plus S&H) at seaside-publishing.com or call (888) 352-2665.

FOR SALE: A 10-minute documentary commemorating the 100th anniversary of the birth of modern American football and the single-wing. Carlisle played Villanova at 3:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 26, 1906 in what was called "the first important game to be played under the new rules" on Indian Field at Carlisle Barracks. Cost for the DVD is \$9.95 plus \$2 shipping and handling (PA residents add 6% for sales tax – even on the shipping). Order through www.TuxedoPress.LoneStarDietz.com or send a check or money order to: Tuxedo Press, 546 E. Springville Rd., Carlisle, PA 17015.

NEW STEAGLES BOOK: "Last Team Standing: How the Steelers and the Eagles – 'The Steagles' – Saved Pro Football During World War II" by Matthew Algeo is now available in bookstores and from Amazon.com and other online booksellers. Based on interviews with every surviving member of the team, it tells the incredible true story of the 1943 merger of the Steelers and the Eagles, includes eight pages of photographs. For more information, visit www.steagles.com

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Warner's 1912 book "A Course in Football for Players and Coaches," \$15

Warner's 1927 book "Football for Coaches and Players," \$17.

All 3 books for \$35 from: www.LoneStarDietz.com or Tuxedo Press, 546 E. Springville Rd, Carlisle, PA, 17015.

No S&H for PFRA members.

Wanted: Any individuals that are interested in writing about the great game of football. If you have a desire to write game previews, feature articles, draft profiles and are interested in the chance to conduct interviews with players of today and tomorrow, then footballdialogue.com is the place for you. It's not a pay position yet but it's a great chance to have fans, media, and football die-hards read your stuff. If this sounds appealing to you, send me an e-mail at Patrick@footballdialogue.com and we can discuss it further.