



Professional Football Researchers Association

740 Deerfield Road
Warminster, PA 18974
www.profootballresearchers.org

Name: Fred 'Duke' Slater

Position: Tackle

Teams: 1922 Milwaukee Badgers, 1922-25 Rock Island Independents, 1926-31 Chicago Cardinals

Quick Hits:

- Was named consensus all-pro twice (1926 and 1930).
- Was named to a major first team all-pro five times (1923, 1925, 1926, 1929 and 1930). No tackle had more during his time.
- Was named second-team all-pro twice (1924 and 1927).
- Finalist for the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1970 and 1971.
- Blocked for Rock Island when they rushed for nine touchdowns against the Evansville Crimson Giants in 1922, an NFL record to this day.
- Blocked for Ernie Nevers when he set an NFL record with six rushing touchdowns in a single game (November 28, 1929, Chicago Cardinals vs. Chicago Bears). That record has never been broken.
- He received his law degree while he was still an active player. After retirement, he became an assistant district attorney and was elected a municipal court judge with over one million votes. Quite an accomplishment for an African-American man at the time.
- In college, Slater was All-Big Ten three consecutive years, second-team All-American in 1919 and first-team All-American in 1921. He was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in its inaugural class in 1951. He was the only African-American inducted into that class.

Analysis:

As one of a small number of African-Americans that were playing in the National Football League at the time, and with the overt discrimination against African-American players, to receive the recognition that Duke Slater received from his peers, coaches and sportswriters is truly an accomplishment. In 1927 and 1929, he was the only African-American player in the National Football League.

In a December 22, 1963 release from United Press International, six people were mentioned as strong candidates for induction into the second class of the Pro Football Hall of Fame: Ken Strong, Steve Owen, Sid Luckman, Bulldog Turner, Duke Slater and Art Rooney. Only Slater is not in the Hall of Fame.

The Professional Football Researchers Association (PFRA) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and, in some cases, reconstructing professional football history. The PFRA is incorporated in the state of Connecticut and has 501(c)(3) status as an educational organization with the Internal Revenue Service.



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Testimonials:

- Wilfrid Smith of the *Chicago Tribune*, a former NFL player himself, stated, “Slater...is one of the best tackles who ever donned a suit. His phenomenal strength and quickness of charge make it almost impossible for his opponents to put him out of any play directed at his side of the line.”
- The *Chicago Herald and Examiner* mentioned the following about Slater, when he helped block for Nevers’ record-setting performance, “Duke Slater, the veteran colored tackle, seemed the dominant figure in that forward wall which had the Bear front wobbly. It was Slater who opened the holes for Nevers when a touchdown was in the making.”
- Elmer Layden, one of Notre Dame’s immortal Four Horsemen and later commissioner of the NFL, said Slater was “the greatest tackle I ever saw.”
- Name by the authors of *Total Football*, the official encyclopedia of the NFL, as one of the 300 Greatest Players in history.
- Selected by noted football historians Dan Daly and Bob O’Donnell to the all-decade team of the 1920s in their book *The Pro Football Chronicle*.
- On December 13, 1960, *Chicago Sun-Times* columnist Dick Hackenberg stated, “What Jackie Robinson was to baseball, at a much earlier date Duke Slater was to collegiate football.”

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