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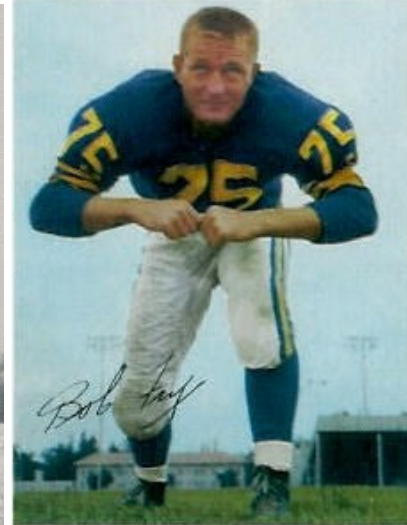
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Bob Fry

This article was written by Jim Marino.

Robert Moellering Fry played five years with the Los Angeles Rams as their starting left tackle. Following his stint with the Rams Fry played five years for the Dallas Cowboys, after the Cowboys selected him in the NFL Expansion Draft in 1960. He was the starting left tackle for the expansion Cowboys during the first three years the team was in existence despite his small size. He started 119 games in a row and never missed a game in his 10-year career. Fry's football career consisted of three varsity seasons at Elder High School, four years at the University of Kentucky, and ten years in the National Football League. Fry also coached eighteen years in the NFL. Listed at 6-4, 235, Fry was light for an offensive tackle, but his quickness, technique, durability, and intelligence enabled him to be a starter as a rookie and throughout his career at both tackle positions and guard for two teams.

Bob was born November 11, 1930, in Cincinnati, Ohio, the son of Harry and Helen Fry of English-Scottish heritage. Fry attended Elder High School, graduating in 1949. In that era of football he played as a lineman and was a two-way starter. He entered the University of Kentucky in the fall of 1949 where he played football and basketball as a freshman. At Kentucky, Fry was coached by Paul 'Bear' Bryant. In Fry's sophomore year, 1950, he started as an offensive end. The Kentucky offense scored 393 points while the defense allowed 69 points. Starting in the Sugar Bowl, Bob, as a sophomore, was a member of the team which upset the University of Oklahoma, coached by Bud Wilkinson, 13-7. The Kentucky victory broke Oklahoma's 31-game winning streak. The quarterback of the Wildcats in the upset was Babe Parilli, then a junior, who would go on to play in the NFL, CFL and AFL. As a junior, Fry played in the 1952 Cotton Bowl victory against TCU. He played end until his senior year, 1952, when he was moved to offensive tackle. Fry earned third-team All-SEC honors in his junior and senior years.



Tackle BOB FRY L.A. Rams

Bob Fry at the Univ. of Kentucky #65. Bob wore #72 his first with the L.A. Rams. Fry wore number #75 the last four years on the Rams.

The '52 Los Angeles Rams had finished tied for first with the Detroit Lions. The Rams lost the playoff game to the Lions 31-21. The team was weak at left tackle. The 1953 National Football League Draft was held on January 22, 1953, at the Bellevue-Stratford Hotel in Philadelphia. Fry was drafted by the Rams in the third round, as the 36th overall pick. The *Spokane Daily Chronicle* headline on June 10 read, "Trio Of Players Signed by Rams." Rams head coach, Hampton Pool, said, "The Rams need strengthening in this department, particularly with the loss of left tackle Don Simensen."¹ Fry made the team along with his Kentucky teammate Frank Fuller. Fry earned the starting spot at offensive left tackle. In his rookie season the team finished in third place while Bob started all twelve games. In 1954, Uncle Sam called and Fry served two years in the U.S. Army.

After his two-year enlistment, Fry returned to the starting line-up in 1956 at his regular spot, left tackle. The 1958 Rams yearbook espoused Fry's skills declaring, "Bob gets the job done with exceptional blocking techniques and amazing speed for a man his size. He is the fastest lineman on the Rams squad and rates among the leaders in the league in this department." The 1959 Rams yearbook said that Fry, "despite playing at 238, using his mobility and technical skill helped him compete on even terms with opponents who often weighed as much as 30 pounds more than him." The Rams line coach, Lou Rymkus, described Fry, "Bob combines great speed, quickness, outstanding blocking ability and intelligence to handle his opponents. He's well-endowed with these qualities and they more than compensate for whatever he lacks in size." Through the end of the decade Fry faced some of the NFL's best defensive ends twice a year like: Detroit's Pro-Bowl Gene



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Cronin, Baltimore's All-Pro Don Joyce, Chicago's All-Pro Doug Atkins, 49ers Bob Toneff, Green Bay's Len Ford, Cleveland's Bill Quinlan, Chicago Cardinals Ed Husmann. The Rams and Fry's best finish was in 1958 when Los Angeles tied for second-place with the Bears, behind the Baltimore Colts.

At the end of the 1959 season, with a miserable 2-10 record, Rams general manager Pete Rozelle fired Sid Gillman and hired Bob Waterfield. The new coach was hired in January 1960. The NFL planned to add a thirteenth team, the Dallas Cowboys, that year. The Dallas expansion franchise was approved too late for it to participate in the 1960 NFL Draft which had been held on November 30, 1959. Which meant that Dallas did not have the benefit of a college draft in its first year.

In order for the new franchise to become competitive with existing teams, the league gave them the opportunity to select current players from those teams. The selections were stretched over four days from March 13 to March 17.ⁱⁱ Despite starting sixty games in a row, Waterfield decided to leave Bob Fry unprotected in the expansion draft. The first two teams to present the list of available players were the Rams and the San Francisco 49ers.ⁱⁱⁱ The three Rams players selected by Dallas were Tom Franckhauser, defensive back, Bob Fry, offensive tackle, and Duane Putnam, offensive guard.^{iv} Dallas coach Tom Landry may have selected Fry because in their first year, the Cowboys were assigned to play in the western division of the NFL. Fry would face all the same defensive right ends he had played against in his previous four years. This experience for a young team made Fry a solid pillar for the Cowboys offensive line as Dallas went through the natural growing pains of an expansion club. After the time the expansion draft was held, the team was known as the Dallas Rangers; the club was renamed the Dallas Cowboys six days later to avoid confusion with the [Dallas Rangers](#), a minor league baseball team.

All three former Rams made the team. Twenty-two of the thirty-six players drafted made the Dallas roster. Only three players from the draft played more than four years with the Cowboys. Fry was one of them, along with Jerry Tubbs and Frank Clarke.^v

In pre-season training camp, Fry became the first starting [left tackle](#) in franchise history. In the Dallas Cowboys 1960 media guide, it emphasized the same characteristics that the Rams yearbook highlighted. The guide mentioned that Fry still lived in Cincinnati. He was a starter on the left side of the line during the Cowboys first three seasons, until he

i AP wire. "Trio Of Players Signed by Rams," *Spokane Daily Chronicle* June 10, 1953, page 26.

ii "Shipped Off To Texas." <https://packerspastperfect.wordpress.com/2016/04/21/shipped-off-to-texas/>

iii IBID

iv "1960 NFL Expansion Draft." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1960_NFL_expansion_draft#:~:text=In%20this%20expansion%20draft%2C%20Dallas,couple%20of%20future%20draft%20picks.

v IBID



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lost his spot to [Tony Liscio](#) in the middle of the [1963 season](#), but Landry moved him to the [right tackle](#) position replacing [Ed Nutting](#).

As the starting left tackle for Dallas, Fry contributed to the many firsts that a new franchise achieved in its first two years of existence. Highlights of firsts Bob was part of included: the first rushing touchdown by the offense in the very first game against the Pittsburgh Steelers on September 24, 1960; the first time the team reached 100 yards rushing against the Philadelphia Eagles on September 30, 1960; the first Dallas victory a 27-24 conquest against the Pittsburgh Steelers on September 17, 1961; the first runner, Don Perkins, going over a hundred yards in a game with 108 yards against the Minnesota Vikings on September 24, 1961; and the first game the offensive line did not give up any sacks against the St. Louis Cardinals on November 5, 1961.



Fry continued to wear number 75 with Dallas that he had worn with the Rams. He would be the first to wear the number with Dallas which became synonymous with the great defensive tackle Jethro Pugh later in the decade. By 1963, Football Editor Harold Rosenthal in Maco's preview *All-Pro 1963* issue wrote, "Fry's light but a solid old pro."^{vi} During pre-season training, Landry moved Tony Liscio, acquired from Green Bay, ahead of Bob Fry at left tackle.^{vii} Landry shifted Fry to the right side of the line where he started in every single game during that season. In [1964](#), he started five games at [right tackle](#), but Landry moved Ray Schoenke to starting right tackle and Fry became a reserve for the only time in his career. On July 19, 1965, general manager Tex Schramm swung a trade with the [Cleveland Browns](#) sending Fry to Cleveland in exchange for a [player to be named later](#). Cleveland head coach Blanton Collier cut Fry, a ten-year veteran on August 29, 1965. Fry announced his retirement soon afterwards.

vi Rosenthal, Harold. *All-Ro 1963*. Page 30.

vii AP wire. "Cowboys Beef Up Defense," *Times Daily* September 5, 1964, page 25.



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On June 21, 1965, the Atlanta Falcons had been designated as the next expansion team and they would begin play in 1966. The Falcons hired Fry as a scout. Involved with his second expansion team, he was part of the group that selected the players that formed the original Atlanta Falcons team. As a scout he was part of the Falcon's initial draft and the Falcons' NFL expansion draft, both in 1966. Fry became the assistant director of player personnel. In 1967, he was appointed the assistant offensive line coach. The next year, former Rams teammate and now new head coach Norm Van Brocklin promoted Fry to be the offensive line coach. Van Brocklin had seen firsthand Fry's ability as an underweight lineman to handle bigger linemen. Van Brocklin knew that Fry would be able to coach linemen and make them better. Fry was on his way to a successful fifteen years of coaching and teaching offensive lines to achieve at high levels.

In 1969, Chuck Noll selected Fry as the Pittsburgh Steelers' offensive line coach. He coached five years at Pittsburgh. In his last year with the Steelers, the 1973 Pittsburgh Media Guide praised Fry for his hard work for the franchise declaring, "An area of consistent improvement during Chuck Noll's term as head coach has been the offensive line which is handled by Bob Fry."^{viii} In 1972, Fry's offensive line created the holes which enabled the runners to rack-up a then franchise record of 2,520 yards, a 5.1 yards per carry, and 22 touchdowns. His forte as a coach was a teacher's patience and expertise of linemen technique. He coached in the Steelers' first ever playoff game, the "Immaculate Reception." He coached in two other Pittsburgh playoffs. Bob missed out on Pittsburgh's Super Bowl appearances because he joined the New York Jets as their offensive line coach in 1974.

Charlie Winner, the new Jets head coach hired Fry on January 18, 1974. Winner explained to the reporters why he selected him, "He is a good teacher, a technician, and a motivator. He was wanted by several clubs, so I feel we're fortunate in getting him."^{ix} Fry ended up coaching the Jets offensive linemen for nine years. By his fifth year with the Jets, Fry had molded the five linemen into a unit which enabled the Jets to set a then team record of 2,250 yards rushing for the season. He developed Marvin Powell into a three-time All-Pro. Fry served as the offensive line coach at the Sheridan Black College All-Star game in January 1982.^x The 1982 New York Jets Media Guide identified Bob Fry as the reason for the development of "the Jet's offensive line into one of the most respected in the league."^{xi}

viii 1973 Pittsburgh Media Guide. Page 4.

ix "People in Sports: Jets Name Fry as Aide; Costello Leaves Bengals For Dolphin Post." *New York Times*. January 18, 1974. Page 29.

x 1982 New York Jets Media Guide Page 10.

xi 1982 New York Jets Media Guide Page 10.



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After the '82 season, New York fired head coach Walt Michaels. A scramble for jobs occurred amongst the Jets staff. Fry talked with Dan Henning, the new Atlanta Falcons head coach, who Fry had worked with before on the Jets staff from 1976 to 1978.^{xii} On February 15, 1983, Fry signed with Atlanta as the offensive coordinator.^{xiii} Henning selected Fry and former Cowboys teammate Eddie LeBaron, the Falcons' executive vice president, approved the employment. During Fry's two years calling the offense, Atlanta went 11-21, finishing in fourth-place both years. He was released from the position at the end of the 1984 season. Fry concluded his career scouting for the NFL Combine.

In 1982 Paul Bryant named Bob to his All-Time Team and he was so honored as part of the Paul Bear Bryant Memorial held at the University of Alabama. In 2002 Fry was honored by Elder High School with the Walter "Babe" Barlett Award for his football accolades. Bob Fry and George Blanda were two of the many players who attended a "Bear Bryant" reunion at the Crown Plaza Cambell House in Lexington, Kentucky on June 19, 2009.



Bob Fry ranked #19 on the Top Ranked Kentucky Wildcats Pro Football Players of All-Time which are the greatest pro players that finished their college career at the University of Kentucky.^{xiv} Robert Fry passed away November 10, 2019, one day before his birthday, at the age of 88 in Wilmington Beach, North Carolina. Bob was married to Vonnie Herzog Fry, for 61 years. Bob had seven children, thirteen grandchildren and two great grandchildren. In 2020, Bob Fry, Class of '49, was inducted into the Kentucky Pro Hall of Fame.^{xv}

xii "People in Sports: Jets Name Fry as Aide; Costello Leaves Bengals For Dolphin Post." *New York Times*. January 18, 1974. Page 29.

xiii "People in Sports: Jets Name Fry as Aide; Costello Leaves Bengals For Dolphin Post." *New York Times*. January 18, 1974. Page 29.

xiv https://ainsworthsports.com/football_player_rankings_by_college_ky_kentucky.htm

xv https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bob_Fry



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End Notes: