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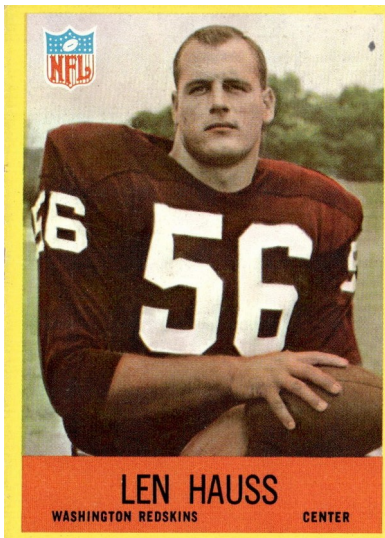
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Len Hauss

This article was written by Matthew Keddie

Len Hauss demonstrated a unique, devoted passion for playing football that led him to a successful NFL career. He played for 14 seasons (1964 to 1977) that spanned 196 total games as a member of the Washington Redskins. Hauss was named to the Pro Bowl five times (1966, 1968-1970, 1972) and earned second-team All-Pro honors in 1974 and 1975.¹ His daughter, Lana Hauss Synder, who was one of his biggest fans said of his passions, “He loved the game – even after he stopped playing. He loved to watch good football. And he loved to watch honorable men play. He was a football lover and a fisherman. He loved to fish.”²

Passion fueled his game as Hauss made 194 consecutive starts at center, a streak that began during his rookie season. He was dubbed, “Mr. Durability” because of his grittiness and dedication. Following his career, Hauss was named one of the 70 Greatest Redskins and earned a spot in the Washington Redskins Ring of Fame.³ Upon his induction he said, “To be chosen one of the 70 Greatest was a great honor. There are 12 offensive linemen on the team, and I appreciated being one of those 12 over a 70-year period.”⁴ Former teammate and Hall of Famer Sam Huff said, “Len Hauss is one of the greatest offensive centers to ever play this game. He was a very smart player and he was all heart. He was gutsy and played hurt. He never asked to come off the field.”⁵



Drafted in the ninth round of the 1964 NFL Draft, Hauss was part of arguably one of the best drafts in franchise history. The haul included future Hall of Famers, running back



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Charley Taylor and defensive back Paul Krause, along with tackle Jim Snowden, quarterback Dick Shiner and Hauss.⁶

Hauss caught the eye of head coach Bill McPeak early on during a practice at training camp. Peak recalls, “In a one-on-one drill, he knocked the devil out of Sam Huff.”⁷ His tenacity helped anchor solid Washington offenses that ranked in the Top 10 in scoring during eight of his 14 seasons.⁸ He helped open running lanes for backs such as Charley Taylor, Larry Brown and Charlie Harraway, and provided pass protection for future Hall of Fame quarterback Sonny Jurgensen and quarterback Billy Kilmer.⁹

To illustrate, Taylor made eight trips to the Pro Bowl (1964-1967; 1972-1975) and earned the Rookie of the Year award from both the UPI and the Associated Press in 1964.¹⁰ Meanwhile, Jurgensen, who the team acquired from the rival Philadelphia Eagles in a trade, led the NFL in passing three times (1966, 1967, 1969), and earned three Pro Bowl appearances.¹¹ Kilmer also made the Pro Bowl in 1972 and led the NFL in passing touchdowns that season.¹² Larry Brown, the 1972 Offensive Player of the Year and NFL's Most Valuable Player, was magnificent, leading the league in rushing with 1,125 yards.

¹ “Len Hauss,” ProFootballReference.com, accessed January 1, 2024, [Len Hauss Stats, Height, Weight, Position, Draft, College | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).

² “Len Hauss, five-time Pro Bowl center for Washington Football Team, dies at 79,” usatoday.com, December 16, 2021, [Len Hauss dies: Former Washington Football Team center dies at 79 \(usatoday.com\)](#).

³ “Len Hauss, five-time Pro Bowl center for Washington Football Team, dies at 79,” usatoday.com, December 16, 2021, [Len Hauss dies: Former Washington Football Team center dies at 79 \(usatoday.com\)](#).

⁴ Richman, Michael. “Flashback: Hauss Was Front And Center,” redskins.com, March 13, 2009, [Flashback: Hauss Was Front And Center \(archive.org\)](#).

⁵ Richman, Michael. “Flashback: Hauss Was Front And Center,” redskins.com, March 13, 2009, [Flashback: Hauss Was Front And Center \(archive.org\)](#).

⁶ “1964 Washington Redskins Draftees,” ProFootballReference.com, accessed January 1, 2024, [1964 Washington Redskins Draftees | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).

⁷ Richman, Michael. “Flashback: Hauss Was Front And Center,” redskins.com, March 13, 2009, [Flashback: Hauss Was Front And Center \(archive.org\)](#).

⁸ “Washington Commanders Franchise Encyclopedia,” ProFootballReference.com, accessed January 1, 2024, [Washington Commanders Team Records, Leaders, and League Ranks | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).

⁹ “Washington Commanders Franchise Encyclopedia,” ProFootballReference.com, accessed January 1, 2024, [Washington Commanders Team Records, Leaders, and League Ranks | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).



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He routinely finished in the Top 5 in rushing yards from 1969 to 1973.¹³ Hauss stood at 6'2" and 235 pounds, wearing number 56, which he kept for his entire career.¹⁴

Despite the abundance of playmakers, the Redskins did not qualify for the playoffs until 1971, Hauss' eighth season. The team finished 9-4-1, its best record and just the Redskins second winning season since 1955.¹⁵ Hauss recalled, "It was pretty tough in those days. We had some pretty good talent, we just didn't win many games."¹⁶ Over that time, the Redskins employed four different head coaches. McPeak was relieved of his duties following the 1965 campaign, finishing with a record of 21-46-3.¹⁷ In stepped the freshly inducted Pro Football Hall of Famer, Otto Graham, who won three NFL championships and four AAFC titles as the quarterback for the Cleveland Browns.¹⁸

Graham maintained the offensive prowess and success the team demonstrated under McPeak, but the defense slipped to one of the worst in the league. As a result, Washington never finished higher than third place in the Capitol Division. Graham was gone after three seasons.¹⁹ Desperate times called for desperate measures, causing the team to rabidly pursue former Green Bay Packers head coach Vince Lombardi as its next head coach. Rumor was Lombardi had several offers, but accepted the position from Washington Team President Edward Bennett Williams.²⁰ The offer was one he could not

¹ ⁰ "Charley Taylor," ProFootballReference.com, accessed January 1, 2024, [Charley Taylor Stats, Height, Weight, Position, Draft, College | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).

¹ ¹ "Sonny Jurgensen," ProFootballReference.com, accessed January 1, 2024, [Sonny Jurgensen Stats, Height, Weight, Position, Draft, College | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).

¹ ² "Billy Kilmer," ProFootballReference.com, accessed January 1, 2024, [Billy Kilmer Stats, Height, Weight, Position, Draft, College | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).

¹ ³ "Larry Brown," ProFootballReference.com, accessed January 1, 2024, [Larry Brown Stats, Height, Weight, Position, Draft, College | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).

¹ ⁴ "Len Hauss," ProFootballReference.com, accessed January 1, 2024, [Len Hauss Stats, Height, Weight, Position, Draft, College | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).

¹ ⁵ "Washington Commanders Franchise Encyclopedia," ProFootballReference.com, accessed January 1, 2024, [Washington Commanders Team Records, Leaders, and League Ranks | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).

¹ ⁶ Richman, Michael. "Flashback: Hauss Was Front And Center," redskins.com, March 13, 2009, [Flashback: Hauss Was Front And Center \(archive.org\)](#).

¹ ⁷ "Bill McPeak," ProFootballReference.com, accessed January 1, 2024, [Bill McPeak Record, Statistics, and Category Ranks | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).

¹ ⁸ "Otto Graham," ProFootballReference.com, accessed January 1, 2024, [Otto Graham Record, Statistics, and Category Ranks | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).



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refuse as it included lucrative incentives such as authority over all aspects of football operations and a part ownership stake.²¹

The Lombardi philosophy turned the team around in 1969 to a 7-5-2 record, that included a 4-1-1 start, and second place finish in the division. Lombardi was tragically diagnosed with colon cancer and passed away prior to the 1970 season. In July, Bill Austin was promoted to the head coaching role, up from offensive line coach.²² Austin aimed to carry on Lombardi's success, however, he did not have success as a head coach. He had led the Pittsburgh Steelers for three seasons (1966-1968), winning a total of 11 games.²³ In his first year at the helm with the Redskins, Washington regressed to 6-8, a mark that included a five-game losing streak late in the season, to seal a last place finish in the newly formed NFC East division. Austin was fired at the conclusion of the season.

George Allen became the next Redskins' head coach for 1971, and he led them to the overdue success the fans, media, and players desired.²⁴ Washington qualified for the postseason in five of the next six seasons under Allen. The Redskins first playoff appearance in over 15 years, as a wild card team in the 1971 postseason, resulted in a 24-20 loss to the NFC West winning San Francisco 49ers.²⁵

The next season, Allen led the Redskins to the Super Bowl and an 11-3 record. The 11 wins was the most, to-date, in a season in franchise history. It was the first time Washington won double-digit games in a season since 1945, also its most recent appearance in a title game.²⁶ The Redskins also won the NFC East Division title. They met the undefeated Miami Dolphins, who fielded a dominant, ball-control offense led by Bob Griese, Paul Warfield, and powerful running backs in Larry Csonka, Mercury Morris, and Jim Kiick. Miami's "No-Name" defense was one of the league's best as well,

¹ ⁹ "Washington Commanders Franchise Encyclopedia," ProFootballReference.com, accessed January 1, 2024, [Washington Commanders Team Records, Leaders, and League Ranks | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).

²⁰ "[Lombardi seeks release to run, coach Redskins](#)". *Milwaukee Sentinel*. February 4, 1969. p. 1, part 1

²¹ "[Lombardi seeks release to run, coach Redskins](#)". *Milwaukee Sentinel*. February 4, 1969. p. 1, part 1

² ² "Washington Commanders Franchise Encyclopedia," ProFootballReference.com, accessed January 1, 2024, [Washington Commanders Team Records, Leaders, and League Ranks | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).

² ³ "Bill Austin," ProFootballReference.com, accessed January 1, 2024, [Bill Austin Record, Statistics, and Category Ranks | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).

² ⁴ "George Allen," ProFootballReference.com, accessed January 1, 2024, [George Allen Record, Statistics, and Category Ranks | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).

² ⁵ "Washington Commanders Franchise Encyclopedia," ProFootballReference.com, accessed January 1, 2024, [Washington Commanders Team Records, Leaders, and League Ranks | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).



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and was on display, holding Washington off the scoreboard for the entire contest.²⁷ Washington's only points came on a special team's fumble return for a touchdown late in the fourth quarter. Miami's defense also forced Redskins quarterback Billy Kilmer to toss three interceptions, as the Dolphins held on for the 14-7 victory.²⁸

The following two seasons, the Redskins posted back-to-back losses in the Divisional Round of the playoffs to the Minnesota Vikings and Los Angeles Rams, respectively. Washington missed the playoffs in 1975, but lost to the Vikings again in the Divisional Round in the 1976 season.²⁹ The 1977 season saw another second-place finish at 9-5, but Washington was swept by the eventual NFC Champion Dallas Cowboys in the regular season that vanquished any playoff hopes.³⁰

Hauss retired prior to the 1978 season. Throughout his career he endured at least six surgeries resulting from injuries. In addition to making the Pro Bowl and earning All-Pro honors, Hauss was selected as a first-team all-conference choice in four distinct seasons (1971, 1972, 1974, 1975) by outlets such as the *Sporting News*, *Newspaper Ent. Association*, Associated Press, and the UPI.³¹

He died on December 15, 2021 at the age of 79. Hauss was survived by his wife of 59 years, Janis; his sister, Lenell, daughter Lana, and two granddaughters. Hauss had a career in banking following his football days.³² Yahoo Sports' Loran Smith wrote on Len's passing, "There were others along the way including Chuck Anderson, who showed up in his letter jacket, and Jim and Joe McPipkin who attended Hauss' service on Monday as friends and neighbors crammed into the First Baptist Church for condolence hugs for

⁶ "Washington Commanders Franchise Encyclopedia," ProFootballReference.com, accessed January 1, 2024, [Washington Commanders Team Records, Leaders, and League Ranks | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).

⁷ "Super Bowl VII – Miami Dolphins vs. Washington Redskins – January 14th, 1973," ProFootballReference.com, accessed January 1, 2024, [Super Bowl VII - Miami Dolphins vs. Washington Redskins - January 14th, 1973 | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).

⁸ "Super Bowl VII – Miami Dolphins vs. Washington Redskins – January 14th, 1973," ProFootballReference.com, accessed January 1, 2024, [Super Bowl VII - Miami Dolphins vs. Washington Redskins - January 14th, 1973 | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).

⁹ "Washington Commanders Franchise Encyclopedia," ProFootballReference.com, accessed January 1, 2024, [Washington Commanders Team Records, Leaders, and League Ranks | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).

⁰ "1977 Washington Redskins Rosters, Stats, Schedule, Team Draftees," ProFootballReference.com, accessed January 1, 2024, [1977 Washington Redskins Rosters, Stats, Schedule, Team Draftees | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).

¹ "Len Hauss," ProFootballReference.com, accessed January 1, 2024, [Len Hauss Stats, Height, Weight, Position, Draft, College | Pro-Football-Reference.com](#).



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Hauss' widow, Janis, and to pay their respects to Len, one of the outstanding centers in Washington Football Team history. Perhaps, the best.”³³

Leonard “Len” Moore Hauss was born on July 11, 1942 in Jessup, Georgia. He attended local Jessup High School, where he developed an avid passion for football. He was a star fullback on the Yellow Jackets football team, where he helped the school win a Class AA championship in 1959.³⁴ His performance in the game was detailed this way, “Len Hauss, magnificent all season, closed out his career in brilliant fashion Friday night while leading the Jessup High Yellow Jackets to a 35-7 rout of Rossville High in the Georgia Class AA championship football game. ... treated some 5,000 fans at Jaycee Stadium to a great show. He scored three touchdowns, recovered two fumbles to set up others, gained 145 yards on 22 carries for a 6.6 average and was a standout linebacker as the Jacket defensive unit completely stymied Rossville.”³⁵ Hauss capped off the game by accounting for the final score described as, “Hauss took command in the final period as the Jackets plainly displayed their mastery. He bucked over from a yard out for a touchdown, and then recovered a fumble to set up the last, which he scored on a pass from Richardson. The quarterback was trapped behind the line, spotted Hauss on the 16, passed and Len gathered it in and raced up the middle to score. Waters' kick was good and the scoring was ended with two minutes remaining.”³⁶

Hauss followed many of the other great high school football players from Jessup to the University of Georgia to play college football. Loran Smith of Yahoo Sports wrote, “Then there was Len Hauss, who was signed for college tenure in Athens by line coach J. B. Whitworth, who first recruited Len's mother by eating second helpings of everything she cooked and bragged with such oratory that he sounded like Williams Jennings Bryan, for whom he was named.”³⁷

Hauss brought his hard-nosed, physicality to the Bulldogs, where he was converted from fullback to center. Hauss played under two coaches in his years at Georgia: three-time

³ ² Richman, Michael. “Flashback: Hauss Was Front And Center,” redskins.com, March 13, 2009, [Flashback: Hauss Was Front And Center \(archive.org\)](#).

³ ³ Smith, Loran. “In remembrance of Len Hauss, of UGA and NFL fame and 'regular guy' Jessup legend,” sports.yahoo.com, December 23, 2021, [In remembrance of Len Hauss, of UGA and NFL fame and 'regular guy' Jessup legend \(yahoo.com\)](#).

³ ⁴ “The History of Wayne County High School,” wayne.k12.ga.us, accessed January 1, 2024, [WCHS-History \(archive.org\)](#).

³ ⁵ “The History of Wayne County High School,” wayne.k12.ga.us, accessed January 1, 2024, [WCHS-History \(archive.org\)](#).

³ ⁶ “The History of Wayne County High School,” wayne.k12.ga.us, accessed January 1, 2024, [WCHS-History \(archive.org\)](#).

³ ⁷ Smith, Loran. “In remembrance of Len Hauss, of UGA and NFL fame and 'regular guy' Jessup legend,” sports.yahoo.com, December 23, 2021, [In remembrance of Len Hauss, of UGA and NFL fame and 'regular guy' Jessup legend \(yahoo.com\)](#).



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Southeastern Conference Coach of the Year Wally Butts and Johnny Griffith, with neither having success during Hauss' tenure.³⁸ Georgia was coming off a 10-1 season in 1959 where they were Southeastern Conference and Orange Bowl champions. Hauss' freshman year in 1960, when he was not eligible to play for the varsity, was Wally Butts' final season as head coach.³⁹ The team went 6-4 that included victories over South Carolina, Vanderbilt, and arch nemesis Georgia Tech.⁴⁰ The next three years under Griffith, Georgia won no more than four contests per season, routinely finishing at the bottom of the conference standings.⁴¹ The Bulldogs won a combined six SEC games from 1961 to 1963.

As a sophomore in 1961, Hauss earned All-Southeastern Conference honors. He did not have quite the college career he envisioned, as a knee injury hampered his junior and senior seasons.⁴² Being the fighter he was that did not deter him from finishing strong. An example of his hard work and dedication was his off-season training regimen as described by Loren Smith, "Then as a sophomore in 1961, Hauss suffered an ACL injury that threatened his career in an era when rehabilitation of such injuries was not what it is today. Len took matters into his own hands. He ran the steps of Sanford Stadium as if he were a man possessed. He was there in the bitter cold of February, the nauseating winds of March and the sweltering heat of summer."⁴³

One of the fondest memories of his career was the relationship formed between his quarterbacks, Sonny Jurgensen and Billy Kilmer, that he helped foster. Smith wrote, "One of those who paid tribute to Hauss was Billy Kilmer. A gifted all-around quarterback at UCLA, Kilmer also played basketball for John Wooden and is best remembered for bringing about the modern use of the shotgun formation with Coach Red Hickey of the San Francisco 49ers. When Kilmer was traded to Washington, he and Sonny Jurgensen became the best of friends, competitors at practice but beer drinking buddies afterwards. Len would join them, a trio of NFL stalwarts."⁴⁴

³⁸ "Georgia Bulldogs School History," sports-reference.com, accessed January 1, 2024, [Georgia Bulldogs College Football History, Stats, Records | College Football at Sports-Reference.com](https://www.sports-reference.com/college-football/history/georgia-bulldogs/).

³⁹ "Georgia Bulldogs School History," sports-reference.com, accessed January 1, 2024, [Georgia Bulldogs College Football History, Stats, Records | College Football at Sports-Reference.com](https://www.sports-reference.com/college-football/history/georgia-bulldogs/).

⁴⁰ "1960 Georgia Bulldogs Schedule and Results," sports-reference.com, accessed January 1, 2024, [1960 Georgia Bulldogs Schedule and Results | College Football at Sports-Reference.com](https://www.sports-reference.com/college-football/schedule/georgia-bulldogs/1960/).

⁴¹ "Georgia Bulldogs School History," sports-reference.com, accessed January 1, 2024, [Georgia Bulldogs College Football History, Stats, Records | College Football at Sports-Reference.com](https://www.sports-reference.com/college-football/history/georgia-bulldogs/).

⁴² Richman, Michael. "Flashback: Hauss Was Front And Center," redskins.com, March 13, 2009, [Flashback: Hauss Was Front And Center \(archive.org\)](https://www.redskins.com/news/flashback-hauss-was-front-and-center).

⁴³ Smith, Loran. "In remembrance of Len Hauss, of UGA and NFL fame and 'regular guy' Jessup legend," sports.yahoo.com, December 23, 2021, [In remembrance of Len Hauss, of UGA and NFL fame and 'regular guy' Jessup legend \(yahoo.com\)](https://sports.yahoo.com/in-remembrance-of-len-hauss-of-uga-and-nfl-fame-and-regular-guy-jessup-legend/).



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End Notes:

⁴ ⁴ Smith, Loran. "In remembrance of Len Hauss, of UGA and NFL fame and 'regular guy' Jessup legend," sports.yahoo.com, December 23, 2021, [In remembrance of Len Hauss, of UGA and NFL fame and 'regular guy' Jessup legend \(yahoo.com\)](#).