

THE ERA OF HUTSON

The following article (submitted by P.F.R.A. member Jim Stewart) appeared in the Sept. 29, 1957, program for the Packers-Bears game.

The Green Bay Packers' championship clubs during the Era of Don Hutson may have lacked some of the flamboyant color of the Triple Champions of 1929-31 but they had one thing the earlier kings didn't enjoy. They had Hutson.

Not that the titlists of 1936, 1939 and 1944 were one-man teams. If anything, both the '36 and '39 clubs were probably better balanced and more powerful than their championship predecessors. Even without Hutson, they would have been powerhouses. With him they were great.

When the Pack hit the glory road again in 1936 it was an almost entirely new cast of characters. Only holdovers from the previous era were Johnny Blood, Arnie Herber, Hank Bruder and Milt Gantenbein. It was, however, an experienced club, solidly blended of veterans and promising rookies, of which Hutson represented the key to greatness.

Blood hadn't changed much and was still up to his old tricks, but he almost sat this one out, being a holdout until the season was well under way. Herber had blossomed into the finest forward passer in the game, and Gantenbein had more than fulfilled his earlier promise. Hard Luck Hank Bruder, free of his college jinx, had become one of the most durable and reliable backs in the business.

The big forward wall had changed too. Bud Svendsen anchored the center of a rugged front line, backed by Frank Butler and Tony Paulekas, while a trio of burly veterans -- Ernie Smith, Champ Seibold and Ade Schwammel -- held down the tackle slots.

The club was knee-deep in top flight guards, all of whom could pull a trick or two at tackle. They included Russ Letlow, Lou Gordon, Tiny Engebretsen, Walt Kiesling, Lon Evans and Buckets Goldenberg -- a gang not calculated to let opposing ball carriers sleep peacefully of nights. If the backfield wasn't as individually versatile as the earlier combinations, it was still loaded. The ball-toting brigade numbered, in addition to Herber, Blood and Bruder, Joe Laws, Bob Monnett, Paul Miller, Herm Schneidmann, Swede Johnston, Cal Clemens and George Sauer. Not to mention Clarke Hinkle.

But the individual who fused a good 1935 team into a champion was Hutson. After a tremendous rookie year the Alabama Antelope really hit his stride and was virtually unstoppable as Herber's favorite target. When the rest of the league tried to gang him, Arnie threw strikes to Gantenbein, Bernie Scherer and Way Becker.

The season didn't start too well. After taking a tough one from the Cardinals in the opener, the Packers were soundly trounced by the hated Bears. That beating did something, however. Blood got down off his high horse and signed his contract, and thereafter the Packers were unstoppable, sweeping to the Western Division title with nine more wins and a scoreless tie with the Cards. They then proceeded to wallop Boston for the league championship.

1936 RECORD

Date	At	Opponent	GB-OP	R
S-13	H	Chicago Cardinals	10- 7	W
S-20	H	Chicago Bears	3-30	L
O- 4	H	Chicago Cardinals	24- 0	W
O-11	H	Boston Redskins	31- 2	W
O-18	H	Detroit Lions	20-18	W
O-25	H	Pittsburgh Pirates	42-10	W
N- 1	A	Chicago Bears	21-10	W
N- 8	A	Boston Redskins	7- 3	W
N-15	A	Brooklyn Dodgers	38- 7	W
N-22	A	New York Giants	26-14	W
N-29	A	Detroit Lions	28-17	W

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D- 6	A	Chicago Cardinals	0- 0	T
Championship Game				
D-13	A*	Boston Redskins	21- 6	W

*-Played at New York, N.Y.

A lot of that gang were still around three years later when the Packers captured their fifth title. The 1939 champions were probably the best club ever to fly a pennant in City Stadium, with a roster that could boast nearly 70 player-years in Green Bay uniforms. Holding over from the 1936 club were Herber, Bruder, Hinkle, Laws, Johnston and Schneidmann in the backfield, plus Svendsen, Goldenberg, Engebretsen, Letlow, Smith, Gantenbein and Hutson up front. That lineup was tough enough even without the help they enjoyed.

The line included Carl Mulleneaux, Frank Steeno, Al Moore and Harry Jacunski on the wings; Lee Mulleneaux, Tom Greenfield and Charlie Brock at the pivot; and Baby Ray, Dick Zoll, Bill Lee, Charley Schultz, Paul Kell, Pete Tinsley, Frank Twedell, Jack Brennan, Warren Kilbourne and Johnny Biolo. Backfield stalwarts were Larry Buhler, Lou Brock, Larry Craig, Frank Balazs, Eddie Jankowski, Dick Weisgerber, Tuffy Thompson, and Andy Uram. Hutson had another crack pitcher to spell the aging Herber in Cecil Isbell. Many of those boys had acquired the habit of picking up championships at Minnesota under the regime of Bernie Bierman.

Actually, 1939 was the second time around for this gang. They had won the division title in 1938, only to be up-ended in the playoffs by the New York Giants. In spite of their power, however, they dropped two early games and had to sweep through the last four scheduled contents and pick up a lot of help from the improving Bears before clinching divisional honors on the final Sunday. Thereafter they took on the defending champion Giants in Milwaukee and nearly chased them out of the park.

1939 RECORD				
Date	AT	Opponent	GB-OP	R
S-17	H	Chicago Cardinals	14-10	W
S-24	H	Chicago Bears	21-16	W
O- 1	H	Cleveland Rams	24-27	L
O- 8	H*	Chicago Cardinals	27-20	W
O-22	H	Detroit Lions	26- 7	W
O-29	H*	Washington Redskins	24-14	W
N- 5	A	Chicago Bears	27-30	L
N-12	A	Philadelphia Eagles	23-16	W
N-19	A	Brooklyn Dodgers	28- 0	W
N-26	A	Cleveland Rams	7- 6	W
D- 3	A	Detroit Lions	12- 7	W
Championship Game				
D-10	H*	New York Giants	27- 0	W

*-Played at Milwaukee, Wisc.

Between 1939 and 1944 the Packers, still paced by Hutson, produced some of their greatest teams, but they had the ill luck to be in the same league with the Chicago Bears. The war wrecked the Bears -- not that it did anyone else any good -- but it hurt the Packers just a little less. The quality of the league during the war years wasn't up to previous standards and nobody knew what was going to happen next. The 1944 champions, consequently, were not not in the same class with their predecessors, but they weren't exactly palookas either.

They might not have come home with the Big Casino, however, if Don Hutson and Buckets Goldenberg hadn't changed their minds. Both had retired after 1943 but couldn't withstand Lambeau's blandishments and returned for just one more season. Ade Schwammel was also lured out of his easy chair for a last try.

Curly still had a pretty fair nucleus of old timers to build upon. Among them were Charlie Brock at center, Pete Tinsley at guard, Baby Ray at tackle, and Harry Jacunski as well as Hutson on the flank. Ball carriers still operating were Joe Laws, Larry Craig and Lou Brock. The rest of the line consisted of Bob

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Flowers, Forrest McPherson, Mike Buccianneri, Bob Kercher, Charlie Tollefson, Glenn Sorenson, Bill Kuuisto, Tiny Croft, Dr. Paul Berezney, Ray Wheba and Joel Mason. The backfield also contained some fair journeymen ball players, among them Roy McKay, Don Perkins, Irv Comp, Dick Bilda, Ted Fritsch, Paul Duhart, Ben Starrett and Bob Kahler.

Of all the oddities of that off-beat season, however, perhaps the greatest was the spectacle of George Trafton in the Packer fold. Twenty years before, as one of the meanest operators ever to wear the spangles of the Chicago Bears, Trafton was the most enthusiastically hated player ever to knock the wind out of a Green Bay football. Out of a clear sky, Lambeau hired him to coach the 1944 line. All was forgiven when George helped groom the Packers to their sixth championship.

The outcome was something of a surprise, and it wasn't until the campaign was nearly half over that the fans woke up to the possibility of another title. It was typical of the season, however, that the Packers won their Western Division crown while sitting dazedly on the seat of their pants in the Polo Grounds, as their old standby, Arnie Herber led the Giants to a crushing upset. Fortunately, the Bears were also kayoed by the Lions on the same Sunday.

It was a different story on the same field three weeks later. This time the aroused Packers reversed the decision, although "Uncle Arnie" almost put the Giants back in the game in the second half.

1944 RECORD				
Date	At	Opponent	GB-OP	R
S-17	H	Brooklyn Dodgers	14- 7	W
S-24	H	Chicago Bears	42-28	W
O- 1	H	Detroit Lions	27- 6	W
O- 8	H	Card-Pitt	34- 7	W
O-22	H	Cleveland Rams	30-21	W
O-29	A	Detroit Lions	14- 0	W
N- 5	A	Chicago Bears	0-21	L
N-12	A	Cleveland Rams	42- 7	W
N-19	A	New York Giants	0-24	L
N-26	A*	Card-Pitt	35-20	W
Championship Game				
D-17	A	New York Giants	14- 7	W

*-Played at Chicago, Ill.