

1926 All Pros

by John Hogrogian

This article will be short because my search for 1926 All Pro teams came up short on quantity. Fortunately, it came up long on quality. The only two teams I dug up each had items of special interest.

For those who have forgotten, 1926 was the year in which two major football leagues competed for the recreational dollar and media attention. The National Football League was in its seventh season and was just getting used to having East Coast teams in addition to the traditional Midwestern crew. The American Football League had just sprung into being around the magnetic popularity of Red Grange. The New York Yankees served as Grange's vehicle for his first full pro season, hoping for some of the wealth he'd generated in his late 1925 tours with the Chicago Bears.

The first All Pro team I encountered excluded the AFL. The annual poll of writers and team officials from NFL cities confined its attention to the senior league. The 17 electors chose two squads which featured some new faces.

first team	second team
E- Brick Muller, LA	E- Lavern Dilweg, GB
E- Charley Berry, Pot	E- Fred Bissell, Akr
T- Ed Healey, ChiB	T- Steve Owen, NYG
T- Walt Ellis, ChiC	T- John Thurman, LA
G- Johnny Budd, Fra	G- Jay Berquist, KC
G- Gus Sonnenberg, Det	G- Bill Buckler, ChiB
C- Clyde Smith, KC	C- Herb Stein, Pot
Q- Tut Imlay, LA	Q- Bert Bloodgood, KC
H- Paddy Driscoll, ChiB	H- Hinkey Haines, NYG
H- Verne Lewellen, GB	H- Curly Oden, Prov
F- Ernie Nevers, Dul	F- Hust Stockton, Fra

Source: Green Bay *Press-Gazette*, Dec. 17, 1926; Milwaukee *Sentinel*, Dec. 17, 1926; Philadelphia *Public Ledger*, Dec. 18, 1926.

Imlay and Muller were the famous names who gave the traveling Los Angeles team its reason to exist. Imlay would stick around for one more season after this, but Muller did not appear in any NFL games outside of 1926. Budd joined the Yellowjackets after several years with independent Pennsylvania teams. Clyde Smith began a short but sterling career by winning the first-team center sport, and Ernie Nevers brought a reputation almost as alluring as Grange's into the NFL.

Listed as top vote getters were Ernie Nevers (17), Paddy Driscoll (15), Brick Muller (14), Tut Imlay (11), and Walt Ellis (10).

Ed Healey won his fourth straight first team berth, and Pady Driscoll won his third in four years. Gus Sonnenberg finished third among the tackles, but because he had more votes than any guard, he was placed on the first team at guard. Three Hall of Famers made the first team, one the second.

Despite the continued presence of old pros Driscoll and Healey, younger players dominated this team.

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Only one man picked the other All Pro team which I found. Wilfred Smith of the Chicago *Tribune* made his selections after finishing his playing career with the Chicago Cardinals one year earlier. Smith drew upon both NFL and AFL players for his honor roll.

first team	second team
E- Ray Flaherty, LA (A)	E- George Tully, Phi (A)
E- Lavern Dilweg, Mil	E- Brick Muller, LA
T- Ed Healey, ChiB	T- Bull Behman, Phi (A)

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T- Duke Slater, RI (A) T- Bub Weller, ChiC
G- Johnny Budd, Fra G- Bill Buckler, ChiB
G- Jim McMillen, ChiB G- Willis Brennan, ChiC
C- George Trafton, ChiB C- Joe Alexander, NYG
Q- Paddy Driscoll, ChiB Q- Joe Sternaman, Chi (A)
H- Eddie Tryon, NY (A) H- Tex Hamer, Fra
H- Tony Latone, Pot H- George Wolson, LA (A)
F- Ernie Nevers, Dul F- Al Kreuz, Phi (A)

Source: *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 19, 1926; *Detroit Free Press*, Dec. 20, 1926; *New York Daily News*, Dec. 20, 1926 (first team only).

Of the 22 men named by Smith, eight played in the AFL. When I read the teams, I mentally separated his AFL choices into a separate squad. The eight picks fill all the positions except the guards and center.

Sternaman, Slater, and Behman had starred in the NFL and kept up the pace in the new league. Wilson, Tryon, and Flaherty broke into pro football with the AFL and would later win honors in the NFL. Kreuz and Tully made their marks with the champion Philadelphia Quakers, but neither made any impact on NFL history. Smith's selections pointedly omitted Red Grange.

Rivaling Grange's 1925 debut was the 1926 tour of Ernie Nevers. Surrounded by a mediocre squad and with shoestring financing, Nevers captivated the fans and writers with his marvelous skills and desire.

The Duluth Eskimos played all over the country before audiences eager to see Nevers. The Eskimos never challenged for the NFL title, but Nevers had a strong claim on being the league's most indispensable player.