

Research Notes

WHAT DO GEORGE BUSH, JACKIE JENSEN, AND BOBBY LAYNE HAVE IN COMMON?

By Tim Gallagher, Graduate Student, Marshall University

In this Presidential election year, we find Vice-President George Bush hitting the campaign trail. Hitting is nothing new to George Bush. He played collegiate baseball at Yale University under Coach Ethan Allen in the late 1940s, but he was better known for his fielding than his hitting.

Jackie Jensen was a major league baseball star in the 1950s and 1960s with the New York Yankees, Washington Senators, and Boston Red Sox. An outstanding hitter, Jensen had a .279 career batting average and led the American League in rbi's in 1955 (tied with Ray Boone), 1958, and 1959. In 1958, he was voted the A.L. MVP. Jensen had been an All-American fullback at the University of California as well as a fine fielding centerfielder.

Of course all *Coffin Corner* readers know Bobby Layne as a great former quarterback who played briefly with the Chicago Bears, New York Bulldogs, but blossomed with the Detroit Lions of the 1950s and later finished his career with the Pittsburgh Steelers. During his 15-year career, he passed for 196 and ran for 25 touchdowns. Never a picture-pretty quarterback, Layne was a winner. He led the Detroit Lions to NFL Championships in 1952, 1953, and 1957. He even quarterbacked the downtrodden Pittsburgh Steelers to winning seasons in 1958, 1959, and 1962.

However, many people are not aware that Bobby Layne played baseball for the University of Texas as a pitcher. During 1946-1948, he won 28 consecutive conference games without a loss – a record in the Southwestern Conference.

What do these three men have in common? They all participated in the first college baseball World Series in 1947. Layne and the Texas Longhorns were beaten 8-7 by Jackie Jensen and his teammates from the University of California in the western regional championship game. Bobby Layne came into the game as a relief pitcher in the bottom of the ninth inning, but he was not effective and gave up a run to take the loss.

The championship series was held in Kalamazoo, Michigan, and matched George Bush and his Yale teammates against Jensen and the University of California. Cal defeated Yale in the first game 17-4 and in the second game 8-7.

In the championship series, George Bush went 0 for 6, but he scored two runs. On the other hand, Jensen went 1 for 1 as a starter, but he delivered a pinch-hit single to knock a run in. Jensen was also the starting pitcher in the second game. He lasted five innings before he was knocked out of the box.

Just think if things would have been different in that series. Perhaps Bush and Layne would have become professional baseball players and Jensen the Vice-President, or maybe Layne as Vice-President and Jensen and Bush in football. Then in the movie, Ronald Reagan as the coach could ask Jensen to go out and win one for the Busher!

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THAT '27 DEE-FENSE

By Donald Kosakowski

"Defense, Defense," has been the well-known chant of Giant fans for years, and why not? With rosters featuring such defensive stalwarts as Mel Hein, Arnie Weinmeister, Andy Robustelli, Emlen Tunnell, Jimmy Patton, Brad Van Pelt, and Sam Huff to name just a few, it's easy to see why the word defense and the New York Football Giants have become synonymous. From Coach Steve Owen's famed umbrella defense of the early fifties, to the well-known fearsome foursome of the mid and late fifties, to Hecker's Wreckers of 1970, to the Rover Defense starring Jack Gregory, to the present day 3-4 featuring the Board of De-Wreckers (Giants four LB crew), the Giants have been and continue to be associated with defense.

Historically speaking, this connection started to take root in the remarkable season of 1927. The Giants of that year played 13 regular season games of which they won 11, lost 1, and tied 1, on their way to capturing the NFL Championship. This feat alone would be reason enough to describe this '27 team as remarkable. However, there is much more.

The Giants of '27 shutout 10 of their 13 opponents, allowing only 20 points while scoring 197. At one stretch, the Giant defense produced 5 straight shutouts and a streak of 23 straight scoreless quarters. Imagine a defense of today going through an entire season

limiting their opponents to just 3 touchdowns and 2 extra points!

Tim Mara's boys of '27 were coached by Earl Potteiger who also played end occasionally. Future Hall of Famers, tackle Steve Owen and tight end Cal Hubbard, helped to anchor a team which also had stars like tackle Century Milstead of Yale, center Joe Alexander of Syracuse, guard Al Nesser, back Jack McBride of Syracuse, back "Mule" Wilson of Texas A & M, and quarterback "Hinkey" Haines of Penn State. These individuals were not only the defensive stars but also the key offensive weapons, especially McBride and Haines. One must remember that this was the era of one-platoon football and free substitution was a concept of the future.

So this year, when the chant of "Defense, Defense," goes up at the Meadowlands, the boys of '27 can certainly be proud. It was this group, more than any other, which initiated the association between the word "defense" and the New York Football Giants.

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STRONG VS NEWMAN

By Bob Gill

In honor of the imminent arrival of the 1940-41 AFL Guide, I've been putting together a few additions to the guide for 1936-37. It's sad to admit, but despite the best efforts of Tod Maher and me, new bits of information keep turning up.

The two most famous players in the 1936-37 AFL were undoubtedly Ken Strong and Harry Newman, and in 1936 they were also the league's two leading kickers. Nobody will be particularly surprised to hear that Strong was second in the league with five field goals, but it may come as a surprise that Newman beat him out for the lead with six – and in only seven games.

The reason is simple: for that one season, at least, Newman was a much more efficient kicker than Strong, for the season making good on six of 11 attempts while his more famous counterpart hit on only five of 20. That's right, 20 attempts, only five of them successful.

Here's Strong's field goal record for 1936, game by game:

| | |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Sept. 27 vs Syracuse | 0-2 |
| Sept. 30 at Boston | 0-2 |
| Oct. 14 vs Brooklyn | 1-1 |
| Oct. 18 at Syracuse | 0-0 |
| Oct. 21 vs Pittsburgh | 0-2 |
| Oct. 25 at Cleveland | 0-1 |
| Oct. 28 vs Cleveland | 0-3 |
| Nov. 1 vs Brooklyn | 1-4 |
| Nov. 15 vs Boston | 0-2 |
| Nov. 22 at Cleveland | 3-3 |

Note that before his grand finale in Cleveland, Strong had made two of 17 field-goal tries. I think the record is complete, but there is a slight possibility that the Oct. 14 and Oct. 18 games might have included a miss or two that went unreported. The others I'm 99% sure of.

In 1937 Strong enjoyed more success as a kicker. He played in only two games that year, a home game against Los Angeles on Sept. 22 and a road game in Cincinnati on Oct. 17. He hit two of three field-goal tries against L.A., but didn't try any against Cincinnati in the second game. The first game account is undoubtedly complete, but it's possible that the second is missing a miss or two. Anyway, the best available figures give Strong a two-year record of seven field goals in 23 attempts.

Here's Newman's game-by-game record for 1936, while we're at it:

| | |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Oct. 11 at Boston | 2-2 |
| Oct. 14 at New York | 0-1 |
| Oct. 18 at Pittsburgh | 0-1 |
| Nov. 1 at New York | 1-2 |
| Nov. 8 at Cleveland | 0-0 |
| Nov. 22 vs Boston | 1-2 |
| Nov. 26 vs Cleveland | 2-3 |

It's possible that Newman may have missed a kick that went unrecorded in the Nov. 8 game, but other than that I think this is pretty sound. Note, by the way, that the Tigers, Newman's team, didn't play any home games until they moved to Rochester in mid-November. While stationed nominally in Brooklyn they had no home field. Thus the Oct. 14 game played at Randalls Island was a home game for the Yankees, and not, as we said in the 1936-37 guide, for the Tigers.

As for Newman's 1937 kicking record, I haven't gotten around to that yet, and he only made two field goals that year anyway. Les Post took over a share of the Tigers' field-goal kicking, and so it may be harder to discover Newman's record. I will give it a look, though.

Next AFL update will contain, along with Newman's 1937 kicking, some passing statistics for him, along with a few game statistics we missed the first time around.

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SOMETHING FOR NOTHING

By Bob Barnett

In the 1920s pro football was a hard-nosed, tough defensive game. Points were usually hard to come by, but because of a quirk in the college and NFL rules, a team could be given an extra point without having to kick the ball through the uprights.

For example, late in the fourth quarter of a 1930 game between the Ironton (Ohio) Tanks and the Portsmouth

Spartans, the semi-pro Tanks led the heavily-favored NFL Spartans 6-0. The Spartans scored on a four-yard run, but the extra point attempt was wide to the left. college rules read, "If a foul is committed by the side on defense, the additional point shall be awarded to the team making the try without further play. According to Joe Horrigan, the curator of the Pro Football Hall of Fame, this rule was in effect through the late 1920s and was only repealed after the 1930 season.

The Spartans, who in 1934 became the Detroit Lions, subsequently won the game over the Tanks on that controversial extra point. And it is possible that many other NFL and college games before 1931 were won on similar "something for nothing" extra points.

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LOSING

By Bob Carroll

The school I teach at when I get time off from the CC is not exactly a gambling den. No Nathan Detroit's roam the halls and I have never been interrupted in class by someone at the door hissing: "Hey, Bud! Equipoise in duh fifth!" But we do have a payday pool among the faculty where everyone puts in a dollar and somebody's name is pulled from a cigar box and he or she wins the pot. We have always had the pool and I've been teaching for twenty-five years. You know how many times I won? Never!

Because the Tanks were offside on the extra point attempt, the Spartans were awarded the point. NFL and

I saw my name go into the box, but it never comes out! I really think someone glued it to the bottom of the box.

So three years ago they started a second pool on Steeler games. For a dollar you put your name on a sheet with a hundred squares, ten across and ten down. Then they drew numbers from 0 to 9 across the top and again down the side. Let's say I got a box below a 7 and across from a 4. If the Steeler score was 7-4, 7-14, 17-4, 17-24, 37-34, or so on, I win. I haven't done quite as well on that pool as on payday.

This year came a new football pool – the 33 pool. I put in two dollars and draw one NFL team. If that team scores 33 points I win half the pool. The other half goes to the guy who has the team that scores the most points. If no team scores 33, that half is carried over. I started off big by drawing Tampa Bay; then Cincinnati; then Houston! This week, I got lucky. I drew San Francisco. The 49ers are a great offensive team! They were undefeated! All they had to do was bomb a defense that had given up more than 30 points the week before.

I was practically counting the money as I sat down to watch the 49ers play Pittsburgh.