

Research Notes

DUB JONES

by Stan Grosshandler

November 25, 1951, was the day Dub Jones ran wild. Scoring six touchdowns against the Chicago Bears, he put on a show only duplicated by Ernie Nevers in 1929 and Gale Sayers in '65.

"Our slogan on the Browns was 'The Best Show in Football,'" Dub said, "and that day we really put one on. It was a very emotional game as we led our division and the Bears led theirs. We also set a record for penalties as the Brownies had 209 and the Bears 165."

"This was the first league game between the two clubs," recalled Don Kindt, Bear defensive standout, "and we really wanted to win badly. We felt it was the reputation of the old NFL versus the young upstart AAFC even though the leagues had been merged for several years. There was still that sentiment prevalent. I really can not remember Halas ever wanting to win a game more."

The first period was scoreless; however, in the second the Browns went 34 yards on 12 plays, with a two-yard smash by Jones over left guard the scoring play. He was to score on the first five times he touched the ball. Two more Brown scores came when Dub took a 34 yard pass from Graham and skirted left end for 11 yards.

"Jones beat Johnny Lujack on that pass," commented Kindt. "Johnny was our right corner man and, in my opinion, about the best defensive back in the league; however, Dub just beat him."

"I felt John Lujack was the best all-around athlete in the NFL," Dub added. "He was their best runner, passer, kicker, and defensive back yet got shuffled all over the place as they had so many good quarterbacks."

Kindt commented on this: "Our big problem that day was defense. We used a five-man line, with two linebackers, two corner men, and two safeties. We did not like this as it left us vulnerable to their Motley-trap play up the middle. It also exposed us to their excellent screens. We would have much preferred the 4-3-3 which gave some flexibility.

"A second problem," Don continued, "was a defensive backfield that was often shifted about. Can you imagine! Lujack played right corner and quarterback! I played either left corner or safety; Gene Schroeder played a corner; Al Campana a safety. Two

quarterbacks George Blanda and Steve Romanik were also safeties, and to top it off Blanda often played linebacker. Our regular linebackers were considered to be offensive tackle George Connor and Stu Clarkson, a center."

After the Bears got on the board, Dub took over, going unmolested around left end for 27 yards and TD #4.

"This was a flip play," stated Dub. "It was intended to be used against a team with slow ends as the halfback cracked back on the linebacker, both tackles pulled to get the corner man, and we ignored the end, depending on our back to outrun him. As we had fast tackles in Groza and Rymkus, it worked very well. In fact, years later it was still doing well for Jim Brown. Now, neither Wightkin nor Sprinkle of the Bears were slow, but it sure worked well against them that day."

The Bears scored again when Ed Sprinkle hit Graham so hard he caused him to fumble and also broke his nose. Ed grabbed the ball and went 55 yards for a score.

"Sprinkle had become a very controversial player due to an article in a national magazine calling him a dirty player. I believe this added to the fuel of our game."

"I did not consider Ed a dirty player," argued Kindt. "He had a trick of coming in from his right end position and hooking a back with his left arm. This was a rough, not dirty play. Another problem that added to the heat of the contest was our determination to gang-tackle Motley. We often were called for piling on."

The Bears scored on a pass in the final period, but Jones came back on a 43-yard run for TD #5.

"I knew Dub needed but one more TD for a record," Otto Graham stated. "When Paul Brown sent in a run I ignored it, probably the only time I ever did this to Paul, and called a pass. Dub cut down and in and I hit him for the score. It was number six."

Otto continued: "I was really glad it happened to a guy like Jones for he was truly a team player. Often he would come back to the huddle and suggest a play which we would use for he was so good at analyzing the defenses."

"Otto threw the soft pass," Dub said. "Like all great passers, he could throw all types and our pass offense was many years ahead of its time."

Don Kindt summarized the Dub Jones story saying, "This was not a great day for a mediocre player, a

fluke. He was the epitome of a great halfback – fast, graceful, great receiver, top scorer – just an all-around superb back.”

A final footnote to the Dub Jones story was added by Otto Graham who had to quip: “His kid proved to be smarter than he was; he was a quarterback.”

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ED DANOWSKI

by Johny Shevalla

Edward Danowski achieved quite a unique distinction in having played for three of the greatest coaches in the history of college and pro football: Fordham’s Major Frank Cavanaugh and Jim Crowley and Steve Owen of the New York Giants.

Ed made All-American at halfback for Fordham in 1932-33. He captained Coach Crowley’s first Fordham team in ’33. From 1934 through 1941, Ed gained his greatest fame with the Giants, completing 309 of 637 passes, while calling the plays for some of Owen’s best teams. Twice he was named to all-league teams.

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SPEC SANDERS

by Stan Grosshandler

Like so many others of his pre-TV era, Spec Sanders is now only a great forgotten runner who played in a good forgotten league – the All-America Football Conference.

“During my career, I saw about five or six men I would place in a special category,” said the late Buddy Young. “I won’t tell you who they all are, but Spec Sanders is definitely one of them! He was in a class by himself!

“Spec was one of the finest and most complete players I have ever seen. First of all he was a late bloomer as he had played in the shadow of Pete Layden while at Texas. Then he was in the service three more years. I’d guess he was what you’d call a late maturation factor.”

On Friday night, October 24, 1947, Spec Sanders put on one of the most unforgettable shows ever seen on a professional gridiron. As the tailback of the New York Yankees of the AAFC, he carried the ball 24 times for 225 yards against the Chicago Rockets.

Taking the opening kickoff, the Yanks were on the scoreboard within 12 plays as Spec went the last 20,

flattening an opponent with an old-fashioned stiff arm. After a second Yank score, Spec put a third TD on the board with a perfect pass and then a fourth when he faded to pass, had no receivers, and decided to run 70 yards through the entire Chicago team.

“I really do not remember a great deal about the game,” he was to recall years later. “I do remember my pal Buddy Young taking the second half kickoff and going 95 yards. Later they took him out and put Dewey Proctor in. I threw him a short pass and instead of the conventional stiff arm, he used a closed fist which proved very effective as he made a nice gain. Most of the starters sat out the second half.

“My first season,” he continued, “I shared the tailback in the single wing formation with Ace Parker. We had the conventional big fullback in Pug Manders, with Lloyd Cheatham at the blocking back and Bob Sweiger, the wing. The next year I played only offensive tailback with Buddy Young at fullback. Now you know, he was only 5’4” and went 175, but we did a lot of faking and so a giant fullback was not a necessity. Buddy was truly one of the great pro backs; and a better friend I have never had.”

“I had to sit out the ‘49 season due to a leg operation,” Spec added, “and by 1950 the AAFC became part of the NFL and my old coach Red Strader coached a New York team. He joked with me about coming back and before I knew it I had signed as a defensive back. I stuck to defense and tied the NFL record of 13 interceptions.”

“Sanders was one of those backs who ran so hard we felt he would soon burn himself out,” remarked Crazy Legs Hirsch, “but before he did he sure set some records.”

Spec Sanders led the AAFC in rushing in both ‘46 and ‘47, setting a record 1432 yards the latter year. He was the only man to surpass the magic 1000 mark in the league’s history. He was also top scorer his second year with 114 points. When the final dusty records were closed, records the present NFL refused to open, he had scored the most TDs by rushing, was the second all-time ground gainer, fourth in total points, and eighth in passing.

Today Spec remains a symbol of “what might have been” had he had the benefits of a league with TV exposure and the benefits of modern surgery that has enabled knees like his to last many more years.