

IT'S A MINOR THING, Part 2

by Steven M. Brainerd

What's in a name?

American Football is credited with being first to put players names on the back of player jerseys -- a practice now followed by all but a few baseball teams in professional sports. However minor league football was there years ahead of the AFL. The Hollywood Bears of the Pacific Pro Football League pioneered the name on jersey concept back in 1946.

The kick is good!

Pete Gogolak was the first soccer style kicker in pro football, right? Wrong, again. Bob Kressler, of the 1962 Providence Steamroller, was the first kicker who didn't do it straight. That year he scored 39 points (33xp and 2 fg) and helped get Providence into the Atlantic Coast League championship game at Atlantic City against the Paterson Miners. The game went into double overtime with Paterson winning, 17-14. Kressler had a chance to win the game in the first overtime, but missed from 38 yards out.

What's in a name II?

Minor league and semipro football nicknames cover a wide range from the sublime to the ridiculous. The NFL supplies a lot of the names used in minor league football. The Raiders are far and away the most popular with 47 past and present teams using that name. The Bears are a distant second with 28 and the Vikings third with 22. Three NFL clubs have failed to have any semipro teams borrow their name (Dolphins, Bills and 49ers.) Other pro sports supply names also, the most popular being 15 Tigers, 14 Hawks and 13 Indians. Twenty five Stars are the most popular non major league nicknames in use, followed by the Bulldogs with twenty one and Mustangs and Panthers tied with nineteen each.

Rivals.

One of the best things a minor league football team can do is develop a strong rivalry with some one. It can do a lot for you. The Binghamton Jets and Scranton Eagles have engaged in a lot of games since 1971. The series stands even at 14 and 14 through last year. That year proved to be very good at the gate for both teams. The game in Binghamton drew 8000, the return game in Scranton drew over 12,000 and the league championship game between them, in Scranton, drew 11,000.

Manitowoc's Chiefs and the Sheboygan Redwings went at each other, off and on, from 1937 to 1975. Manitowoc won the series with 48 victories, 14 loses and 5 ties. The 67 games these two rivals played is more than any other twosome.

Two original members of the Empire League, Glens Falls Greenjackets and Hudson Vikings, have the second longest series with 34 games. Glens Falls leads the rivalry 28 to 8, including fourteen in a row.

What's in a name III?

You know about the common names for minor league football teams and now you'll learn about some of the unusual.

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Minor league football is the cat's meow: Alpharetta Cougars, Lathrope Leopards, Falls River Lions, Ironwood Panthers, Durham Bobcats, Los Angeles Wildcats, Cincinnati Bengals, Lynchburg Jaguars, Vancouver Cats and Waynesboro Tigers.

Semipro football is bad: New London Sea Raiders, Kansas City Rustlers, Brea Outlaws, San Jose Bandits, Washington (DC) Buccaneers, Portsmouth Pirates, Albany Metro-Mallers, Springfield Maraiders, Richmond Renegades, Ottawa Bootleggers, Lake Tahoe Gamblers, Willimatic Wreakers and Houston Head Hunters.

Just when you thought it was safe to go on the field: San Diego Sharks, Wausau Muskies, Oregon City Steelheads, Mobile Tarpons, and West Palm Beach Baracudas.

Minor leaguers can be armed and dangerous: Detroit Arrows, Louisville Tanks, Waukegan Rifles, Oneida Silver Bullets, Flint Sabres, Columbus Stingers, Eugin Torpedoes, Pasadena Pistols and Long Island Tomahawks.

Games can be played in all kinds of weather: Charlotte Storm, Panama City Suns, Tulsa Thunder, Orange Tornadoes, Rohert Park Rainbows, Saybrook Tides, Columbus Winds, Bellflower Hurricanes, and Plano Cyclones.

Players come from all types of occupations: Paterson Miners, Boston Sweepers, Atlantic City Senators, Virginia Sailors, Sacramento Statesmen, Redondo Beach Crew, Clintonville Truckers, Fond du Lac Brewers, Kaukauna Merchants, Portland Loggers, Hammonton Bakers, Poughkeepsie Diplomats, Vancouver Millionaires, Indianapolis Tailors, Humbolt Foresters, Houston Drillers, Fresno Prospectors, San Pedro Longshoremens and Newport News Shipbuilders.

Semipro football is for the birds: Baltimore Eagles, Jersey City Jays, Cleveland Falcons, Madison Cardinals, Houston Seagulls, Charlotte Bantams, Portland Seahawks, Northwest Chicago Fighting Turkeys, Sacramento Condors, Richmond Roadrunners, Chicago Owls, Chicago Ravens, Huntsville Hawks, Baltimore Orioles, Baltimore Bluejays, Jacksonville Robins, Lake Charles Pelicans, Columbia Sandlappers, La Canada Ducks and Petaluma Leghorns.

The players are very tough: Wichita Falls Roughnecks, New Kensington Rough Riders, Cedar Rapids Crushers, Columbus Bullies, Pittsburgh Ironmen, Schuylkill Coal Crackers, Youngstown Hardhats, Ashland Ironmasters and Syracuse Stormers.

The game is full of action: Oklahoma City Stampede, Wabash Express, Shreveport Steamer, East Los Angeles Ramblers, Sharon Blasters, Chicago Flash, Orland Park Fury, Palos-Orland Force and Battlesville Quickicks.

The team nicknames are often colorful: Braddock Black Knights, Bel Air Big Red, Kansas City Blues, Columbus Green Wave, Watertown Red and Black, Los Angeles Maroons, Boca Raton Blue Wave, and Stamford Golden Bears.

Some of the players are strong like...Anderson Bulls, Lakeland Brahams, San Antonio Toros and Kansas City Steers.

General Custer, General Custer, we're surrounded by...Long Island Indians, Chattanooga Cherokees, Cincinnati Mohawks, Rock Island Blackhawks, Monterrey Golden Aztecs, San Jose Apaches, South Boston Chippewas and Tulsa Seminoles.

There's a woman on the field!

Twice in minor league football's long history, women have played on the field with the men. They both were the holder for the kicker. Pat Palinkas has the honor of being the first. She played in one exhibition game with the 1970 Orlando Panthers. She held the ball for her place-kicker husband Steve. Orlando cut Mr. Palinkas, but wanted her to continue to play. However she went home with her husband.

Joann Ramirez was the ballholder for the 1975 Sacramento Statesmen. She played in at least four regular season California League games at 5'2 and 115 lbs. The Statesmen didn't play well going 3 and 5.