

Mini Bio: Paul Hornung

Hornung was college football's greatest star in 1956 when he was a Heisman Trophy-winning quarterback at Notre Dame. The Green Bay Packers made him their bonus selection in the 1957 draft. But for two years he struggled as he was shuffled ineffectively between quarterback and halfback by the inept Packers.

When Vince Lombardi arrived as coach of the Pack in 1959, he handed Hornung the left halfback position – a key slot in Lombardi's offense. The change in Hornung was incredible. The 6-2, 220-pound blond became a pro superstar with his all-around play, excelling as a runner, receiver, blocker, kicker and team leader. He had a "nose for the end zone." After leading the NFL in scoring with 94 points in 1959, he broke all records with 176 in 1960 and followed with 146 in '61. He was twice league MVP. At his best in big games, Hornung set a playoff record with 19 points in the 1961 Championship Game while on weekend leave from the army.

Green Bay's "Golden Boy" was known for his high-living lifestyle, and he was suspended for the 1963 season for gambling problems. In 1964, he returned to score 107 points for the Pack. He finished his career with 62 touchdowns and 760 points scored.

Mini Bio: Ken Houston

Houston was a linebacker at Prairie View A&M, but the Houston Oilers drafted him on the ninth round in 1967 to play safety. It was a great choice. In practically no time, the rugged, 6-3, 198-pounder was regarded as the premier safety of his era.

A smashing tackler who could stop powerful runners in their tracks, Ken was also an exceptional pass defender. He finished his 14-season career with 49 interceptions, including a personal high of nine in 1971. That year, he returned four of his steals for touchdowns, and he holds the NFL record with nine career interceptions for touchdowns.

After six years with the Oilers, he was traded to Washington where he starred for eight more seasons. All-NFL eight times, he was selected to play in 12 Pro Bowls.

Mini Bio: Willie Lanier

Lanier patrolled the middle of the Kansas City Chiefs' defense for eleven great seasons, from 1967 through 1977. His booming hits earned him the nickname "Contact." At 6-1 and 245 pounds, the former Morgan State star was big enough to crunch the power runners, quick enough to run down the speedsters, and mobile enough to drop back and help on pass defense. But his most important attribute was the intelligence that enabled him to diagnose enemy offenses. Together with outside men Bobby Bell and Jim Lynch, Lanier gave the Chiefs one of the top linebacking trios in history.

The first black to excel at middle linebacker, Lanier was overshadowed early in his career by Dick Butkus and Tommy Nobis, but after a few rock-'em-sock-'em seasons many rated him their equal. Seven times All-AFL/AFC, he played in eight Pro Bowls.

In his eleven seasons, he intercepted 27 passes and recovered 15 enemy fumbles.

Mini Bio: Fran Tarkenton

Tarkenton holds nearly all the “total” passing records: most attempts, 6,467; most completions, 3,686; yards, 47,003; and touchdowns, 342, yet during his 18-season career, he was better known for his feet than for his arm. He was the first – and many believe the best – of the “scramblers,” quarterbacks who buy extra time for their passes by dashing around the backfield evading tacklers. Once he scrambled for 28 seconds before firing a touchdown.

Despite predictions that his scrambling style would eventually earn him crippling injuries, the 6-0, 185-pound Georgia Bulldog stayed amazingly healthy. He finally missed one game with a rib injury in his 16th season and five with a broken leg in his 17th, but he was back for a full 16 games in 1978, his final season. Along the way, he scrambled for 3,686 yards, more than many famous running backs.

Tark’s first pro coach, Norm Van Brocklin, hated his out-of-the-pocket style. After six seasons with the Vikings, Fran was traded to the New York Giants. He returned to Minnesota for his twelfth season and led the Vikings to three Super Bowls in his second tour there.

Mini Bio: John Mackey

Mackey was the prototype tight end: the size of a small tackle, the strength of a blacksmith, the speed of a dash man, and the aggressiveness of a true football player. At Syracuse he split time between end and fullback, but when he joined the Baltimore Colts in 1963 as a second-round pick, he found his niche at the then-new position of tight end. An immediate starter, he was the only rookie chosen to the Pro Bowl that year and went on to play in four more. From 1966-68, he was All-NFL.

The 6-2, 224-pounder had breakaway speed – in 1966 he had touchdown receptions of 51, 57, 64, 79, 83, and 89 yards. In nine years with the Colts, he never missed a game, and in 1972, his final year, he played all but one game with the Chargers. His career receiving totals: 331 catches, 5,236 yards, and 38 touchdowns.

His most famous play – one often shown on TV in highlight films – saw him catch a deflected pass in Super Bowl V and turn it into a 75-yard touchdown.

Mini Bio: Vic Sears

Sears was an outstanding two-way tackle at Oregon State. In 1940, he was named All-PCC and All-America. The Pittsburgh Steelers drafted him on the fourth round in 1941, but before he could report, the Pittsburgh and Philadelphia franchises were switched and Sears found himself an Eagle.

Although he eventually became a defensive specialist, Sears averaged 50 minutes a game for the Eagles from 1941 through 1949, with the exception of the 1944 season which he missed entirely with a broken ankle. The 6-3, 230-pound bruiser was named All-NFL in 1943 and 1949. In many other seasons he earned second team status or honorable mention. He was a mainstay of the Eagle teams that won three division titles and two NFL championships from 1947-49. He planned to retire after the 1952 season, but a desperate call from Philadelphia brought him back for one more year.

In the 1960s, he was named to the Eagles’ All-Time Team.

Mini Bio: Lynn Swann

Swann was one of the most graceful receivers ever to play the game – a leaping, diving Nureyev of the gridiron. He was named MVP of Super Bowl X for his four spectacular receptions good for 161 yards, including a game-winning 64-yarder. The 6-2, 190-pound, former Southern California great joined the Steelers in 1974 and played nine sensational seasons. His 336 receptions were the Pittsburgh career record until John Stallworth passed him. He scored 51 touchdowns and gained 5,462 yards. In four Super Bowls his catches were good for 364 yards.

But, though his totals were outstanding, Swann's greatest value was as a "big play" receiver who could turn a game around with a single catch. He was All-NFL in 1975 and 1978, All-AFC three times, and chosen to four Pro Bowls.

Mini Bio: Al Wistert

An All-America tackle at Michigan in 1942, Wistert's two elder brothers were also Wolverine All-America tackles: Francis in 1933 and Alvin in the late 1940s after returning from military service. Only Al played professionally, but he was probably the most consistently honored lineman of his time. In his nine seasons with the Eagles (1943-51), he received at least a second team all-league selection in every year except his first. From 1944 through 1948, he was consensus All-NFL.

At 6-2 and 217 pounds, Wistert was one of the smallest tackles in the league, but he more than made up for any lack of bulk with his speed and fighting spirit. If the Eagles seemed flat before a game, coach "Greasy" Neale, who called Al "the greatest offensive tackle I have ever seen," would sometimes turn the squad over to Captain Wistert on Saturdays so that he could put them into a fighting mood for Sunday.

Philadelphia retired Wistert's number 70 when he hung up his cleats.