

# Dan Hampton, class of 2002

Courtesy of the Pro Football Hall of Fame

## DAN HAMPTON

Hampton, Daniel Oliver (Danimal)  
Arkansas

B: 9 / 19 / 1957, Oklahoma City, OK

Drafted: 1979 Round 1 ChiB

DT-DE

6-5, 264

HS: Jacksonville [AR]

Year	Team	G	Sacks	Year	Team	G	Sacks
1979	CHI	16	n/a	1986	CHI	16	10.0
1980	CHI	16	n/a	1987	CHI	8	3.5
1981	CHI	16	n/a	1988	CHI	16	9.5
1982	CHI	9	9.0	1989	CHI	4	2.0
1983	CHI	11	5.0	1990	CHI	14	0.0
1984	CHI	15	11.5	TOTALS		157	57.0
1985	CHI	16	6.5				

Additional Career Statistics: Safeties: 1

### Pro Football Hall of Fame 2002

All-Pro: 1982, 1984, 1986 DE, 1988

All-NFC: 1980 DE, 1984, 1986 DE, 1988

Pro Bowls: 1981, 1983, 1985, 1986

Selected as Defensive Tackle 1980's All-Decade Team

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University of Arkansas lineman Dan Hampton, "was a late bloomer that only a few astute scouts knew much about," according to a Chicago sportswriter. Luckily for the Chicago Bears, one of the "astute" was Bears scout Jim Parmer. Hampton, the scout reported, "Could play inside or outside." He even went so far as to suggest that the Bears coaching staff could "put him about anywhere you want to." Convinced, the Bears drafted Hampton in the first round of the 1979 NFL Draft.

The versatile lineman, nicknamed "Danimal" by his Razorback teammates, more than lived up to his advance billing. Six times during his stellar 12-year career with the Bears, he earned first- or second-team All-Pro honors, four times as a defensive tackle and twice as a defensive end. Four times he was selected to play in the Pro Bowl, and in 1990 was named to the NFL's 1980's All-Decade Team.

Born on September 19, 1957, in Oklahoma City, Dan moved with his parents, Robert and Joan, when he was five years old, to a farm in Cabot, Arkansas. His father, an IBM customer engineer, wanted his three children, of whom Dan was the youngest, to grow up with a respect for the earth and to experience the benefits of a simple life.

The "simple life," however, didn't prevent Dan from finding his fair share of youthful mischief. He was once described as being "about as restrained as a sack full of pups...large pups."

According to Jill Lieber in her 1989 *Sports Illustrated* profile of the veteran NFL star, "Dan was an accident waiting to happen." Hampton related a number of "disaster" stories to Lieber including how he once fell out of a large elm tree, dropping 30 feet to the ground. The then-12-year-old smashed his left heel and broke his right ankle and left wrist. "I landed standing up," he told Lieber. "The doctors said that a fall from that distance should have shattered the femurs and driven them up into my body. But my bones were extremely strong, they said, from drinking fresh cow milk." Although there was no internal damage, the energetic pre-teen did spend the next five months in a wheelchair.

It was during his recovery period that his father encouraged him to learn to play the guitar, one of several instruments at which he eventually became proficient. When Dan finally did recover sufficiently to discard his casts and crutches, it was just in time for tryouts for the eighth grade football team. Unfortunately, the pain from his fall was still significant, and after just one practice he knew he wouldn't be able to play.

Glad that his father had encouraged his musical development, Dan decided to join the school band. Then, just as a sense of normalcy seemed to be back in his life, Dan's father died. It was a devastating loss for the entire family, but Dan was particularly affected.

The family struggled financially the next few years. Although Dan had grown to 6-3 and 200 pounds, he showed no interest in playing football and sometimes less in his schoolwork. Finally, the high school football coach convinced him to take his sometimes-misdirected energy to the football field.

"I owe it all (the start of his football career) to my high school coach, Bill Reed," he told veteran sportswriter Cooper Rollow in a 1980 interview. "He found me in the school band. I had learned how to play the bass guitar and the alto sax and four other instruments. I used to play my guitar in the stands and switch over to the sax when we marched...Reed kept looking at me like I was a piece of meat. When I was a junior, he pulled me out of the band and put me on the football team."

Quickly, his coaches realized they had a diamond in the rough. As a senior, a more seasoned Hampton, started and excelled at defensive and offensive tackle. His outstanding play earned him a football scholarship to Arkansas.

"I'd always thought it was kind of funny that Arkansas was the only school that showed any interest in me," he told Rollow. "I never heard from Texas or Oklahoma. I finally mentioned this to one of the Arkansas coaches and he said, 'You heard from them, Bill Reed never gave you the letters.'"

A four-year letterman and three-year starter at Arkansas, Dan played in the Senior, Fiesta, Orange, and Cotton Bowls. Nicknamed "Danimal" by his Razorback teammates, for his ferocious style of play, he capped off his collegiate career by earning All-America honors as a senior, as well as SWC Defensive Player of the Year honors.

When Hampton reported to his first Bears training camp he fully expected to be a backup defensive tackle learning his trade from veteran starters Alan Page and Jim Osborne. However, when Al Harris and Tommy Hart both went down with injuries, Hampton was thrust into the starting lineup as a defensive end. He became the first rookie to earn a starting berth on a Bears' defense since 1975.

Although initially he played too "mechanically" Hampton quickly learned to make the necessary adjustments. He went on to earn consensus All-Rookie honors after starting all 16 games at the left defensive end spot. In that first season he was credited with 70 tackles, 48 of which were solo efforts, two fumble recoveries, and three passes defended. Although quarterback sacks were not an official statistic until 1982, unofficially he was credited with five sacks as a rookie as well as eight tackles of running backs behind the line of scrimmage.

The following season, an even stronger, more confident Hampton emerged. The sophomore defensive lineman led the Bears' in sacks with 11.5 and his 73 tackles were the most by a Bears lineman. His dominating play earned him the first of his four Pro Bowl invitations as well as All-NFC honors as a defensive end. In 1981, it was pretty much the same story as "Danimal" continued to wreak havoc on opposing ball handlers, this time from both the defensive end and defensive tackle positions. His nine quarterback sacks were again a team high.

In the nine-game strike-shortened 1982 season, Hampton, played exclusively at right defensive end and again led the Bears with 9 sacks and was second with 71 tackles. One major publication selected him as the NFC Defensive Most Valuable Player. He was also named to his first All-Pro team.

Injuries slowed Hampton in 1983, but he still managed to record five sacks in just 11 games. The following season, although he missed one game with a hyper-extended knee, he equaled his career best 11.5 sack mark.

It is for the 1985 season, however, that Dan and the Bears' defense is best remembered. For his part, Hampton spent the first half of the season playing right tackle before moving over to the left defensive end spot for the remainder of the season. His non-stop aggressive style of play caused opposing offenses to assign extra blockers ultimately freeing up other Bears defenders to make plays. Even with the added attention, Dan still managed to record 6.5 sacks, force two fumbles, recover three fumbles, and defend four passes.

Overall, the stingy Bears defense allowed just 198 points and shut out both opponents in the NFC playoff games. Chicago went on to destroy the New England Patriots 46-10 in Super Bowl XX, allowing just 123 total yards and sacking Patriot quarterbacks seven times.

"Maybe 20 or 30 years from now when people talk about the great defenses of all time, I think surely people will put us on that list, maybe with the Steelers or the Cowboys of the 70's or 80's," Hampton reflected. "I think that a lot of people have said that the defense of that season, was one of the most dominant ones ever fielded. So, sure there was a lot of pride at being a part of that. The great thing about it," he continued, "was it was a feeling of responsibility, we knew that we had to play great and tried to play great every week because in order to win the championship you had to be ready each and every game."

Obviously, Hampton and his teammates were "ready" as the team posted a near perfect 15-1 regular season record and the one-sided Super Bowl win.

Although 1985 may have been a high point in his career, Dan played at a consistently high level throughout his tenure with the Bears. In 1986, he turned in another All-Pro season that included an amazing single-game performance against the Green Bay Packers. In that game, Hampton was a one-

man wrecking crew as he accounted for seven tackles, three sacks, and a safety. Even his teammates, who presented him with the game ball, were awestruck.

Ironically it was against the Packers the following season, that Dan suffered a knee injury that kept him out of the lineup for three games. Still, he managed to record 3.5 sacks in just eight games in the strike-shortened season. Adding to his résumé that year, he also blocked two field goals, including one against the Kansas City Chiefs in a two-point victory.

After playing both defensive end and defensive tackle in 1987, Hampton settled in exclusively at the right defensive tackle spot in 1988. Again he earned All-Pro and All-NFC honors, posting 10 sacks and 88 tackles, including 12 in a single game against the Patriots.

Dan's willingness to shift from one defensive position to another without question or complaint caused one reporter to wonder in print, "Had he stayed at one position, who knows how many Pro Bowls he might have made?"

Although Dan had many statistically outstanding seasons and single-game performances, he always contended that numbers and individual honors per se weren't important to him. "That doesn't wind my clock," he offered. More important, he contended were the games, "where we went in against great odds and adversity and won."

Always a leader on the field, in the locker room, and in the huddle, Hampton was in many ways, a throwback to another era. "One of the greatest compliments I was given," he once recalled, "was after a number of years I got to know Dick Butkus and Ed O'Bradovich and one night they said, 'You could have played with us. You're one of our kind of players.' That really made me feel good."

Hampton, who became just the second Bear to play in three different decades, was the consummate team player. He gave it his all on every play, often to the detriment of his body. During his career he endured 10 operations, five on each knee, as well as countless other "minor" injuries.

"I was dealt a hand," he reflected after his final season. "I tried to play that hand as long and as hard as I could...I didn't mind because I enjoyed doing what I did so much that I really wanted to try and come back and be more successful each time I got hurt. I think there was a lot of good luck. But I also think that the good Lord gave me a very resilient body. I don't know if a lot of people would have done it or could have done it. It just never seemed to be that tough of a deal for me. The only thing that I regret is the fact that I couldn't have done more each year. I always wanted to be one of the guys that was making it happen...But somehow things worked out all right, and for 12 years, I don't think I did too bad."

Apparently, the Pro Football Hall of Fame's Board of Selectors didn't think he "did too bad" either. On February 2, 2002 they rewarded the Bears lineman for his outstanding play and dedication to the game with his election to the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

#### **PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO PFRA BY-LAWS**

PFRA has a set of by-laws that govern the Association's operation. At present, the by-laws require that PFRA hold a meeting of the Board of Directors every year. In the late 1980's, the meetings were usually held at the Hall of Fame in Canton and drew about 10-12 members (not just members of the Board) who shared research and socialized. In the 1990's, the meetings never drew more than eight members. The last meeting was held in 1998. For the last three years, the Board of Directors simply waived the meeting because of lack of interest and lack of pressing business.

The Association does not feel the need for annual meetings. Therefore, I propose that the by-laws be amended to provide for meetings every other year, and more often if the President so directs.

I propose that the first sentence of Article VII, section 2, be amended to read as follows: "The Board of Directors shall conduct a meeting at least every other year. It shall also meet at any other times and places determined by the president. Except when the president declares an emergency, meetings shall be announced two months in advance through publication in the Coffin Corner, and they shall be open to all members of the Association."

I also propose that Article X, section 1, be amended. This section governs amendments to the by-laws. It requires that "any proposed amendment must be submitted to the membership in writing, either by personal mail or by publication in the Coffin Corner, at least one month prior to the date of the beginning of the annual meeting of members." I propose that the words after the last comma be replaced by the words "with a voting period of at least one month." This change is necessary because of the absence of annual meetings.

I know that these matters are very dry and of no interest to most members. Nevertheless, you are encouraged to vote your approval or disapproval by communication to Bob Carroll by December 1, 2003. The result of the referendum will be published in the Coffin Corner after that date.