

It might be mistaken for a college bowl, but for nearly a thousand athletes in the 60s and early 70s, it was actually their first professional football game. Not the NFL, AFL, or the CFL – the paychecks came from the AFCA. Few remember ...

# THE COACHES' ALL-AMERICA GAME

by Mark L. Ford

True or false?

- (a) Ernie Davis never played a professional football game.
- (b) Fran Tarkenton's first professional TD pass was in Buffalo to Art Baker of the AFL Buffalo Bills.
- (c) Bob Griese's first points as a pro player came on a 29 yard field goal.
- (d) Dick Butkus and Gale Sayers never opposed each other in a pro game.

It turns out that (a) and (d) are false, and (b) and (c) are true. The players listed above made their pro football debuts, not with the NFL or the AFL, but with the AFCA – the American Football Coaches Association. The AFCA had picked "All America" college football teams since 1945, and from 1961 to 1975, the AFCA operated its own all-star game – paying nominal amounts to players who had signed contracts with other teams.

The All-America Game wasn't a college bowl – none of the players were college students and their classes had graduated before the June game. Nor was the All-America much of a pro game – the pay, a few hundred dollars, would be considered semi-pro by most standards. But during its sixteen years of operation, hundreds of college football's star alumni played AFCA pro ball first.

Like many college all-star games, the format was East v. West. Profits from ticket sales and television rights went to fund scholarships. By June, most of the players would already be signed to a pro contract, so the AFCA had to get approval for the game at the NFL's March 1960 meeting, followed by the AFL and the CFL. By 1965, the All-America Game was considered both the best of the college all-star games and the first pro outing for the new season's rookies. *Sports Illustrated* described it as pro football in some years, college ball in others.

Twenty four future members of the Pro Football Hall of Fame got their first payday from the AFCA, but interest in the game was never very high – perhaps because the game was a hybrid of NCAA and NFL. Depending on your perspective, you were either watching yesterday's college stars or a bunch of untested pro rookies. In its first nine years, the All-America was played at the homes of the Buffalo Bills (War Memorial Stadium, 1961-65) and the Atlanta Falcons (1966-69). The final seven games were played on the campus of Texas Tech in Lubbock. TV ratings on NBC and later ABC were consistently low, even when the East and West teams attracted the nation's best players.

The best players, however, stopped going to the All-America Game and its older rival, the Chicago College All-Star Game.

Athletes who were negotiating contracts, and owners who had signed big deals, didn't want to risk injuries. By the time Dan Fouts suffered a broken collarbone in the 1973 All-America, the game's days were already numbered. After the 1976 contest, both the All-America and the College All-Star game were discontinued. The All-America Game has a place in history, however, as the first pro football game for many of the era's great players. Highlights:

**1961:** The first All-America Game, held at Buffalo's War Memorial Stadium, billed itself as the "Graduation Bowl", but the name didn't stick. Vikings' QB Fran Tarkenton fired his first pro TD pass to the Bills' Art Baker. Tarkenton was sacked for a safety by Ron McDole, and both played 18 seasons in the NFL.

Game One: Buffalo, NY June 23, 1961

WEST	7	0	14	9	-	30
EAST	0	6	6	8	-	20

W - Marv Luster, 47 yd pass from Bob Schloredt (George Fleming kick)

E - Mike Ditka, 5 yd pass from Norm Snead (kick failed)

W - Rome Lakes, recovered blocked punt in end zone (Fleming kick)

W - Tommy Mason, 5 yd pass from Billy Kilmer (Fleming kick)

E - Art Baker, 9 yd pass from Fran Tarkenton (pass attempt failed)

E - Claude Moorman, 6 yd pass from Snead (Mike Ditka, pass from Tarkenton)

W - Safety, Kurt Gagner and Ron McDole tackle Tarkenton in end zone

COACHES: WEST/ Murray Warmath, Minnesota

EAST/ Rip Engle, Penn State

A - 19,000

**1962:** All-America Game II was the first pro game for Heisman Trophy winner Ernie Davis, and the last. After collecting his AFCA check for \$200 as a player for the East team, the Syracuse University speedster was preparing to join the College All-Stars in Chicago and then the Cleveland Browns training camp. Days after the All-America game – where he dropped a pass from Roman Gabriel on a 2 point conversion attempt – Davis showed the first signs of the leukemia that would eventually kill him.

Game Two: Buffalo, NY June 29, 1962

EAST	0	0	7	6	-	13
WEST	0	0	8	0	-	8

E - Roman Gabriel, 1 yd plunge (Greg Mather kick)

W - Tom Hall, 70 yd interception return (Sandy Stephens run)

E - Bob Ferguson, 28 yd run (Gabriel to Ernie Davis pass fails)

COACHES: WEST/ Murray Warmath, Minnesota

EAST/ Woody Hayes, Ohio State

A - 22,759

**1963:** USC had beat Wisconsin 42-37 in the Rose Bowl nearly six

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months earlier, and the third All-America pitted the coaches against each other again. Bruhn's tandem of Richter and Vanderkelen was unsuccessful in Buffalo, but combined for an upset of the Green Bay Packers in the College All-Star Game.

Hugh Campbell scored two TDs to win the game for the West. Like Bob Schloredt and Sandy Stephens before him, he went on to play in Canada. In 1984, he came over to the NFL – for two years as the Oilers' head coach.

### Game Three: Buffalo, NY June 29, 1963

WEST	8	0	7	7	-	22
EAST	7	0	7	7	-	21

W - Ronnie Goodwin, 2 yd run (Conrad Hitchler, pass from Bill Nelsen)

E - Ron Vanderkelen, 24 yd pass from Pat Richter (John Baker kick)

E - George Saimes, 2 yd run (Baker kick)

W - Hugh Campbell, 19 yd pass from Nelsen (Ray Mansfield kick)

E - Willie Richardson, 28 yd pass from Daryl Lamonica (Baker kick)

W - Campbell, pass from Nelsen (Mansfield kick)

COACHES: WEST/ John McKay, USC

EAST/ Milt Bruhn, Wisconsin

A - 20,840

**1964:** In the first few years of the All-America, kicking specialists were not picked for the 30 available spots on each team. Dave Kopay was a receiver for the 49ers, the Saints and the Redskins, but never kicked in the NFL. He became more famous for "coming out" in his autobiography.

### Game Four: Buffalo, NY June 27, 1964

EAST	0	0	12	6	-	18
WEST	0	7	0	8	-	15

W - Willie Crenshaw, 2 yd run (Dave Kopay kick)

E - Paul Warfield, pass from George Mira (kick failed)

E - Rick Leeson, 1 yd run (kick failed)

E - Sherman Lewis, 1 yd run (kick failed)

W - Dennis Claridge, 1 yd run (Mel Profit, pass from Don Trull)

COACHES: WEST/ Bob Devaney, Nebraska

EAST/ Pete Elliott, Illinois

**1965:** Future Dallas Cowboys Roger Staubach (East) and Craig Morton (West) were opposing QB's in the fifth All-America, and would face each other again in Super Bowl XII. Jerry Rhome, another Cowboys QB, backed up Morton, while Staubach spelled fellow Heisman winner John Huarte. Staubach was also used on defense for the East team. Gayle Sayers (West) and Dick Butkus and Brian Piccolo (East) played against each other in the All-America, then joined the Chicago Bears.

### Game Five: Buffalo, NY June 26, 1965

EAST	7	0	14	13	-	34
WEST	7	7	0	0	-	14

E - Jim Nance, pass from John Huarte (Huarte kick)

W - Rick Redman, 15 yd interception return (Reid kick)

W - Gale Sayers, 1 yd run (Reid kick)

E - Tom Nowatzke, 1 yd run (Huarte kick)

E - Huarte, 3 yd run (Huarte kick)

E - Jack Snow, pass from Huarte (Huarte kick)

E - Rollie Stichweh, 1 yd run (kick failed)

COACHES: WEST/ Frank Broyles, Arkansas

EAST/ Ara Parseghian, Notre Dame

A - 25,503

**1966:** After five years in Buffalo, the AFCA moved to Atlanta, and the game was dominated by members of the new Falcons team, including the starting quarterbacks – Randy Johnson (West) and

Steve Sloan (East). Sloan's backup, Preston Riddlehuber and West linebacker Tommy Nobis had also signed with Atlanta. The coaches had faced each other in the Rose Bowl, UCLA winning 14-12. Prothro later coached the Rams and the Chargers in the NFL.

### Game Six: Atlanta, GA July 8, 1966

WEST	0	12	0	12	-	24
EAST	7	0	0	0	-	7

E - Jim Grabowski, 1 yd run (Charlie Gogolak kick)

W - Walt Garrison, 12 yd (kick failed)

W - Jim Lindsey, pass from Randy Johnson (kick failed)

W - Johnson, 3 yard run (kick failed)

W - Donny Anderson, pass from Johnson (kick failed)

COACHES: WEST/ Tommy Prothro, UCLA

EAST/ Duffy Daugherty, Michigan State

A - 38,236

**1967:** Kicking was never a big part of the All-America Game, and it took seven years before a field goal was scored. The historic first goal was made by Bob Griese, better remembered as the quarterback who took the Dolphins to two Super Bowl wins. Griese connected from 29 yards out and made an extra point as well, but never used that skill in the NFL. History records, however, that Griese's kicking was better than Garo Yepremian's passing.

### Game Seven: Atlanta, GA July 9, 1967

EAST	2	3	0	7	-	12
WEST	6	0	3	0	-	9

W - Mel Farr, 2 yd run (kick failed)

E - Safety, Bob Howard forced out of end zone

E - Bob Griese, 29 yd field goal

W - Larry Wachholtz, 25 yd field goal

E - Gene Washington, pass from Steve Spurrier (Griese kick)

COACHES: WEST/ Bob Devaney, Nebraska

EAST/ Tom Cahill, Army

A - 29,145

**1968:** Larry Csonka, Syracuse grad and Miami Dolphin rookie, was the game's MVP. The 1972 Miami Dolphins featured had ten regulars who were AFCA alumni: Csonka, Nick Buoniconti, Bob Griese, Bob Heinz, Larry Little, Jim Mandich, Mercury Morris, Bill Stanfill, Otto Stowe and Paul Warfield.

### Game Eight: Atlanta, GA June 28, 1968

WEST	7	6	7	14	-	34
EAST	0	14	0	6	-	20

W - Yazoo Smith, 77 yard punt return (Jerry DePoyster kick)

W - John Williams, fumble recovered in end zone (kick failed)

E - Larry Csonka, 1 yd run (Jimmy Keyes kick)

E - Greg Landry, 2 yd run (Keyes kick)

W - Rick Eber, pass from Gary Beban (DePoyster kick)

E - Csonka, 1 yd run (kick failed)

W - Billy Stevens, 1 yd run (DePoyster kick)

W - Ken Dyer, pass from Beban (DePoyster kick)

COACHES: WEST/ Dee Andros, Oregon State

EAST/ John Pont, Indiana

A - 21,120

**1969:** Rodgers avenged a 14-13 Orange Bowl loss to Paterno, but the NFL's top draft choices avoided the game, including Heisman winner O.J. Simpson, "Mean Joe" Greene, Calvin Hill, Ted Kwalick and Fred Dryer. Future Hall of Famer Ted Hendricks was one of the more outstanding players.

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Game Nine: Atlanta, GA June 28, 1969

WEST	0	0	0	14	-	14
EAST	0	3	7	0	-	10

E - Gerry Warren, 42 yard field goal  
 E - Bob Campbell, 1 yd run (Warren kick)  
 W - Bill Enyart, 2 yd run (Terry Brown kick)  
 W - Paul Gipson, 1 yd run (Brown kick)  
 COACHES: WEST/ Pepper Rodgers, Kansas  
           EAST/ Joe Paterno, Penn State  
 A - 17,008

**1970:** After runs in Buffalo and Atlanta, the All-America Game left pro football stadiums and moved to Lubbock and the Texas Tech campus. Dennis Shaw passed for 481 yards and drove the West team within 3 yards of a tying TD before time ran out. East coach Dan Devine's defensive tackle, Mike McCoy, later played for him on the Green Bay Packers.

Game Ten: Lubbock, TX June 27, 1970

EAST	7	14	7	6	-	34
WEST	0	21	0	6	-	27

E - Gordon Slade, 5 yd run (Jim O'Brien kick)  
 W - Brown, 1 yd run (Dennis Leuthauser kick)  
 W - Carter Campbell, 2 yd blocked punt return (Leuthauser kick)  
 E - Frank Foreman, 4 yd pass from Slade (O'Brien kick)  
 E - Frank Foreman, 21 yd pass from Slade (O'Brien kick)  
 W - Ron Gardin, 4 yd pass from Dennis Shaw (Leuthauser kick)  
 E - Charley Waters, 22 yd pass from John Isenbarger (O'Brien kick)  
 W - Terry McMillan, 1 yd run (kick failed)  
 E - Bruce Taylor, 43 yard interception return (kick failed)  
 COACHES: WEST/ Dan Devine, Missouri  
           EAST/ Charlie McClendon, LSU  
 A - 42,150

**1971:** Opposing coaches Devaney and McClendon met in the 1971 Orange Bowl, with Nebraska beating LSU 17-12. Cornhusker star Joe Orduna scored two touchdowns for the West team, including the game winning pass reception with 31 seconds to play, but played only one season in the NFL. Heisman winner Jim Plunkett passed for a TD and ran for another.

Game Eleven: Lubbock, TX June 26, 1971

WEST	7	0	19	7	-	33
EAST	7	8	7	7	-	29

W - J.D. Hill, 73 yard punt return (Bob Jacobs kick)  
 E - Paul Staroba 57 yd pass from Scott Hunter (Staroba kick)  
 E - Mike Adame, 1 yd run (Mickey Zofko, pass from Hunter)  
 W - Otto Stowe, 34 yd pass from Jim Plunkett (Jacobs kick)  
 W - Joe Orduna, 17 yd run (conversion failed)  
 W - Jim Plunkett, 1 yd run (conversion failed)  
 E - Hunter, 3 yd run (Staroba kick)  
 W - Orduna, pass from Chuck Hixson (Jacobs kick)  
 COACHES: WEST/ Bob Devaney, Nebraska  
           EAST/ Charlie McClendon, LSU  
 A - 43,320

**1972:** Big names stayed away from the All-America. The East's winning QB, Paul Miller, wasn't drafted by an NFL team. The West team's first score came on a touchdown pass from Jack Mildren to Bernie Jackson, both of whom became defensive backs in the NFL for the Colts and the Bengals, respectively. West coach Chuck Fairbanks later ran the New England Patriots.

Game Twelve: Lubbock, TX June 26, 1972

EAST	14	7	7	14	-	42
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WEST	0	7	7	6	-	20
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E - Billy Taylor, 1 yd run (George Hunt kick)  
 E - Lewis Jolley, 14 yd pass from Paul Miller (Hunt kick)  
 W - Bernie Jackson, pass from Jack Mildren (Marv Bateman kick)  
 E - Johnny Musso 1 yd run (Hunt kick)  
 W - Skip Thomas, pass from Mildren (Bateman kick)  
 E - Pete Watson, 25 yd run (Hunt kick)  
 E - Mike Taylor, 1 yd run (Hunt kick)  
 W - Tom Mosizek, 5 yd run (kick failed)  
 E - John McMakin, pass from Paul Miller (Hunt kick)  
 COACHES: WEST/ Chuck Fairbanks, Oklahoma  
           EAST/ Bear Bryant, Alabama  
 A - 42,314

**1973:** Dan Fouts of Oregon and San Diego quarterbacked the West team and was put out of commission by LSU's John Wood, a last minute replacement for the East. Fouts missed the start of the Chargers' season while recovering from a broken collarbone. Wood played two games in 1973 for the Saints.

Game Thirteen: Lubbock, TX June 23, 1973

WEST	0	7	13	0	-	20
EAST	3	3	0	0	-	6

E - Ray Guy, 33 yard field goal  
 W - Terry Metcalf, 2 yd run (Joe Wylie kick)  
 E - Ray Guy, 46 yard field goal  
 W - Sam Cunningham, 1 yd run (Wylie kick)  
 W - Steve Holden, pass from Ty Paine (kick failed)  
 COACHES: WEST/ John McKay, USC  
           EAST/ Shug Jordan, Auburn  
 A - 43,472

**1974:** There was no Chicago College All-Star Game in 1974, and the All-America Game stood alone that year. Many of the players in the All-America – Lynn Swann and Mike Webster, Randy Gradishar and Jesse Freitas – were set to play in Chicago against the Miami Dolphins, but the July 26 game was cancelled after NFL players went on strike. For West coach Barry Switzer, whose Oklahoma Sooners were on probation, this marked his lone bowl game for the 1974 season.

Game Fourteen: Lubbock, TX June 22, 1974

WEST	9	7	13	7	-	36
EAST	0	6	0	0	-	6

W - Lynn Swann, pass from Jesse Freitas  
 W - Berl Simmons, 48 yd field goal  
 E - Paul Seal, 48 yd pass from Norris Weese  
 W - Dickey Morton, 4 yd run (Simmons kick)  
 W - Joe Barnes, 26 yd run (kick failed)  
 W - Dickey Morton, 2 yd run (Simmons kick)  
 W - Swann, pass from Freitas (Simmons kick)  
 COACHES: WEST/ Barry Switzer, Oklahoma  
           EAST/ Johnny Majors, Pittsburgh  
 A - 42,368

**1975:** Texas Tech contributed the playing field, two of the defenders for the West team, and the head coach for the East team. Louis Carter quarterbacked the winning team, then went on to become a running back for the Raiders. Alan Pringle's 54 yard field goal wasn't enough for pro success. He played one game for the Lions, with no scoring attempts.

Game Fifteen: Lubbock, TX June 21, 1975

EAST	3	14	6	0	-	23
WEST	13	0	0	8	-	21

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E - Mike Franckowiak, field goal  
 W - Russ Francis pass from Neal Jeffrey (Pringle kick)  
 W - Alan Pringle, 39 yard field goal  
 W - Pringle, 54 yard field goal  
 E - John Sawyer, pass from Louis Carter (Franckowiak kick)  
 E - Carter run (Franckowiak kick)  
 E - Gary Johnson, fumble recovery  
 W - Don Hardeman run (Willard Harrell pass from Jeffrey)  
 COACHES: WEST/ Grant Teaff, Baylor  
           EAST/ Steve Sloan, Texas Tech

A - 36,108

**1976:** Had the East team won All-America Game XVI, the series would have closed out in a tidy fashion, with eight victories for each side. But tidy endings seldom happen in real life. By the time of the final All-America Game in 1976 – which was also the final year for the Chicago College All-Star Game. Both games were remnants of the days when college football was far more popular than pro ball. By the 1970s, rookies and owners had little to gain, and much to lose, from participation in somebody else's charity event.

Game Sixteen:           Lubbock, TX June 19, 1976

WEST	7	7	7	14	-	35
EAST	14	0	3	0	-	17

E - Rick Jennings, 2 yd run (Fred Steinfort kick)  
 W - Skip Walker 2 yd run (Bob Berg kick)  
 E - Jennings, 2 yd run (Steinfort kick)  
 W - Chris Rowland, 1 yd run (Berg kick)  
 E - Steinfort, 22 yd field goal  
 W - Henry Marshall pass from Steve Myer (Berg kick)  
 W - Marshall, pass from Chris Rowland  
 W - Theo Bell, pass from Myer  
 COACHES: WEST/ Frank Kush, Arizona State  
           EAST/ George Welsh, Navy

A - 36,504

Epilogue: The AFCA reluctantly dropped the All-America Game, though it continued to bestow honors. In 1997, though, the AFCA became a co-sponsor of the Hula Bowl, honoring its Coach of the Year selections and its senior All-America picks with a trip to Maui. While the game isn't the first professional outing for its players, it's sure to be their last college play. Beginning in 2003, the game takes place in February, the day before the NFL Pro Bowl.

**ALL-TIME ALL-AMERICA GAME TEAM**

<u>EAST</u>	<u>WEST</u>
QB - Fran Tarkenton '61 (Georgia/VIKINGS)	QB - Jim Plunkett '71 (Stanford/PATRIOTS)
C - Mike Webster '74 (Wisconsin/STEELERS)	C - Guy Morriss '73 (TCU/EAGLES)
G - John Hannah '73 (Alabama/PATRIOTS)	G - Gene Upshaw '67 (Texas A&I/RAIDERS)
G - Ed Budde '63 (Mich. St./CHIEFS)	G - Bob Brown '64 (Nebraska/EAGLES)
T - Dan Dierdorf '71 (Michigan/CARDINALS)	T - Rockne Freitas '67 (Oregon State/LIONS)
T - Dan Yochurn '73 (Syracuse/CFL)	T - Ron Yary '68 (U. Minn./VIKINGS)
RB - Larry Csonka '68 (Syracuse/DOLPHINS)	RB - Gale Sayers '65 (Kansas/BEARS)
RB - Ernie Davis '62 (Syracuse/BROWNS)	RB - Greg Pruitt '73 (Oklahoma/BROWNS)
WR - Paul Warfield '65 (Ohio State/BROWNS)	WR - Lynn Swann '74 (USC/STEELERS)

WR - Bob Hayes '65 (Florida A&M/COWBOYS)	WR - Sam Cunningham '73 (USC/PATRIOTS)	
TE - Mike Ditka '64 (Pitt/BEARS)	TE - Russ Francis '75 (Oregon/PATRIOTS)	
K - Bob Griese '67 (Purdue/DOLPHINS)	K - Alan Pringle '75 (Rice/LIONS)	
DE - Gerry Philbin '64 (Buffalo U./JETS)	DE - Carl Eller '64 (Minnesota/VIKINGS)	
DE - Claude Humphrey '68 (Tenn. St./FALCONS)	DE - Jerry Sherk '70 (Okla. St./BROWNS)	
DT - Rubin Carter '75 (Miami/BRONCOS)	DT - Merlin Olsen '62 (Utah St./RAMS)	
DT - Jim Dunaway '63 (Miss./BILLS)	DT - Bob Lilly '61 (TCU/COWBOYS)	
LB - Dick Butkus '65 (Illinois/BEARS)	LB - Bobby Bell '63 (Minnesota/CHIEFS)	
LB - Randy Gradishar '74 (Ohio St./BRONCOS)	LB - Gus Otto '65 (Missouri/RAIDERS)	
LB - Nick Buoniconti '63 (Notre Dame/PATRIOTS)	LB - Dave Wilcox '64 (Oregon/49ERS)	
CB - Jim Marsalis '69 (Tenn. St./CHIEFS)	CB - Mike Haynes '76 (Arizona St./CHIEFS)	
CB - Dick Anderson '68 (Colorado/DOLPHINS)	CB - Mel Renfro '64 (Oregon/COWBOYS)	
DB - Bruce Taylor '70 (Boston Coll. /49ERS)	DB - Willie Buchanan '72 (San Diego St./PACKERS)	
DB - Thorn Darden '72 (Michigan/BROWNS)	DB - Bill Bradley '69 (Texas/EAGLES)	

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