The Official Newsletter of the PFRA

Coffin Corner

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Vol. II, No. 10

October, 1980

The Spartans Live On (In Detroit)

C. Robert Barnett

On September 26, at the halftime of the Fairland-Portsmouth high school football game, three men will walk to the center of Spartan Municipal Stadium. These men, Glenn Presnell, Ernie Caddell and John Wager, are the last surviving members of the Portsmouth Spartans, the next-to-last small-town pro football team. The event celebrated will be the 50th anniversary of the first National Football League game played under the lights.

Monday Night Football, with its slick announcers, millionaire quarterbacks and hundreds of multi-watt bulbs, may have dulled our appreciation of that night in Portsmouth. But on Sept. 24, 1930, when the Brooklyn Dodgers came to the Ohio River town to play the Spartans, little could diminish the glittering effect that the spectators saw when the lights were turned on and men played football at night.

The game itself (Portsmouth won 12-0) was secondary to the condition of the lights. Most of the post-game reports spotlighted those grandstand bulbs rather than the play of the teams on the field. For the event, more than 6,000 fans turned out on unseasonably warm evening to watch the two NFL teams in brand new Universal Stadium (renamed Spartan Municipal Stadium during the Spartans' homecoming in 1970).

It was the second game of the season for the Spartans; their NFL debut came when they defeated the Newark Tornados, 13-6, in a day game. The Spartans were to make their mark in another chapter of NFL history by appearing in the first NFL indoor championship game, but that came later, in 1932. There were many games between that night when the lights came to Universal Stadium and the day when the Spartans met the Chicago Bears in Chicago Stadium—and another season to go before financial problems forced the Spartans to leave Portsmouth and go to the "big city" in Michigan to claim headlines as the Detroit Lions.

The Spartans were members of the NFL from 1930 through 1933. During those seasons, they amassed a 23-10-4 record (in NFL games) and annually were a contender for the league championship.

The fact that the team secured a professional franchise and etched a place in the history of pro football certainly reflects an America of a different era. In the first place, NFL franchises were not hard to get. A franchise could be acquired for as little as a $50 registration fee and a $2,500 deposit with the league office. Yet, the only city in the league in 1930 with a smaller population than Portsmouth was Green Bay, Wis., with a population of 37,415 residents. All of the other teams were located either within or very close to major metropolitan centers.

The citizens of Portsmouth viewed their hometown as a city on the move in the 1920s. During that decade, Portsmouth had grown to a population of more than 42,000, an increase of 9,000. The economy, based on the manufacture of steel, shoes and bricks, and rail and river transportation, was stable. During the late 1920s, a million-dollar bridge spanning the Ohio River was completed, the floodwall was extended, a new courthouse was begun, and a championship semi-pro football team had emerged. Growth and prosperity—and winning football teams—seemed automatic.

Semi-professional football began in Portsmouth as early as 1910. Various semi-pro teams, called the Shoe-Steels and Presidents, represented the town in the 1920s, and Jim Thorpe, the legendary Indian halfback, regularly played for Portsmouth near the end of his career.

Southern Ohio semi-pro football was dominated by the Ironton Tanks during the 1920s. Portsmouth, while occasionally beating or tying the Tanks, chafed under their dominance. In 1928, Portsmouth began seriously importing players who would form the heart of later Spartan teams. After a 5-2-2 record in 1928, the team came into its own in 1929.

The star of Coach Harold Griffin's 1929 team was Roy "Father" Lumpkin, a first-year back from Georgia Tech. Lumpkin was an immediate hit in Portsmouth. Glenn Presnell, a teammate of Lumpkin on later Spartan teams, described him as a "happy-go-lucky sort of guy who loved

to have a good time, but he was a serious football player, an excellent blocker." Part of Lumpkin's appeal was his hard-nosed play on the field, an image he maintained by refusing to wear a helmet when he played.

Lumpkin led the Spartans to a 12-2-1 record. The two loses were to the 1929 NFL champions, the Green Bay Packers, 14-0, and to the Ironton Tanks, 3-0, but the Spartans later crushed the Tanks, 38-0. Despite the earlier loss, the Spartans' management claimed the Ohio Valley League Championship and began using stationary which proclaimed them the "Independent Pro Champions of the United States." The next stop was obvious: The Big Leagues.

The First NFL Season

The citizens of Portsmouth must have ignored the Oct. 24, 1929, "Black Thursday" stock market crash and subsequent market declines when they decided to push for an NFL franchise. The Portsmouth National League Football Corporation was capitalized at $25,000 on June 12, 1930. To raise money, the corporation attempted to sell 250 shares of stock for $100 a share. Harry N. Snyder bought 91 shares and various other people bought 67 shares in lots of one or two shares each. The Spartans were officially granted a franchise at the July 1930 league meeting.

The Spartans made their NFL debut by defeating the Newark Tornados and the Brooklyn Dodgers, 12-0, in the famous night game. But four days later, the Spartans were barely able to defeat the semi-pro Ironton Tanks, 7-6. The *Portsmouth Times* expressed the belief that the underdog Tanks, particularly Keith Molesworth who had been cut earlier in the season by the Spartans, had badly outplayed the Spartans. "Why wasn't Molesworth retained by the Spartans," the *Times* asked rhetorically. Every one in Portsmouth knew Molesworth had been cut because he had stolen (and later married) Coach Griffin's girl friend.

After amassing a mid-season record of 4-2-1, the Spartans fell apart under Griffin's uneven leadership. They lost the second game to the Tanks, 15-16, and won only one of their last seven league games (they did beat the Tanks 12-0 in the third meeting). Finishing their first NFL season with a record of 5-6-3, the Spartans tied for seventh place in the 11-team league. It was apparent that the team needed new leadership.

The 1931 Season

Before the beginning of the 1931 season, Griffin was demoted to business manager and George "Potsy" Clark was hired as the new coach at a salary of $5,000. The head coach at Butler University, Clark had no experience in the professional game. Clark established his authority early. On the first day of practice he threw Father Lumpkin, the star of the 1930 team, off the field for "too much horseplay." The spectators and the team were shocked by Clark's action, but it worked. The next day Lumpkin apologized to Clark, and Clark, with discipline established, named Lumpkin captain of the team.

Glenn Presnell remembers Clark as an excellent coach. "Potsy trained us like a college team: hard physical practice, attention to detail, and discipline," said Presnell.

"We were in excellent condition. A lot of players returned from the previous year's team, but Potsy cut most of them because they would not be disciplined."

The 1931 Spartans opened their season at home on Sunday, Sept. 13, against the Brooklyn Dodgers. The temperature that day hovered around 100 degrees, and the well-conditioned Portsmouth team had little trouble defeating the Dodgers, 14-0. The Spartans proceeded to win their next seven straight games allowing their opponents a total of only 16 points. Yet the Spartans were not able to assume the league lead because the Green Bay Packers were also undefeated.

The Spartans' winning streak was broken by the New York Giants on Nov. 2 by the score of 14-0, and they lost the following week to the Chicago Bears, 9-6. They did win two of their next three games to stay in second place in the league standings.

The Packers, in first place with a 12-1 record, had two away-games scheduled with the Bears and Spartans. The second-place Spartans had a 10-3 record with two home games remaining against the Bears and Packers. If Portsmouth won both games and the Bears beat the Packers, the Spartans and Packers would be tied, necessitating a play-off game for the championship. The Spartans had a chance, but it was a long-shot possibility.

The Spartans beat the Bears 3-0, thanks to a heavy rain and wet field which kept the Bears' running attack led by Red Grange and Bronco Nagurski in check and a 17-yard field goal by Glenn Presnell. The Spartans had an open date and awaited the outcome of the Bears-Packers game. The Spartans' prayers were answered. The Bears rebounded from their loss to the Spartans and beat the Packers in a 7-6 thriller. Portsmouth had a shot at a tie for the championship.

But the game was not to be. Spartan management met with L. H. Joanness, president of the Green Bay Packers, in Chicago following the Bears-Packers game. To the surprise of the Spartans, the Packers refused to play them. The Packers contended that the game had only been "tentatively" scheduled and that no contract had been signed. Therefore, the Packers argued, the game could be cancelled by either party. The Spartans countered by saying that they did not have contracts for most of their games, but that the Dec. 13 Spartans-Packers game was listed on the "official league schedule."

The Spartans appealed to League President Joe Carr. He backed Green Bay, saying, "the Green Bay-Portsmouth arrangement was made after the regular schedule had been drawn up." Carr added that he had no power to force Green Bay to play and that he could not forfeit the game to Portsmouth. Consequently, the Green Bay Packers were declared the NFL champions and Portsmouth second.

Columbus State Journal sportswriter Bob Hooey summed up the feelings of the Portsmouth Spartan fans when he wrote: "Green Bay withheld its decision until after the Chicago Bears game Sunday. The Bears won and the Packers crown was toppling. Had Green Bay won, it is practically certain that it would have agreed to visit Portsmouth next Sunday, glad for the chance to strut on the Ohio gridiron, keenly partaking of the championship limelight, but with its crown not endangered. Such is the way of cheese champions."

The 1932 Season

Before the season began, the NFL shrunk from 10 to eight teams, and the remaining teams were in deep financial trouble. Portsmouth was no exception. The auditor's 1931 report indicated that the Spartans had lost more than $16,000 on the season and were $27,000 in debt. In an attempt to remain solvent, the Spartans cut their player roster, scheduled a number of exhibition games and traveled by bus rather than by train.

Spartan lineman John "Popeye" Wager recently said, "It was tough. We had a small roster because we just could not pay more players. Other teams traveled by train, but we went by bus to save money. We would pack enough clothing for three or four weeks and take off. Potsy would stop the bus alongside the road and we would practice in a farmer's pasture. In New York we practiced in Central Park, but we did not have to practice much because we played a game every three or four days."

Despite the financial difficulties, the 1932 season proved to be a good one for the Spartans. They returned from a nine-game, 21-day road trip with a 4-1-3 record (some games were exhibitions and were not included in the record) and were again in the championship race. Unfortunately, the team could not pay the players following the next home game, a 10-0 win over the Boston Braves. The players threatened to strike, and rumors of a franchise shift and the rescheduling of

(Continued on page 7)

FOOTBALL PLAYERS ARE BETTER THAN EVER, RIGHT?

by

David Shapiro, PhD

It certainly sounds like it every Sunday afternoon and evening, every Monday night, and on occasional Thursday nights from July to January, as sportscasters, their color men, and their statisticians hype the big-money game with paeans about new records, near-records, threatened records, superstars, and superseasons.

Not only does it give the hard-pressed broadcast crew something to talk about during lulls in the game, which is at least two-thirds of the time, but it also makes the pro game sound bigger, better, more exciting, and more entertaining. That's a major factor when you consider that television time on pro games is among the most expensive advertising buys in the business and that time on the Super Bowl broadcast is the most expensive -- $468,000 a minute this year on Super Bowl XIV.

One of their favorite ways to compare players is by season performances -- the number of carries, yards gained, touchdowns scored, and so forth by a player (or team, for that matter) over an entire season.

To hear the TV jocks tell it, it seems like Jim Brown set season rushing records, then O.J. Simpson broke them, then Walter Payton came along to break them, and now Earl Campbell sets new ones for Ottis Anderson to shoot at after Anderson's own record-breaking year, and so on.

Is there no end to this record-breaking?

No.

And there won't be any end to it because of the way season performance records are kept, published, and hyped by the NFL and its supporters in the media and in the advertising time-sales business.

Because, either by design or by oversight, they are dealing from a stacked deck when they talk about season records.

The truth is that season records are incorrectly kept and that many great football players (and teams) have seen their names dropped from the record books unfairly for nearly forty years because of it.

Since 1936, the first year in which all NFL teams played the same number of games per season, the season has varied in length from:

12 games in 1936 to
11 games in 1937 to
10 games in 1943 to
11 games in 1946 to
12 games in 1947 to
14 games in 1961 to
16 games in 1978.

But the NFL's official measurement of season performance has never been corrected for the different number of games in the seasons being compared. This is no different than keeping track records without regard to whether the distances run are measured in feet, yards, or meters.

Pro football records are officially compiled by the NFL Public Relations Department, meticulously kept on computers by Elias Sports Bureau, Inc. (this is the same kind of meticulousness as measuring for a first down to a fraction of an inch after the ball's forwardmost position is eyeballed by officials while the pigskin is being buried in a morass of 10-15 very large bodies), and published by NFL Properties, Inc. Everyone, even the prestigious Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio, buys them, reads them, believes them, and uses them.

As a result, everyone using Elias/NFL seasonal statistics is using data that can best be described as "no-think".

When you deal from the Elias/NFL stacked deck and look at 25 major categories of season records (both individual and team), it appears that football players are indeed better than ever. Of these 25 standards, Elias/NFL would have you believe that:

2 were set in the 40's,
2 in the 50's,
14 in the 60's, and
7 in the 70's, 6 during the last three seasons.

But they're wrong and anyone with a $2.50 NFL Record Manual and a $4.98 pocket calculator can prove it.

To get the real season statistics, you must first correct for the number of games in the seasons you're looking at, compared to a 16-game season.

If it was a 10-game season, you have to add 60% to get a true comparison. If it was an 11-game season, add 45.46%. If it was 12, add 33.33% and for 14 add 14.29%.

The results are startling and should be welcome to all those old pros who think they've been forgotten.

Applying these formulas to the same 25 season records, we find that, in reality:

9 were set in the 40's,
5 in the 50's,
9 in the 60's, and
only 2 in the 70's, 1 in '73 and 1 in '79!

At least in baseball, they have the class to insert a polite asterisk when they hit an anomaly like that, to wit:

*60 home runs, Babe Ruth, New York Yankees, 1927 (154-game season)

**61 home runs, Roger Maris, New York Yankees, 1961 (162-game season)

Baseball's record-keepers at least give you a chance to reflect on the fact that, given his pace of about one home run in every two and one-half games, Ruth would probably have hit 63 out of the park in a 162-game season. If he had had 246 games in which to bat -- the same as going from 10 games to 16 games in football -- it is reasonable to assume that the Babe would have produced 96 roundtrippers in a single season. Who says that the number of games you play in a season isn't important?

However, in pro football, you either use the Elias/NFL deck or you don't sit in.

Let's look at some of those new/old season records. For clarity, I have labeled the official records as "__NFL". The figures corrected for the 16-game season, I have modestly labeled as "__Shapiro". What the hell, Volta, Watt and all those guys named their units of measurement after themselves, didn't they? Why not Shapiro?

Individual records first.

Rushing Attempts

Official record: Earl Campbell, 1979 Houston Oilers, 368 NFL

Real record: Jim Brown, 1959 Cleveland Browns, 290 NFL (387 Shapiro)

Walter Payton, 1977 Chicago Bears, 339 NFL (387 Shapiro)

Touchdowns Rushing

Official record: Jim Taylor, 1962 Green Bay Packers, 19 NFL (22 Shapiro)

Earl Campbell, 1979 Houston Oilers, 19 NFL

Real record: Steve Van Buren, 1945 Philadelphia Eagles, 15 NFL (24 Shapiro)

Passing Attempts

Official record: Steve DeBerg, 1979 San Francisco 49ers, 577 NFL

Real record: Sonny Jurgensen, 1967 Washington Redskins, 508 NFL (581 Shapiro)

Passing Yards

Official record: Dan Fouts, 1979 San Diego Chargers, 4,082 NFL

Real record: Joe Namath, 1967 New York Jets, 4,007 NFL (4,579 Shapiro)

Touchdown Passes

Official record: George Blanda, 1961 Houston Oilers, 36 NFL (41 Shapiro)

Y.A. Tittle, 1963 New York Giants 36 NFL (41 Shapiro)

Real record: Sid Luckman, 1943 Chicago Bears, 28 NFL (45 Shapiro)

Total Touchdowns

Official record: O.J. Simpson, 1975 Buffalo Bills, 23 NFL (26 Shapiro)

Real record: Steve Van Buren, 1945 Philadelphia Eagles, 18 NFL (29 Shapiro)

Recasting team data is also most fruitful.

Rushing Attempts
Official record: 1977 Oakland Raiders, 681 NFL (778 Shapiro)
Real record: 1949 Philadelphia Eagles, 632 NFL (843 Shapiro)

Rushing Yardage
Official record: 1978 New England Patriots, 3,165 NFL
Real record: 1948 San Francisco 49ers, 3,663 AAFC (4,186 Shapiro)
If the purists balk at this one because the 1948 49ers played in the AAFC, no problem. Just substitute any one of eleven other teams that had total rushing yardage in a single season in excess of 3,165 Shapiro -- say, the 1936 Detroit Lions with 3,844 Shapiro.

Touchdowns Rushing
Official record: 1962 Green Bay Packers, 36 NFL (41 Shapiro)
Real record: 1941 Chicago Bears, 30 NFL (44 Shapiro)

Total Touchdowns
Official record: 1961 Houston Oilers, 66 NFL (75 Shapiro)
Real record: 1950 Los Angeles Rams, 64 NFL (85 Shapiro)

Total Points
Official record: 1961 Houston Oilers, 513 NFL (586 Shapiro)
Real record: 1950 Los Angeles Rams, 466 NFL (621 Shapiro)

Pass Interceptions
Official record: 1961 San Diego Chargers, 49 NFL (56 Shapiro)
Real record: 1943 Green Bay Packers, 42 NFL (67 Shapiro)

There you are, 12 "new" NFL season records, courtesy of logic and a pocket calculator, and 7 of them unbroken since the 40's, buried all these years by the strange statistical methods of Elias/NFL and perpetuated by a shallow sports philosophy that doesn't bother to look beyond what it says in this year's Official Record Manual.

Even some of the existing record performances take on a new lustre when you convert them by the same formula.

Paul Hornung's 176-point record for the 12-game 1960 season becomes 235 points.

Dick "Night Train" Lane's 14 interceptions in the 12-game 1952 season becomes 19 interceptions.

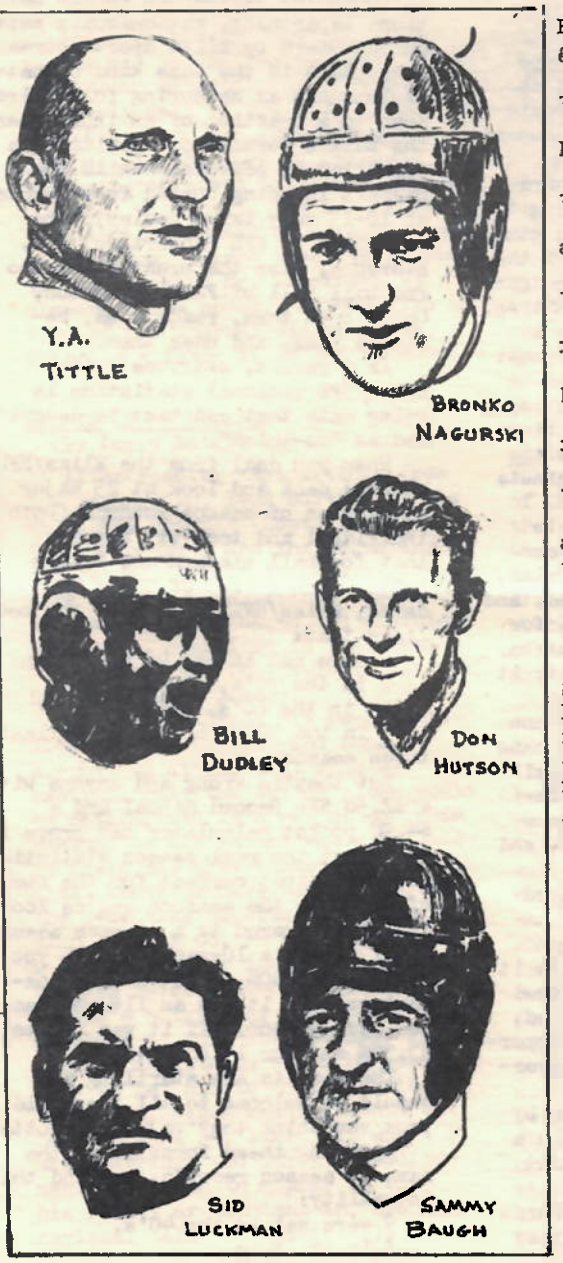
Charlie Hennigan's 1,746 yards gained on pass receptions in the 14-game 1961 season goes up to nearly 2,000 yards. His 101 catches in 1964 become 115.

O.J. Simpson's 1973 standard of 2,003 yards gained rushing becomes 2,279 yards.

Don Hutson's 1942 mark of 17 pass-reception TD's becomes 25 TD's.

Some old familiar names deservedly come back out of the past when you look at their performances in terms of true comparisons.

And when you remember that the pre-1950 stars played on both offense and defense, their records become even more impressive.



Now what about the greatest season ever played by a professional footballer, setting aside for the moment the philosophical truth that there is never a greatest anything? Did it take place in the 70's now that the pro players are better than ever?

There have been many outstanding season-length performances in the past five decades or so, anyone of which could justifiably be advanced as the greatest. Go over the last page or so and you'll find more than enough likely candidates.

But all things considered, I have to go back about thirty-five years and opt for Bill Dudley's all-around play in 1946 for the Pittsburgh Steelers as the most remarkable individual season-length performance ever in the NFL.

His stats for that year are stunning!

During the eleven scheduled games, Bill Dudley had (converted to 16-game seasonal equivalents):

*212 rushing attempts, first in the NFL
*879 yards rushing, first in the NFL
*47 pass completions in 131 attempts for 657 yards and 3 TD's
*6 pass receptions for 159 yards and 1 TD
*15 pass interceptions, first in the NFL
*352 yards on pass interceptions, first in the NFL
*39 punt returns, first in the NFL
*560 yards gained on punt returns, first in the NFL
*14.26 yard average on punt returns, first in the NFL
*20 kickoff returns for 407 yards and an average of 20 yards per return
*87 punts for a 40-yard average
*17 extra points in 20 attempts
*3 field goals in 10 attempts

Mr. Dudley did virtually all the Steelers' punting, punt returning, kickoff returning, extra-point and field-goal kicking, and pass intercepting as well as a preponderant majority of his team's rushing and passing, leading the league in 7 categories while doing so.

One wonders where even the articulate Howard Cosell would find the superlatives necessary to describe such a season were Dudley playing today. After all, with "great", "remarkable", "extraordinary", "fantastic", "super", and so on used so loosely these days by our sports media brethren to cover just about anything that takes place on the gridiron, what's left to describe performances of Dudley's caliber?

One final note for those who are prone to accept the opinion that football players are better than ever today because they are bigger, faster, and stronger.

In 1946, Bill Dudley stood 5'-10" tall and weighed 172 pounds.

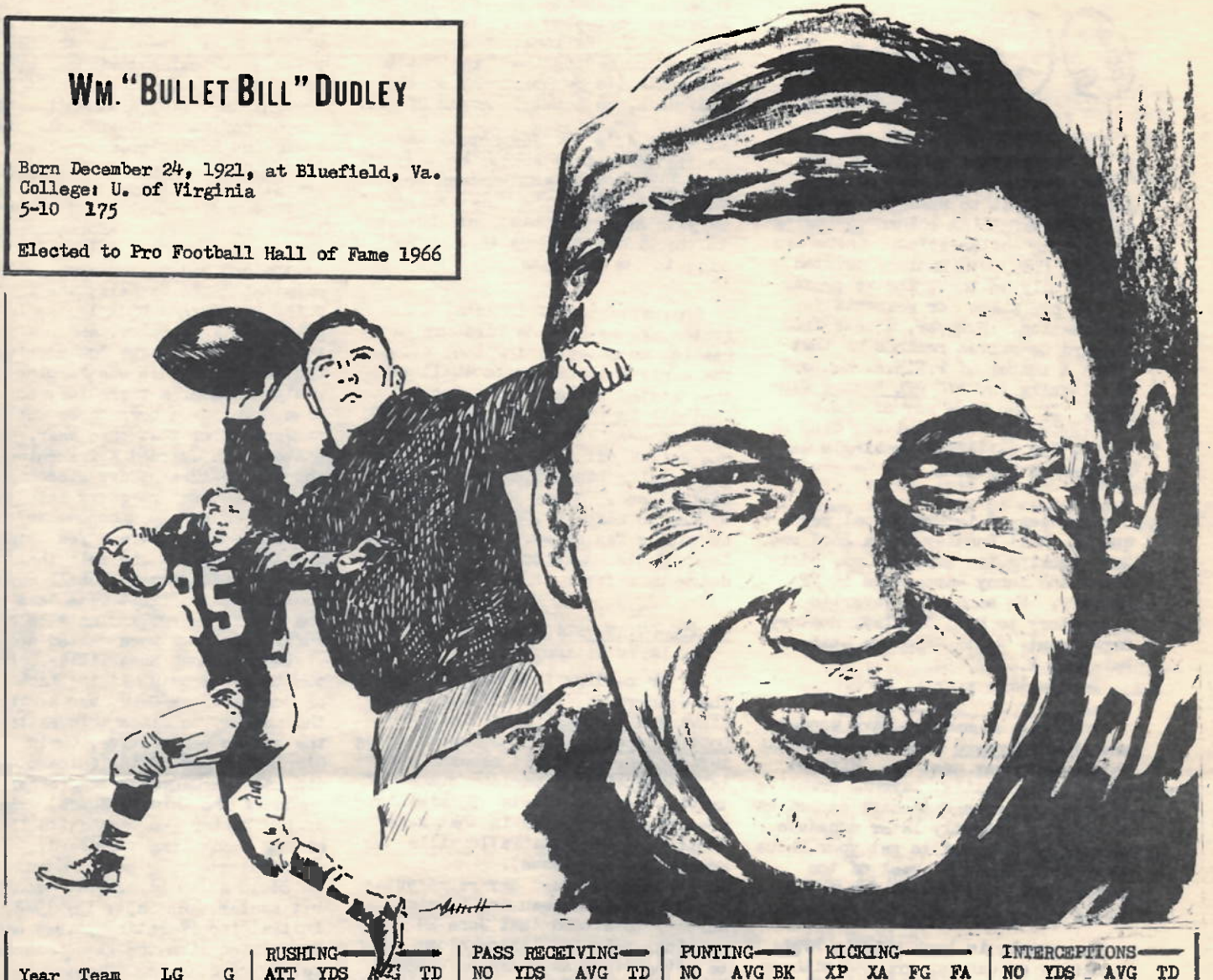
Of course, if you consider that 1946 was an 11-game season and convert Dudley's measurements into Shapiros by adding 45.46%, he comes out to be 8'-6" tall and weighing 250 pounds. I guess that proves that players do get better as they get bigger, right?

* * *

WM. "BULLET BILL" DUDLEY

Born December 24, 1921, at Bluefield, Va.
College: U. of Virginia
5-10 175

Elected to Pro Football Hall of Fame 1966



				RUSHING				PASS RECEIVING				PUNTING			KICKING				INTERCEPTIONS			
Year	Team	LG	G	ATT	YDS	AVG	TD	NO	YDS	AVG	TD	NO	AVG	BK	XP	XA	FG	FA	NO	YDS	AVG	TD
1942	Pitts.	NFL	11	*162	*696	4.3	5	1	24	24.0	0	18	32.0	1	0	0	0	0	3	60	20.0	0
1943-1944												In Military Service										
1945	Pitts.	NFL	4	57	204	3.5	3			None		2	18.0	1	2	3	0	0	2	47	23.5	0
1946	Pitts.	NFL	11	*146	*604	4.1	3	4	109	27.2	1	60	40.0	1	12	14	2	7	*10	*242	24.2	1
1947	Det.	NFL	9	80	302	3.8	2	27	375	13.9	7	15	43.8	0	0	0	0	0	5	104	20.8	1
1948	Det.	NFL	7	33	97	2.9	0	20	210	10.5	6	23	35.9	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	3.0	0
1949	Det.	NFL	12	125	402	3.2	4	27	190	7.0	2	32	39.9	1	30	32	5	14		None		
1950	Wash.	NFL	12	66	339	5.1	1	22	172	7.8	1	14	41.8	0	31	31	5	10	2	3	1.5	0
1951	Wash.	NFL	12	91	398	4.4	2	22	303	13.8	1	27	34.9	0	21	22	10	13		None		
1952												Did Not Play										
1953	Wash.	NFL	12	5	15	3.0	0			None			None		25	25	11	22		None		
	9 Years		90	765	3057	4.0	20	123	1383	11.2	18	191	38.2	4	121	127	33	66	23	459	20.0	2

				PASSING							PUNT RET.				KICKOFF RET.				TOTALS		
Year	Team	LG	G	ATT	COM	PCT	YDS	TD	IN	AvgG	NO	YDS	AVG	TD	NO	YDS	AVG	TD	TD	PTS	Fum
1942	Pitts.	NFL	11	94	35	37.2	438	2	5	4.66	20	*271	13.5	0	11	298	27.1	1	6	36	NA
1943-1944											In Military Service										
1945	Pitts.	NFL	4	32	10	31.3	58	0	2	1.81	5	20	4.0	0	3	65	21.7	0	3	20	1
1946	Pitts.	NFL	11	90	32	35.5	452	2	9	5.02	*27	*385	14.2	0	14	280	20.0	0	5	48	8
1947	Det.	NFL	9	4	3	75.0	24	2	0	6.00	11	182	16.5	1	15	359	23.9	0	11	66	4
1948	Det.	NFL	7	1	0	0.0	0	0	1	0.00	8	67	8.4	0	10	204	20.4	0	7	42	6
1949	Det.	NFL	12				None				11	199	18.1	1	13	246	18.9	0	6	81	8
1950	Wash.	NFL	12				None				12	185	15.4	1	1	43	43.0	0	3	64	5
1951	Wash.	NFL	12	1	1	100.0	13	0	0	13.00	22	172	7.8	0	11	248	22.5	0	3	69	4
1952											Did Not Play										
1953	Wash.	NFL	12				None				8	34	4.3	0		None			0	58	0
	9 Years		90	222	81	36.9	985	6	17	4.44	124	1515	12.2	3	78	1743	22.3	1	44	484	36

*-Led League

Named to Official All-League Team in 1942 and A.P. & U.P. All-League Teams in 1946.

From time to time, the Corner gets a request to place an item in the PFRA-ternizing column re-buying or selling collectables. There are several fine publications devoted exclusively to that, and we prefer to use our space for requests for information. However, a note from Richard Gonsalves reminds us that quite a number of P.F.R.A. members are looking for old NFL Record Manuals. If you have any of those cluttering up your shelves, drop us a line and we'll make a single exception to our rule.

Speaking of informational requests, Bill Beezley has a good one. He's looking for curiosities, oddities, and funny happenings in PF history. So send your favarite wild story to Bill Beezley, History Department, North Carolina State, Raleigh, N.C. 27650.

Sounds like a great book!

A couple of members have wondered why their Corners have been arriving later than they used to. Without going into details, layout, printing and mailing processes have caused us to adopt a slightly later schedule. Formerly, we tried to get your issue to you by the first week of the month, but now we shoot for the 15th.

The puzzle in last month's PFRA-ternizing column was greeted with an overwhelming wave of apathy. Not one member sent in the correct answer. In fact, no one even sent in a wrong answer.

Too bad! We had a nice prize all ready -- a bottle of the actual air used inside the football with which Tom Dempsey kicked his 63-yard field goal. We even hoped to have it autographed.

Oh, well!

For the record, this is how we worked it out, and we think it's right (the underlined answers are new; the rest was given before):

	GP	W	L	T	PF	PA	PTS
Algonquins	4	2	1	1	49	7	5
Esquimaux	2	0	2	0	14	42	0
Delawares	4	1	2	1	35	70	3
Canadians	3	0	0	3	28	28	3
Bombardiers	3	2	0	1	35	14	5

P.F.R.A. heartily welcomes some new members with this issue of the Corner. Tod Maher (Salinas, Cal.), Edward Brickley (Winchester, Mass.), and Randy and Warren Etheredge (Brooklyn, N.Y.) are our newest members.

Vic Frolund, P.F.R.A. treasurer, recently celebrated a birthday. The date was September 17. We are proud of the National Football League for having the foresight to celebrate its own birthday on the same date, no doubt in honor of Vic.

P.F.R.A.'s Dr. Joe Kopcha was honored this past summer by the Gary (Ind.) Host and Hostess Group when he received the outstanding Garyite Award for his contributions to the growth of Gary through service to its citizens.

And, speaking of Indiana, a few months ago we had the pleasure of reading an entertaining book about the early days of pro football in that state, called Professional Football in the Days of Rockne. It was authored about ten years ago by one Emil Klosinski, the son of an outstanding lineman on several teams of that era. Since then, we've been trying to reach Mr. Klosinski to compare a few notes. Anyone with an idea of his whereabouts would be doing us a favor if he let us know.

UPDATE ON AN UPDATE.

By Larry Setaro

After reading that article from the January 28, 1922 edition of the Milwaukee Journal (Sept. issue -- Coffin Corner), and the accompanying inferences; I felt it necessary to take exception to various pieces of trivia, and (incidents of) misinterpretation, contained in that same "follow-up" to "The Taylorville Scandal" (June issue).

Of the two Green Bay representatives (Curly Lambeau and Donald Murphy) to attend that June 24 meeting, only the latter alone could be categorized as a man of enormous wealth, as his father was a well-to-do Green Bay area lumberman. Lambeau (last known to have been employed in the receiving department of the Indian Packing Co. -- his father was a local building inspector) after setting aside $50.00 to cover the league's entry fee; hadn't any idea of where to turn for whatever financial assistance would be necessary to get him to Canton, Ohio, where the league meeting would be held on June 24, 1922. It was early spring, and Curly's predicament had begun to appear in both his facial expressions and his mannerisms. Almost immediately, Murphy was able to sense that something was gnawing away inside of him.

After a bit of prodding, Curly explained his situation; and Murphy offered to do what he could to help. When Murphy produced the money to be used to finance their trip, he requested only one small favor in return: to play for the Packers. After starting at tackle in the opening game of the season, and playfor a few minutes; he "retired" in complete satisfaction that he had once played for the Packers. It wasn't until several months had passed, following their successful trip to Canton, Ohio, when it was brought to Curley's attention that Murphy had gone out and sold his brand new Marmon roadster for $1,500.00 in order to finance their travels.

Though J.L. Claire had volunteered much of the information (at the January meeting - 1/28/22) that in the end had only served to "incriminate" the Packers, the franchise was turned back to the league at Carr's insistance, and not returned to the league "on a silver platter." The NFL was forcing the resignation of a franchise, not a team. This was born borne out when on June 24 of that same year, Curly Lambeau was awarded a franchise for the town of Green Bay, Wisconsin.

The Packers' re-entry into the league did not go unopposed by any means, as there were a few league members (owners) who felt that the Packers came from too small a town, couldn't put a first-rate team on the field, and/or wouldn't be a sufficient draw when called upon to visit their own home fields. Fortunately, Lambeau had the backing of Commissioner Carr, who exhibited the ability to place this matter in the proper perspective, Chris O'Brien (owner of the Chicago Cardinals) and George Halas (owner-coach of the Chicago Bears). Each of the latter two were quite influential among league members.

Now that Curly had his franchise, he could allow himself to breathe a bit easier. On Sept. 13, 1922, the initial incorporation papers had been filed with the Wisconsin Secretary of State's office. The Packers had gone public, that is to say that they began to sell shares of stock in themselves at $5.00 per share. Anyone who was to buy five shares of stock was guaranteed a free box seat for all home games. Because they had taken out a loan for $2,500.00 to cover immediate expenses, they ended the season owing the bank money; but it was such a slight amount that it would be fair to say that they had almost "broken even." Besides, the corporation's officers had the foresight to subscribe an additional 50 citizens who pledged (in writing) to absorb any outstanding expenses (at season's end) at a ratio of $100.00 per. In all, eighty shares of stock were sold the first year. The following August, new articles of incorporation were filed, and an additional 1,000 shares were sold. Profits if any, were to go to the Sullivan post of the American Legion in Green Bay. Officers and directors were to receive no salary, and each was required to buy six season tickets to Packer home games.

home games for larger cities filtered through Portsmouth.

"We talked about not playing," Presnell said, "but in the end we always played in the hopes of drawing a big enough crowd to get paid."

Going into the last game of the season, the Packers were in first place with a 10-1-1 record (.909 percentage, tie games were not counted), and the Spartans (5-1-4 record) and the Bears (5-1-6 record) were tied for second place with identical .833 percentages. The Packers had two games remaining—one with the Spartans and one with the Bears; if either team defeated the Packers, it would win the championship.

An estimated 14,000 fans jammed Universal Stadium to watch the Spartans crush the hated "cheese champion" Packers, 19-0. Coach Clark did not substitute once during the entire game and the "iron men" Spartans temporarily moved into first place. The following Sunday the Bears beat the Packers 9-0 to create a first-place tie (Spartans 6-1-4, pct. .857; Bears 6-1-6, pct. .857). The Bears and Spartans agreed to play off on Dec. 18 for the championship in Chicago. (The loser would drop to third place).

The game was originally scheduled for Wrigley Field, but the weather in Chicago was extremely cold and deep snow blanketed the field. Bears' owner George Halas was having financial problems, as were the Spartans. Both teams hoped a good crowd would keep them solvent. Halas hit on the idea of holding the game indoors in the Chicago Stadium and the Spartans readily agreed.

A number of rules had to be modified because the playing surface in the Chicago Stadium was not quite large enough for a regulation field. The field was reported to be 80 yards long (both Presnell and the *Portsmouth Times* contend it was only 67 yards long) and 45 yards wide. The goal posts were placed on the goal line, but no field goals were permitted. The teams kicked off from the 10-yard line and all touchbacks were brought out to the 10. The playing surface was dirt with a light covering of tanbark and wood shavings, which had been placed there because a circus was to perform there the following week.

Unfortunately for the Spartans, their All-Pro quarterback Dutch Clark could not play. Clark, who also was the head basketball coach at Colorado College, had returned to Colorado to resume his coaching duties. Clark's team had a game on Dec. 17, and despite a personal request from the Spartans' management, the president of Colorado College would not excuse Clark so that he could be in Chicago to play in the championship game.

Eleven thousand fans filled Chicago Stadium on Sunday, Dec. 18 to watch the first NFL indoor championship game. Even with the smaller playing field, there was no scoring in the first three periods. Early in the fourth quarter, the Bears' Dick Nesbitt intercepted a John Cavosie pass and returned it to the Spartans seven yard line. The Bears' massive fullback, Bronko Nagurski, hit over center on the first play and carried to the Spartans two.

The Spartans tightened up on the line of scrimmage to stop what was certain to be another Nagurski power play. The ball was again given to Nagurski and he started toward the line, but instead of running he stopped, jumped into the air and lobbed a short pass to Red Grange, all alone in the end zone.

Touchdown.

The Spartans protested that Nagurski was not five yards behind the line of scrimmage when he passed the ball (the pros used college rules which required a passer to release the ball five yards behind the line of scrimmage), but the officials ignored the protest and allowed the touchdown. John Wager recalls: "I know Nagurski was on the line of scrimmage when he passed because I had a hold of his legs trying to tackle him."

The Bears kicked the extra point and later scored a safety to make the final score: Bears 9, Spartans 0.

The indoor championship game and the large number of tie games led to some significant rule changes in professional football. For the 1933 season, passing was permitted from anywhere behind the line of scrimmage and the goal posts were moved up to the goal line. Both changes were designed to make the game more wide open and high scoring. In addition, the league was divided into Eastern and Western Divisions with an annual championship game between the division winners.

The Final Season

The Spartans received a major setback before the beginning of the 1933 season when All-Pro Dutch Clark decided to retire from professional football to accept the athletic director's position at the Colorado School of Mines. The Spartans signed University of Kansas All-American Elmer Schaake, but he was a less-than-adequate replacement for Clark.

Even without Clark, the Spartans were challenging the Bears for the Western Division Championship at mid-season, but two late-season losses to the Bears and one to the lowly Cincinnati Reds dropped their final record to 6-5, a disappointing season but good enough for second place.

Glenn Presnell emerged from the shadow of Dutch Clark and had an outstanding season. He tied for the league scoring and field goal leadership and was named to the All-Pro team.

The Spartans' financial situation was becoming worse. In the book, *Detroit Lions*, Dutch Clark was quoted as saying, "Hell, we'd get 4.000 or 5,000 people out to watch practice and at game time we'd be lucky if we had 2,000." Wager added, "We were popular and everyone who could afford it came to the games, but as the depression got worse not many people could afford the ticket price."

The players were forced to take shares of stock in the team instead of their full salary (both Wager and Presnell still have their stock certificates), as the team was deeply in debt.

Early in the spring of 1934, the directors of the Portsmouth Spartans began negotiations with George A. Richards for the sale of the team and the re-establishment of the franchise in Detroit. The sale price was reported to have been between $15,000 and $16,500, but there are some indications that Richards may have paid an extra $5,000 to cover the Spartans debts. The Detroit Lions were officially accepted into the NFL in the summer of 1934.

The Spartans Become the Detroit Lions

Richards gave Coach Clark enough money to induce Dutch Clark out of retirement, and he was joined in Detroit by at least 12 former Spartans including Ace Gutowsky, Glenn Presnell, Ernie Caddell, George Christensen, Ox Emerson, and Father Lumpkin.

The transplanted Spartans' first season in Detroit was a tremendous success. They were unscored on in their first seven games and won their first 10 straight (one game was won by a 54-yard field goal by Presnell). They then lost their next three games and finished second in the Western Conference (10-3 record) behind the undefeated Chicago Bears (13-0).

In 1935, the Lions won it all. They won the well-balanced Western Division with a 7-3-2 record and faced the New York Giants in the championship game. Former Spartan Ace Gutowsky scored first for the Lions on a two-yard run and Presnell kicked the extra point. Later in the first quarter, Dutch Clark romped 40 yards for the games second touchdown. Ernie Caddell scored the Lions' third touchdown, and Clark drop-kicked the extra point after the fourth. In all, former Spartans scored 20 of the Lions' points in this 26-7 win over the Giants.

For many football fans in southern Ohio it was a bittersweet experience because their beloved Spartans had finally won the championship, but they were dressed in the blue uniforms of the Detroit Lions. □

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ACE GUTOWSKY

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The Professional Football Researchers Association was founded as a non-profit organization on June 22, 1979, at Canton, Ohio. The purpose of the association is to foster the study of professional football as a significant social and athletic institution. It further hopes to establish an accurate historical account of professional football and to disseminate research information.

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