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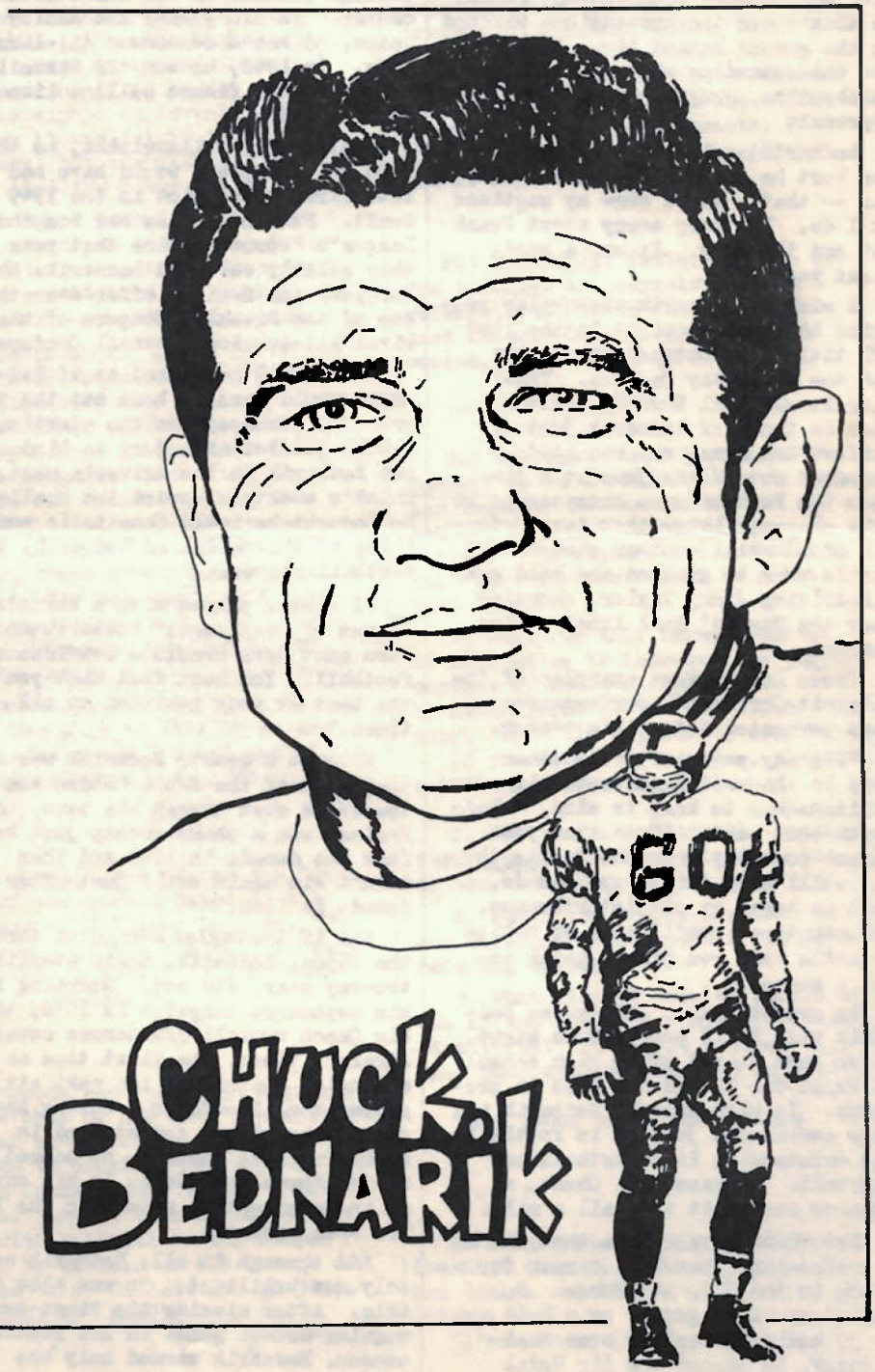


By Don Smith

In more than 20 years as a football player with Bethlehem Technical High School, the University of Pennsylvania and the Philadelphia Eagles, Chuck Bednarik had great fun tearing up halfbacks, fullbacks and quarterbacks.

Plus ends, centers, guards, tackles and defensive stalwarts as well.

If you played football and if you wore a different colored jersey, you were fair game for the 235-pound bone-crusher. You couldn't escape by settling on either the offensive or defensive platoon. Chances are that you would catch Chuck on a day that he was going both ways -- which is something he loved to do long after the two-way player in the National Football League had become a subject for the history books.

Fourteen of Bednarik's gridiron years came as a member of the Eagles and it was in Philadelphia that he became known as pro football's "Iron Man," a distinction that, along with his exceptional athletic skills, earned a berth in Pro Football's Hall of Fame just five years after his retirement in 1962. Five years is the minimum waiting time for football's highest honor.

As an offensive center, big Chuck was a bulldozing blocker. On defense, he not only was a true scientist at his job but a bone-jarring tackler who literally could stop even the best enemy runner "on a dime."

It was Bednarik, in fact, who made one of the most famous tackles in NFL history. It was a picture play -- as seen through a defensive man's eyes -- that saved a game, paved the way for a Philadelphia championship and put one of the NFL's greatest stars, Frank Gifford of the New York Giants, out of action for more than a year!

The films confirmed that Gifford had moved ahead of Bednarik but the ever-hustling Eagle was trailing the play closely when Frank cut suddenly to his right.

"I hit Frank head on," Bednarik has explained many times since then. "It was one of the hardest tackles I ever made but it was a clean shot."

Suddenly Bednarik was in the midst of a heated controversy. Gifford fumbled when hit and the Eagles recovered. Philadelphia had the ball and a seven-point lead with less than two minutes to play. An important Eagle victory was seemingly assured. Bednarik, who celebrated just as he played the game — all-out, went into a wild victory dance. He didn't see the unconscious Gifford on the ground behind him. The crowd, not understanding what Bednarik was celebrating, erupted in violent disapproval.

Bednarik explained the situation the best he could: "I play hard to win — that's why I show my emotions as I do. I'm very sorry about Frank but not the play. It was a good, clean tackle."

A similar Bednarik super-play provided the turning point in the 1960 NFL title game between the Eagles and the Green Bay Packers. This time it was Paul Hornung, cutting back in front of Bednarik just as Gifford had done, who was sledgehammered out of the game at a time when the Packers were threatening to take charge. Later that day, Bednarik added still another game-saving tackle when he grabbed and held onto pile driving Jimmy Taylor, churning near the Eagles' goal line as time ran out.

These are perfect examples of the "play-it-for-keeps" performances that permeated Bednarik's career.

"I'd say pursuit to the other side is the most important thing for a linebacker to keep in mind," Bednarik once said. "Even when you cannot possibly make the tackle there are still many things you can do, such as break up the interference. And sometimes you'll wind up making a tackle when you didn't think you had a chance."

As exceptional a gridder as Bednarik was, it is possible he might never have played after high school if World War II had not been in progress. In high school, Bednarik had been considered just OK in football but outstanding in basketball and baseball. In baseball, Chuck, a catcher could hit the ball a mile.

But Chuck gave up his thoughts of a professional baseball career for a hitch in the U.S. Air Force. He served as waist gunner on a B-24 and, in 30 bombing missions over Nazi Germany, he earned the Air Medal with five oak leaf clusters and five battle stars.

When he returned to civilian life, he wanted to give college football a try and decided on Penn. At first, the Penn coach, George Munger, wasn't too eager about accepting a sixth center candidate. Once he saw Bednarik, who by that time had expanded to 6-3 and 230 pounds, Munger quickly reasoned that somehow Bednarik could fit in.

By the third game of Chuck's first college season, he was the starting center. In his junior and senior years, he was a consensus All-American. In 1948, he won the Maxwell Trophy as the finest college lineman in the nation.

Ordinarily, Philadelphia, as the 1948 NFL champion, would have had a late first-round pick in the 1949 draft. But the Eagles had won the league's "bonus" choice that year and they quickly selected Bednarik. Chuck accepted the Eagles' offer over the one of the Brooklyn Dodgers of the rival All-America Football Conference.

At first it appeared as if Bednarik would have to beat out the veteran Vic Lindscog for the starting center job but an injury to Lindscog put Bednarik in the driver's seat. Chuck's attitude toward the challenge he thought he would face tells something of the nature of Bednarik, the football player.

"I always played with a certain amount of cockiness," Bednarik admits. "You must have absolute confidence in football. You must feel that you are the best at your position at all times."

Without a doubt, Bednarik was a trademark of the NFL's Golden Age of the 1950s even though his team, the Eagles, won a championship just before the decade in 1949 and then didn't win again until just after the decade in 1960.

But if the Eagles struggled through the 1950s, Bednarik, their sterling two-way star, did not. Starting in his sophomore campaign in 1950, the big Czech won all-NFL honors seven straight times, the first time as an offensive center and the next six years as a linebacker. During the period, he played and starred in eight Pro Bowl games — he scored one of the three touchdowns in his career on an interception return in the 1954 Pro Bowl contest.

And through it all, Bednarik not only was brilliant. He was also durable. After missing the first two regular-season games in his rookie season, Bednarik missed only one other game in his 14-year tenure in Philadelphia. Counting pre-season and post-season games, Chuck played in 256 games for the Eagles during that period.

When he retired after the 1962 season, Bednarik admitted he had been fortunate. "I had the rib cage battered up a few times. But although it hurt like hell, it was the era when you had to play with pain. I was lucky, though. Knees caved in all around me but I never had so much as a stretched tendon. Not even one knee twinge — in high school, at Penn or with the Eagles."

Chuck was always available to go either way with the Eagles but he gained the most attention as a bone-jarring linebacker who, at one time or another, had a hand in stopping all the great backs of the decade — Eddie Price, Joe Perry, Ollie Matson, Hugh McElhenny and, later on, Jimmy Brown, Jimmy Taylor, Hornung, Gifford and the list could go on and on.

But he remembers Cleveland's great fullback, Marion Motley, as his toughest personal opponent.

"Motley was 245 pounds, the biggest of them all, and when he gained momentum, he simply carried you with him," Chuck says.

Chuck almost retired twice, the first time in 1956 after the Eagles had suffered through a 3-8-1 season, the second time in 1959. Each time he was talked out of quitting and the second decision to play some more made possible the most thrilling, and also the most satisfying chapter of the Chuck Bednarik story.

Midway through the 1960 campaign, Bednarik responded to an injury-induced emergency and took up two-way playing duties again. Since 1957, he had been more or less confined to the center's job on the offensive platoon, an assignment more suited to an old-timer in his middle 30s.

Bednarik was in action 394½ minutes in a 12-game season that year and then he capped it all off with a sterling 58-minute performance in the championship against Green Bay. The honors and the accolades that had deserted Chuck during recent seasons returned in greater volume than ever before.

It was a fitting tribute to one of the truly great players of pro football's Golden Age!

* * *

Don Smith's article on Bednarik was originally published in Pro!

YPSG

"Shame!" said David Shapiro.

He referred to our January article "1955 — That Wonderful Year." "Teams played only twelve games that year," he grumbled. "Cleveland's 349 points don't sound like much but that's better than any team's output in 1979 when adjusted for the same number of games."

He had a point (no pun intended). Pittsburgh's league-leading 416 points averaged 26.0 points for each of 16 games. The '55 Browns were better than a Lou Groza field goal better at 29.1.

Perhaps more interesting is what happens to some of the individual records when adjusted in accord with the number of scheduled games. For example, we note that Wilbert Montgomery gained 1512 yards in 1979 which looks far superior to Steve Van Buren's then-record of 1146 in 1949. But Montgomery's '79 Eagles were scheduled for four more games than Staunch Steve's team. Van Buren actually averaged 95.5 yards per scheduled game to Montgomery's 94.5.

We're not advocating a ton of Roger Maris Asterisks, but we thought you might be interested in comparing two different "Top Ten Gainers" lists.

We hasten to add that we didn't invent the "Yards Per Scheduled Game" stat or the idea of projecting an earlier record (YPSG x 16 Gm.) over a modern schedule. Both David Shapiro in The 135 Greatest Pro Running Backs and David Neft, et. al., in The Sports Encyclopedia: Pro Football have taken this idea much farther.

TABLE I: PASSING YARDAGE (Top 10)

	A. TOTAL YARDS GAINED				B. YARDS PER SCHEDULED GAME					
NO	Year	Player, Team	Gm	YARD	NO	Year	Player, Team	Gm	YARD	YPSG	YPSG x 16 Gm.
1	1979	Dan Fouts, S.D.	16	4082	1	1967	Joe Namath, NYJ	14	4007	286.2	4579.2
2	1967	Joe Namath, NYJ	14	4007	2	1967	Sonny Jurgensen, Was.	14	3747	267.6	4281.6
3	1979	Brian Sipe, Clev.	16	3793	3	1961	Sonny Jurgensen, Phi.	14	3723	265.9	4254.4
4	1967	Sonny Jurgensen, Was.	14	3747	4	1960	Johnny Unitas, Bal.	12	3099	258.3	4132.8
5	1979	Terry Bradshaw, Pitt.	16	3724	5	1979	Dan Fouts, S.D.	16	4082	255.1	4082.0
6	1961	Sonny Jurgensen, Phi.	14	3723	6	1963	Johnny Unitas, Bal.	14	3481	248.6	3977.6
7	1979	Jim Zorn, Sea.	16	3661	7	1968	John Hadl, S.D.	14	3473	248.1	3969.6
8	1979	Steve DeBerg, S.F.	16	3652	8	1964	Babe Parilli, Bos.	14	3465	247.5	3960.0
9	1979	Ken Stabler, Oak.	16	3615	9	1967	Johnny Unitas, Bal.	14	3428	244.9	3918.4
10	1979	Roger Staubach, Dal.	16	3586	10	1947	Sammy Baugh, Was.	12	2938	244.8	3916.8

TABLE II: RUSHING YARDAGE (Top 10)

	A. TOTAL YARDS GAINED				B. YARDS PER SCHEDULED GAME					
NO	Year	Player, Team	Gm	YARD	NO	Year	Player, Team	Gm	YARD	YPSG	YPSG x 16 Gm.
1	1973	O.J. Simpson, Buf.	14	2003	1	1973	O.J. Simpson, Buf.	14	2003	143.1	2289.6
2	1963	Jim Brown, Clev.	14	1863	2	1963	Jim Brown, Clev.	14	1863	133.1	2129.6
3	1977	Walter Payton, Chi.	14	1852	3	1977	Walter Payton, Chi.	14	1852	132.3	2116.8
4	1975	O.J. Simpson, Buf.	14	1817	4	1975	O.J. Simpson, Buf.	14	1817	129.8	2076.8
5	1979	Earl Campbell, Hou.	16	1697	5	1958	Jim Brown, Clev.	12	1527	127.3	2036.8
6	1979	Walter Payton, Chi.	16	1610	6	1959	Jim Brown, Clev.	12	1329	110.8	1772.8
7	1979	Ottis Anderson, St.L.	16	1605	7	1965	Jim Brown, Clev.	14	1544	110.3	1764.8
8	1965	Jim Brown, Clev.	14	1544	8	1976	O.J. Simpson, Buf.	14	1503	107.4	1718.4
9	1958	Jim Brown, Clev.	12	1527	9	1979	Earl Campbell, Hou.	16	1697	106.1	1697.0
10	1979	Wilbert Montgomery, Ph.	16	1512	10	1962	Jim Taylor, G.B.	14	1474	105.3	1684.8

TABLE III: RECEIVING YARDAGE (Top 10)

	A. TOTAL YARDS GAINED				B. YARDS PER SCHEDULED GAME					
NO	Year	Player, Team	Gm	YARD	NO	Year	Player, Team	Gm	YARD	YPSG	YPSG x 16 Gm.
1	1961	Charley Hennigan, Hou.	14	1746	1	1961	Charley Hennigan, Hou.	14	1746	124.7	1995.2
2	1965	Lance Alworth, S.D.	14	1602	2	1951	Elroy Hirsch, L.A.	12	1495	124.5	1992.0
3	1964	Charley Hennigan, Hou.	14	1546	3	1965	Lance Alworth, S.D.	14	1602	114.4	1830.4
4	1951	Elroy Hirsch, L.A.	12	1495	4	1964	Charley Hennigan, Hou.	14	1546	110.4	1766.4
5	1960	Bill Groman, Hou.	14	1473	5	1942	Don Hutson, G.B.	11	1211	110.1	1761.6
6	1963	Bobby Mitchell, Was.	14	1436	6	1960	Raymond Berry, Bal.	12	1298	108.2	1731.2
7	1967	Don Maynard, NYJ	14	1434	7	1945	Jim Benton, Clev.	10	1067	106.7	1707.2
8	1962	Bobby Mitchell, Was.	14	1384	8	1960	Bill Groman, Hou.	14	1473	105.2	1683.2
9	1966	Lance Alworth, S.D.	14	1383	9	1952	Bill Howton, G.B.	12	1231	102.58	1641.6
10	1964	Art Powell, Oak.	14	1361	10	1963	Bobby Mitchell, Was.	14	1436	102.57	1641.6

SINGLES

By Robert Sproule

Ever hear of a non-forfeited football game ending with the score 1-0? It has happened at least twice in Canadian senior football, most recently when the Montreal Alouettes beat the Ottawa Rough Riders on Oct. 30, 1966. It is possible in Canada because they have a way of scoring one point, all by itself. Appropriately enough, it's called a "single".

If the ball is kicked into the goal area (which is 25 yards deep in Canada) by an opponent, a single is scored (1) when the ball becomes dead in possession of a player in his own goal area or (2) when the ball touches or crosses the deadline or a sideline in-goal, and touches the ground, a player, or some object beyond these lines. Under American rules all such plays would be touchbacks.

Singles used to be more common than they are today, and frequently they decided games. The records for most singles scored in a single game are given below.

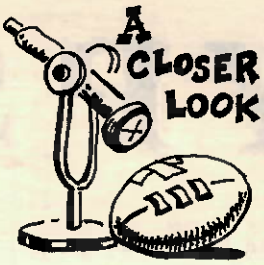
For individuals:

11 Ben Simpson, Hamilton Tigers v. Montreal Football Club, Oct. 29, 1910
10 Bill Dobbie, Calgary Tigers v. Edmonton YMCA, Oct. 28, 1911
Freddy Wilson, Regina Roughriders v. Saskatoon Quakers, Oct. 4, 1913
Billy Mallett, Hamilton Tigers v. Ottawa Rough Riders, Nov. 14, 1914
9 Ben Simpson, Hamilton Tigers v. Toronto Argonauts, Nov. 13, 1909
Jack Williams, Ottawa Rough Riders v. Hamilton Tigers, Nov. 20, 1909
Billy Mallett, Hamilton Tigers v. Ottawa Rough Riders, Oct. 5, 1912
Billy Mallett, Hamilton Tigers v. Toronto Argonauts, Nov. 21, 1914
Vern Bradburn, Winnipeg Victorias v. Winnipeg Tammany Tigers, Sept. 25, 1920
Bert Gibb, Hamilton Tigers v. Montreal Football Club, Oct. 2, 1926
8 Hughie Gall, U. of Toronto Varsity v. Toronto Parkdale, Dec. 4, 1909
Billy Mallett, Toronto Argonauts v. Montreal F'ball Club, Oct. 28, '11
Ross Binkley, Toronto Argonauts v. Montreal F'ball Club, Oct. 19, 1912
Al Adamson, St. Johns v. Winnipeg Rowing Club, Sept. 27, 1913
Paul Bennett, Winnipeg Rowing Club v. Wpg. Tammany Tigers, Oct. 3, '14
Jimmy Pritchard, Wpg. Victorias v. Wpg. St. Johns, Sept. 27, 1919
Lionel Conacher, Toronto Argonauts v. Ottawa Rough Riders, Nov. 11, 1922
Morris Hughes, Toronto Argonauts v. Montreal F'ball Club, Oct. 20, '23
Norm McLeod, Wpg. Victorias v. Wpg. Tammany Tigers, Sept. 17, 1927
Frank Turville, Toronto Argonauts v. Ottawa Senators, Oct. 20, 1928
Frank Turville, Tor. Arg'ts v. Montreal F'ball Club, Nov. 8, 1929
Frank Turville, Tor. Arg'ts v. Ottawa Rough Riders, Oct. 24, 1931
Frank Turville, Hamilton Tigers v. Tor. Arg'ts, Nov. 12, 1932
Huck Welch, Hamilton Tigers v. Montreal Winged Wheelers, Nov. 16, '35
Huck Welch, Hamilton Tigers v. Ottawa Rough Riders, Oct. 31, 1936

For teams:

14 Hamilton Tigers v. Toronto Argonauts, Nov. 13, 1909
12 Hamilton Tigers v. Montreal Football Club, Oct. 29, 1910
Calgary Tigers v. Edmonton YMCA, Oct. 28, 1911
11 Hamilton Tigers v. Ottawa Rough Riders, Nov. 14, 1914
10 University of Toronto Varsity v. Toronto Parkdale, Dec. 4, 1909
Regina Roughriders v. Saskatoon Quakers, Oct. 4, 1913
9 Ottawa Rough Riders v. Toronto Argonauts, Oct. 10, 1908
Ottawa Rough Riders v. Hamilton Tigers, Nov. 20, 1909
Hamilton Tigers v. Montreal Football Club, Nov. 5, 1910
Toronto Argonauts v. Montreal Football Club, Oct. 28, 1911
Toronto Argonauts v. Hamilton Alerts, Nov. 18, 1911
Calgary Tigers v. Edmonton Eskimos, Oct. 28, 1912
Winnipeg St. Johns v. Winnipeg Rowing Club, Sept. 27, 1913
Winnipeg Victorias v. Winnipeg Tammany Tigers, Sept. 25, 1920
Hamilton Tigers v. Regina Roughriders, Nov. 30, 1929

Singles are ordinarily scored on kickoffs, punts, or missed field goals. Dave Cutler of Edmonton Eskimos holds the record for most singles scored on kickoffs in a single game. He scored two on Aug. 16, 1978, in a game against Toronto Argonauts.



THE CURIOUS CASE OF THE ONE-POINT TOUCHDOWN

On October 27, 1923 the Edmonton Eskimos ventured to Calgary to take on the Tigers for their second of three Alberta provincial union games. Calgary had won the first match 18-4.

Playing in the second quarter, Edmonton was ahead 4-0. Tigers held the Eskies and they punted to the Calgary 20-yard line. A plunge on first down failed to gain, but on the next play halfback Ken McCallum broke through the Edmonton line and into the secondary. Weaving a course through a broken field, McCallum sped 90 yards to the Northerners' goal-line with two opposition players in hot pursuit.

Upon crossing the line under the watchful eye of an official, Ken slowed to a trot, allowing one of the pursuers to tackle him. When he touched the ground, the referee blew his whistle to indicate a dead ball and awarded the Tigers a single point rather than the five points for a try (touchdown). It seems that in 1928 in order to register a try, the ball either had to be touched down to the ground after crossing the goal-line or the player in possession of the ball had to remain stationary, in which case the official would blow his whistle to indicate a dead ball and award the team their points. McCallum's movement after crossing the line did not bring the play to an end, and the Eskie player was able to make a legal tackle.

Edmonton held on to win 4-1 and the third game was cancelled due to adverse weather conditions. The Eskimos finished the season in first place with a 3-1 record, while Calgary was last (third place) at 1-3.

* * *

P.F.R.A. member Robert Sproule is statistician for the Toronto Argonauts. He has promised several more articles on Canadian football both for the enjoyment of our Canadian members and for the edification of those of us south of the border who find the Canadian game exciting but sometimes mystifying.

1940: that wonderful year

(As summarized in the New York Times, Dec. 22, 1940)

The year of 1940 will not easily be forgotten in the growing history of professional football. This past season ever will be remembered for one reason, the 73-0 massacre of the Washington Redskins by the Chicago Bears, one of the greatest teams, amateur or professional, in the annals of the gridiron sport.

This score in the championship play-off gave the campaign a smash climax. Prior to that there had been nothing unusual about it. Crowds were larger throughout the National Football League than they had been in the past, but that was merely following a trend. In recent years the tendency ever has been upward, unofficial estimates for the 1940 campaign reaching 1,295,217, a new record. (Ed.- Final figures turned out to be 1,063,025, a drop of about 8,000 from 1939.)

As the season developed the Redskins were the standout troupe. With Slingin' Sammy Baugh pitching forwards with unprecedented efficiency, the Washington team won seven straight and seemed on the verge of a runaway in the East.

But the team had reached too early a peak. It started downhill in November with a loss to the ever-improving Brooklyn Dodgers, won from the Bears, 7 to 3, and then was routed by the New York Giants, 21 to 7. The race tightened up and it was only by staggering past the Philadelphia Eagles in the finale, 13 to 6, that Washington reached the play-offs.

This was a mistake. In the West the Bears and Packers had run neck and neck, with Chicago always a step in front. And so it went right to the last engagement. Then came the play-off, with a capacity crowd of 36,034 in Griffith Stadium paying a record net gate of $102,280 to watch the slaughter.

The Monsters from the Midway were so wrought up over having lost to the Redskins four weeks before that they played with a fury rarely seen. This was a perfect football machine at its very best.

In fifty-six seconds the Bears scored. George McAfee rocketed through for 7 yards and Bill Osmanski swept 68 more for a touchdown. Washington was stunned but struck back. The Redskins reached the 26, had a touchdown pass dropped and never were in the ball game thereafter.

Sid Luckman, the old Blue from Columbia, engineered an 80-yard drive that was a quarterbacking masterpiece and he scored himself. It was his artful handling of plays that caused George Halas, the owner-coach of the Bears, to stamp him as the standout man on his team.

By the half-time intermission the Bears had a 28-0 lead and in less than a minute of the second half they had intercepted a pass for another seven points. Then came the deluge. It was a record score, not only in play-offs but in the history of the league.

Jock Sutherland of Pitt made his debut in the league. He coached the Dodgers, and they not only beat the Giants for the first time in ten years but also finished ahead of the New Yorkers for the first time in history.

The Giants, reorganizing their backfield, never hit stride until they toppled the Packers and Redskins in succession near the end of the campaign. But then they were beaten by the Dodgers -- paced by the peerless Ace Parker -- in the game that clinched second place in the East.

The season was also noteworthy for the attempt to revive the American Football League, a six-team circuit. The New York Yankees were the local club, operating in the Yankee Stadium before very small crowds. Columbus won the title.

In the American Association the Jersey City Giants and the Wilmington Clippers met in the play-off. Jersey City won.

* * *

EASTERN DIVISION

	W	L	T	PCT	Points For	Agst.
Washington	9	2	0	.818	245	142
Brooklyn	8	3	0	.727	186	120
New York	6	4	1	.600	131	133
Pittsburgh	2	7	2	.222	60	178
Philadelphia	1	10	0	.091	111	211

WESTERN DIVISION

Chicago Bears	8	3	0	.727	238	152
Green Bay	6	4	1	.600	238	155
Detroit	5	5	1	.500	138	153
Cleveland	4	6	1	.400	171	191
Chicago Cards	2	7	2	.222	139	222

TOP TEN

RUSHING	ATT	YDS	AVG	TD
White, Detroit	146	514	3.5	5
Drake, Cleveland	134	480	3.6	9
Leemans, New York	132	474	3.6	1
McFadden, Brooklyn	65	411	6.3	1
Todd, Washington	76	408	5.4	4
Hinkle, Green Bay	109	383	3.5	2
Nolting, Bears	78	373	4.8	1
Maniaci, Bears	84	368	4.4	2
Hall, Cleveland	94	365	3.9	1
Goldberg, Cards	87	325	3.7	2

PASSING	ATT	COM	YDS	TD	IN
Baugh, Washington	177	111	1367	12	10
Luckman, Bears	105	48	941	4	9
Isbell, Green Bay	150	68	1037	9	12
O'Brien, Phila.	277	124	1290	5	17
Parker, Brooklyn	111	49	817	10	7
White, Detroit	80	35	461	0	11
Herber, Green Bay	89	38	560	5	7
Hall, Cleveland	183	77	1108	6	16
McCullough, Cards	116	43	529	4	21
Patterson, Pitt.	117	34	529	3	15

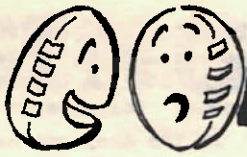
RECEIVING	NO	YDS	AVG	TD
Looney, Phila.	58	707	12.2	4
Hutson, Green Bay	45	664	14.8	7
Johnston, Wash.	29	350	12.1	3
Benton, Cleveland	22	351	16.0	3
Spadaccini, Cleve.	22	276	12.5	2
Milner, Washington	22	233	10.6	3
Schwartz, Brk.	21	370	17.6	3
Todd, Washington	20	402	20.1	4
Cardwell, Detroit	20	349	17.5	1
Malone, Washington	20	222	11.1	0

SCORING	TD	XP	FG	PTS
Hutson, Green Bay	7	15	0	57
Drake, Cleveland	9	2	0	56
Todd, Washington	9	0	0	54
Parker, Brooklyn	5	19	0	49
Hinkle, Green Bay	3	3	9	48
Cuff, New York	3	9	5	42
Johnston, Wash.	7	0	0	42
Masterson, Wash.	4	15	1	42
Mulleneaux, G.B.	7	0	0	42
Manders, Brooklyn	6	0	0	36

1940 ALL-LEAGUE SELECTIONS

Official Team

LE - Don Hutson, Green Bay
LT - Joe Stydahar, Chicago Bears
LG - Danny Fortmann, Chicago Bears
C - Mel Hein, New York
RG - John Wiethe, Detroit
RT - Bruiser Kinard, Brooklyn
RE - Perry Schwartz, Brooklyn
QB - Ace Parker, Brooklyn
LH - Sammy Baugh, Washington
RH - Whizzer White, Detroit
FB - Johnny Drake, Cleveland



PFRA-TERNIZING

With this issue, we begin a new feature. Part of our PFRA-ternizing column will be given over to first-hand experiences in pro football by members. Few of us have scored the winning touchdown or been named MVP, but we've all seen odd or interesting or funny or exciting PF happenings that we'd enjoy sharing with others. So get your pencils sharpened, Members. This one is strictly for you -- your chance to tell about the time when you had a seat right there

ON the 50 YARD LINE

A STRANGE SWITCH

By Stan Grosshandler, P.F.R.A.

The most unusual event I have ever seen in football involved a player destined to become one of the great legends of pro football.

I was a freshman member of the 1945 U. of Cincinnati team. The Bearcats had resumed football that season with Ray Nolting, an outstanding alumnus, as head coach. Their eight game schedule presented the unusual feature of home and home games with the University of Kentucky.

Nolting, a great Bear halfback (1936 through '43), had chosen the Bears so he would not have to play against Nagurski; however, who do you think he had to tackle in his first scrimmage with the Bears? Naturally, the Bearcats used the T formation. Nolting felt there was no need for each player to know all the assignments for every play, only his own. This made it somewhat confusing. To me the confusion was compounded by the fact that odd numbered plays went to the right rather than to the left as in most systems.

Ray was an extremely vain man. Ruggedly handsome, he would frequently remove his dentures, hand them to a manager, and scrimmage with the squad. His ability to be at full speed with only one or two steps was amazing.

The assistant coaches were John Wiethe and Carl Brumbaugh. Wiethe, a Xavier of Cincinnati man, played guard for the Lions ('39-'42) making All League. He had also been a playing coach in the National Basketball League. A Phi Beta Kappa and graduate lawyer, Wiethe gave the impression too many linemen in the NFL had beat on his head. This was hardly the case. He later coached the U. of Cincinnati basketball team and then became the all-powerful Democratic chairman of Cincinnati, a position that enabled him to wield considerable power for many years.

Carl Brumbaugh had a distinguished career as a Bear QB (1930-34, 36-38) and also spent a short period with Cleveland and Brooklyn in '37. I have read he was the first T formation QB to crouch down behind the center, the style used to this day. (I would appreciate it if some P.F.R.A. members would comment on the validity of this statement.)

Kentucky won the first game of the series, with the second game to take place in Nippert Stadium, Oct. 27, 1945. All week we prepared for the devastating passing attack the Wildcats had featured in their first game, sparked by a brilliant freshman T quarterback.

In the repeat game, the first time Kentucky got the ball we were astonished to see them line up in the Notre Dame box with the freshman passing sensation at tailback. It was immediately apparent that the young star was bewildered at this new position. The whole Cincy squad sensed the frustrations of the Kentucky squad as they struggled with an unfamiliar formation. Their rifle-armed QB was stymied.

The final score: Cincinnati 16, Kentucky 7!

The freshman star was next heard from in 1949 as the backup QB to Sid Luckman and Johnny Lujack. With these two ahead of him, he had little opportunity to demonstrate his passing skill and was confined to a linebacker and defensive back role with some place kicking on the side.

In fact, he was a very good linebacker, according to Don Kindt, a teammate and close friend, who told me that he was really a very good defensive player -- a fact that has never been realized.

Don told the humorous story of the most frustrating game he had ever played. In the 1951 game against the Dallas Texans in which the Texans became the only team Dallas could beat all year, Don was knocked out of bounds and stuck head first into a snow drift. Suddenly, he saw a Dallas player soar over his head. The Texan -- the one who had stuck Don in the snow drift -- was a victim of the kicking prowess of the quarterback-turned-linebacker. The "field goal" had been made with the seat of his Texas pants!

Ray Nolting had reasonable success in four years as coach at Cincy, taking one team to the Sun Bowl. He drifted from coaching, returned a few years ago to coach a minor league team, and now owns a tavern in Cincy. One member of his 1945 team, starting end Gene Ruehlman, became mayor of Cincinnati.

The old game program of the Cincinnati-Kentucky contest had an article by Sid Luckman describing that new and complex formation -- "The T." The Wildcat roster included George Washington Serini, a Bear interior lineman from '48-'51 and a Packer in '52; Dick Hensley, an end with the Giants in '49, Pittsburgh '52, and the Bears '53; and two of Kentucky's greatest basketball players, Ralph Beard and Wallace "Wah Wah" Jones. Somehow Nolting had managed to get Jones declared ineligible for the second game. The Wildcat coach, Bernie Shively was also AD. This was his only season as coach.

Why a coach would scrap a successful formation in the middle of a season with a T formation quarterback like George Blanda is something that has eluded my research for 35 years.

* * *

Dr. Stanley Grosshandler, M.D., is a member of SABR and NASSH as well as P.F.R.A. He's had numerous articles on both football and baseball published. His address is 4905 Richland Drive, Raleigh, N.C., 27612.

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DIRECTORY

Don't forget to return your directory questionaire. Unless you send us more, about all we can put in the directory will be your name, and then we can't guarantee spelling.

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P.F.R.A.'S NUMBER ONE FAN

By Jim Stewart, P.F.R.A.

As a charter member of P.F.R.A., I think I will put in a bid to being its longest and steadiest pro football fan. I grew up in the northwest part of New Jersey, in the town of Phillipsburg, a real hotbed of high school football in the '20s.

I saw my first high school game in 1923. From then on I never stopped going to games -- high school and college. Lafayette and Lehigh were my favorites.

In 1925 I got hooked on pro football. As a high school freshman, I made my first trek 85 miles up to the Polo Grounds on October 18,1925. I'd worked after school to get a few dollars together to make the trip, but I hitch-hiked from dawn that Sunday morning to get to New York. I recall getting to Jersey City around 11:30 with plenty of time to spare for a ride on the 42nd Street Ferry and my first ride on an elevated train uptown to the Polo Grounds. As a 15-year-old kid from a small town I was really excited, with only one thing on my mind -- to see a pro game.

There were former Lafayette players on the Giant squad -- Williams, Brennan, Bednar, and Walbridge -- and the great Jim Thorpe at right halfback. Funny thing though, I was never a Giant fan. I always seemed to root for the other guys who were usually the underdogs.

The game, viewed by 26,999 other fans and me, was the first home game in the Giants' history. They were shut out by the Frankford Yellowjackets, 14-0. Jack McBride to Lynn Bomar passes gave New York good yardage in the second half, but Frankford, led by Guy Chamberlin, scored two TDs in the opening half and held on.

On the way home, I was lucky. After crossing the Hudson River, I got a ride all the way to Belvedere, N.J., on a truck. This was only 12 miles from my home. I recall getting home around midnight and my parents were really worried.

I made many trips after that to see the Giants play in the late 1920s. Later the Lehigh Valley Railroad ran excursions to N.Y. from Easton, Pa., for only $1. With about $2.50 in my pocket I could get all I wanted to eat at Horn & Hardarts, get into the Polo Grounds for 50¢, and still have a few cents to get a couple of extra things.

Sightseeing in New York didn't interest me then; all I could think of was to ride the elevated trains until it was game time. I got to know the EL system quite well.

One of my biggest football thrills in the late '20s was to sit right back of Mayor Jimmy Walker and Governor Al Smith at a Giant game. I got their autographs and shook their hands. I still remember how friendly they were.

I kept going to see the Giants until 1933. Then the Eagles opened at Baker Bowl in Philadelphia. I witnessed the first Sunday pro game in Philadelphia on November 12. I remember it was frigid in that old ball park, but surprisingly the Eagles tied the Bears at 3-all.

Although I took in every pro game I could get to -- from Saturday nights in Baltimore to out-of-the-way exhibitions in Hershey, Pa. -- the Eagles remained my team.

On December 10, 1933, I started a streak of not missing an Eagle game until 1945 when I missed a Sunday because of illness. Then it was 1975 before I missed another Eagle home game. I doubt if anyone else has had season tickets from 1934 on up to the present time. I still think my best time was watching those great Eagle teams of 1947-49. For me, the payoff came in the championship game on December 7, 1948, when the Eagles won over the Cards, 7-0, in a blizzard.

In summary, I'm really happy that I was able to live in an era and an area where I could see all the great players from 1925 on.

* * *

Jim Stewart was one of the "Canton Six" who participated in the formation of P.F.R.A. in June, '79. He allows that his football library is "second to none." His address is 305 N. Camden, NJ 08105.

* * *

Progress report: John Hogrogian writes that he has made contact with several ex-Stapleton players and expects to complete his work on the Staten Island story within a few months. Anyone wishing to contact John with material on the Stapes should be advised of his change of address to 69 Gillett St. (# 305), Hartford, CT 06105.

* * *

Lack of progress report: David Shapiro writes that P.F.R.A. members have shown only a slight interest in his offer of his book The 135 Greatest Pro Running Backs for $1 to any member. In case you missed it, his address is 288 Whitmore Street, Oakland, Calif. 94611. The offer still stands.

* * *

Former Corner staffer Miss Nomar Shirdlew is again seeking employment. She briefly held a position with a major advertising firm. She was terminated when she turned in a clever commercial in which Joe Greene was to drink a kid's coke and then throw the bottle at the child. In view of later developments, Miss Shirdlew points out that she almost got it right.

* * *

But seriously, folks, we have no one to blame but ourselves for the reference to "Bruce" Gehrke in our last issue. Our new member is, of course, Fred Gehrke of Denver.

* * *

For the last three issues of the Corner, we've experimented with a new format. So far, only two members -- Shapiro and Herbert Furlow -- have commented. Both felt that the new format is a bit hard to read.

We went for this format because it allowed us to increase the Corner content by about a fourth, but that is meaningless if you can't read the copy. We would appreciate some help.

If you can find the time, please write and answer the following.

1. Are you having trouble reading the Corner? If so, is it the size or the kind of print?

2. Would you prefer a return to our earlier format, even if it means reducing content?

3. What kind of stories should we use in the Corner? Players? Teams? Statistics? To put it another way, what past stories have you enjoyed?

Keep these cards and letters coming.

* * *

Quickie quote: President Calvin Coolidge when he was introduced to Red Grange and George Halas "of the Chicago Bears."

"I've always liked animal acts."

ABOUT PFRA:

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.

Membership in P.F.R.A. is open to anyone with a sincere interest in the history of professional football or related subjects. Members receive: twelve issues of The Coffin Corner, the official newsletter of the P.F.R.A.; the opportunity to submit material to be considered for publication in the newsletter; an end of year Directory of Membership; a specially prepared association publication to be offered at the end of the year at a membership discount; and a P.F.R.A. Membership Card.

To join, write to P.F.R.A./ 218 Wise St., N.E./ N. Canton, O./ 44720.

To help defray operational expenses of the association, reasonable dues of $12 per year have been set.

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