

The Official
Newsletter
of the PFRA



Mailing address:
Bob Carroll, ed.
The Coffin Corner
12870 Rt. 30
N. Huntingdon, PA
15642

Vol. II, No. 8

August, 1980

HAPPY BIRTHDAY NFL?

By P.F.R.A. Research

On September 17 of this year the National Football League will celebrate its 61st birthday, but some new information uncovered by a P.F.R.A. research team indicates the celebration may be a bit belated. By the time mid-September rolls around, the NFL might actually be closer to 61 years and one month old.

As most fans know, the NFL has for many years regarded a meeting in Ralph E. Hay's Hupmobile showroom in Canton, Ohio, as its initial organizational meeting. That get-together -- held on Friday evening, September 17, 1920 -- has been described by nearly every writer who ever penned a book on pro football, how Hay, Jim Thorpe, George Halas, Leo Lyons and eight or ten other pioneers sat around on the cars' running boards, drank beer from buckets hung over the fenders, and created in a few hours' time the first pro football league.

The minutes of that meeting have been reprinted many times, and a bronze copy hangs on the wall at the Pro Football Hall of Fame. (See the facsimile on this page.)

In summary, the following business was transacted:

1. A name -- American Professional Football Association -- was chosen.
2. Officers were elected.
3. A \$100 membership fee was set (but Halas is witness that no money changed hands).
4. A committee to draft a constitution was named.
5. The secretary was to receive a list of all players used during the season by Jan. 1, 1921. (This to stop players from jumping from team to team.)
6. Clubs were to advertise their APFA affiliation on their stationery.
7. The league champion was to

Frank Nied

AKRON PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL TEAM

Office

21 N. Summit St.
Bell Main 1766

League Park

Carroll and Beaver Streets
Akron, Ohio

A.F. Ranney

E.W. Tobin, Coach
C. Copley, Captain

MINUTES OF MEETING - SEPTEMBER 17th - 1920

Meeting called to order at 8:15 P.M., by chairman, Mr. Hay. Teams represented were Canton Bulldogs, Cleveland Indians, Dayton Triangles, Akron Professionals, Massillon Tigers, Rochester, N.Y., Rock Island, Ill., Muncie, Ind., Staley A.C., Decatur, Ill., Racine Cardinals, Wisconsin, and Hammond, Ind.

Minutes of previous meeting were given in a resume by the Chairman.

OLD BUSINESS

Massillon withdrew from professional football for the season of 1920.

NEW BUSINESS

It was moved and seconded that a permanent organization be formed to be known as American Professional Football Association. Motion carried.

Moved and seconded that officers be now elected, consisting of President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. Carried.

Mr. Jim Thorpe was unanimously elected President, Mr. Stan Cofall, Vice President, and Mr. A.F. Ranney, Secretary and Treasurer.

Moved and Seconded that a fee of \$100.00 be charged for membership in the Association. Carried.

Moved and seconded that the President appoint a committee to work in conjunction with a lawyer to draft a constitution, by laws and rules for the Association. Carried.

Mr. Thorpe appointed A.A. Young of Hammond, Chairman, and Messrs. Cofall, Flannigan, and Storck associates.

Moved and seconded that all clubs mail to the Secretary by January 1, 1921, a list of all players used by them this season, the Secretary to furnish all clubs with duplicate copy of same, so that each club would have first choice in services for 1921 of his team of this season. Carried.

Moved and seconded that all members have printed upon their stationery, "Member of American Professional Football Association." Carried.

Mr. Marshall of the Brunswick-Dalke Collender Company, Tire Division, presented a silver loving cup to be given the team awarded the championship by the Association. Any team winning the cup three times should be adjudged the owner.

It was moved and seconded that a vote of thanks be extended by the secretary to Mr. Marshall.

The meeting was adjourned.

Next meeting to be called by the President sometime in January.

A.F. Ranney

receive a trophy.

And with that -- according to all accounts -- everyone went home and began playing football.

* * *

There had never been any reason to question that this marked the birth of the NFL. However, it was known that some sort of a preliminary meeting had been held earlier. The NFL's Official Record Manual says, "Meeting was held among interested teams in August."

P.F.R.A. members Bob Braunawart, Bob Carroll, and Joe Horrigan became curious as to just what teams might have been "interested" and what they might have done about it. The researchers began checking through several 1920 Ohio newspapers in hopes of finding some mention. To their surprise, they found a great deal more than they expected.

* * *

When they examined the August 21, 1920, edition of the Canton Evening Repository, a startling headline caught their eyes: "PRO' FOOTBALL MUGLS FORM NATIONAL BODY."

The lead made no bones about it: "The American Professional Football Conference, an organization national in scope was formed here last night at a gathering of men connected with the promotion of the professional gridiron game, held in the offices of Ralph E. Hay, business manager of the Canton Bulldogs, professional champions. Hay was chosen secretary of the new body."

The researchers were staggered. If the Repository story was taken at face value, a league had been "formed" nearly a month before the accepted date! Moreover, a name had been chosen and an officer elected.

The story went on to describe other business that was conducted: "The purpose of the A.P.F.C. will be to raise the standard of professional football in every way possible, to eliminate bidding for players between rival clubs and to secure cooperation in the formation of schedules, at least for the bigger teams. Members of the organization reached an agreement to refrain from offering inducements to players to jump from one team to another, which has been one of the glaring drawbacks to the game in past seasons. Contracts must be respected by players as far as possible, as well as by club managers."

Further on, the story named the teams represented: "The Cleveland Indians, Canton Bulldogs, Dayton Triangles, Akron Indians, Buffalo, Hammond, Ind., and Rochester, N.Y., are charter members of the organization ... Rochester and Buffalo were the only cities admitted which

were not personally represented last night. They were applicants by letter."

* * *

After a few moments euphoria, the researchers became cautious. As far as is known, no reporter was present at the meeting. A logical assumption would be that the Repository reporter got his information from Ralph E. Hay. Could the scribe have misunderstood? Could Hay have overstated what actually happened?

Obviously the thing to do was to check other papers for accounts of the meeting.

The Canton Daily News also reported the August 20 meeting, again most likely from interviewing Hay. Its story agreed that the Canton manager had been named secretary of a new organization called the American Professional Football Conference and that teams had agreed to refrain from bidding for players.

An added piece of information was that the owners had set a maximum salary figure for players.

On one count, the Daily News differed from the Repository. Hammond, it said, had also been represented by letter.

That point seemed minor to the researchers; essentially the stories were the same.

But the question still remained: did the other representatives (Akron, Cleveland, and Dayton) understand that they had formed a league?

* * *

The Akron Beacon-Journal (August 21, 1920) named the men present at the meeting: Hay and Thorpe for Canton, Carl Storck (mis-named "Ray Storck" in the story) of Dayton, Stan Gofall and Jim O'Donnell from Cleveland, and Frank Nied and Art Ranney of Akron. The story agreed that players would not be allowed to jump to higher bidders and added that no college player still in school would be "molested."

However, the Beacon-Journal called what had been agreed upon a "working agreement" and made no direct reference to any organization.

The P.F.R.A. researchers felt that this report actually weakened the argument for an August formation of the league.

A story in the Massillon Evening Independent (August 26, 1920) which stated that a "professional football conference" was "formed" did not particularly strengthen the case. The date of the story indicated that it was probably based on the Canton newspaper stories.

The Cleveland Plain Dealer (August 22, 1920) used the name "American

professional football conference," but the timing again indicated a re-writing of the original Canton stories.

At this point, the researchers could not say with any degree of certainty that the "league" was not a product of Ralph Hay's imagination. Without evidence that one of the other men at the meeting believed a formal organization, the August 20 gathering remained only an obscure footnote.

* * *

Some contradictory data began to show up in the way the September 17 meeting was reported by the newspapers. Although the Canton Daily News, on the day of the meeting, said: "At least seven cities will be represented. It is to be the second session of the American Professional Football conference," other papers indicated that the September meeting was the first.

Akron Evening Times (September 18): "An organization of professional football teams ... was perfected at Canton last night."

Massillon Evening Independent (September 18): "An American Professional Football association was organized with Jim Thorpe ... as its head."

Akron Beacon-Journal (September 18): "The American Professional Football association was organized last night"

Cleveland Plain Dealer (September 19): "... organized last week ... first meeting"

* * *

In an effort to find new evidence Horrigan and Carroll went to the Ohio Historical Center in Columbus. There newspapers from all over the state are on file.

They found what they were looking for in the Dayton Journal. In the August 22, 1920, edition under the headline "TRIANGLES LISTED IN GRID LEAGUE" the Journal stated positively: "A football league ... was organized." Most importantly, items within the story indicated that it had been based on an interview with Carl Storck rather than Ralph Hay.

Moreover, Storck apparently was using a name for the league prior to the September 17 meeting because on the day of the meeting the Journal announced that Storck was leaving Dayton to "attend a meeting of the American Professional Football conference."

* * *

And there the trail ended. Although other newspapers have been checked with care, no other evidence of significance as yet come to light. Even in Ohio, pro football was not

big news in 1920.

The research team feels that three theories are supportable:

First, the August 20 meeting was actually the birth of the league, but because of the wider scope of the September meeting (more teams represented, more business conducted, more publicity) some papers at the time mistakenly reported the second meeting as the first.

Second, the August meeting was

only a preliminary meeting after all, but Ralph Hay and Carl Storck represented it as being more, either through misunderstanding or through enthusiasm.

Third, there were actually two organizations formed within a month's time in Canton -- a "conference" of four Ohio teams (Akron, Canton, Cleveland, and Dayton) followed by a larger "association" of teams from throughout the midwest.

Perhaps the whole answer may lie in exactly how the participants defined "conference," "association," and "league."

* * *

In the belief that -- at a minimum -- this information sheds new light on the formation of the National Football League, the P.F.R. has submitted all of its findings to the NFL.

NOW KICKING, **KELSCH!**

By Bob Braunwart & Bob Carroll

When Pittsburgh's Matt Bahr trots out onto the field to kick a point or three, he is upholding a tradition of specialization that began in the Steel City's first year in the NFL. Indeed, it may have saved the franchise.

Had it not been for the staunch right leg of an aging and now all-but-forgotten sandlotter, Terry Bradshaw, Joe Greene, Franco Harris and Company might have been forced to do their winning somewhere other than Pittsburgh. By the time the 1970s rolled around, a Pittsburgh pro football team could have been only a fading memory.

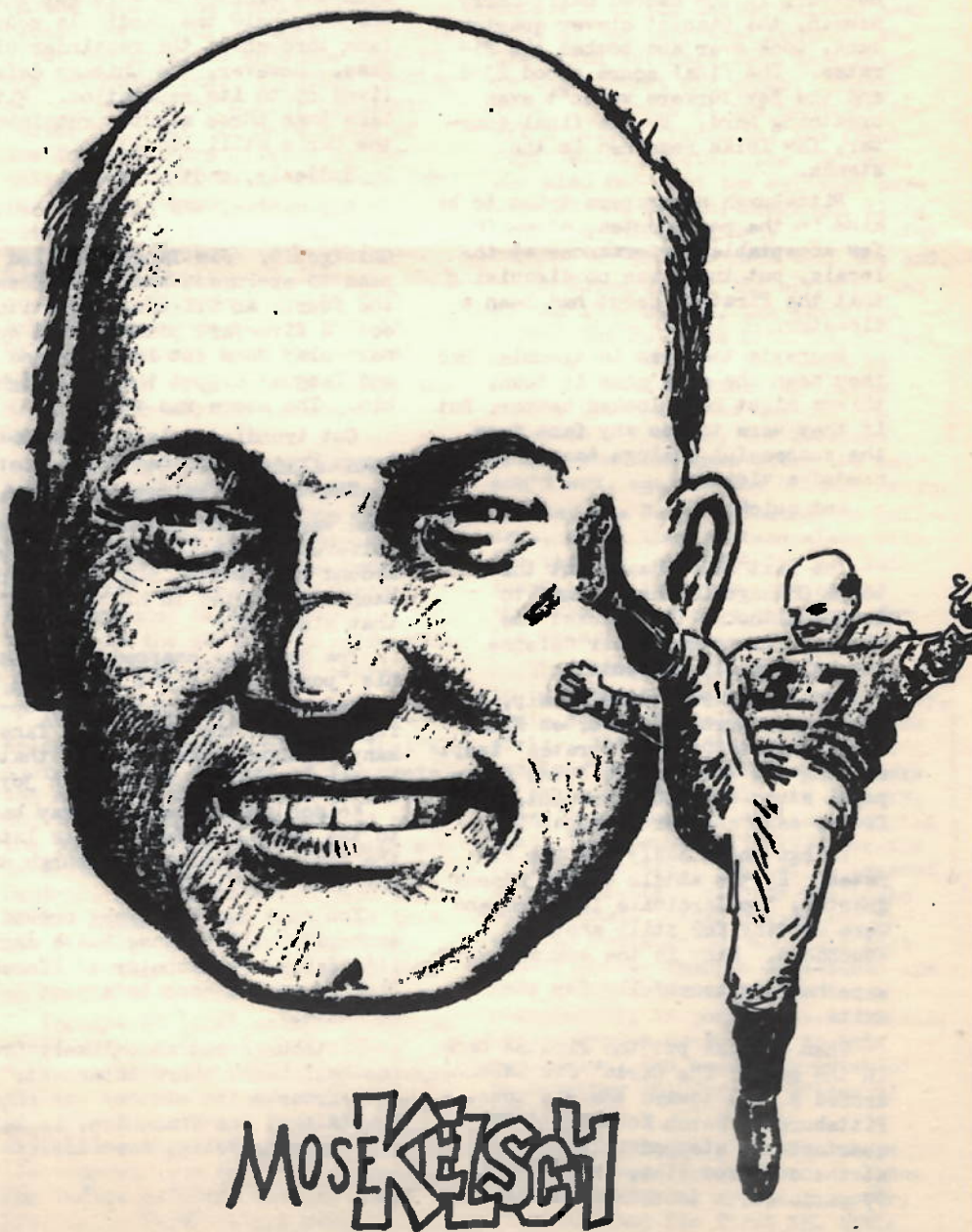
After watching the modern Steelers win four Super Bowls, national writers often forget the forty years of frustration suffered by the team before it achieved its present state. Pittsburghers remember, of course. All those losing years are etched indelibly in their hearts.

Yet even the most virulent Steeler rooster may not remember just how shaky the franchise was in its first few seasons. Then the question was not "will they win," it was "will they survive." Other NFL teams have gone the way of the passenger pigeon -- remember the Dallas Texans in 1952? Remember the Brooklyn Dodgers? How about the Cincinnati Reds, who disappeared in the middle of the 1934 season?

The same sad fate might well have befallen the Steelers.

In 1933 Art Rooney took a chance and bought an NFL franchise. Rooney had previously headed a local sandlot outfit -- the J.P. Rooneys, named for his brother -- but this was his first venture into the big league.

He called his new team the "Pirates," but a glance at its roster showed that it was the Pittsburghers who were destined to walk the plank in 1933. Rooney had scraped around for athletes and ended up signing



some of his former sandlotters and several other players who were not at all in demand by other NFL clubs. The lineup was one of the weakest ever to stumble on to an NFL field.

Local football fans were frankly skeptical of the professional game. Pitt, under Jock Sutherland, was a national power in college football. Duquesne and Carnegie Tech both played major schedules. Who needed a pro team?

Especially a losing pro team!

* * *

The season began at old Forbes Field on Wednesday night, September 20 (Sunday football would not become legal until after election day) against the strong New York Giants. 15,000 people — a good crowd at the time — came out bearing modest hopes. For one half the Pirates played respectable football, trailing only 7-0 at the intermission. However, in the second half, Harry Newman, the Giants' clever quarterback, took over and bombed the Pirates. The final score stood 23-2 and the New Yorkers weren't even breathing hard. By the final quarter, few folks remained in the stands.

Pittsburgh newspapers tried to be kind in the post-mortem, stressing a few acceptable performances by the locals, but there was no disguising that the Pirates' debut had been a disaster.

Rooney's team was in trouble. Had they been the only game in town, things might have looked better. But if they were to woo any fans from the successful college teams, they needed a victory.

And quick!

* * *

The next Wednesday night the tough Chicago Cardinals came to town. Although they lacked the Giants' firepower, their defense was universally respected.

An all-day rain didn't help, but the meager turnout at Forbes Field was due mostly to the Pirates' inept showing the week before. One newspaper story had 6,000 present. Still fewer, said another account.

Things began badly for the Pirates. By the middle of the second quarter, the Cardinals led 13-0 and were driving for still another touchdown. Many in the sparse crowd were heading mournfully for the exits.

Then a break put the Pirates back in the game. The Cards' Jim Bausch arched a pass toward the end zone. Pittsburgh's Butch Kottler, a sub-quarterback, stepped in front of it at the one-yard line, and steamed 99 yards for a touchdown — the

first ever for Rooney U.

On to the field waddled a somewhat controversial Pirate player. Christian "Mose" Kelsch had been playing local sandlot football for many years — since "about the time that Dewey was steaming into Manila" insisted one reporter. Many folks had wondered why the Pirates had allotted a place on their already weak squad to a now chubby, 37-year-old "has-been" when there were so many players with glittering college reputations standing in unemployment lines. Ol' Mose had never seen the inside of a college classroom.

A moment later, when Kelsch returned to a bench crowded with college graduates, having successfully placekicked an extra point, the fans gave him a polite round of applause. It was nice to see the old man do well.

The freak touchdown seemed to spur the Pirates to stronger efforts and they held the Cardinals scoreless throughout the remainder of the game. However, the Chicago defense lived up to its reputation. With less than three minutes remaining, the Cards still led 13-7.

Suddenly, another break!

Cap Oehler, the Pirates' center, recovered a Cardinal fumble at the Chicago 18. Jim Tanguay sailed a pass to ex-Purdue star Paul Moss at the four. An ill-timed substitution cost a five-yard penalty, but on the next play Moss cut into the end zone and Tanguay zipped the ball right to him. The score was tied!

Out trundled Kelsch. The Pittsburgh Press described the scene:

"He wore no helmet and his bald head wagged and his double chin quivered as his teammates clustered around him, patted him on his broad back and shouted in his ear to 'make that kick good!'"

The ball was snapped. Mose swung his "ponderous" right leg. The ball sailed perfectly through the up-rights. And the Pittsburgh fans — many of whom became fans at that precise moment — erupted in joy.

Kelsch grinned all the way back to the bench. A few moments later the game ended with Pittsburgh narrowly on top, 14-13.

The next day the Press crowed exuberantly: "Old Mose has a degree. It's B.P.K. — Bachelor of Placement Kicking — and Mose is a post graduate!"

Pittsburgh had an unlikely pro football hero. More important, the come-from-behind victory won enough hearts that the franchise, at least for the time being, was safe.

* * *

According to Pittsburgh folklore, Mose Kelsch was the first "specialist" in pro football. The colleges had used a few men in special spots, but they had no roster limits and could afford to carry a man to do a particular job.

Pro roster limits and substitution rules combined against the idea of specialization, at least, over any length of time. Certainly there were plenty of "specialists-for-a-game," men who, usually because of an injury, were saved for one crucial play.

But Kelsch actually went two whole seasons with the Pirates and never attempted anything other than field goals and extra points.

Later in 1933, Kelsch played the hero again when he kicked a field goal to give the Pirates a 3-3 tie with Brooklyn. Since the team won only three times all season (the other two wins were over lowly Cincinnati and Philadelphia) that tie was one of the high points of the season.

1934 did not go so well for the Pirates or for Kelsch. The team fell to only two wins, and Mose was roundly criticized when he missed a couple of extra points that would have enabled Pittsburgh to tie the Giants.

By the end of the season, he was sharing his kicking duties with young Armand Niccolai, who could also play tackle. Whether Kelsch could have made the squad the next year was problematical.

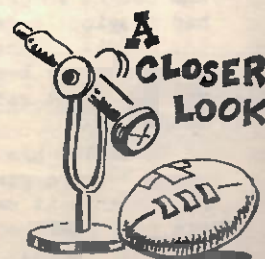
His untimely death in an auto crash in July of 1935 saddened all Pittsburgh fans and many around the league, where Mose was popular for play and for his sportsmanship.

During his two-year NFL career, Kelsch was not only the oldest player in the league, but he was also older than the team's owner, Art Rooney.

* * *

MOSE KELSCH'S NFL CAREER

		XP	XA	FG	PTS
1933	Pittsburgh	2	3	3	11
1934	Pittsburgh	2	5	1	5
	Totals	4	8	4	16



CLEVELAND'S 1ST TITLE

By Joe Horrigan

The people of Cleveland, Ohio, have been witness to professional football for many years, even before the organization of the National Football League in 1920. It wasn't, however, until 1946 and the birth of the Cleveland Browns of the All-America Football Conference that pro football found a permanent home in Cleveland.

Although the Browns provided their followers with a league title in their first year of operation, it wasn't a first for the city of Cleveland. That came in 1924, when the Cleveland Bulldogs were awarded the NFL's pennant.

The Cleveland Bulldogs were a team surrounded by almost as much controversy as talent. They were owned by a Cleveland sports promoter named Sam Deutsch, who was involved in both minor league baseball and boxing in the city. In 1923, he had been awarded the Cleveland NFL franchise vacated a year earlier by Jim O'Donnell who had operated football's Cleveland Indians in 1920 and 1921.

Deutsch kept the name of Indians for his 1923 team, but displayed a better brand of football for Clevelanders than they had witnessed in O'Donnell's earlier attempts. Going into the final game of the '23 season, the Indians boasted an undefeated record of 3-0-3. Their final opponent, the Canton Bulldogs, came into the game, however, with an even more impressive 10-0-1 mark.

A crowd of nearly 17,000 fans showed up in Cleveland for that final game, only to see their Indians overwhelmed by a 46-10 score. The Bulldogs scored seven touchdowns, all of them on the ground, with two in each of the first three quarters and one in the fourth. Canton's team work and ability to score almost at will, impressed Sam Deutsch in a way that changed football history in both Canton and Cleveland.

Canton's season-ending victory over the Indians, gave Canton not only its second consecutive title, but also its second consecutive undefeated season.

The Bulldogs were a gridiron success, but a financial disaster. High salaries and traveling expenses and adverse weather conditions had put Canton's famous team in debt. The Canton Repository, on August 3, 1924, reported that due to losses of approximately \$13,000, the Canton

Athletic Company had sold the Bulldogs to Cleveland Sam Deutsch, "and will henceforth compose the Cleveland team, with a few additions."

In a statement to the Repository, C.A.C. spokesman Lester Higgins said, "Some time ago letters were sent out to Canton merchants and manufacturers, informing them of the financial situation and the probability that the Bulldogs would hardly be continued without assistance in a substantial way." Higgins further stated, "The letter brought very few favorable responses and but few promises of aid. Hence the decision to give up the ghost. Deutsch was the only bidder for the team and his offer of \$2500 was accepted by telephone Saturday night to clear up the whole matter."

The sale of the Bulldogs caused considerable consternation to the Canton fans. The public outcry caused the C.A.C., a mere three days after the sale, to announce that it was reconsidering. A public meeting was called for by C.A.C. spokesman Lester Higgins: "If only a few of the followers are kicking on the sale, there will be no Bulldogs for Canton this season, as those who backed the team last year will allow the sale to Deutsch to go through. But, if the Chamber of Commerce hall is jammed and packed to its full capacity tomorrow night, then it will be apparent that the football bugs of this city want to retain the Bulldogs for another season at least."

According to Higgins, there existed a legal technicality that could block the sale of the Bulldogs to Deutsch. The Canton loyalists and Deutsch both were quick to respond to Higgins' remarks. The Canton fans responded with an overflow turnout at the meeting while Deutsch responded with threats of legal action.

Anthony Quinn, a C.A.C. stockholder and lawyer, contended that a quorum was not present at the meeting at which the sale was approved and that Deutsch had purchased only the players -- not the franchise and uniforms as Deutsch was contending. Deutsch, meanwhile, fired back that he had acted in good faith and that his prestige as a sports promoter was at stake. He vowed not to give up the Bulldog team without a fight.

Threats of legal action from both sides were exchanged and for the next few days the Canton papers were filled with rumors of compromise and possible solutions. Finally, ten days after the initial call for public support, the matter was resolved. The Canton Bulldogs were no more. The C.A.C. stockholders were told by

Quinn that, after a lengthy investigation, it was his opinion that, "Deutsch's purchase, while presenting a few technicalities, had no flaws in it worthy of a defense in a court fight," and hence was considered valid.

With the ownership debate over, Deutsch once again began putting the pieces of his dream team together. Although ten former Canton players were invited to report to the Cleveland Bulldog team, only seven accepted. Harry Robb, Larry Conover and Wilbur Henry chose to desert the NFL to play instead with the independent Pottsville Maroons.

With seven Canton stars, a few holdovers from the 1923 Indians and two rookie sensations, Hoge Workman and Dave Noble, the Cleveland Bulldogs were an instant powerhouse.

The '24 season began to shape up just as Sam Deutsch had hoped. Reminiscent of the Canton Bulldog team that had so impressed Deutsch, the Cleveland Bulldogs went undefeated in their first six games. Their first loss came at the hands of the NFL's newest franchise, the Frankford Yellowjackets. The 'Jackets, who also had tied the Bulldogs earlier in the season, remained, along with the Chicago Bears, in the thick of the '24 pennant race till the end.

On November 30, the official end of the 1924 season, the standings showed the Bulldogs with their 7-1-1 on top, followed by the Bears at 6-1-4. Based on existing league rules, Cleveland was the new NFL champion. However, the Bulldogs played one more game after the season's end, against the Chicago Bears.

When the Bears defeated the Bulldogs, 23-0, they claimed along with the victory the 1924 title. Both teams, they insisted, had agreed that the game was to be played for the championship.

The Cleveland Bulldogs, who seemed to be right at home with controversy, again found themselves in the thick of it. This new dispute was only resolved by a vote of league owners at their annual meeting in January. There, a motion was made and carried that, "The pennant for 1924 for the National Football League, be awarded to the Cleveland club on the basis of the games played before and including November 30, and that post season games, wherein agreements are made between teams to play for a championship is positively forbiddin, and to insure conformity to this resolution, the season is extended to December 20, for the season of 1925."

So with the help of the league owners, seven former Canton Bulldog stars and a local sports promoter, Cleveland had its first NFL title.

The Research Notebook

1890s

By Bob Braunwart & Bob Carroll

The first pro coach -- that is, a coach hired to lead a team that had some recognized pros -- was probably Ben "Sport" Donnelly, who was also the second recognized pro player. On Nov. 19, 1892, Sport was paid \$250 to play for the Allegheny A.A. The next year, the team had at least three paid players and Sport was hired to coach (and sometimes play) after the team lost its opening Game.

* * *

From the Pittsburgh Press, Nov. 26, 1893:

HOW IT IS PLAYED

The Methods That Have Governed This Season's Football

A football team advances the ball in two different ways. Either it is kicked or carried forward by a run. A kick explains itself. Runs are made either by individual players, who are assisted by the interference of the rest of their side, or by the whole side advancing together. Individual runners are most frequently the backs, who are specially trained for that purpose, less frequently linemen, when tackles and ends, and least frequently linemen when guards. The center rusher can only run with the ball by obtaining it on a fluke after it has been put in play, as his own function is to snap it back. New runs with the ball are necessarily made either through openings in the line or around the ends, and all runners, backs or linemen, attack the opposing rush line and try to break through the holes made by their fellows, or they skirt its ends, the opposing tacklers being blocked off by the interference. When, on the other hand, it is sought to advance the ball by means of mass plays, the whole ll group themselves together and either push forward as a mass or wedge, or standing back some distance, start on a charge, in a flying wedge, as it is called. These wedges are also often converted into runs, since if the player who holds the ball can slip out of the mass and elude the oppo-

site tacklers he will generally have a clear field. These plays are the foundation of all methods of running attack, and the lover of the game who studies and comprehends them will have no difficulty in appreciating all the fine points of the play, in separating the struggling mass into its component parts and understanding at a glance why the attack is prevailing over the defense or vice versa, and he will also find that he instinctively begins to understand novelties in the play and values the broader lines of strategy.

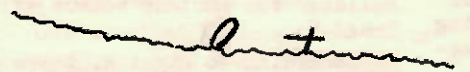
* * *

The oldest pro player contract can be found at the Pro Football Hall of Fame and reads as follows:

I hereby agree to participate in all regularly scheduled football games of the Pittsburgh Athletic Club for the full season of 1893. As an active player I agree to accept a salary of \$50 per contest and also acknowledge that I will play for no other club during PAC games.

as witnessed by George Barbour
on Oct. 4, 1893

The signer of the contract would be one of the earliest known pros except for one thing. The bottom part of the contract where he signed has been torn off. Only a fragment of his signature remains, looking like this:



After checking newspaper "box scores" for the names of players appearing for the P.A.C. in 1893, we discovered that only three players had last names that would fit the configuration of the signature scrap. They were Will Gumbert, a tackle, Grant Dibert (sometimes spelled Diebert), and a back named Southgate. However, another factor narrows the choice. Southgate did not appear in a game until November 25; Gumbert until November 4. But Dibert played on October 7, three days after the contract was signed. Therefore, unless the signer did not play at all (unlikely, but possible), he was probably Grant Dibert, a veteran of earlier seasons with the P.A.C.

* * *

The first kick-off wasn't made until 1894. Until that time, one team just started up by forming a flying wedge or turtle-back or some such.

* * *

Until 1897, the goal kicked after a touchdown was worth a pair of points -- the original two-point conversion. But a touchdown was worth only four points, one less than a field goal.

* * *

In 1896, the Allegheny Athletic Association won the Pittsburgh pro championship (and, in a sense, the world championship) in two days.

The A.A.A. was in trouble with the A.A.U. for earlier payments to players. Finally, they decided to go openly pro and hang the consequences. They contacted several star players around the country, all of whom were tired of the hypocrisy necessary to stay within the A.A.U. guidelines on professionalism.

The group arrived in Pittsburgh in early November. It was practically a "Who's Who" of 1890s football, including Doggie Trenchard, Biffy Lea, Sport Donnelly and Pudge Heffelfinger.

On Tuesday, November 10, they knocked off the Pittsburgh A.C., 18-0. The next day they came right back to defeat the only other competitor for the pro title, the D.C. & A.C., 12-0.

By then the A.A.A. was broke, but the team went on to play several more games just for fun. In effect, they went from semi-pros, to pros, to amateurs within a few days.

* * *

Anyone who studies the 1890 pro football scene will sooner or later wonder, who was "Nelson Ross?"

About 20 years ago, a mysterious gentleman showed up at the office of Dan Rooney of the Pittsburgh Steelers. The stranger and Rooney chatted for a few minutes, and then he left, leaving behind a manuscript. It was unsigned. When Rooney read it, he immediately recognized it as a valuable piece of research. As best he could recall the researcher's name was something like "Nelson Ross."

The manuscript, which is now at the Pro Football Hall of Fame, traces the early history of pro football in Pittsburgh. It was the first source to identify Pudge Heffelfinger's pro game in 1892. Although later writers have added to the knowledge found in the "Ross" manuscript (notably, P.F.R.A. members J. Thomas Jable and Bob Van Atta), but "Nelson Ross" still remains a pioneer.

But, who was he? To this day, no one has come forward to claim authorship.



P.F.R.A. is happy to welcome four new members. They are Stratis Skoufalos (of Philadelphia, Pa.), Glenn Presnell (of Ironton, O.), Pete Elliot (of Canton, O.), and Edward W. Racely (of Atherton, California).

* * *

Got a question about either pro football or P.F.R.A.? Why not drop a line to The Coffin Corner? If we don't know the answer (and we often don't), we'll try to put you in touch with one of our members who does.

For emergencies, call (412) 863-6345.

* * *

The Coffin Corner is particularly interested in receiving information on early pro teams that were never members of any major leagues (who they played, scores, dates, cities, who were the players). At one time, almost every town tried pro or semi-pro football. There was probably a team in your home town. Why not find out about them and share the information.

* * *

Reminders:

A few charter members have not yet renewed their memberships. We assume it's only because they've been so tied up with "summer fun." Don't forget when renewing that dues are now \$15, still "the biggest bargain in the researcher's budget."

A limited number of extra copies of the P.F.R.A. Annual are available (\$5) but they must go on a first-come, first-serve basis.

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P.F.R.A. charter member Milton R. Roberts has recently been named an assistant editor for Coach & Athlete magazine -- which has recently been named the magazine of the National High School Athletic Coaches Association.

Milt will have an article on Lou Holtz in the September issue of C&A. It's a close-up called "The Arkansas Magician." Milt's membership in P.F.R.A. is given prominent mention in an editorial in the front of the magazine.

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PFRA-files

To say that BOB VAN ATTA is the expert on early pro football in Greensburg and Latrobe is to only scratch the service with this ex-marine. His encyclopedic knowledge of the full spectrum of history in western Pennsylvania has won him respect all over the state.

His duties as the head of the public information department for a local utility and as the history editor for the Greensburg Tribune-Review keep him busy, but he still finds time to be a contributing member of S.A.B.R., P.F.R.A. (his article, "Latrobe, Pa.: Cradle of Pro Football," appeared in our Annual) and the Pennsylvania Sports Hall of Fame. One of his greatest pro football thrills has been presenting plaques to former players inducted into the state HOF.

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STEVE VASILIOU joined P.F.R.A. only after we promised to always put the second "i" in his last name (one of his pet peeves). Although he regards himself more as a fan -- particularly of the Steelers -- than as an historian, he enjoys very much learning about pre-NFL teams.

Steve is professor of art at Wheeling (W.Va.) College and also

very active in local theatrics. His acting talents have won him spots in numerous locally-made films and commercials.

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Few fans have had a more spectacular introduction to pro football than TONY CUSHER. At the first pro game he ever saw, Dante Magnani of the then-Cleveland Rams took the opening kickoff back 93-yards to spark a 17-14 win over Pittsburgh. Then, at halftime, he got a chance to talk with Dutch Clark, the Cleveland coach and former Detroit Lion immortal.

Tony readily admits that his first love is college football. He has, without a doubt, the most complete and authentic All-America list in the world, with literally hundreds of teams and still growing.

Until his retirement from the U.S. Army, Tony lived all over the country. Now he makes his home in Reeder, North Dakota, "600 miles from anywhere."

He also enjoys stamp collecting, baseball (a S.A.B.R. member), old movies, and classical music.

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LARRY SETARO lives in Danbury, Connecticut, but his heart is in Green Bay. He fondly recalls visiting the Wisconsin city for a whole week, attending Packer practice sessions, and visiting the Packer Hall of Fame. His favorite game is still the 1965 western conference playoff when the Pack beat the Colts in overtime, but other Green Bay championship games rate high.

Larry is currently assembling a list of sites of Packer road games (stadia). This list covers all Green Bay games, including pre-season, post-season barnstorming and all playoffs. As of March of this year, he had identified more than 75 stadia.

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 \$15 per year have been set.

The Coffin Corner
12870 Rt. 30
N. Huntingdon, PA 15642

John Hogrogian
69 Gillett St.
Apt. 305
Hartford, Ct. 06105