

A TEAM NAMED ERNIE?

By Bob Carroll

Pro football teams are named after animals, birds, colors, and even gold miners, but, in the whole history of the National Football League, only one time was ever named after a player. The star so honored was Ernie Nevers, a big, blonde fullback from Stanford. It was quite appropriate because no one ever more deserved the nickname of "One-Man-Team."

At Stanford, Nevers' coach, the venerable Glenn "Pop" Warner, called him "the football player without a fault" and compared him favorably with an earlier Warner protege -- Jim Thorpe! Like Thorpe, Nevers could do everything asked of him on a football field and do it exceptionally well. He ran, passed, kicked, called signals, and played defense, all brilliantly.

Equally important, he topped it off with something Warner said Thorpe sometimes lacked -- a blazing competitive spirit. Only two broken ankles kept him from All-American recognition in 1924, his junior year. Even so, he came back limping by the end of the season to star against Notre Dame's "Four Horsemen" in the Rose Bowl. Healthy the next year, he made everyone's honor team.

He turned pro in 1926, just as the NFL was undergoing a crisis. Red Grange, who had been responsible for huge crowds the previous year, decided to form his own league. The NFL faced a dangerous competitor in Grange.

Ernie Nevers, before playing a league game, was automatically the NFL's biggest drawing card.

He joined the Duluth, Minnesota, team. To take full advantage of Nevers' fame, it was decided to make it a touring squad, spotlighting the blonde fullback's skills in each league city. So no one would miss the point, "Duluth" was dropped from the team's name and they became officially "Ernie Nevers' Eskimos."

It was quite a season. The Eskimos crossed the country, playing twenty-nine games against league and non-league opponents. Nevers played an incredible 1,713 minutes of football, handling the ball on nearly every offensive play.

Although Red Grange's league failed after that one season, the Ernie Nevers' Eskimos went through another tour in 1927. In two years, Nevers saw as much football action as many players saw in half a dozen seasons.

After a year off pitching major league baseball, Nevers joined the Chicago Cardinals for three excellent seasons. In each, he was named all-league fullback.

On November 28, 1929, he performed the single feat for which he is best known. In one afternoon against the Bears, scored 40 points on six touchdowns and four extra points. After some more than 50 years, the record still stands.

ERNEST ALONZO NEVERS Fullback

Born: Willow River, Minn., June 11, 1903

Died: May 3, 1976

Height: 6-1

Weight: 205

College: Stanford

Pro Teams: Nevers' Eskimos, 1926-27; Chicago Cardinals, 1929-31

Pro Football Hall of Fame: 1963

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Year	Nevers' NFL Scoring Record				
		TD	XP	FG	Pts
1926 Nevers' Eskimos	NFL	8	11	4	71
1927 Nevers' Eskimos	NFL	4	7	0	31
1928	Did not play				
1929 Chicago Cardinals	NFL	12*	10	1	85*
1930 Chicago Cardinals	NFL	6	9	1	48
1931 Chicago Cardinals	NFL	8	15*	1	66
5 years (Unofficial)		38	52	7	301

*-Led league
Courtesy of David Neft