

JIM RINGO

Jim Ringo walked out of Green Bay's training camp in 1953, feeling he had no chance to make the team. Smallish at only 6-2 and 230, he hadn't accumulated any All-America notices at Syracuse. What was the use?

Fortunately, he returned to become one of the greatest offensive centers in NFL history. In 15 seasons, he was All-NFL six times and played in 10 Pro Bowls. He used quickness, desire and savvy to make up for lack of bulk. He had great durability. After missing the final seven games of his rookie season, he played in a then-record 182 straight games.

Jim started earning personal awards while the Packers were still one of the weakest teams in the NFL. When Lombardi arrived, he had Ringo to build his offensive line around. Jim played for the Packers' champs of 1961-62. In 1964, he was traded to Philadelphia where he put in four more great years.

WILLIE DAVIS

The Cleveland Browns drafted Davis out of Grambling on the 17th round in 1956. He played a couple or years of Army football before joining Cleveland in 1958. For two seasons, he was used sparingly, but his career turned around when he was traded to the Green Bay Packers in 1960.

Installed as a regular defensive end, he was able to use his intelligence, speed, agility, and size (6-3, 245) to one of the best in the business. He was All-NFL five times as the Packers played in six title games, winning five. Davis was also tapped for five Pro Bowls.

A great team leader, perhaps his most amazing feat was in not missing a single game during his 12-season career.

SAM HUFF

Huff was an All-America, two-way tackle at West Virginia U. in 1955, pairing with longtime San Francisco line star Bruce Bosley. But at 6-1, 230 pounds, he was small for a pro tackle. The New York Giants drafted him on the third round in 1956 and installed him at middle linebacker, a position that was just evolving. He was an instant hit, ranking almost immediately with Bill George and Joe Schmidt as the league's best.

He became one of the inspirational leaders of the great Giants defense of the late 1950's, noted for his hard-hitting duels with star running backs like Jim Brown. His speed and tackling ability made him a match for anyone. Sam (real name Robert Lee) played in six NFL title games and five Pro Bowls. He was All-NFL four times.

Huff remained with the Giants through 1963. Traded to the Redskins in 1964, he played three seasons, retired, and then returned as a player-coach for 1969.

DOUG ATKINS

At 6-8 and 275 pounds, Atkins won All-America honors as a tackle at the U. of Tennessee in 1952, but after two inconsistent years at defensive end with the Cleveland Browns, he was shipped to the Chicago Bears. There he developed into one of the most feared pass rushers in the NFL. For 12 seasons he used his exceptional strength and agility to terrorize Bears opponents. In 1967, he joined the expansion New Orleans Saints, where he lent a touch of class to an otherwise makeshift line.

Doug was famous for practical jokes. One of his favorites was to invite teammates over for a beer blast, wait until everyone was full up, and then set his large and ferocious dog

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to bar the bathroom door.

He was All-NFL three times and named to eight Pro Bowls. In his 17 seasons, he played in 205 games.

JIM OTTO

Offensive centers aren't the most visible men on the field, but Jim Otto helped get himself noticed by wearing double-zero as his number. O(tt)O, get it? Even with a more mundane number, it would have been hard to miss the man who anchored the Raiders' offensive line for 15 years. A sure-handed ball-snapper and an excellent blocker who could handle opponents in the pits or out on the wings, he called line assignments faultlessly, while embodying the pride and poise Raiders' motto. He was the only man named All-AFL center during the leagues's ten seasons, and he continued as All-AFC in 1970-71-72.

The 6-2, 255-pound pivot came out of Miami (Florida) without a lot of fanfare, and he had to be especially terrific to garner all-league notice in the Raiders' early years when they were among the weakest teams in football.

During his long career, he was often injured. Yet he played an amazing 308 games, including pre-season and post-season play, plus 12 all-star games.

BOB LILLY

Big Bob Lilly was th Dallas Cowboys. first-ever draft choice in 1961. (A 1960 draft had been held before the team received its franchise.) In choosing Lilly. the Cowhoys plucked a prize-winner who would bloo into onc or theilr greatest stars. The former TCU All-America wcnt on to be the foundation of great Dallas defensive lines for 14 seasons; He combined unusual speed and inelligence, and, with his 6-5, 260-pound build, he wreaked havoc on enemy ball-toters and quarterbacks. Add durability; he missed only one game in all his pro career.

In 1962 he became the first Cowboy to be named to the Pro Bowl, an honor he would repeat ten more times. In 1964, he became the Cowboys' first All-NFL, pick. Seven more times he would receive All-NFL/NFC honors. He helped Dallas move from the bottom of the standings to a perennial playoff team. Eventually he played in five league or conference title games and two Super Bowls. In 1980, he had another Dallas "first" -- the first Cowboy to be inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame,

GEORGE BLANDA

Blanda played longer than anyone --26 seasons spread over 27 years --and the career of the 6-2, 215-pound former Kentucky star can be divided into three eras. The Bear (1949-58): George was the most accurate placekicker in the NFL, but he wanted to play quarterback. Chicago tried him at linebacker before giving him a shot under center, For about a season and a half, he was the throwingest QB in the league. Then a shoulder separation and they put him back as a kicking specialist.

The Oiler (1960-66): He set the new league on fire and took Houston to the first two AFL titles and a near-miss in 1962, In '61, his 7 TD passes in one game and 36 on the season won him Player of the Year honors.

The Raider (1967-75): As the greatest kicker-backup QB in history, he pulled many games out of the fire, particularly in 1970, when his last-minute heroics came five games in a row. He was AFC Player of 1970.

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Some stats: 4,007 pass attempts, 26,920 yards, 236 TDs, and a record 2,002 points.

RED BADGRO

Badgro was a three-sport star at USC, and for a while couldn't decide whether to be a football or a baseball player. After spending 1927 with the New York football Yankees, he retired to try the diamond as a St. Louis Browns outfielder. His weak bat sent him back to football with the New York Giants,

At 6-0, 190-pounds Badgro was a terrific defensive end, outstanding blocker and a good receiver for his day. His real knack was in pulling off the Big Play --the clutch catch, game-saving fumble recovery, or touchdown-stopping tackle. Small wonder he was the first man to score a touchdown in the first NFL championship game,

Red was All-NFL in 1930, 1931, and 1933. In '34 he tied for the pass receiving leadership with 16, a good total at the time. After a season with the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1936, he retired for good. 45 years later, he was elected to the Pro Football Hall of Fame,