

Great Forgotten Ends of the 1930's

by Stan Grosshandler

There was once a position called END!

The end played on both sides of the line of scrimmage; therefore, there was a left end and a right end. There were no split ends, tight ends, wide receivers, flankers, wide outs, or anything else.

There were just plain ENDS!

Now end was a very difficult position to play. You had to catch passes all over the field, block a tackle who vastly outweighed you, and stop end sweeps by throwing yourself into an interference that consisted of two running guards built like tanks and a pretty hefty blocking back built like a bull.

You were expected to play sixty minutes, which often meant you had to chase a pass the length of the field, then block that monster in front of you, and next go on defense and break up the interference. Some days it was just plain hell!

Four ends from the 1930's, Don Hutson, Red Badgro, Bill Hewitt, and Wayne Millner are honored in the Hall of Fame. A fifth, Ray Flaherty, is in the Hall for his coaching success, but was a very good end as a player.

During the early years of the NFL, George Halas, an old right end himself, did a pretty good job of collecting most of the talent. Besides Hewitt he had Luke Johnsos, Bill Karr, Eggs Manske, Dick Plasman, and George Wilson.

Johnsos and Karr played the right side opposite Hewitt. With the Bears from 1929 through 1936 Luke had a career total of 87 receptions and 19 TD's. He served as co-head coach during Halas' tour in the Navy during World War II.

Bill Karr played from '33 through '38 scoring 18 TD's on a career total of only 48 receptions.

Eggs Manske studied law before joining the Eagles in 1935. He became a Bear in '37, went to Pittsburgh the next season, and returned to Bears in '39. Dick Plasman also joined the Bears in 1937. Known as the last player to play without a head gear, Dick took off two years for military service, returned in 1944 and then played for the Cards in '46 and '47 where he played both defensive end and tackle.

A long time Bear ('37-'46), George Wilson is best remembered as the man who with one block took out Jimmy Johnston and Ed Justice enabling Bill Osmanski to score the first six points of the great 73-0 rout of the Redskins in the 1940 championship game.

Considering one of the great tacticians of the game George coached the Lions from '57 through 64 and the Dolphins from '66 to '69. He also put in one season in the National Basketball League (1939-40).

The Packers, one of the early teams to have a potent passing attack, had Lavie Dilweg from '27 through '34 and Milt Gantenbein who arrived for a ten-year stay in 1931. A fine blocker, he was "the other end" to Don Hutson, at Green Bay just as Bear Bryant had been at Alabama.

Joe Carter was one of the better, and lesser known ends of the early days. He played for the Eagles from '33 through '40, the Packers in '42, spent '43 in service and then two more seasons as a Brooklyn Dodger and Chicago Cardinal.

In 1934, Joe tied with Red Badgro for most receptions in the league - 16.

Gaynell Tinsley, a highly touted All-American from L.S.U. hit the NFL in 1937 as a Cardinal. With his L.S.U. passer, Pat Coffee, Tinsley gained a record 675 yards on receptions as he caught 36 passes and

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scored five touchdowns. On December 5th he caught a 97 yard pass from Coffee that is still among the longest in history.

The following season against the Rams he took a 98 yarder from Doug Russell. This was the only TD he scored all season. Tinsley did not play the '39 season. After a dispute over his salary he decided to become a high-school coach; however, he returned for the 1940 campaign, his last. In only three seasons he caught 93 passes for 1,356 yards.

Jim Benton was another high profile collegian when he joined the Cleveland Rams in 1938. At Arkansas he had teamed with Jack Robbins and Dwight Sloan to make the Razorbacks the best passing team in the nation.

Benton sat out the 1941 season, returned in '42, was loaned to the Bears for 1943, returned to the Rams in 1944 and then moved to Los Angeles with the team, retiring after the 1947 season.

Jim led the league in touchdowns by receivers in 1939, was the total yard leader in both '45 and '46, also leading in receptions the latter year. His 303 yards in a single game against Detroit in 1945 remains the third best single day achievement on record.

Both the Giants and Redskins were dominant in the 1930's and each had notable ends. Jim Poole stood out at left end from 1937 until he went into the service in 1942. He played briefly for the Cards in '45 but returned to the Giants for the '45 and '46 season. His teammate Jim Lee Howell started in '37 went to the service for three seasons and upon returning in 1946 played through '48. He later coached the Giants for seven seasons.

Charlie Malone joined the 1934 Boston Braves and went with the team to Washington. He did not play in 1941, returned the next year and then entered the service. Bob McChesney also joined the club in Boston and played until 1943 when he went into the service. He never returned to the NFL.

The classic example of a great forgotten end who played with a forgotten team is Perry Schwartz of the late and lamented Brooklyn Dodgers. Starring on both offense and defense from 1938 through '42, he then lost three seasons to military service before returning to play for the 1946 New York Yankees of the AAFC.

While the stats in the following tables may not look impressive it should be noted the most pass attempts in 1937 were made by the "pass happy" Redskins, a total of 222. The best completion percentage that year was 44.6%. The fewest attempts in 1991 were 414 and no team had a completion percentage below 50.5.

Jim Benton

Cleveland 1938-40, 1942, 1944-45; Chicago Bears 1943; Los Angeles 1946-47
(288 rec., 4801 yards, 45 TDs)

Joe Carter

Philadelphia 1933-40 Green Bay 1942; Military 1943; Brooklyn 1944; Chicago Cards 1945
(132, 1989, 22)

Lavie Dilweg

Milwaukee 1926; Green Bay 1927-34
(*Unofficial* 126, 2,053, 12)

Milt Gantenbein

Green Bay 1931-40
(1932-40 - 77, 1299, 8)

Jim Lee Howell

New York Giants 1937-42, Military 1943-44; New York Giants 1946-48
(61, 921, 7)

Luke Johnsos

Chicago Bears 1929-36
(1932-36 – 58, 985, 20)

Bill Karr

Chicago Bears 1933-38
(48, 1032, 18)

Charles Malone

Boston 1934-36; Washington 1942; Military 1943
(137, 1932, 13)

Eggs Manske

Philadelphia 1935-36; Chicago Bears 1938-40; Pittsburgh 1938
(70, 1467, 11)

Bob McChesney

Boston 1936; Washington 1937-42; Military 1943-45 (59, 679, 7)

Dick Plasman

Chicago Bears 1937-41, 1944; Military 1942-44;
Chicago Cards 1946-47
(56, 1083, 7)

Jim Poole

New York Giants 1937-41; 1945-46; Military 1942-44;
Chicago Cards 1945
(65, 895, 13)

Perry Schwartz

Brooklyn 1938-42; Military 1943-45; NY Yankees AAFC 1946
(105, 1696, 10)

Gaynell Tinsley

Chicago Cards 1937-38, 1940
(93, 1356, 7)

George Wilson

Chicago Bears 1937-46
(111, 1342, 15)