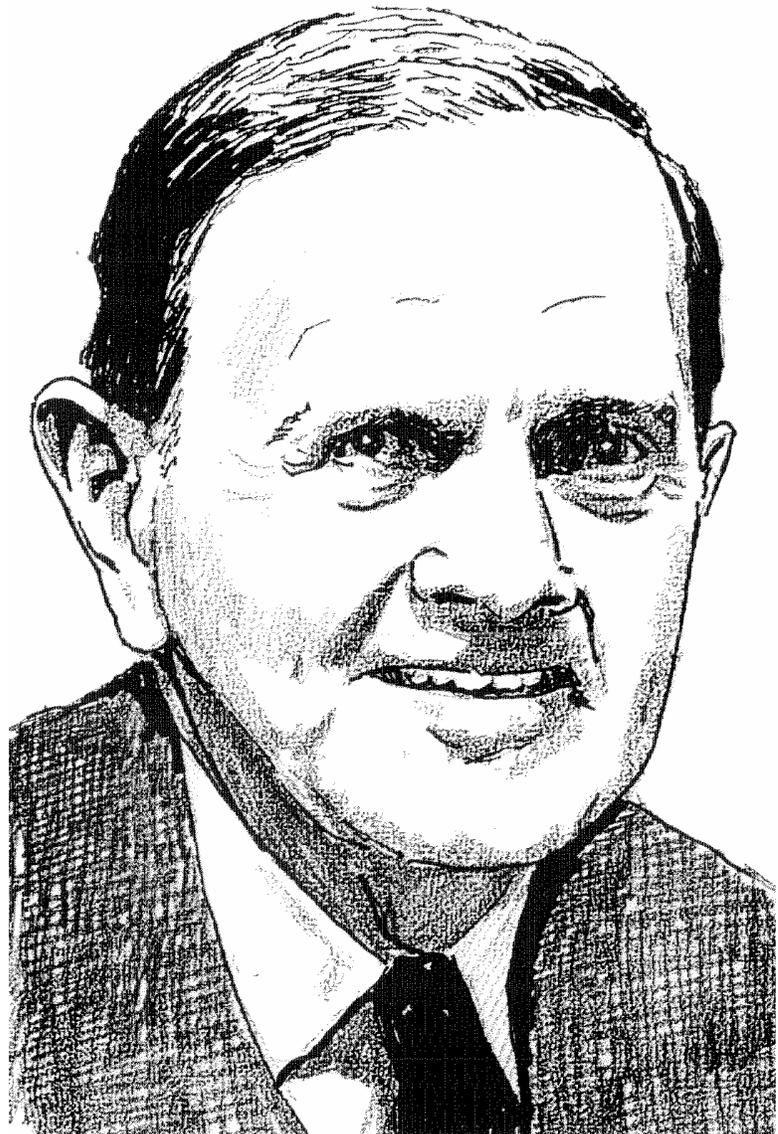


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Ralph **Wilson**

GOOD, BETTER, BEST

By Jim Campbell

When it comes to NFL coaches, there seems to be two camps. First, the one whereby every coach appears to anoint his above average players as “the best ever.” The other, more thinly populated, refuses to go on record as rating one star player above another as the very best.

Weeb Ewbank and Dick Gallagher fall into the second camp. Coincidentally, both were assistant coaches for the Cleveland Browns during the team’s halcyon AAFC days.

Gallagher, later the general manager of the champion Buffalo Bills and director of the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton, had the honor and privilege of coaching what was undoubtedly pro football’s first pair of outstanding offensive ends (the term used in those post-World War II days) to suit up for the same team. The dynamic duo was, of course, Dante “Gluefingers” Lavelli and Mac Speedie. It didn’t hurt that the pair had HOFer Otto Graham to get them the ball, nor that coach Paul Brown was a firm believer in the passing game.

Lavelli, who never met a defensive back he didn’t think he could beat, went on to induction into the Pro Football Hall of fame. Not only did his fingers, apparently, contain glue, he had large hands and knew how to fight for the ball. While Lavelli would tell Graham that he was “always open,” Speedie would wait to pick his spots before petitioning Graham to get him the ball. More than once, Graham would get an answer of “nothing,” when he asked Speedie what he had. But when Speedie said he had something, you could take it to the bank—or at least to the end zone. Speedie chose to take a few bucks more in Canadian dollars and defected to the CFL after the 1952 season. It undoubtedly mitigated against his chance for inclusion in the HOF.

Just how dominant was the pair of star receivers, you ask? Take a look at the AAFC receiving numbers, 1946-1949. Lavelli led the league in receptions (40) in 1946. Speedie was first in 1947 with 67 catches for 1,146 yards and Lavelli was second (49 catches). In 1948, Speedie was No. 1 with 58 grabs. In 1949, the AAFC’s final season, Speedie again led the league (62 receptions) and gained 1,028 yards.

Gallagher, known to nearly everyone as “the Coach,” was often asked who was better—especially by a former HOF employee at the annual Christmas parties. But all the affable director would say was, “They were both great. You couldn’t go wrong with either one.” Never, ever would he even hint at one being better than the other.

Ewbank took a similar tack. He won NFL titles (1958 and 1959) with Johnny Unitas under center and he won Super Bowl III with Joe Namath under center. Like Gallagher, perhaps even more so, Ewbank heard the who’s better question countless times. Statistics, which prove nothing in most cases anyhow, do not need to be gone into here. Weeb would diplomatically say when asked, “They both were outstanding. Each could do a few things the other couldn’t and each could do many things that very few others could. I can’t pick one over the other as being ‘the best,’ but I’ll tell you this: you could give me either one if I was starting a team and I’d be happy no matter who it was.”

Unfortunately, both men are no longer with us, so if they really had a preference, Lavelli over Speedie, Speedie over Lavelli, Namath over Unitas, Unitas over Namath we’ll never know.

But one thing is certain: Speedie and Lavelli, Namath and Unitas could never paraphrase Tommy Smothers and complain, “Coach liked you best.”

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Forgotten Challengers to be the First Black Quarterback in the Post War Era

By John Maxymuk

The field of sports was a major battlefield in the Civil Rights movement that took hold in the wake of World War II. Today, we remember Marion Motley and Bill Willis of the Browns and Kenny Washington and Woody Strode of the Rams as pioneers who broke the professional football color barrier in 1946. By 1952 when the Bears, Steelers, Cardinals and Eagles signed their first black players, only the Redskins had failed to integrate. At that point, observers began to take note of new barriers to overcome, and one of the biggest was the quarterback position. In the black press in particular, the issue of when an African American would at last become a regular starting professional quarterback became a cause of growing exasperation over the next two decades. Doc Young and Brad Pye in the *Los Angeles Sentinel* wrote of this regularly, and it was also a singular concern in the *Pittsburgh Courier*, *Chicago Defender* and *Atlanta Daily World*. While we celebrate the milestones reached by Willie Thrower, Marlin Briscoe and James Harris, many other black quarterbacks were once championed during the long march toward equality, but are now barely remembered. It's time to right that injustice and commemorate more than a score of talented field generals whose best efforts were blunted by prejudice.

The first black quarterback to get a tryout with a professional team was black All American Oscar Givens from undefeated Morgan State College. In 1947, the Los Angeles Dons of the All America Football Conference invited the 6'2" 197-pound Army veteran to training camp and tried him as a quarterback for two months before farming him out to the Honolulu Warriors of the Pacific Coast League. Givens backed up Keith Spaith in Hawaii and threw for just two fewer yards than Spaith as the high-powered Warriors swept through its competition to win the league title, but half the team was responded for betting on the games. Givens, who was not involved, gave up football to play shortstop for the Newark Eagles of the Negro Leagues until they ceased operations.

Two years later, another black quarterback, Alva Tabor, was signed by the New York Yankees of

the AAFC. Tabor had starred at the Tuskegee Institute before going into the service. After the War, he transferred to University Nevada where he backed up the nation's leading passer, Stan Heath, in 1948. Tabor, who was also a college tennis star, did not make the Yankees, but did go on to have a long career as a football coach in both the college and pro ranks. 1949 also marked the first time a black college player was drafted by an NFL team when Indiana tailback George Taliaferro was selected by the Bears. Although Taliaferro was a Chicago native, he signed instead with the LA Dons of the AAFC who ran a variation of the single wing offense in which he passed for 790 yards and ran for 455 as a rookie. He would get his chance under center a few years later in the NFL.

Two years after that a grossly overlooked milestone was reached; Bernie Custis became the first black quarterback in professional football when he signed with the Hamilton Tiger Cats of the Big Four League – the predecessor of the Canadian Football League. As a rookie in 1951, Custis was named the Most Valuable Back in the league, although no statistics were collected at that time. Custis had been a three-year starter at Syracuse and threw for 2,617 yards, 12 touchdowns and 32 interceptions with the Orangemen. The Philadelphia-native was shifted to halfback in 1952 and played in Canada for six seasons. He was elected to the Canadian Football Hall of Fame as a Builder on the strength of the 30 years he spent coaching in Canada after his playing days ended.

Also in 1952, Drake tailback Johnny Bright spurned the Philadelphia Eagles and went to Canada. Bright twice led the nation in total offense while running for over 3,100 yards and passing for more than 2,800, but was a victim of a grotesque, racially-motivated cheap shot in a game against Oklahoma A&M that made national news in his senior season. Although not a quarterback, this versatile back would become the CFL's all time leading rusher by the time he retired in 1964.

In 1953, Custis' successor at Syracuse, Avatus Stone, also came North and starred as a runner and defensive back in the CFL for several seasons. 1953 is more remembered for Willie Thrower, however. Thrower was recruited out of New Kensington, PA as a halfback and converted to quarterback at Michigan State. As a Spartan, though, Thrower backed up Al Dorow for two seasons and didn't win a letter for football until his senior year when he backed up Tom Yewcic on MSU's national title team of 1952. Thrower led second half comebacks against Notre Dame and Texas A&M and finished with 29 completions in 49 attempts for 400 yards. Thrower signed as a free agent with the Bears and then was cut on October 2nd. He then re-signed and made NFL history when he appeared in fourth quarter of the October 18th game against the 49ers and completed three of eight passes. Three weeks later, Chicago released him for good. It is often reported that Willie then played in the CFL, but that is not true. Instead, he spent four years playing semi-pro ball in Canada.

In the same month that Thrower was released by the Bears, the Baltimore had a rash of injuries and gave versatile tailback George Taliaferro a shot under center. Taliaferro got into three games at quarterback, two as a starter, but the dreadful first year Colts lost all three games. George was a three-time Pro Bowler who averaged 4.5 yards per rush and 13.2 yards per catch over his career while also returning kicks and punting. Even though he did not play much quarterback, he threw nearly 300 passes in his professional career as a passing tailback. One other pioneer of note in 1953 was fullback Leo Miles of the Giants. Miles was converted from quarterback at Virginia State and only played one season in the NFL, but later became the first black official to work the Super Bowl and ultimately rose to the prestigious position of the NFL's supervisor of officials.

It would be another two seasons before another black quarterback would get a chance in the NFL. Charlie Brackins was drafted in the 16th round by Green Bay out of Prairie View in 1955; he was the first quarterback drafted from a historically black college. Brackins was also the kicker, punter and star defensive back for Prairie View and led the team to 33 wins in 37 games over four years in which he completed 269 of 534 passes for 3,485 yards. He had a great arm, good size and could move fluidly in the pocket. What he lacked was coaching and maturity. If he were white, perhaps

his off-the-field wildness would have been forgiven, but instead he got to throw just two passes before he was released in the second half of 1955 and was replaced by journeyman Paul Held. Brackins starred in service ball and got one more tryout as a defensive back with the Dallas Texans, but hurt his knee and was cut.

Another two years passed before the Eagles picked Harold Davis in the ninth round of the 1957 draft. Davis, a member of the College Football Hall of Fame, lost just one game in three years as an option quarterback for little Westminster College of Pennsylvania. Davis elected to join the Army instead and became quite successful in business. Ironically, the Eagles signed All Army quarterback Vinnie "Ham Hands" Drake that same season for training camp, but Drake, who had once played for Fordham, did not make the squad. He later played minor league ball in the Atlantic Coast and United Football Leagues.

In 1958, the Rams drafted Floyd Iglehart, quarterback of historically black Wiley College in the sixth round, while the nation's fifth leading passer, Roger LaBrasca of Drake University went undrafted. Iglehart, however, was not drafted as a quarterback, but as a defensive back, a new pattern that began to emerge to take advantage of the skill sets of black quarterbacks without giving them a shot under center. Iglehart was highly valued by the Rams, but a series of knee injuries ended his career after just two seasons. Floyd's coach at Wiley was Al Tabor, who was once tried at quarterback in the AAFC. Iglehart went into high school coaching himself. He next emerged as the trusted spokesman for one of his former high school athletes who was having trouble being understood in the pros – sphinx-like runner Duane Thomas. Tragically, Iglehart later committed suicide when being sought in connection with the shooting death of his girlfriend in 1987.

The 1950s were noteworthy for the opportunities given to black quarterbacks by Big 10 universities. None of these pioneers was given a real chance to play quarterback in the pros, however. Sidney Williams of Wisconsin was the first of the group to turn pro in 1959, but the Giants converted him to defensive back. Because college players in the 1950s and early 1960s played both ways, it was too easy to switch a quarterback to defensive back. Williams was also the first black quarterback to play in the annual East-West

Shrine game, but as a halfback. He later played in Canada as a defensive back.

The Civil Rights movement began to make serious strides in the turbulent 1960s. As for the black quarterback, the dream continued to be deferred by position switches and endless excuses: too small, too big, too fast, not smart enough, just not right for the pro game. In the New Frontier of 1960, three black college quarterbacks turned pro: Willie Wood of USC, Pete Hall of Marquette and John Henry Jackson of Indiana. The 5'11" Wood went undrafted after completing just 29% of his passes as a senior, but signed as a free agent safety with the Packers on his way to the Hall of Fame. The 6'3" 210-pound Hall was drafted by the Giants as a tight end after having thrown for over 1,500 yards as a senior and having been the first black quarterback to play in both the North South Classic and the College All Star Game. Hall spent a season on the New York taxi squad learning his new position and even got to start one game in 1961 when Joe Walton was hurt. However, he resented the position switch and jumped to Canada in 1962 where he got a brief unsuccessful trial as a quarterback in 1962. Hall later became a record producer in Detroit.

Jackson, meanwhile, flunked out of Indiana as a sophomore and signed with the Toronto Argonauts of the CFL in 1961 where he backed up Tobin Rote at quarterback and got to throw just four passes. He went on to play quarterback for the Continental League's Toronto Rifles for three seasons and opened a successful restaurant in Toronto. In 1965, he threw for 18 touchdowns and just 7 interceptions for the Rifles. Still another Big 10 quarterback, Mel Meyers of Illinois, flunked out as a junior in 1960 and never was able to catch on in the pros. He did play four years of minor league ball and was an all star cornerback in 1965 for Grand Rapids of the Professional Football League of America.

The two most famous names from this period in the Big 10 both finished their collegiate careers in 1961: Sandy Stephens of Minnesota and Wilburn Hollis of Iowa. While both came from winning programs, the NFL was not interested in either as a signal caller, but a look at their statistics make that somewhat understandable. Stephens led Minnesota to a national title, but completed just 35% of his passes, although he averaged 4.4 yards per carry. Hollis also completed just 35% of

his passes while averaging 4.5 yards on the ground.

Stephens was drafted by the Cleveland Browns and New York Titans but signed instead with Montreal of the CFL because they promised him a shot at quarterback. In two seasons in Canada, he completed less than half his passes and threw just 22 touchdowns to 38 interceptions. He was smart, a great leader and a tough runner, but his strong arm lacked touch. He lined up a tryout with the Vikings in 1964, but was in a serious car accident days before. After strenuous rehabilitation, Stephens went to training camp with the Kansas City Chiefs in 1966 and played in a 1967 preseason game against the Raiders, but did not make the team. Hollis was drafted by the St. Louis Cardinals and also the Titans and converted to flanker before being cut. Over the next two seasons, he failed as a receiver with the Steelers and Giants in the NFL and Montreal and Edmonton in the CFL. He went on to play four years as a running back with Charleston of the Continental League. Hollis later remarked to William Rhoden in *Third and a Mile*, "You had to be two times better than whites – four times better if you were a quarterback."

The conversion games continued in 1963 when the Steelers drafted Jackson State Black All American quarterback Roy Curry and turned him into a wide receiver. Curry had completed nearly 60% of his passes as a senior, but his speed slotted him as an end just like his favorite target in college, Willie Richardson. Curry caught just one pass – a 31-yard touchdown against the Bears late in the season – and that was his whole NFL career, although he did spend a season in the minors. Another highly rated quarterback from a black school was better able to deal with a similar fate in 1965. Prairie View coach Billy Nicks said of his signal caller Jim Kearney, "Kearney is a quarterback – a very exceptional quarterback -- and is not a defensive back." Despite Nicks' admonition, Kearney failed as defensive back in Detroit before landing in Kansas City to give the Chiefs a decade of sterling play at safety.

Cincinnati Bearcat quarterback Brig Owens was drafted as a safety by the Cowboys in 1965 and spent a season on the taxi squad before being traded to the Redskins the following season. Although he had never played defense before the Cowboys converted him, Owens played a dozen years in Washington as a solid starter in the

defensive backfield. As a college quarterback, though, he completed over half his passes and averaged over 4.5 yards per carry.

By 1967, the drumbeat for a black quarterback had spread to the mainstream press. The prime candidate was thought to be Eldridge Dickey a junior at Tennessee A&I who had all the physical tools except skin color. A new candidate emerged during the 1966 collegiate season, though, Hank Washington of West Texas State. The Raiders' Al Davis, who had played with Bernie Custis at Syracuse, said Washington "could be [the one.]" Washington completed 58% of his passes for over 2,100 yards and 17 touchdowns as a senior and was the first black quarterback in the Senior Bowl and the first on the South squad in the North South Classic. In 1966, Hank finished fourth in the nation in total offense and fifth in passing. He signed with the Giants as a free agent and then was farmed out to the Westchester Bulls of the Atlantic Coast League for seasoning. Sadly, he was dead from cancer at the age of 25.

Washington's opposing quarterback in the 1966 North South Classic was Carroll Williams of Xavier whose favorite target was Dan Abramowicz. Williams threw for 4,000 yards and 33 touchdowns as a three-year starter in Ohio. Williams drew no interest from the NFL, though, and signed with Montreal of the CFL where he was famous for his flashy white shoes and threw 29 touchdowns and 48 interceptions in three seasons. The Miami native went on to become a longtime school principal in Dade County. The third black quarterback to come out in 1967 was Dave Lewis of Stanford. Lewis was actually pushed aside as a starter at Palo Alto as a senior by another black quarterback, Gene Washington. Washington would later convert to wide receiver in college and develop into an All Pro receiver. Lewis, who completed over half his passes in college, spent two seasons as a backup quarterback in the CFL before joining the Cincinnati Bengals as their punter and third quarterback in 1969. Lewis was the first black quarterback to play in the East West Shrine Game in 1966.

1967 was Eldridge Dickey's senior season and it culminated with his being the first black quarterback drafted in the first round when the Raiders selected him in 1968. Al Davis was shocked Dickey was still available at pick number 25 and couldn't resist taking him even though he

didn't need him. Oakland already had Daryle Lamonica, George Blanda, and Cotton Davidson as well as second round pick Ken Stabler. The black press was shocked when Davis of all people, a longtime supporter of black quarterbacks, moved Dickey to wide receiver after trying him out at quarterback during the exhibition season. At Tennessee A&I, Dickey completed 60% of his passes for over 6,600 yards and 74 touchdowns. He was known as "The Lord's Prayer," wore white shoes and drove a big, black Cadillac. Oiler GM Don Klosterman told *Sport Magazine*, "First, God blessed Dickey with a great throwing arm. Second, he possesses a fine mind. Third, he has quick feet. He's a wonderful scrambler, and he sets up fast in the pocket to throw. On top of that, he's been a winner wherever he's been." Davis himself said, "I know Dickey can play quarterback. He can be a great quarterback." Yet, faced with a bulging depth chart and Dickey's 9.8 100 and 4.5 40 times, Davis moved him to flanker where he caught five passes, returned six punts and one kick in four seasons before fading into obscurity. While his way was blocked by the talent in front of him, it was also hindered by his propensity to flee the pocket and abandon the play at the first sign of trouble.

The other big college name in 1967 was Michigan State's Jimmy Raye who led his team to a share of the national title in 1966 and became the first black quarterback to appear in the Hula Bowl in 1967. Raye was a fine leader, but was just 5'11" with a relatively weak arm. The Rams converted him to defensive back in 1968 just as the Steelers converted Morgan State's Bob Wade that same year. Raye would go on to have a very long coaching career in the pros and was the first African American offensive coordinator in the NFL. The real sleeper of 1968 was Marlin Briscoe from Omaha. The little-regarded Briscoe got it written into his contract that he would be tried out as a quarterback by the Broncos, and indeed became the first black quarterback to start a game that year when injuries and incompetence decimated Denver's signal callers. Briscoe did quite well in 11 games by throwing for over 1,500 yards and 14 touchdowns, better rookie numbers than John Elway would record 15 years later. Briscoe was only 5'10" though, and completed just 41% of his passes while running for over 300 yards. He was not a prototypical quarterback and probably would have been no better than a back up in the long run, although he was still superior

to anyone Coach Lou Saban would try at quarterback in Denver over the next three years. When Saban tried to convert him to receiver in 1969, Briscoe left training camp and was released.

Buffalo signed Briscoe as a wide receiver, and he became a good one who was eventually traded to Miami for a number one pick in 1972 when Saban returned to the Bills as coach. In Buffalo, the scrambling Briscoe came face to face with the real deal, Grambling's 6'4" James "Shack" Harris. Harris was bred to be the first black quarterback by coaching legend Eddie Robinson. While he didn't fully succeed in the NFL, he did go to the Pro Bowl and the playoffs. By being a winner, Harris ushered in a new era for black quarterback in the 1970s. 1969, in fact, was a watershed year. Harris was drafted by Buffalo. Onree Jackson of Alabama A&M was drafted by New England and later passed through Atlanta and Cincinnati without success, briefly catching on in the Continental League. The Bengals drafted Florida A&M's Ken Riley, who became an All Pro cornerback, and Tulsa's scrambler Mike Stripling, who did not make the team as a defensive back, but did play two minor league seasons at quarterback. The Rams drafted Sandy Stephens' brother Ray from the University of Minnesota and converted him to wide receiver and signed John Walton of Elizabeth City College as a free agent. Walton spent four years trying to make the Rams – including winning an MVP Award in the Continental League in 1969 -- before he hooked on with the World Football League. He would later play with the Eagles in the NFL and San Antonio in the USFL, one of three black quarterbacks along with Karl Douglass and Reggie Collier to play in three major professional leagues. Curt Wilson, who beat out Ray Stephens for the starting job at Minnesota, was not drafted and spent two seasons in the Continental League as a running back

In the 1970s, there would be an exponential proliferation of black quarterbacks in the college ranks as college coaches went with the most skilled signal callers who gave them the best chance to win and keep their jobs. The NFL would continue to lag behind by rationalizing that multidimensional black college quarterbacks would not be successful in the pro ranks because of the differences in how the game was played. Finally in the 1980s, the success of Warren Moon and Randall Cunningham and Doug Williams

made it clear to everyone that black quarterbacks could win at any level. Today, black quarterbacks are given the same chance to succeed or fail as their white counterparts. It is good to remember the unfulfilled black quarterbacks from the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s who laid the groundwork for today's level playing field. While many are long forgotten, they all deserve our recognition of their talents and sacrifices.

Table 1
CFL Black Quarterbacks pre-1970

Bernie Custis	1951-56
Avatus Stone*	1953-57
Johnny Bright*	1951-64
Sidney Williams*	1960
John Henry Jackson	1961
Pete Hall	1962
Sandy Stephens	1962-63
Dave Lewis	1967-68
Carroll Williams	1967-69

**-Did Not Play QB in CFL*

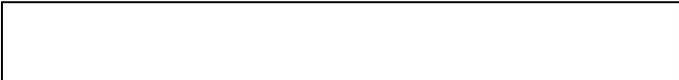
Table 2
Black Quarterbacks Who Changed Position in the NFL 1946-69

Sidney Williams	DB	1959
Willie Wood	S	1960-71
Pete Hall	TE	1961
Wilburn Hollis*	WR	1962
Roy Curry	WR	1963
Jim Kearney	S	1965-76
Brig Owens	DB	1966-77
Jimmy Raye	DB	1969
Marlin Briscoe	WR	1968-76
Eldridge Dickey	WR	1968-71
Bob Wade	DB	1968-70
Ken Riley	CB	1969-83
Mike Stripling*	DB	1969
Ray Stephens*	WR	1969

** Did Not Play in NFL*

Table 3
First Black Quarterbacks in College All-Star Games

College All Star Game	1960	Pete Hall
North South Game (North)	1960	Pete Hall
East West Shrine Game	1966	Dave Lewis
North South Game (South)	1966	Hank Washington
Senior Bowl	1966	Hank Washington
Hula Bowl	1967	Jimmy Raye
Blue Gray Game	1971	Joe Gilliam



Ralph Wilson - The National Football League's Voice of Reason!

By Greg Tranter

With the recent death of former Denver Broncos founder Bob Howsam and the 2006 death of Kansas City Chiefs owner and American Football League founder Lamar Hunt, the famed "Foolish Club", the nickname given to the eight original owners of the American Football League clubs, continues to shrink: as only three of the original members are still alive, K.S. Bud Adams, Barron Hilton and Ralph Wilson. The AFL owners were known as the "Foolish Club" because many people at the time thought that they were foolish to invest money in a fledgling football league to compete with the entrenched NFL. As Wayne Valley, General Partner of the Oakland Raiders, and a member of the "Foolish Club" said, we were considered foolish because "we were starting a new Pro Football League against seemingly insurmountable odds."

Ralph Wilson was the original owner of the Buffalo Bills and still owns the team today. He is the only AFL owner still alive that owns his original team, in the same city that it all began in late 1959. Also, Wilson has had a very significant impact on professional football and on football in Buffalo.

Wilson bought the team in 1959 as an original owner in the AFL for \$25,000. He was a young Detroit trucking and insurance executive that had been a stockholder of the Detroit Lions and had longed to own his own team. He read of the prospective league when he picked up a newspaper in Saratoga, NY, immediately called Lamar Hunt and said he would like a franchise. Wilson wanted to place the team in Miami, FL, but the city politicians would not let him use the Orange Bowl to play the teams games, so a pro franchise would not be possible.

On October 16, 1959, Mr. Wilson made a hurried trip to Buffalo, NY to consider Buffalo as a city for his franchise. A significant influence on Wilson was a local Buffalo building contractor, George Schaaf. He had been Wilson's commanding officer aboard a Naval Minesweeper during World War II. Schaaf was a native of Western NY and he recalled the days of the All America Football Conference and the tremendous fan support that

the Buffalo Bills had enjoyed and what a loss it was to the city when the team was disbanded in 1950.

Wilson was quoted in the Buffalo News saying "George and many other of Buffalo's most prominent citizens convinced me that the city was one of the greatest sports towns in America." On October 17, 1959 Ralph Wilson decided to place his franchise in Buffalo.

A modest and unassuming owner, Wilson does not get the credit he deserves as not only the long time owner of the Bills, but on the impact he has had on the success of the AFL and NFL. Wilson has been a very successful business man, leading Wilson Enterprises that has had success in insurance, trucking, road building, oil drilling and horse racing. He also was a distinguished World War II war veteran.

Wilson upon founding the franchise in Buffalo committed to the city that he would keep the team in Buffalo for at least 3 years, no matter the financial loss. Forty-eight years and a proud history later, the team is still in Buffalo. In the early years he put together an organization that grew in maturity and became AFL Champions in 1964 and 1965. The 1966 team came within one game of making it to the first Super Bowl, losing the AFL Championship to Lamar Hunt and the Kansas City Chiefs.

Wilson has been an owner that cared for the league as much as his own team. He has always been an advocate of co-operative existence with all the clubs, first in the AFL and later in the NFL, for the better interest of the entire league. In the early 1960's when several of the AFL teams were struggling for survival he loaned \$400,000 to the Oakland Raiders to keep the team afloat. Had it not been for Wilson's generosity and his interest in the success of the league, the Raiders would have folded and the AFL would have been at risk of surviving.

It was Wilson and Carroll Rosenbloom, owner of the Baltimore Colts, who had the first tentative talks in January 1965 that would ultimately lead to

the AFL-NFL merger. Wilson initiated the talks because he knew that the two professional football leagues would have a difficult time surviving with the escalating player salaries.

He was one of the architects of the merger that culminated in June 1966 that led to the tremendous growth of Professional Football into the number one sport in the United States. He also was the head of the owners' executive committee that oversaw the implementation of the merger plans.

Ralph Wilson has been a very creative and innovative owner as he has continued to do many creative things to make the Buffalo franchise successful in the NFL despite the regions significant economic woes that have plagued the area since the mid 1970's.

The Bills in 1969 drafted O.J. Simpson as the first player taken in the draft. He was considered to be one of the greatest college football players of all-time and Wilson was willing to pay him the most lucrative NFL contract ever to secure his services for Buffalo.

Wilson worked diligently with the city of Buffalo, Erie County and the state of New York to ultimately have a new stadium built in 1973 that preserved the franchise. The stadium was opened on August 17, 1973, that was a fulfillment of a dream of Ralph Wilson's that ensured the future success of the Bills. At the time it was one of the largest stadiums in the league, seating 80,020 fans, though Buffalo was the second smallest market in the NFL. Wilson was recognized as the NFL Man of the Year, by "The Football News" in 1973. They commented that "Ralph Wilson's brilliant decisions kept his team in Buffalo, changed it from a loser to a winner, built a new stadium when the project looked impossible, led the NFL in actual attendance and made Pro Football's number one star (OJ Simpson) happy to play in Buffalo ... He has been a tower of strength in the administration of professional football."

He was very involved in Labor negotiations between the NFL players and owners throughout the 1970's as a prominent member of the NFL Labor Committee. Wilson was instrumental in the labor negotiations in 1977 that led to the agreement with the players that averted a players strike. He did not serve on the Labor Committee

during the 1980's when the NFL suffered through two players strikes.

Wilson has also served on the NFL's Pension Committee, Super Bowl Site Selection Committee, and served as a member of the Board of Directors of NFL Charities.

Again in 1986 he stepped forward to pay Jim Kelly the most lucrative contract for an NFL player to secure his services so that the Bills could return to prominence in the league. Kelly and the Bills would compete in an unprecedented four consecutive Super Bowls from 1990 through 1993. At the same time, they would break the NFL's All-time attendance record, though being in the second smallest market in the league.

In 1997 he was honored with one of the league's most prestigious awards, the NFL Alumni Associations "Order of the Leather Helmet." "Membership in the order is reserved for those individuals making deep and lasting contributions to the game of professional football and the award was bestowed upon the Bills owner in recognition of his outstanding contributions over the past four decades to the sport he loves dearly."

With significant economic change happening in the NFL, Wilson and the Bills have continued to be innovative in creating new opportunities to regionalize the franchise to ensure its success.

In 1995 the Bills completed the building of a field house immediately adjacent to the stadium. The facility is used not only as the Bills practice facility, but also on game day it turns into an indoor tailgate party for fans.

In 1998 Wilson was able to mastermind a plan to keep the Bills in Western New York and completely renovate the stadium at a fraction of the cost to become one of the finest venues in the NFL. The Bills remodeled their stadium that was built in 1973 by adding luxury boxes and club seats to increase the team's economic viability. The stadium added heated seats in part of the stadium and they are still the only team in the league with that amenity. Wilson worked with state, county and city government to ensure funding for the stadium renovations. He also worked with Buffalo business leaders and formed the "Buffalo Backs the Bills" campaign to canvas businesses and fans throughout Western NY to sell all the luxury boxes and club seats, so that

the franchise could remain competitive.

In 2000 the Bills were one of the first teams to market their training camp. They moved their training camp to St John Fisher College in Rochester, NY to further enhance the regionalization of the franchise. The training camp marketing was an incredible success as the Bills consistently drew several thousand fans a day to training camp from across New York State, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Canada. It quickly earned a national reputation for hosting one of the top training camps in the NFL.

During 2004 the Bills became pioneers in NFL youth football by becoming the first NFL franchise to open a facility dedicated to youth football on the same grounds as its headquarters.

On opening day of the 2007 football season, Bills player Kevin Everett had a catastrophic spinal injury that could have paralyzed him for life. However, the Bills were one of the only teams in the NFL to have an orthopedic surgeon on the sidelines at their games. In addition, they were prepared to apply an unprecedented treatment of mild hypothermia, because they were the only team in the NFL that had the critical supplies in the ambulance at the game to allow for the unique treatment. Had it not been for that preparation, Everett may never have walked again. The Bills training staff has been lauded for their unique and ground breaking efforts.

Earlier this year, the Bills became the first franchise in the NFL to agree to host a series of both preseason and regular season games outside of the United States. As a further way to increase their economic viability and add to the regionalization of the franchise the team has agreed to play five regular season and three preseason games in Toronto during the next five years. Toronto is the 5th largest market in North America. This partnership will enable the Buffalo franchise to significantly increase its revenue, enhancing not only the Bills future, but also increasing market penetration for the NFL.

In recent years Wilson has become known as "The Conscience of the NFL." He was one of two owners that voted against the controversial move of the long time Cleveland Browns franchise to Baltimore as he has always staunchly supported the cities with existing NFL teams and believes protecting that is critical to the league.

He also was one of two owners that voted against the most recent collective bargaining agreement with the players that the owners are giving 59% of the league's revenue to the players. He believed that the deal was bad for the league and really bad for the smaller market teams and he spoke his mind. He worked diligently following the agreement to ensure that the league's revenue sharing, that has been a staple of the league's success of the past 40 years, did not get watered down or destroyed by the new breed of owners and bring a competitive imbalance to the league. He was criticized mightily by several owners, including Jerry Jones, Dallas Cowboys and Robert Kraft, New England Patriots. Now those two owners are the most vocal that the league should opt out of the agreement, when given the opportunity in the fall of 2008, because of its negative impact on the overall economics of the league.

Ralph Wilson has been an outstanding NFL owner for the Buffalo Bills and also for the National Football League. Under his leadership the Bills have led the league in fan attendance ten times since the merger in spite of being a small market team. They have also won six AFL/AFC Championships and competed in four Super Bowls. The Bills have had many outstanding players including Hall of Famers - O.J. Simpson, Jim Kelly, Joe DeLamielleure, Billy Shaw, James Lofton, Thurman Thomas - and soon to be Hall of Famers, Bruce Smith and Andre Reed. The only thing that has eluded Ralph Wilson and the Bills is a Super Bowl victory. But, he has continued to bring innovation to the league and the Bills franchise. He has not received the credit he deserves because he is not a big ego owner, so his contributions largely go unrecognized. Though earlier this year, Wilson was recognized at the Maxwell Football Club's 71st Annual Awards dinner with the Francis J. Bagnell Award for contributions to the game of Football. He is only the fourth NFL owner to receive the award. As Marv Levy, Bills Hall of Fame Coach, said during his Hall of Fame induction speech in 2001 "Ralph Wilson's contributions to this game are unbounded. He deserves to be enshrined here in Canton, may that day come soon." Marv could not have said it better!

DOUG DIEKEN

By Roger Gordon

Originally published in The Orange and Brown Report



Nineteen-eighty was certainly not Doug Dieken's finest season. Far from it. Funny thing is, it was his only Pro Bowl year.

"It kind of shows how the voting goes," the former Cleveland Browns left tackle explains. "If you win, you've got a better chance of going to the Pro Bowl than if you lose. I mean, I played the season on kind of one leg. I had strained knee ligaments. By far, it wasn't the best season I ever had."

Joining Dieken that year in Honolulu were four of his teammates, including fellow offensive linemen

Joe DeLamielleure and Tom DeLeone, making for the "Three Ds."

That particular season of 1980 was a wonderful time for the Browns and their fans. It was chapter two of the "Kardiac Kids," for the dramatic finishes actually began with the opening three games the previous season.

Week four of 1979 presented the Browns with a monumental task – beating "America's Team." Tom Landry, Roger Staubach and the Dallas Cowboys were in town for the first time in nearly a decade. The Cowboys, like the Browns, were 3-0. But Dallas was the defending NFC Champion and a heavy favorite to derail Cleveland's winning streak. What's more, Howard Cosell and the gang on Monday Night Football were on hand.

Electricity was in the air that night with more than 80,000 fans in Cleveland Stadium to see how the Browns stacked up against one of the NFL's finest. The "Kardiac Kids" shed their image that night and shocked the Cowboys, 26-7, hanging up 20 points before Dallas even got a first down. Dieken will never forget that magnificent evening in which ex-President Gerald Ford paid a visit to the Browns' locker room after the game to congratulate the team, especially fellow University of Michigan alum and player Thom Darden, who intercepted a Staubach pass and returned it 39 yards for a touchdown.

"Nobody, I don't think, counted on us having a chance, and we were able to pull it out," Dieken says. "That was a big game. It was kind of one of those that gives you the ability to get some confidence with what you can do. You get a win

like that and start getting confidence, and all of a sudden you start having some success.”

Unfortunately for the Browns, they had to wait a year to truly experience that success. They lost seven of their last 12 games in '79, barely missing the playoffs. They lost their opening two games in 1980 and had fans wondering if the buzz the "Kardiac Kids" created in 1979 had merely been a mirage.

It wasn't.

Cleveland won 11 of its last 14, again in thrilling fashion, to wrest the AFC Central Division title from the two-time defending Super Bowl Champion Pittsburgh Steelers. Dieken and his line mates were a large part of that. They protected Brian Sipe so well that the Associated Press Player of the Year was sacked just 23 times, second fewest in the NFL.

"It was exciting football," Dieken says. "We'd be down a couple touchdowns at halftime, and Sipe would tell the offensive coordinator, Jim Shofner, 'Hey, we've got 'em right where we want 'em,' and Brian or whoever would find a way to make the plays that made it happen. It wasn't just one guy, it was one of those situations where everybody did their part, it was different people making different big plays every week. And we had a lot of success, we won a lot of games in the closing minutes. It was good team chemistry, and sometimes that will win you some games but sometimes they'll slip through the cracks."

One game that *nearly* slipped through the cracks but didn't was the division title-clinching regular-season finale in Cincinnati. It was a microcosm of the season. Once again, it was someone different coming through.

"Sipe hit Ricky Feacher on two (touchdown) bombs," remembers Dieken, "and we were able to hang on and pull it out."

One game that *slipped* through the cracks was the painful loss to the Oakland Raiders in the "Red Right 88" game two weeks later in which Sipe was intercepted by Mike Davis in the end

zone with less than a minute to go. Dieken, for one, was not fazed in the least with the gutsy play call.

"I had enough confidence," he says, "in Sam [Rutigliano] and Jim Shofner and Brian that if they called it, we executed it, it would work."

A sixth-round draft pick of the Browns in 1971 out of the University of Illinois, Dieken joined a Cleveland team stock full of veterans accustomed to championship-level football, several of them still around from the team's last NFL Championship in 1964. A wide receiver and tight end in college, Dieken made the team and by November of his rookie season had bulked up and taken over for longtime left tackle Dick Schafrath. Dieken carried on the franchise's fine tradition at the position, at one time manned by Lou "The Toe" Groza.

Although the Browns, for the most part, were average at best during his playing days, Dieken nonetheless was involved in a number of memorable games. Long before the "Kardiac Kids" era, there was the AFC Divisional Playoff on Christmas Eve 1972 in the Orange Bowl when the Browns had the undefeated Miami Dolphins on the ropes in the fourth quarter. Five interceptions by Mike Phipps, however, did the Browns in in a 20-14 defeat.

"I think some of our offensive linemen might've led the team in tackles," Dieken laughed about that Dolphins game.

The mid-1970s brought consecutive losing seasons for the first time in franchise history – 4-10 in 1974, Nick Skorich's final year as head coach, and 3-11 in 1975, Forrest Gregg's first.

"It was frustrating," acknowledges Dieken, explaining that age, retirements and poor drafting were the main culprits.

The Browns improved to an extent under Gregg but really got it in gear when Rutigliano came aboard, and Sipe began blossoming into a top flight quarterback, in 1978. Then came the

"Kardiac Kids" experience. But things fell apart quickly as the Browns fell to 5-11 and last place in 1981.

"The ball just didn't bounce our way," says Dieken, adding that injuries played a part, too. "We also probably felt we were better than we were."

Perhaps Dieken's most gratifying individual memory occurred on October 30, 1983, in a home game against the Houston Oilers. His receiving skills from college came in handy when he caught a 14-yard touchdown pass from Paul McDonald on a fake field goal for the lone touchdown of his professional career. Dieken says the play was actually designed to go to kicker Matt Bahr to pick up a first down.

"But when I came off the line of scrimmage, everybody was up on the line rushing," he recalls, "and I was so wide open that *McDonald* couldn't miss me."

Dieken was a member of the Browns for all but the first and final games of the infamous "Three Rivers Jinx," a 16-year period in which the Browns lost heartbreakers galore in countless different fashions. However, Dieken scoffs at the notion that the losing streak was caused by some "jinx."

"If you look at their team, of the 11 guys they had on the defense," he says, "I think at some point or another 10 of them went to the Pro Bowl, four of them are in the Hall of Fame and there's a fifth one that's trying to get in. So that was a pretty talented football team."

Dieken's final season with the Browns came in 1984. It was one to forget. The Browns were competitive in most every game, they just fell apart in the fourth quarter. They finished 5-11.

"I was going to try to come back for another year," Dieken says, "but [new head coach Marty] Schottenheimer decided since they were going to get a new quarterback, they might as well get a new left tackle, so ... we decided to call it quits. I was fortunate enough to hang around for 14 years

and figured I got my money's worth out of my body."

Dieken's retirement was timely – at least in a career sense. It coincided with longtime radio voice Gib Shanley's exodus to "bigger and better" things in California. Dieken and newcomer Nev Chandler joined Jim Mueller in the booth. Dieken remains a radio voice for the team to this day, now teaming with Jim Donovan.

Right off the bat, Dieken got to call the action during some high times for the Browns, including the painful divisional playoff loss to the Dolphins in 1985, the amazing comeback win against the Jets in 1986 and, of course, the infamous "Drive" and "Fumble" games, the first two of the three-part "Denver Dilemma."

Does Dieken believe the Browns would have won any of the three Super Bowls had they beaten the Broncos in any of those AFC Championship Games?

"I think once you get there, you just kind of roll the dice. I think there's a chance they would have [won at least one]," he says, adding that, even had the Browns advanced to – and won – one of those Super Bowls, he believes the franchise still would have wound up in Baltimore. "I think the game got to be too much of a rich man's game for [Art] Modell to afford the team. I mean, he was in financial trouble whether they won or not.

"His problem was he wasn't the best businessman. He made some financial decisions that came back to haunt him. And it gets to the point where you've got to have money to play the game, and he didn't have that kind of money there everybody else had."

Dieken has also had several local gigs as a sports reporter since his playing days, including his current position at WKYC TV-3. There, he is on the panel of the Extra Point program on the Browns. Dieken is also a contributor to cable channel Sports Time Ohio.

Hailing from the small town of Streator, Illinois, some 100 miles southwest of Chicago, Dieken had been to just one professional football game before joining the Browns. Ironically, it was a Browns game – against the Bears on November 30, 1969, at Wrigley Field.

Dieken not only had the misfortune of taking part in the infamous NFL Players' Strike of 1982, he was a central figure in a "work" stoppage as a senior in college.

"They fired our coach [Jim Valek] in the middle of the season, right after the Ohio State game, and we actually played Ohio State pretty good," Dieken recalls. "We had them down at half but lost by [more than] a couple touchdowns. [Ohio State head coach] Woody Hayes said if they fired [Valek] for being a bad coach, they [Ohio State] should fire [Hayes] because [Valek] out-coached him that day."

A private team meeting was held in the locker room. Dieken stood up and told his teammates that if Valek was gone, he was too.

"Everybody said that they were going to join me, so we took the University of Illinois football team out on strike," he says. "The athletic department had an emergency meeting, and they hired [Valek] for the remainder of the season. And then the next week, we went over to Purdue for their homecoming and beat them and gave the coach the game ball."

The 58-year-old Dieken, who resides in the Cleveland area, is partners with former Browns teammate and fellow lineman Robert E. Jackson in ownership of a local insurance company. Son Spencer recently graduated from Lakewood St. Edward High School, where he was a defensive end. Spencer will forego football and concentrate on his studies as he received an academic scholarship to Miami (Ohio) University. Daughter Ali will be a freshman at Magnificat High School.

A golfer and family man in his spare time, Dieken sees happy days ahead for the Browns and their fans.

"I think things are turning around not just with this past draft but the draft before," he says. "I think you've got a couple quality players there. They're starting to get a lot more impact-type players, and players that are going to be the core for a period of time. You've got the Kamerion Wimbleys, and you've got the Sean Joneses and the Brodney Pools and the D'Qwell Jacksons. You've got some pretty good athletes out there, and they've definitely upgraded their talent.

"And on the offensive side, you've got what you hope is going to be your left tackle for the next decade or so, and you got more athletic in the offensive line when they picked up Steinbach. You've got some playmakers in Jurevicius and Winslow and Braylon, and hopefully Jamal Lewis has got some gas in the tank."

As for the ever-hyped quarterback situation, Dieken says it is a simple case of playing the waiting game.

"I think you have to see how Brady Quinn handles the pro game," he says. "Charlie Frye's not going to go down without swinging. I mean, Charlie's a competitor, he's a tough kid."

Dieken has fond memories of his playing days and is thrilled that he has had the good fortune of staying associated with the Browns via the airwaves. Perfect timing, he said, was prevalent in both cases.

"I happened to be coming to the Browns when Dick Schafrath was getting a little old," he says, "and then I retired, and when Gib Shanley decided to go out to the West Coast and be a sportscaster out there, that opened up a job there.

"So, between the two of them, I just happened to be in the right place at the right time."



PUNT RETURNS FOR TOUCHDOWNS

Part One: 1920-59

Compiled by Gary Selby

No.	Date	Scoring Team	W / L	Scoring Player	Opponent	Yardage
1	10 / 03 / 20	Triangles	W	Frank Bacon	Panhandles	75
2	11 / 28 / 20	Akron	W	Fritz Pollard	Triangles	50
3	12 / 05 / 20	Detroit	W	Ty Krentler	D. Maroons	25
4	10 / 19 / 21	Cardinals	L	Paddy Driscoll	Independents	75
5	11 / 27 / 21	Buffalo	W	Ockie Anderson	Triangles	45
6	10 / 15 / 22	Canton	W	Norb Sacksteder	Oe. Indians	60
7	11 / 25 / 23	Hammond	L	Eddie Robinson	Bears	65
8	10 / 05 / 24	Bears	L	Joe Sternaman	Cle. Bulldogs	70
9	10 / 19 / 24	Buffalo	W	Benny Boynton	Jeffersons	78
10	11 / 22 / 25	Pottsville	W	Jack Ernst	Cle. Bulldogs	55
11	11 / 22 / 25	Rock Island	W	Roddy Lamb	Milw. Badgers	90
12	12 / 20 / 25	Frankford	W	Ralph Homan	Cle. Bulldogs	70
13	10 / 02 / 26	Frankford	W	Doc Bruder	Hart. Blues	35
14	10 / 10 / 26	Providence	W	Curly Oden	Col. Tigers	78
15	10 / 24 / 26	Providence	W	Curly Oden	P. Maroons	57
16	11 / 11 / 26	Providence	W	Curly Oden	Can. Bulldogs	65
17	11 / 08 / 27	Giants	W	Jack Hagerty	Steam Roller	53
18	11 / 13 / 27	Providence	W	Curly Oden	Eskimos	74
19	12 / 03 / 27	Providence	W	Jack Cronin	NY Yankees	55
20	09 / 30 / 28	Bears	T	Dick Sturtridge	Packers	80
21	09 / 30 / 28	Giants	W	Al Bloodgood	P. Maroons	95
22	11 / 11 / 28	Giants	T	Hinkey Haines	Detroit Wolverines	70
23	12 / 02 / 28	Bears	W	Bill Senn	Yellow Jackets	70
24	09 / 29 / 29	Cardinals	W	Mickey MacDonnell	Buff. Bisons	60
25	10 / 13 / 29	Boston	W	Cy Wentworth	Triangles	?
26	11 / 05 / 29	Stapletons	T	Ken Strong	Steam Roller	52
27	12 / 01 / 29	Packers	W	Johnny Blood	Steam Roller	73
28	09 / 23 / 31	Lions	W	Glenn Presnell	Cardinals	55
29	10 / 25 / 31	Frankford	W	Mort Kaer	Bears	84
30	11 / 01 / 31	Providence	T	Curly Oden	Stapletons	70
31	11 / 11 / 31	Stapletons	L	Ken Strong	Lions	60
32	11 / 13 / 32	Giants	W	Red Cagle	Stapletons	70
33	10 / 04 / 33	Redskins	W	Cliff Battles	Steelers	70
34	10 / 15 / 33	Cardinals	L	Joe Lillard	Bears	51
35	10 / 15 / 33	Brooklyn	W	Shipwreck Kelly	Cinc. Reds	70
36	11 / 12 / 33	Brooklyn	W	Shipwreck Kelly	Steelers	70
37	12 / 03 / 33	Cincinnati	W	Gil LeFebvre	Bkln Dodgers	98
38	12 / 10 / 33	Packers	L	Bob Monnett	Bears	85
39	10 / 28 / 34	Brooklyn	W	Jack Grossman	Steelers	72
40	11 / 18 / 34	Cardinals	W	Homer Griffith	Packers	65
41	10 / 06 / 35	Lions	L	Glenn Presnell	Bkln Dodgers	40
42	10 / 20 / 35	Cardinals	L	Phil Sarboe	Steelers	80
43	10 / 27 / 35	Cardinals	W	Phil Sarboe	Giants	88
44	11 / 08 / 36	Cardinals	W	George Grosvenor	Eagles	82
45	12 / 06 / 36	Redskins	W	Cliff Battles	Giants	74

No.	Date	Scoring Team	W / L	Scoring Player	Opponent	Yardage
46	10 / 31 / 37	Cardinals	W	Doug Russell	Rams	62
47	11 / 21 / 37	Brooklyn	W	Ace Parker	Steelers	44
48	11 / 05 / 39	Packers	L	Joe Laws	Bears	72
49	11 / 12 / 39	Redskins	W	Dick Todd	Bkln Dodgers	80
50	09 / 22 / 40	Redskins	W	Dick Todd	Giants	76
51	12 / 01 / 40	Bears	W	Ray McLean	Cardinals	44
52	10 / 12 / 41	Bears	W	George McAfee	Cardinals	74
53	10 / 12 / 41	Packers	W	Andy Uram	Bkln Dodgers	90
54	10 / 19 / 41	Bears	W	Ray McLean	Lions	61
55	10 / 26 / 41	Lions	L	Steve Beilchick	Packers	77
56	10 / 26 / 41	Redskins	W	Dick Todd	Rams	73
57	11 / 16 / 41	Redskins	L	Andy Farkas	Bears	59
58	10 / 11 / 42	Bears	W	Ray McLean	Cardinals	89
59	11 / 01 / 42	Steelers	W	Curt Sandig	Giants	64
60	11 / 29 / 42	Steelers	W	Andy Tomasic	Bkln Dodgers	52
61	10 / 22 / 44	Eagles	W	Steve Van Buren	Bos. Yanks	55
62	11 / 04 / 45	Lions	W	Charles DeShane	Bos. Yanks	81
63	12 / 08 / 46	Eagles	W	Steve Van Buren	Bos. Yanks	50
64	10 / 19 / 47	Lions	L	Bill Dudley	Bears	84
65	11 / 02 / 47	Boston	L	Frank Seno	Bears	86
66	11 / 23 / 47	Rams	W	Tom Harmon	Lions	88
67	11 / 23 / 47	Eagles	L	Pat McHugh	Bos. Yanks	69
68	12 / 14 / 47	Rams	W	Fred Gehrke	Giants	66
69	10 / 10 / 48	Cardinals	W	Charlie Trippi	Packers	45
70	10 / 10 / 48	Bears	W	George McAfee	Rams	60
71	10 / 17 / 48	Cardinals	W	Jerome Davis	Giants	70
72	10 / 31 / 48	Eagles	W	Bosh Pritchard	Steelers	55
73	11 / 14 / 48	Cardinals	W	Charlie Trippi	Steelers	67
74	11 / 25 / 48	Cardinals	W	Jerome Davis	Lions	69
75	10 / 23 / 49	Rams	W	Tommy Kalmanir	Packers	62
76	10 / 30 / 49	Eagles	W	Clyde Scott	Steelers	70
77	11 / 06 / 49	Giants	L	Emlen Tunnell	NY Bulldogs	67
78	11 / 06 / 49	Cardinals	W	Red Cochran	Lions	50
79	11 / 13 / 49	Packers	L	Ralph Earhart	Giants	57
80	11 / 27 / 49	Cardinals	W	Red Cochran	Packers	71
81	12 / 04 / 49	Eagles	W	Frank Reagan	Giants	41
82	12 / 04 / 49	Lions	W	Wally Triplett	NY Bulldogs	62
83	12 / 04 / 49	Rams	L	Vitamin Smith	Cardinals	51
84	12 / 11 / 49	Lions	W	Bill Dudley	Packers	67
85	09 / 24 / 50	Packers	W	Billy Grimes	Redskins	85
86	10 / 01 / 50	Packers	W	Billy Grimes	Bears	68
87	10 / 02 / 50	Colts	L	Herb Rich	Cardinals	86
88	11 / 19 / 50	Cardinals	W	Don Paul	Eagles	82
89	12 / 03 / 50	Redskins	W	Bill Dudley	Steelers	96
90	12 / 10 / 50	Browns	W	Don Phelps	Redskins	54
91	09 / 28 / 51	NY Yanks	L	Buddy Young	Rams	79
92	10 / 14 / 51	Giants	W	Emlen Tunnell	Cardinals	81
93	10 / 14 / 51	Lions	L	Jack Christiansen	Rams	69
94	10 / 14 / 51	Lions	L	Jack Christiansen	Rams	47
95	10 / 21 / 51	Giants	W	Emlen Tunnell	Eagles	71
96	11 / 11 / 51	Rams	W	Tommy Kalmanir	Cardinals	67
97	11 / 18 / 51	Steelers	L	Ray Mathews	Redskins	68
98	11 / 22 / 51	Lions	W	Jack Christiansen	Packers	71
99	11 / 22 / 51	Lions	W	Jack Christiansen	Packers	89

No.	Date	Scoring Team	W / L	Scoring Player	Opponent	Yardage
100	11 / 25 / 51	Giants	W	Bosh Pritchard	Cardinals	81
101	12 / 16 / 51	Giants	W	Emlen Tunnell	NY Yanks	74
102	10 / 19 / 52	49ers	W	Hugh McElhenny	Bears	94
103	10 / 19 / 52	Redskins	W	Johnny Williams	Steelers	62
104	10 / 26 / 52	Lions	W	Jack Christiansen	Packers	65
105	10 / 26 / 52	Eagles	W	Ed Bawel	Giants	52
106	10 / 26 / 52	Steelers	W	Ray Mathews	Cardinals	70
107	11 / 02 / 52	Steelers	W	Ray Mathews	Redskins	70
108	11 / 09 / 52	Rams	W	Woodley Lewis	Dal Texans	65
109	11 / 09 / 52	Eagles	W	Don Stevens	Redskins	56
110	11 / 09 / 52	Redskins	L	Johnny Williams	Eagles	74
111	11 / 16 / 52	Lions	W	Yale Lary	Dal Texans	58
112	11 / 23 / 52	Lions	L	Jack Christiansen	Bears	79
113	11 / 23 / 52	Rams	W	Woodley Lewis	49ers	82
114	11 / 30 / 52	Browns	W	Ken Carpenter	Redskins	54
115	10 / 03 / 53	Lions	W	Yale Lary	Colts	74
116	10 / 04 / 53	Packers	L	Gib Dawson	Bears	60
117	10 / 18 / 53	Rams	W	Woodley Lewis	Lions	78
118	10 / 31 / 53	Colts	L	Carl Taseff	Packers	71
119	09 / 26 / 54	Lions	W	Doak Walker	Bears	70
120	11 / 07 / 54	Cardinals	L	Ollie Matson	Eagles	59
121	11 / 07 / 54	Packers	L	Veryl Switzer	Bears	93
122	11 / 25 / 54	Lions	W	Jack Christiansen	Packers	61
123	11 / 28 / 54	Giants	L	Herb Johnson	Browns	48
124	10 / 30 / 55	Browns	W	Don Paul	Cardinals	60
125	10 / 30 / 55	Giants	W	Jimmy Patton	Redskins	69
126	11 / 20 / 55	Giants	W	Emlen Tunnell	Eagles	66
127	11 / 20 / 55	Redskins	W	Bert Zagers	Cardinals	55
128	11 / 27 / 55	Cardinals	W	Ollie Matson	Bears	77
129	11 / 27 / 55	Redskins	W	Joe Scudero	Steelers	49
130	12 / 11 / 55	Cardinals	L	Ollie Matson	Browns	78
131	12 / 11 / 55	Rams	W	Skeets Quinlan	Packers	55
132	09 / 30 / 56	Bears	L	Perry Jeter	Colts	51
133	10 / 14 / 56	Colts	L	Carl Taseff	Packers	90
134	10 / 14 / 56	Cardinals	W	Frank Bernardi	Redskins	95
135	11 / 04 / 56	Rams	L	Will Sherman	Bears	76
136	11 / 25 / 56	Browns	L	Ken Konz	Redskins	65
137	12 / 09 / 56	Lions	W	Jack Christiansen	Steelers	66
138	12 / 16 / 56	49ers	W	Joe Arenas	Colts	67
139	10 / 27 / 57	Redskins	W	Bert Zagers	Giants	76
140	11 / 03 / 57	Redskins	L	Bert Zagers	Browns	56
141	10 / 19 / 58	Lions	L	Yale Lary	Colts	71
142	11 / 23 / 58	Browns	W	Bobby Mitchell	Eagles	68
143	10 / 04 / 59	Eagles	W	Tommy McDonald	Giants	81
144	10 / 11 / 59	Bears	L	Johnny Morris	Rams	78
145	10 / 11 / 59	Eagles	W	Art Powell	Steelers	58
146	11 / 01 / 59	Cardinals	W	Bill Stacey	Steelers	59
147	11 / 01 / 59	Cardinals	W	Ken Hall	Steelers	84
148	11 / 08 / 59	Packers	L	Bill Butler	Bears	61
149	11 / 22 / 59	Cardinals	L	Bill Stacey	Giants	74
150	11 / 22 / 59	Cardinals	L	Bobby Joe Conrad	Giants	69
151	12 / 06 / 59	Rams	L	John Arnett	Packers	71
152	12 / 06 / 59	Browns	L	Bobby Mitchell	Giants	78

The Long Pass: Is It Pro Football's Best Offensive Weapon?

By Bob Follensbee

A few years ago the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) ran an article on some of the technicalities of professional football's forward passing game (passing). More specifically, it was about an often quoted parameter known as "Yards per Attempted Pass (YAP)".

The author noted that a stat most consistently linked to game winners is the quarterbacks "yards per throw" and further stated, "This is the single most important stat in professional football."

Since a high YAP suggests a long pass as well as a high completion percentage, I am left wondering about a stat that deals with only the long pass. This statistic would be "yards per completed pass (YCP)." It tells us how long the QB is throwing. The question we seek to answer is: "How important is the long pass in winning football games?" This is not fully answered by the "Yards per Attempted Pass," because it does not involve, as noted, pass completion percentage.

To help shed some light on this subject, I constructed the chart shown at the end of this article. It displays the passing statistics of seventeen quarterbacks (QB) who have led their team to the World Championship or Super Bowl games at least three times in their career. These stats focus on the average length of the pass play, the touchdowns produced and the number of times the QB led his team to the final championship game. I consider that the pass play becomes "long" when the average exceeds 13.5 yards.

Note: The use of the QB designation is meant to include the receivers since the pass is not complete until he catches it. It is my view that the receiver has the more difficult task in the passing game, but the QB is cited as the more visible and expedient descriptive entity.

The final test of the great QB's is how many times they led their team to the final championship

contest in the years they have played. The QB whose team goes to the Super Bowl four times in eight years has accomplished more than the QB who goes four times in fifteen years. The Chart then is configured around this stat: i.e. the percent of the QB's playing years he went to the final championship game.

The Chart shows pretty clearly that the long passers were winning most of the championships and dominated pro football's passing game from 1940 until the 1980s when the short pass game became popular. This change coincided with the adoption of rule modifications that made passing easier and defending more difficult. It seems like all the teams within a few years elected to concentrate on the higher pass percentage that goes with the short pass. Bill Walsh has made the point that completion percentage falls sharply when the average pass exceeds twelve yards.

After 1970, the long pass game began to fade. Only two QB's, Roger Staubach and Terry Bradshaw in the 70s, threw consistently long. Not as long as the QB's in the 40s, 50s and 60s, but a good deal further than the short passers of the 80s and later. As the long pass game began to lose its practitioners, the stat signifying the percent of championship games attained by the QB and his team began a steady decline, as the Chart so strikingly shows. It would seem there is a connection.

A lingering question is: "What does all of this mean?" Of the top ten QB's, seven played in the 40s and 50s. We know the numbers don't lie, but their real meaning is often hidden in the subtleties.

The difference between the performance of the best QB's of the 40s and 50s and those of today is remarkable, because it favors the old-era players. First of all, they threw much longer on average. The top five QB's on the Chart averaged 15.1 yards per completion. Today, the top QB's average about 12.5 yards per completion. But, did

this difference in favor of the old-era QB's give them more wins and titles? It did indeed and that is the part that the most striking.

The top five old-era QB's had an average 6.3% of their attempted passes go for touchdowns. The Chart's modern-era QB's averaged 4.6%, which is 27% lower. If the long pass is truly a more productive offense, the QB's who threw the longest would be expected to have the most TD's per attempt and the most wins, or at least be near the top. Is this true? It is indeed.

Otto Graham and Sid Luckman threw the longest and between them, led in every Chart category. Their 16 plus yards per completion and their TD's per attempt are far above the modern day average. Graham's championship game percentage is an unprecedented 100%, while Luckman's is a very high 42%. Looking at these numbers and their meaning it would seem that the "long pass offense" is the way to play the game.

Many observers feel the game today is played at a much higher skill level and the kinds of numbers put up by Luckman, Graham et. al. are not possible today, given the superior defenses manned by players larger, faster and more skilled players. Some say these QB's would never dominate in today's game.

This line of reasoning, however, has its weaknesses. If the defense is bigger, faster and more skillful, so is the offensive side: the line, the receivers and the backs; therefore the QB position should be unaffected by the bigger, faster and more skillful.

Another weakness of this viewpoint is that it fails to consider the greatly improved conditions players of today play under. There are the rule changes that made passing much easier, the greatly improved field and weather conditions, the face mask, rules allowing 45 players compared to 33 in the 50s, and finally much larger coaching, training and medical staffs. And then, the pay is the biggest difference of all.

Given the greatly superior conditions of today a question that should be asked, but never is: How would players of today perform playing under the conditions of the 40s and 50s? No face masks, no domed stadiums, no special turf to prevent the inevitable accumulation of mud following the

inevitable rains, minimal restrictions on hassling pass receivers and interfering with their running pass pattern routes. Pass interference penalties were rarely called. With only 33 players, special teams were non-existent. Punting and field goal kicking was usually a special job of some front line player. Linemen were given few rests during the game, because reserves were not available. This is one reason why the 300-pound player was a rarity in the 40s and 50s. He required more frequent rest, especially during warmer weather, but there were not enough subs to fill the greater resting needs that go with the heavier players. Player compensation was but a fraction of what it is today.

It seems obvious then that the skilled players of today could not play at today's normal level if they played under the more difficult conditions that existed in the 40s and 50s. There were 12 games played in the season. Most of these games were played in the eastern part of the U.S. and the Midwest. Los Angeles and San Francisco were the two exceptions. The geography of the league almost guaranteed that one third of a team's 12 games were going to see rain, snow, ice or a combination of all three. In any case the playing fields became mud and/or ice. The QB's passing game was going to suffer. If he could pass at all, the receivers had trouble running the pattern and catching the ball. It was almost certain that in at least one game of the season, he would hardly pass at all. Offensive stats were adversely affected by conditions to a degree not seen today.

There is the other side of this inquiry that compares QB performance today against yesterday. If QB's playing today would likely see their stats diminish under the more difficult conditions of the 40s and 50's, then the reverse is true if we bring the old-era QB's forward to the conditions of today. The superior playing conditions of today would allow these QB's to play at a higher skill level than under the more difficult old-era conditions. This being so, it is not unthinkable that the Chart's top five long pass QB's would dominate today's play in a manner similar to the way they did in the 40s, 50s and 70s. After all, the basic athleticism in athletes is not what changes with time. It's the conditions. The athletes of years gone by were just as athletic as those of today. It's the conditions under which they performed that have changed.

Whether the foregoing reasoning is completely valid or not, the numbers are unmistakable. The long pass QB's of the earlier era compiled an impressive record of winning championships not matched by today's teams. Still, a nagging question remains that has not been answered. If the "long pass game" is as potent as the Chart shows it to be, why has the modern game replaced it with a less promising short pass offense? As noted, the long pass game started getting shorter towards the end of the 60s and all during the 70s. The long pass QB's of the 60s were not being replaced in the 70s, but the two who did emerge (Bradshaw and Staubach) were the decade's biggest winners.

It may be that Bill Walsh gave the reason for the demise of the long pass offense, that won so much in the 40s through the 60s, when he noted the higher completion percentage of the short pass. Perhaps there is a tradeoff in favor of the short pass -- higher completion percentage of the short pass against higher yards-per-completion of the long pass. There could be other factors. The

emergence of the high scoring field goal kicker and its scoring potential may be facilitated by the short pass offense. And perhaps the short pass offense makes the running game perform at a higher level.

Or it could be the time and effort required to become the accurate long throwers of the old-era is not required by the modern day short pass offense and is therefore not forthcoming. Coaches like to stick with what works and what works best is usually what is simplest and easiest to teach. It may be the short pass offense is easier and works better with the material at hand.

But we still have the findings of the WSJ writer that "Yards per pass attempt" is the best predictor of winning teams and is also the most important stat in professional football. These findings are confirmed by the Chart data showing the long pass offense to have been the "offense-of-choice" of the biggest winners.

**SELECTED PRO FOOTBALL PASSING STATS FOR QB/RECEIVERS
WITH THREE OR MORE TRIPS TO THE CHAMPIONSHIP GAME**

Player	Years Played	Yards Per Pass Completion	Touchdowns Per Attempt	Years Played (Total)	Number of Championship Game Appearances	Championship Appearances as a Percent of Years Played
Otto Graham	1946-1955	16.1	6.6%	10	10	100%
Bob Waterfield	1945-1952	14.6	6.0	8	4	50
Sid Luckman	1940-1951	16.1	8.3	12	5	42
Norm Van Brocklin	1949-1960	15.2	6.0	12	5	42
Bart Starr	1956-1971	13.7	4.8	16	6	38
Roger Staubach	1969-1979	13.6	5.2	11	4	36
Jim Kelly	1986-1996	12.3	5.0	11	4	36
Tommy Thompson	1940-1942, 1945-1950	14.2	6.4	9	3	33
Johnny Unitas	1956-1971	14.2	5.6	16	5	31
Sammy Baugh	1937-1952	12.9	6.3	16	5	31
John Elway	1983-1996	12.4	3.9	16	5	31
Terry Bradshaw	1970-1983	13.8	5.4	14	4	29
Joe Montana	1979-1994	11.9	5.1	15	4	27
Troy Aikman	1989-1996	11.4	3.5	11	4	27
Charley Conerly	1948-1961	13.7	6.1	14	3	21
Bob Griese	1967-1980	13.0	5.6	14	3	21
Bobby Layne	1948-1962	14.8	5.3	15	3	20

HOF Inductees vs. Super Bowl Participants

By Ken Crippen

In the pre-announcement coverage of the 2008 Pro Football Hall of Fame enshrines, one reporter stated that there was a trend that the selection committee seemed to vote for someone who played for one of that year's Super Bowl participants. This was in direct relation to Andre Tippett being a finalist (and later inductee), with the New England Patriots playing the following day in Super Bowl XLII. I thought I would check out this theory. There are a few instances where it is a stretch to associate an inductee with their team's appearance in that year's Super Bowl, but you are free to form your own conclusions.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Super Bowl Teams</u>	<u>HOF Inductees</u>
2008	New England, N.Y. Giants	Andre Tippett (1982-1993 New England Patriots)
2007	Indianapolis, Chicago	(None)
2006	Pittsburgh, Seattle	Warren Moon (1997-1998 Seattle Seahawks)
2005	New England, Philadelphia	(None)
2004	New England, Carolina	(None)
2003	Oakland, Tampa Bay	Marcus Allen (1982-1992 Raiders), James Lofton (1987-1988 Raiders)
2002	New England, St. Louis	George Allen (1966-1970 Los Angeles Rams)
2001	Baltimore, N.Y. Giants	(None)
2000	Tennessee, St. Louis	(None)
1999	Denver, Atlanta	Eric Dickerson (1993 Atlanta Falcons)
1998	Denver, Green Bay	(None)
1997	New England, Green Bay	Mike Haynes (1976-1982 New England Patriots)
1996	Pittsburgh, Dallas	Mel Renfro (1964-1977 Dallas Cowboys)
1995	San Diego, San Francisco	Kellen Winslow (1979-1987 San Diego Chargers)
1994	Buffalo, Dallas	Tony Dorsett (1977-1987 Dallas), Jackie Smith (1978 Dallas), Randy White (1975-1988 Dallas)
1993	Buffalo, Dallas	(None)
1992	Buffalo, Washington	John Riggins (1976-1979, 1981-1985 Washington Redskins)
1991	Buffalo, N.Y. Giants	(None)
1990	Denver, San Francisco	Bob St. Clair (1953-1963 San Francisco 49ers)
1989	Cincinnati, San Francisco	(None)
1988	Denver, Washington	(None)
1987	Denver, N.Y. Giants	Larry Czonka (1976-1978 Giants), Don Maynard (1958 Giants)
1986	New England, Chicago	(None)
1985	Miami, San Francisco	O.J. Simpson (1978-1979 San Francisco 49ers)
1984	L.A. Raiders, Washington	Willie Brown (1967-1978 Raiders), Charley Taylor (1964-1975, 1977 Washington Redskins)
1983	Miami, Washington	Sonny Jurgensen (1964-1974 Redskins), Bobby Mitchell (1962-1968 Redskins), Paul Warfield (1970-1974 Dolphins)
1982	Cincinnati, San Francisco	(None)
1981	Oakland, Philadelphia	George Blanda (1967-1975 Raiders), Jim Ringo (1964-1967 Eagles)
1980	Pittsburgh, L.A. Rams	Deacon Jones (1961-1971 Rams)
1979	Pittsburgh, Dallas	Johnny Unitas (on 1955 Pittsburgh Roster, but was cut)
1978	Denver, Dallas	Lance Alworth (1971-1972 Dallas Cowboys)
1977	Oakland, Minnesota	(None)
1976	Pittsburgh, Dallas	(None)
1975	Pittsburgh, Minnesota	(None)
1974	Miami, Minnesota	(None)
1973	Miami, Washington	(None)
1972	Miami, Dallas	(None)
1971	Baltimore, Dallas	Y.A. Tittle (1948-1950 Baltimore Colts) (Not the same Baltimore Colts)
1970	Kansas City, Minnesota	Hugh McElhenny (1961-1962 Minnesota Vikings)
1969	N.Y. Jets, Baltimore	Joe Perry (1961-1962 Baltimore Colts)
1968	Oakland, Green Bay	(None)
1967	Kansas City, Green Bay	Emlen Tunnell (1959-1961 Green Bay Packers)

PFRA COMMITTEES

By Ken Crippen

COMMITTEE UPDATES SINCE THE LAST ISSUE OF COFFIN CORNER:

Website and Forum Committee:

As many of you know, we have relocated the PFRA website and forum.

Website: <http://www.profootballresearchers.org>

Forum: <http://www.pfraforum.org>

We have used this relocation opportunity to make a few changes and add features to our website.

- 1) *Coffin Corner* Articles: We now have all *Coffin Corner* articles online, except for the last three years. Articles from the last three years are available for free via e-mail for any PFRA member in good standing. If you want hard copies, a small postage fee will be charged. Contact Bob Carroll for more information.
- 2) Committees: A listing of all PFRA committees is now on the website. Along with this, any committee that has a website will have a link to their appropriate website. Currently, the following committees have their work online: Linescore, Pre-NFL, Central & Northern New York, Western New York and the Rochester Jeffersons subcommittee. There are also links to other notable sites by PFRA members. If you are a PFRA member have a website that is not listed here, please contact me to have it added.
- 3) Books: We not only have a listing of PFRA books that were published, but we are also listing books published by PFRA members outside of the PFRA. If you are currently a member and would like to have your book(s) listed, please contact me with a link to your book, as well as a book description.

All-America Football Conference Committee:

The All-America Football Conference Committee recently obtained copies of the Official AAFC Score Sheets from PFRA member Pete Palmer. These score sheets have been in a private collection since the disbanding of the Conference and have never seen the light of day until now. Pete Palmer deserves a lot of credit for

convincing the owner of the score sheets to allow copies to be made for researchers.

The committee is also in the process of archiving AAFC-related materials for use by researchers. This includes team photos, media guides, game programs, newspaper articles and game films. All of these items, as well as the score sheets, will be digitized, making them easier to share among researchers without having to handle the originals.

Finally, the committee is working on gathering current contact information on all surviving players of the Conference. While this is going on, committee members are trying to interview these players in order to document an oral history of the league.

Linescore Committee:

The Linescore committee is in the process of updating the PFRA website with the latest linescore information. Over the next several weeks, the latest research will be posted online.

Stadiums Committee:

The Committee would like to thank several PFRA readers for contributing photos and historical data on several different stadiums for this project. The readers include Tony Lanza in Cincinnati, Denis Crawford in Boardman, Ohio, Mike Frank in New York, and Joe Cronin in Citrus Heights, California.

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CLASSIFIEDS

2 Wanted: Offering top price for 1962 book "Football Scouting Methods" by Steve Belichick. Sheldon Mulman, 5680 Rembrandt Ave., Apt 606, Montreal, QB, Canada H4W 3G3 idealsheldon@aol.com

3 Program Wanted: Eagles-Carolina, NFC Championship Game, January 18, 2004. Contact: Bob Lyons, 1214 Dennis Road, Southampton, PA 18966. Phone (215) 355-4749.

TAR – The Autograph Review -- \$14.95 annually, 6 editions. Special to PFRA members for new subscriptions 5/\$9.95. Payable to JW Morey, 305 Carlton Road, Syracuse, NY 13207. Publishing 18 years – Addresses, info, helpful to researchers... Try us.

3 WANTED: Game films or highlight films from Washington Redskins games 1970-76, especially need 1974 Miami Dolphins game. John Jacob / P.O. Box 4155 / Merrifield, VA 22116 / (703) 909-6395.

3 "Pride & Poise: The Oakland Raiders of the American Football League is the most takes a definitive look into the formation and turbulent early history of the American Football League." For info please visit www.raidershistory.net

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