

# **THE STORY OF THE PATRICIANS**

By Vic Frolund

In the year of 1914, the Patrician Club, a men's group from St. Patrick's Parish on Youngstown's near South Side, whose objectives were to advance the moral, social and physical welfare of its members, organized a football team. This team was comprised of players with little or no high school or college training and therefore was on the sandlot or semi-pro level. Most of the squad came from within a 25-mile radius of Youngstown, Niles, and Girard, Ohio.

So, with about 18 players and a motto that read, "With Malice to None and a Square Deal to All," the Patricians entered the football wars of 1914 with an eight game schedule against teams in Ohio and nearby Pennsylvania. Their season's record was a very respectable seven wins, one loss -- that to Salem, Ohio, 7 to 0. These, by the way, were the only points scored on them. The Pats scored 148 points on their opponents.

The big game of the year was the season's finale against the Crescent A.C., also from the south side of Youngstown, which was won by the Patricians 3 to 0 on a field goal by fullback John Dillon. The Crescents had been local champs for the past few years and, with this victory the Pats laid claim to the Mahoning Valley title.

Highly elated over the success of their first venture into this comparatively new Sunday afternoon diversion, the Patrician club decided to go into the pro football game on a larger scale. As a result of this decision, a longer --nine games -- and tougher schedule was arranged. In addition to four opponents from the previous year, the Pats slated Akron, the McKeesport Olympics, the Pitcairn Quakers, the Columbus Panhandles, and the Washington, D.C., Vigilants.

In order to meet this kind of opposition, more experienced and more "name" players were necessary. The squad was increased to 25 players, with only seven carried over from 1914. The 18 new men were for the most part former college stars. A few were still in school but could pick up some much needed "E Pluribus Unum" by playing on Sundays under assumed names. Contracts were practically unheard of in the early days of the pro game. Consequently a player could be with a different team every Sunday. His services were open to the highest bidder each week. Among the players garnered for the 1915 season were Ray Miller of Notre Dame; Elgie Tobin, Penn State; "Busty" Ashbaugh, who had just begun coaching at South High School in Youngstown after receiving All-American mention at Brown University; George Vedernack, Carlisle; Eberhart of Penn State; Getz, Duvall, and Benson from Akron; Jarvis from the Columbus Panhandles; and "The Man of the Hour," player-coach Ray L. Thomas, another local just out of school and entering the practice of law.

Under the brilliant playing of the brainy Thomas who guided the team at quarterback, the Pats won eight, tied one, and lost none, scoring 271 points to their opponents' 22. A scoreless tie with the Columbus Panhandles marred an otherwise perfect season. Included among the eight wins was an outstanding, 13-7, victory over the Washington Vigilants. Over a span of nine years, the Vigilants had won 90 games, lost but three,

and had one tie. They had claimed the World's Championship of professional football since 1907, defeating such teams as the famous Philadelphia Blues, Jersey City Pros, Harrisburg Giants, Altoona All-Stars, Baltimore and New York Pros, Albany, Camden, Boston, Reading, Scranton, and Savannah. The three losses were by slim margins -- 3-0, 7-6, and 3-0 -- to All-Star College teams at the ends of seasons, after the Patricians had broken training. The Patricians were the first pro team to win from Washington in nine years, and, by virtue of the win, laid claim to the title of World Champs.

To further strengthen their claim to the title, the Pats cited the following facts: Massillon defeated Toledo; Toledo defeated Columbus; Dayton defeated Toledo; Columbus defeated Massillon, Dayton and Detroit, western champs; Massillon defeated and lost to Canton; the Detroit Maroons lost to Massillon; and the Patricians tied Columbus. Or, to sum up, Massillon and Canton and Toledo all lost twice, and Columbus lost three times. Youngstown offered to play Canton, Massillon, and Toledo in post-season games but each of these teams rejected the offer. The Patricians believed that they deserved to be called the 1915 Champions.

In 1916, the Patricians were faced with the problem of retaining their "championship," and this against much stiffer opposition. To begin with, the schedule was increased to eleven games. For the first time Canton and Massillon were to appear on the Patrician schedule, Massillon to be played on a home and home basis. The season opened with a sound beating of Lisbon, Ohio, 21 to 0. Altoona was trounced, 41 to 0. Jamestown, N.Y., was smothered 33 to 0. Wheeling, W.Va., bowed 7-0, and the Pitcairn Quakers went down by the same count. The Pats were off and running with five straight wins and nary a point scored against them. However, in the sixth game, the first against the Tigers of Massillon, the Pats went down in a hard fought struggle, 3-0. In the next contest, the McKeesport Olympics were swamped, 20 to 3, but the powerful Canton Bulldogs proved too formidable as they won 6-0. Then, in the ninth game, the Washington Vigilants were edged by the slimmest of margins, 10 to 9. But in the second Massillon game, the Tigers romped, 26-0. The season closed with a sad, 0-13, loss to the Columbus Panhandles.

This mediocre, 7-4, season could be attributed to the departure of key players to more fertile fields and the decision of player-coach Ray Thomas to confine his duties to manager. He was replaced at quarterback by Tommy Hughitt of Michigan. Also brought in were Sanooke from Carlisle; "By" Morgan, a local semi-pro; "Palmer" of Ohio State; and Loos from Akron. But their inability to win the big games proved their undoing, and the Patricians, who'd claimed the 1915 championship, surrendered the 1916 laurels to the Canton Bulldogs.

In 1917, the Patricians were determined to win back the pro title. An all new squad that included five All-Americans was signed. Such names as Hughitt, Tom Gormley of Georgetown, Bart Macomber of Illinois, and Freeman Fitzgerald, Bill Kelleher, and Gil Ward of Notre Dame adorned the roster. But the master stroke was the signing of Stan Cofall, All-American fresh out of Notre Dame, to be player-coach of this star-studded aggregation.

After the warm-up and fairly tough games were out of the way, the big ones began. The first of these came on November 3 when the great Jim Thorpe and his Canton Bulldogs invaded Youngstown. The game was played at Wright Field before a record crowd of 7,000 (Canton claimed 5,500) wild and hysterical fans. As an indication of what a titanic

struggle this game was, Thorpe, who very seldom played a full game, played every minute of this one.

**CANTON**

Fred Sefton (Colgate)  
 Neil Matthews (Penn)  
 Unk Russell (Penn)  
 Fat Waldsmith (Akron U)  
 Ollie Driesbach (Akron)  
 Jo.Kellison (W.Va.Wes)  
 Greasy Neale(W.Va.Wes)  
 Milt Ghee (Dartmouth)  
 Jim Thorpe (Carlisle)  
 F.A. Dunn (Dickinson)  
 Pete Calac (W.Va.Wes)

**YOUNGSTOWN**

LE W. Martin (Georgetown)  
 LT Budge Garrett (Rutgers)  
 LG Tom Gormley (Georget'n)  
 C Bob Peck (Pittsburgh)  
 RG F. Fitzgerald (Notre D.)  
 RT Jim Barron (Georgetown)  
 RE Bill Kelleher (Notre D.)  
 QB Tommy Hughitt (Michigan)  
 LH Stan Cofall (Notre Dame)  
 RH Bart Macomber (Illinois)  
 FB Johnny Barrett (W. & L.)

The Bulldogs won this thriller on a field goal by "Black" (Neil Matthews of Penn). With the score 3-0 against them, the Pats had three field goals missed by their specialist, Bart Macomber. Even after we make allowances for a few assumed names by college undergrads picking up a buck or two, the lineups read like a who's-who of post-graduate football, circa 1917.

The next week, the Patricians took the measure of the Massillon Tigers, 14-6. On November 19, the team journeyed to Canton for their second game with the Bulldogs. This was a different story from the previous encounter and the Pats went down 13-0.

This game abruptly wrapped up the season for Youngstown. Cofall, Peck and several other stars jumped to Massillon for more money. With the menacing clouds of World War I hovering over the U.S., some football stars were joining up with Uncle Sam, and it was becoming difficult to muster a team on the field.

Pro football was abandoned in northeast Ohio during 1918. When the war was over in 1919, the Pats tried to return to power briefly, playing two games before giving up. Hughitt and Tuss McLaughry, a future great college coach, were in the 1919 lineup.

For the next couple of years, a semi-pro team competed and did well at that level. They were coached by "Busty" Ashbaugh, who with end Bob Kling had played on the "big" Patrician teams of former years.

In 1922, a proposed Youngstown team -- to be run by Elgie Tobin -- was actually granted a National Football League franchise, but the project died in the planning stage.