

**KEN KAVANAUGH: THE BEARS' HOME-RUN HITTER**

**By Bob Carroll**

Ken Kavanaugh probably caught fewer passes than any other wide receiver to be seriously considered for the Pro Football Hall of Fame. His modest total of 162 catches over an eight-year pro career would make a tidy two-year total for some of today's busier wide-outs.

But there's quantity and then there's quality. Ken Kavanaugh was definitely a quality receiver. It was never how many passes he caught but what he did with them.

On a Chicago Bear team that ran the ball against NFL defenses with the same thundrous effect of real bears against rabbits, Kavanaugh was the sudden touchdown strike from far out, the big play end, the home-run hitter. He averaged a touchdown for nearly every third catch.

Ken was born November 23, 1916, at Little Rock, Arkansas. He was graduated from Little Rock Senior High School in 1936 and entered Louisiana State University that fall. He played three varsity seasons at L.S.U. and was named All-SEC each year. Twice, he was a Sugar Bowl All-Star. In his final season, he finished seventh in the voting for the Heisman Trophy and won the Rockne Trophy given by the Washington Touchdown Club.

During that season, he caught 30 passes for 467 yards and eight touchdowns. He was selected to play in the Chicago Tribune College All-Star Game for 1940. At L.S.U., he also starred in baseball and later played minor league baseball for the St. Louis Cardinals.

Kavanaugh was drafted by the Bears on the second round. He joined the team for the 1940 season. Coach George Halas had put together a deep and talented roster; Kavanaugh became a key part. With Sid Luckman's powerful arm and Kavanaugh's blazing speed, he was used almost exclusively as a long-distance touchdown threat.

The 1940 team won the 1940 NFL Championship and repeated in 1941.

In the second quarter of the '40 championship game, he scored a TD on a 30-yard toss from Luckman. Hardly, the key to the game, his touchdown was the fourth on the Bears' way to their historic 73-0 win over the Redskins.

The next year, in the '41 title game, he scored again, this time on a 42-yard return of a fumble with only nine seconds left in the contest. Once more, the TD was only icing on the cake of a 37-9 Bear victory. Of some historic note, Bear halfback Ray McLean made the extra point with a dropkick!

Then Kavanaugh entered the U.S. Air Force. He served three and one-half years, reaching the rank of captain. While stationed in England, he flew 30 missions.

In 1946, he returned to the Bears just in time to help them to another NFL championship. In the championship game, Ken completed an impressive streak by scoring another touchdown – three title games, three touchdowns. This one came on another Luckman pass, good for 21 yards, in the first five minutes of play to get the Bears away and winging in their 24-14 victory over the New York Giants.

The 6-3, 205-pound speedster had perhaps his greatest season in 1947, catching 32 passes for 818 yards and a league-leading 13 touchdowns. He was named to most All-NFL teams in both 1946 and 1947, but his best game came in 1950, his final season, when he caught eight passes for 177 yards against the New York Yanks on October 29.

His career totals show 162 receptions, 3626 yards, a 22.4 average, and 50 touchdowns on passes plus two on fumble recoveries.

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Married, with a son and a daughter, Kavanaugh served as an assistant coach with the Bears in 1951, Boston College in 1952-53, Villanova 1954, and the New York Giants 1955-1970. In 1971, he became a scout for the Giants. He also pursued several successful business enterprises.

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### KAVANAUGH'S PASS RECEIVING RECORD

YEAR	TEAM	Lg	GM	NO	YDS	AVG	TD
1940	ChiBears	N	11	12	276	23.0	3
1941	ChiBears	N	11	11	314	*28.5	6
1942-	1943-1944				In Military Service		
1945	ChiBears	N	10	25	539	21.5	6
1946	ChiBears	N	10	18	337	18.7	5
1947	ChiBears	N	12	32	818	25.3	*13
1948	ChiBears	N	12	18	352	19.6	+6
1949	ChiBears	N	12	29	655	*22.6	*6
1950	ChiBears	N	12	17	331	19.5	+2
8 years			90	162	3622	22.4	50

\*-Led league

+ -Scored additional TD on fumble recovery

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Bibliography: Pro Football Hall of Fame file (Canton, OH); Ronald L. Mendell and Timothy B. Phares, Who's Who in Football (N.Y., 1974), 174.