

PRO FOOTBALL: THE WAY IT WAS -- AND HOW THE PLAYERS FEEL TODAY

With the cooperation of Pro Legends Inc., a marketing arm of NFL Alumni Inc., The *Atlanta Journal and Constitution* sent questionnaires to Pro Legends' 176 members (from a total of 948 living players who retired from professional football prior to 1959). Here are the responses from 130:

Q. Did you receive serious injuries as a football player?

YES: 55.4% NO: 44.6%

Q. Since your retirement from pro football, have you consulted a physician or other medical professional to attend to a football-related injury?

YES: 46.9% NO: 53.1%

Q. Since your retirement from pro football have you been hospitalized for the treatment of any football related injuries?

YES: 25.4% NO: 66.1%

Q. Are you in any way disabled due to a football injury?

YES: 26.2% NO: 73.8%

Q. As a player, did you regularly compete while injured?

YES: 73.0% NO: 24.6%

* Gerry Conlee, C, San Francisco 49ers, 72: "I was afraid I might get cut from the squad and my injury wouldn't be paid for."

* Robert Reinhard, DT, Los Angeles Rams, 66: "If you couldn't play you had a good chance of going down the road."

* Armand Nicolai, T, Pittsburgh Steelers, 75: "There were few substitutes and I needed the money."

* Lee Artoe, T, Chicago Bears, 69: "Why did I play hurt? George Halas."

Q. Do you think today's players try to compete when injured as much as players in your era?

YES: 21.5% NO: 70.0%

* Nolan Luhan, E, Green Bay Packers, 65: "I don't think the players of today are as committed to the game as the old-timers were. It is more of a business to today's players and they want to extend their playing years as long as possible to get the big bucks."

* Lou Brock, RB, Green Bay Packers, 68: "Very few of today's players play hurt but in my day it was a requirement."

* Chester Bulger, T, Chicago Cardinals, 69: "They have good lawyers and business agents. Today's ball player is smarter. He is loyal to himself first and the team comes second."

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Q. In your opinion, are the majority of the Pre-59ers having some financial difficulty?

YES: 47.7% NO: 12.3%

* Richard Edlitz, RB, Philadelphia Eagles, 66: "Football salaries were insufficient to establish a nest egg. You had to find work for the off-season to make a living -- and sometimes even during the season."

* Al Wistert, T, Philadelphia Eagles, 66: "None of the players I know made enough from the NFL to become financially secure. Only a small number have been able to establish a career after their playing days."

Q. What is your total yearly income, including all salaries, pensions and investments?

About \$10,000 -- 37.6% About \$30,000 -- 35.4%
About \$50,000 -- 7.6% About \$70,000 -- 3.8%
About \$90,000 -- 0.7% About \$100,000-- 3.0% Q.

Q. Did the fact that the Pre-59ers went so long without a pension diminish your respect for the modern professional football player?

YES: 57.7% NO: 31.5%

* Thomas Jones, G, New York Giants, 77: "The majority of today's players have money as a motive and not the love of the game. Most of the players today have agents and guaranteed salaries so the incentive is not there."

* Nolan Luhan, E. Green Bay Packers, 65: "If we hadn't played for very little money, I don't think those teams would have continued to grow and thus make the money to pay today's salaries."

* Earl Svendsen, C, Green Bay Packers, 73: "The current players are too selfish. Red Grange did more for pro football in one year than most of these players will do in a lifetime."

* Art Jones, RB, Pittsburgh Steelers, 67: "Young men have never been ones to think ahead and realize what's down the road."

* Paul Stenn, T, Washington Redskins, 68: "It seems the attitude is 'the hell with the other guy' until some day they get in the same predicament."

Q. If you could change one aspect of professional football in the 1980s, what would it be?

* Bill Dudley, RB, Pittsburgh Steelers, 65: "Institute a grading system and subtract from players' salaries for missed passes, loafing and missed blocks."

* Otto Graham, QB, Cleveland Browns, 65: "Ban any player, coach or owner for life if involved in hard drugs."

* Ken Kavanaugh, E, Chicago Bears, 70: "Take all pads off arms and hands, then the players could not use their arms as a club."

* Al Wistert, T, Philadelphia Eagles, 66: "I would dress all quarterbacks in skirts and blouses and legislate rules that they be treated like girls...protected from being injured."