

THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 10, No. 3 (1988)

[The following is from a letter by Aaron Hertzman, once owner of the Louisville Brecks (NFL 1921-23) to Leo Lyons, once owner of the Rochester Jeffersons (NFL 1920-25), dated February 24, 1961.]

Dear Leo:

Just received your letter and note your various comments. Glad to note that you were named "Honorary Historian of the League." Last Derby Day eve, a son of Mr. Treat called on me for information about players of the early days and other information – and later I submitted some to his father. I also gave him your name and several others he might contact for information he desired, which I thought you might be able to supply.

My records show I entered the league about Feb. 21, 1921. Have many records from those days, but had no opportunity to assemble them. I do remember that when Jim Thorpe was President, he was playing baseball for Milwaukee, Wis. [Ed.Note: Akron, OH], called on him at the old Louisville Hotel, where he was playing billiards and too busy to stop to talk – but he did suggest that we not make application for membership. However, we did write Joe Carr and sent him the franchise fee of \$25.00 on date mentioned above.

I do not recollect having been at meetings at the Cortland Hotel, unless it was at Canton, Ohio; I know was not at the Portage Hotel in Akron, Ohio. What you say about the gold pass is just another way of catering to a Hero Worshipper. I, too, have not received annual passes for many years. It would appear that the league would endeavor to locate all former owners – and, at least, send them annual passes. They do not mean anything, as you are not guaranteed a seat – which you must still purchase.

The majority of present owners know nothing (nothing) of the hardships Joe Carr went through in finding new clubs each year, most of which lasted only one season – but did contribute dues and assessments, which were essential to the continuance of the league until it finally got on its feet. The three or four or five games they filled in the schedules of the ruling clubs enabled the league to keep going – and the least they could do for the comparative handful of such owners is to recognize them as the real builders of the league and issue annual passes. Very few will be used – and the cost of these cards would be infinitesimal.

My impression has always been that the league was started in 1920, with Thorpe as president, followed the next year with Joe Carr in that role. I, of course, know there was professional football prior to that time – but unorganized.

As for Treat, it appears he publishes an Encyclopedia of Football – and offered to make me an "Associate Editor" if I could assist him. Such publicity, naturally, does not interest me – but I did provide him with the rosters of the Evansville, Ind., and Cincinnati Celts clubs – and straightened out the former connections of some of the players on the list he submitted. Noticed an article by Treat in Sports Illustrated on the beginnings of football, which contained quite a number of errors.

As for the prices asked for exhibition games – they have played games in Louisville the past four or five years – and am certain the local promoters could not stand such sums as \$50,000.00 and \$70,000 for the games.

While on the subject, it appears that young Treat was making the rounds of cities in which clubs had been located in the past and contacting such players as he could in obtaining information; in fact, it was through one of my former players that he located me. If they have access to league records, it would appear they would have no trouble in locating former owners.

My relations with George Halas have always been very cordial – and I hear from him several times a year. I have attended the All-Star games in Chicago for some years – but the present owners of most clubs are unknown to me. I did meet Augie Haugrud, of Duluth, Minn., with the sporting editor of a Minneapolis newspaper, seeking a franchise. It appears that when Duluth sold its franchise, there was an agreement made that if the league placed a club at a later date in Minnesota, Augie was to have first crack at the franchise – and they apparently honored the agreement.

For myself, I see three or four games a season, beside some on television. I do not let what little I contributed to the game bother me much. The present owners have no idea of the trials and tribulations

THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 10, No. 3 (1988)

through which the league has passed – and are only interested in their own success. I was not one to save clippings, so I am unable to help you on that score. Hope you will be able to accomplish what you are endeavoring to do. Any assistance I can give you, you may count on.

With kindest regards, I am,

Sincerely,

Aaron Hertzman