

CURLY LAMBEAU:
The Man Behind The Mystique,
by David Zimmerman, (Eagle Books) Cloth.
Review by John Vorperian.

"In other news the World Champion Green Bay Packers' winning streak came to an end today--in a loss to themselves."

---Dan Rowan, Laugh-In comedy skit, circa 1960s

The National Football League's most successful franchise without a doubt is the Green Bay Packers. Today in any true fan's mind mention this charter club and one easily conjures gutsy gridiron action played upon the frozen tundra of Lambeau Field. Stop any Tiletown U.S.A. follower and ask for the name of the Trinity. It won't be father, son, nor spirit, but more likely Lombardi, Favre, and the Cheesehead faithful. The smallest market in the greatest professional sports league has a rich long heritage.

Yet with our television addicted sports society Packer history appears to start in 1967 with the Ice Bowl. The perennial image embedded in game day devotees is Guard Jerry Kramer powering a hole in America's Team's D-line and QB Bart Starr sneaking over the goal line rendering the Boys back to Dallas and the Pack onto a consecutive Super Bowl appearance.

A beloved hero in Wisconsin (Vince Lombardi) is popularly believed to have bellowed, "Winning isn't everything it's the only thing." He did not say that phrase, but that myth persists. And here lies the key accomplishment of author David Zimmerman's grand work **Curly Lambeau: The Man Behind The Mystique**. Finally there is a full feature bio on the Packer founder, player, captain, coach, executive, and legend Curly Lambeau. Prior to this essential work we were faced not with myth, but the unknown. Popular football lore has inadvertently displaced one of the NFL's most essential pioneers and successful coaches of the 1930s and 1940s in Curly Lambeau.

The Packer Patriarch had full loyalty to his vision, his dream, of a city football team. Circa 1919 a young 22 year old went to his boss Frank Peck of Indian Packing and sought company sponsorship of a Green Bay 25. In their inaugural season the "backwoods" band went 10-1 and outscored their opponents 565 to 12.

In 1921 Indian Packing was purchased by Acme Packing Company. Acme kept the same game plan the Acme Packers pounded their opponents. But circumstances turned out that Acme had college players laboring on the gridiron. This serious infraction led to franchise revocation. On August 22, 1922, the American Professional Football Association (APFA) newly renamed the National Football League reinstated Green Bay under the ownership auspices of E.L. Lambeau. From there to 1931 the "little city by the bay" garnered National glory, fame, and honor and thanks to the man behind it all CURLY LAMBEAU.

But, pull away the Blue and Gold banner and the lifestyle and personality Earl Louis "Curley" Lambeau illustrates human shortcomings and an upended moral compass. Curly Lambeau netted three divorces his first from his high school sweetheart. Had an estranged son and by the 1940s showed strong indications of "going Hollywood" on Green Bay. "You should never take a drink until after five o'clock and surround yourself with a lot of pretty girls." Curly Lambeau took credit for Wins. Losses? The fault was not him but some player.

Curly Lambeau's football achievements are monumental. He brilliantly commanded a small town David over the big city Goliaths. His sports career bought fame his personal life shame. David Zimmerman has carefully steered the course of Curly Lambeau's persona.

Author Zimmerman has provided an original and insightful chronicle. Yes, the work includes Hall of Famers their football assessments. George Halas wrangled with CURLY LAMBEAU, but admitted pro football survived because of him. Don Hudson credits his Canton shrine in part to Lambeau's visionary belief in a radical play--the forward pass. In all and masterfully David Zimmerman has put a perfect spiral on the man behind the mystique.

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John Vorperian resides in New York. He is Host & Producer of BEYOND THE GAME a community syndicated sports history cable television show and an active member SABR, Westchester Baseball Group and Professional Football Researchers Association. For more of his reviews see:

www.johnnyvsports.fws1.com