



Floyd Hudlow

This article was written by Greg D. Tranter.

Floyd Hudlow played three years of professional football, one season with the 1965 AFL Champion Buffalo Bills and two with the expansion Atlanta Falcons. Prior to his pro football career he starred at the University of Arizona, where he was named to the Western Athletic Conference all-star team twice and broke three conference records. He also starred in junior college for two years at Phoenix College prior to attending Arizona.



Floyd “Buddy” Leroy Hudlow was born November 8, 1943 in Phoenix, Arizona, to Audrey (Kent) Green and Floyd Hudlow. Buddy grew up in the Phoenix area and graduated from West High School. He is one of only two West High football players to play professional football. The other was Gordie Smith who played tight end for the Minnesota Vikings from 1961 to 1965. Hudlow matriculated to Phoenix College (a community college that prepares students for a four-year college) and played football at the school in 1961 and 1962.

He immediately made an impact on the football field as a Phoenix College Bear in his freshman season, as he led the team in rushing with 444 yards on 63 carries for a 6.65 per carry average. He was fourth in the conference in scoring with 42 points on seven touchdowns. The Bears finished third in the Western States Conference with an overall 6-2-1 record. A highlight of his freshman season was the Bears’ homecoming 51-0 win over Pierce College as he contributed three touchdown runs of 77, 47 and 2 yards.



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Hudlow, a 172-pound scatback, continued his excellent play for the Bears throughout his sophomore year and it was capped off at the school's father-son awards banquet in December 1962. He was awarded the American Legion Trophy as the team's most valuable player. The coaching staff (in teasing Hudlow) also gave him a football with suitcase handles affixed to memorialize Bud's fumbles from the season. He was named to the *Arizona Daily Stars* elite Arizona junior college football team at safety for the second consecutive year.

Phoenix College finished the 1962 season with a solid 7-2 record. Hudlow led the team in scoring with 14 touchdowns and had a two-point conversion for 86 total points. He was second on the squad in rushing with 417 yards on 75 carries for a 5.5 yard average. He also played extremely well on defense, leading the team with 11 interceptions and he averaged an outstanding 17 yards per return.

A highlight from his sophomore season was a 42-31 victory over Compton College in the homecoming game on November 10. Hudlow scored on a 50-yard touchdown run and a 13-yard TD pass reception, and he added a two-point conversion that put the Bears ahead for good, 28-24. He was also named homecoming king. Hudlow had an outstanding game in a 40-14 victory over American River Junior College on October 13, as he scored three touchdowns on a 75-yard scamper, a 47-yard pass reception and a 17-yard run. His best defensive game was in a 52-7 victory over Fort Lewis A&M as he picked off three Aggies passes and returned one 71 yards for a TD.

Hudlow's excellent performance for the Bears led to a scholarship from Arizona University. He entered Arizona as a junior in the fall of 1963 and majored in history. He also was a member of the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity.

The Wildcats had a disappointing 1963 season, finishing with a 5-5 record. Arizona was routed in its rivalry game with Arizona State, losing 35-6. The following week, the Wildcats played for the Western Athletic Conference (WAC) championship and lost to New Mexico 22-17.

Hudlow was a reserve halfback for the club but was its top kickoff return man. He led the WAC in both kickoff return yards (422) and average (32.5). In addition, he led the Wildcats in scoring with 24 points on four TDs and in pass receiving with 13 receptions for 167 yards and three touchdowns. He contributed 94 rushing yards on 33 carries. His carries were seventh on the team. At the start of the season so little was expected of Hudlow that he was given a locker in "The Hole," which was not part of the varsity locker room.



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Hudlow scored the first touchdown of his Arizona career on a 14-yard pass reception from Bill Brechler in the Wildcats' 28-12 loss to Oregon on October 19. His highlight of the season was the two touchdowns he scored in a stunning 15-7 upset win over 5-1 Wyoming on November 3. The scores came on an 8-yard pass reception from Brechler, and a 69-yard kickoff return in which he was not touched.

The following week, Hudlow caught a school record 84-yard TD pass from Brechler in a 34-7 win over Idaho, a day after his 20th birthday. At the conclusion of the season he was named to the second team All-WAC all-star squad.

The Wildcats and Hudlow had a more satisfying season in 1964 as Arizona tied for the WAC championship with an overall 6-3-1 record and routed rival Arizona State 30-6. Hudlow led the team in rushing with 402 yards on 73 carries and a 5.5 per carry average with five touchdowns. He only caught five passes for 53 yards, as he was not as effective in the passing game as 1963. However, he led the team in both punt and kickoff return yardage with 261 and 238 yards respectively. Hudlow also had three punt return TDs. His punt return average and TD returns led the WAC. He tied for the conference lead in TDs with eight, and scoring with 48 points. Hudlow also set three WAC records, highest single season punt return average (27.1 yards), most career kickoff return yards (658), and highest average per kickoff return for a career (27.4).

The Wildcats and Hudlow got off to a fast start in winning the first two games, 39-6 over BYU and 28-12 over Washington State. Hudlow scored two touchdowns in each of the two games. In the opening day win over BYU, Hudlow electrified the crowd with two punt return TDs, a 62-yarder in the second quarter and a 69-yard return in the third frame that the *Tucson Citizen* described as one of the greatest runs in Wildcats' history. In the win over Washington State, Hudlow scored two rushing TDs, from 16 yards and on a 1-yard plunge. In Arizona's 10-7 loss to New Mexico on October 10, Hudlow had an 80-yard touchdown run for the team's only score.

For the second year in a row the Wildcats upset undefeated Wyoming 15-7. Again it was Hudlow that sparked the victory over the 5-0 Cowboys with an 82-yard punt return for a TD in the third quarter. Arizona's 30-6 upset over rival Arizona State was one of the biggest Wildcat wins in several seasons and Hudlow played one of the best games of his career. He ran for two touchdowns, from 58 yards and seven yards, and had a 37-yard kickoff return helping to spark his team. He was named WAC back of the week. It was a great game to cap his college career. Hudlow was such an outstanding punt and kickoff returner for the Wildcats. The *Arizona Republic* described him, "Hudlow runs like a scared taxpayer on punt and kickoff returns."



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Hudlow was drafted in the NFL by the Philadelphia Eagles in the ninth round, pick 119th overall. The Buffalo Bills selected him in the AFL Draft in the tenth round, 80th overall. Hudlow signed a \$15,000 contract with the Bills on December 1, 1964 that included an \$8,000 bonus.

He was named to the first team All-WAC squad at halfback at the conclusion of his senior season. He was selected to play in the East-West Shrine Game for the West squad on January 2, 1965 and for the Senior Bowl to play for the North squad on January 9. The West won the East-West Shrine game 11-7 in San Francisco. Hudlow played the entire game at cornerback and returned two punts in the mud for eight yards. The following week in the Senior Bowl in Mobile, Alabama, Hudlow made two key plays in the game that ended in a 7-7 tie. He contributed a 44-yard punt return and recovered a key fumble at the North 10-yard line, snuffing out a South scoring threat. Future Pro Football Hall of Famers Joe Namath and Bob Hayes played for the South squad.

Hudlow married Shan Worsley on April 10, 1965. She was a senior at Arizona State and graduated later that spring.

Hudlow played his first professional football game in the Fifth Annual American Football Coaches All-America Football Game at War Memorial Stadium in Buffalo on June 26, 1965. He was joined on the West squad by quarterback Craig Morton and running back Gale Sayers. Notre Dame quarterback John Huarte led the East to a 34-14 victory in front of 25,503.

Hudlow joined the Bills at the start of training camp and played in each of the team's five preseason games. He was released in the Bills' final cut on September 8 and the following day he joined the teams' taxi squad. Buffalo activated Hudlow, while releasing Joe Auer, in time for the Bills' October 17 matchup versus Kansas City.

He made his regular season debut against the Chiefs in Kansas City and returned the second half kickoff for 18 yards. The Bills won 23-7. Hudlow played in the Bills' next six games, primarily on special teams. He contributed a 12-yard punt return in a 17-14 win over the Oakland Raiders on November 14 and he returned a kickoff for 18 yards in a 29-18 victory over Houston on December 5. That was the last game he played for Buffalo as he was released on December 11 and replaced on the roster by Sullivan Mills.

Hudlow played seven games for the Bills and the team was 5-1-1 in those contests. Buffalo went on to win the AFL Championship, defeating the San Diego Chargers 23-0, but Hudlow was not part of it.



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Hudlow signed with the Philadelphia Eagles (who had drafted him in 1964) on February 3, 1966. He participated in the Eagles training camp, but was injured and placed on the Eagles injured reserve list on August 23 and later was released. The Joe Kuharich-led Eagles finished in second place behind the Dallas Cowboys in the NFL East Division with a 9-5 record.

Hudlow had a tryout with the Atlanta Falcons on September 27 and was offered a spot on their taxi squad, which he accepted. He remained with the Falcons for the remainder of 1966 but was not activated. Hudlow was with the Falcons throughout training camp in 1967, trying to win a job as a defensive back and kick returner. He was the last player cut prior to the opening of the season, receiving the bad news on September 13. He was placed on the taxi squad and then was activated on October 13. He missed the Falcons' first four games, all losses, and remained on the roster for the remainder of the season and played in 10 games.

In his second game with Atlanta, Hudlow snared his first career interception leading to a field goal in a 24-3 loss to Detroit on October 22. He nearly had two other interceptions in the game. In the Falcons' only win of the season, a 21-20 defeat of the Minnesota Vikings on October 29, Hudlow returned a punt for two yards, but also took a cheap shot that resulted in a Viking penalty. The motivated Falcons played their best game of the season and linebacker Tommy Nobis clinched the victory when he returned a Ron Vander Kelen pass 41 yards in the fourth quarter for a touchdown.

In the November 19 game the 1-7-1 Falcons hosted the 6-1-2 Los Angeles Rams. The "mismatch" was surprisingly tight throughout the first three quarters. Atlanta's defense was stout and Hudlow snagged an interception, picking off a Roman Gabriel pass in the second quarter and returning it 21 yards. The Falcons only trailed 7-3 heading into the fourth quarter, but the Rams exploded in the final period for 24 points and a 31-3 win.

Hudlow got his first chance to return kicks in the Falcons' loss to Chicago on December 17. He returned two kickoffs for 56 yards in the teams' 23-14 loss. The 1-12-1 Falcons ended the season with that loss.

Hudlow was back in Atlanta in 1968, but he was released in training camp on August 14. The Falcons got off to an 0-3 start and head coach Norb Hecker was fired and replaced by Norm Van Brocklin. Hudlow was re-signed and activated on November 1. He played his first game in a 41-21 loss to Pittsburgh on November 3. He remained with the squad for the rest of the season, primarily as a back-up safety and some special teams' action. Atlanta finished with a 2-12 record and won only one game that Hudlow played.



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Hudlow was back in the Falcons' 1969 training camp, but he did not last long. He was cut on August 1. He signed with the Montreal Alouettes of the Canadian Football League on August 6. It did not last long. He was released by Montreal on August 13. However, he did not want to end his football career and he signed a contract to play for the Orlando Panthers of the Continental Football League. He joined the team in time for the opening game against the Ohio Valley Ironmen on August 31, a 14-7 loss. Orlando, with Hudlow playing linebacker, had an excellent season as it won 10 of their next 11 games to finish with a 10-2 record and first place in the Atlantic Division. The Panthers played the Central Division Champion Indianapolis Capitols in the Eastern Playoff and lost 27-7, ending their season. That was the end of Hudlow's professional football career.

In 1973 Hudlow started a flag football league in Phoenix at Encanto Park called the Arizona Nine-man Flag Football League. He played several years with a team called the Outsiders who won several championships while he played. He left the team when he moved to Louisiana in 1983.

After retiring from football, Hudlow had a long career in sales and the gaming industry. He and wife Shan had two daughters, Heather and Heidi. The couple also had six grandchildren. Buddy enjoyed playing golf, making model airplanes (WWII fighter planes), and watching his grandkids play sports.

He died on March 22, 2021 at 77 years old.