



Angelo Loukas

This article was written by Greg D. Tranter

Angelo Loukas was the co-captain of the 1968 Northwestern University Wildcats football team. He played two years in the National Football League with the Buffalo Bills, and Boston Patriots, and finished his career in the Atlantic Coast Football League with the Hartford Knights in 1971.



Angelo Cous Loukas was born on February 25, 1947 in Corinth, Greece. His family emigrated to the United States when Angelo was a youngster. He grew up on the southside of Chicago, Illinois with his older brother Tony and younger brother George. His father was not supportive of his boys playing football. But Tony paved the way for Angelo, playing high school football at Chicago Vocational. His Dad sent Angelo to Bowen high school to be away from Tony's influence. But it did not work out as his Dad envisioned. Angelo was inspired by his older brother and decided to play football at Bowen, where he ultimately starred in the sport. As a senior he was named to the Chicago Tribune Prep All-Star team as a guard and linebacker. Tony attended the University of Wisconsin, but Angelo decided Northwestern University, in nearby Evanston, was the best for him, and both boys distinguished themselves as football players.

Loukas played well on the Northwestern freshman team in 1965. As a sophomore he moved right into the starting line-up, playing both ways at guard and linebacker. The Wildcats, under third year head coach Alex Agase, went 3-6-1 with wins over Oregon State, Iowa, and rival Illinois 35-7. However, the most special game of the year for Angelo was the match-up with Wisconsin and playing against his older brother Tony. In



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front of a capacity crowd of 53,153 on a wet and soggy field in Madison, Wisconsin, the teams and brothers battled to a 3-3 tie. Northwestern led 3-0 into the fourth quarter and held Wisconsin on a drive inside their three-yard line, but a field goal tied the game. The Badgers had a chance to win the game late, but their 27-yard field goal attempt was wide.

Angelo was a fixture at guard on the Wildcats offensive line in 1967, but also played some linebacker on defense when injuries required it. Northwestern finished with a 3-7 record, including a stunning upset on opening day over #8 ranked Miami (FL), 12-7. The Wildcats lost several close games, including a 6-2 defeat against Ohio State, and a 7-3 defeat at Michigan. They beat Wisconsin 17-13 for one of the teams' victories, but Angelo's brother had graduated.

Loukas was selected as a co-captain along with teammate John Cornell for the 1968 Northwestern team. With Angelo playing well as the starting left guard, the Wildcats nonetheless struggled through a 1-9 season. Though their results were not good, they played one of the toughest schedules in the country, playing five teams ranked in the top ten - Michigan, Ohio State, Purdue, USC, and Notre Dame. Their lone victory was over Wisconsin, a 13-10 win on October 26. Following the season, Loukas was named second team All-Big Ten by United Press International. He was also selected to play in the 31st annual Blue-Gray All-Star game in Montgomery, Alabama on December 28, 1968.

Loukas acquitted himself well in the All-Star game as the Gray defeated the Blue 28-7 at the Cramton Bowl in front of 18,000 fans. Loukas helped the Gray team rush for 193 yards and score three rushing touchdowns in the win.

Angelo was not selected by any NFL team during the annual college draft held on January 28-29, 1969 at the Belmont Plaza Hotel in New York. Loukas was disappointed that he was not selected but was philosophical about it, saying, "Well, nobody from Northwestern gets drafted very often. The top teams have everybody drafted and if you're on a loser they forget about you."ⁱ The highlight of the draft was the selection of O.J. Simpson by the Buffalo Bills with the #1 overall pick.

Angelo graduated from Northwestern in May 1969 with a B.S. degree in history.

Loukas signed a free agent contract with the Buffalo Bills on May 30, 1969. The Bills also signed Angelo's Northwestern teammate, defensive end Mark Proskine. Angelo knew he had an uphill struggle to make the Bills, but he gave it everything he had and drew the attention of head coach John Rauch. Loukas played in all six of the Bills preseason encounters. His preseason highlights were a tackle on a kickoff in his first game against the Houston Oilers in the Astrodome on August 2. He made a tackle and recovered a fumble in the Bills' 20-7 loss to the Colts on August 22. He also had the



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opportunity to play in O.J. Simpson's preseason debut with the Bills at Detroit on August 15. Though the Bills lost that game 24-12, Simpson showed flashes of his talent on a 14-yard run, and a 38-yard pass reception from fellow rookie James Harris.

Loukas was one of four free agents that made the Bills 40-man roster out of training camp. Upon reflecting about making the team, Loukas said, "You have to be desperate. It's the only way to be noticed. You have to hit somebody and hit him hard."ⁱⁱ He went on to say, "If a free agent doesn't do something spectacular right away, he's gone goodbye."ⁱⁱⁱ

Angelo made his pro football regular season debut on September 14 at War Memorial Stadium in Buffalo as the Bills played the Super Bowl III Champion New York Jets. It also was O.J. Simpson's regular season debut. The Bills played the defending champions tough. With the game deadlocked at 19 heading into the fourth quarter, Joe Namath and the Jets scored two TD's to pull away and win the game 33-19.

Loukas got his first start after Billy Shaw pulled a hamstring in the Bills 17-3 loss to Houston on September 21. In his first start the Bills defeated the Denver Broncos 41-28 as the offensive line opened holes for O.J. to rush for 110 yards, and Bills quarterback Jack Kemp threw for 249 yards with three touchdown passes, one to Simpson. After the game, Loukas paid tribute to Shaw, saying "I can't give him enough credit. He told me what to look for, when to crash, when to hang back...all these things."^{iv} In the postgame locker room, Shaw came over and shook his hand and said, "Nice game, Angie."^v

Shaw was back in the starting line-up the following week. Loukas played the rest of the season primarily on special teams with limited action as backup guard to Shaw. He played in 13 of the teams 14 games, only missing the October 11 game versus Boston.

Playing in a snowstorm on November 30 against the Cincinnati Bengals, Loukas recovered a fumble, returning it five yards in the Bills 16-13 win over Cincinnati. It was one of the craziest weather games in Bills history. Buffalo won the game on a touchdown by Booker Edgerson, when he stole the ball from Bengals quarterback Greg Cook and returned it 10 yards for a touchdown.

Loukas played well when he got the chance and his future appeared bright with the Bills. He re-signed with Buffalo on July 11 and with Billy Shaw's retirement it looked like he was the odds on favorite to be the starting left guard. He started the team's first three preseason games, losses to the Jets (33-10), and Lions (22-6), but a win versus Philadelphia (35-20). He was injured against Philadelphia and was replaced by rookie guard Jim Reilly from Notre Dame. Reilly took his spot in the starting lineup for the remainder of the preseason.



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In the Bills final cutdown, they were unsure how long Loukas would be out and thus they decided to waive him as injured. On September 11, 1970, his once promising career as a Bill came to an end.

After recovering from his undisclosed injury, he joined the taxi-squad of the Denver Broncos. The Boston Patriots, in desperate need of offensive line help, signed Loukas on December 8, off the Broncos taxi squad. They activated him on December 11, for the last two games of the season. Loukas played back-up guard to former Bill Gary Bugenhagen in both games and played special teams where he made one tackle in the final game against Cincinnati, a 45-7 Patriots loss.

Loukas re-signed with the Patriots as a free agent on May 29, 1971. He had a short stay in the Patriots training camp as he was released on July 19. In early August he had a five-day tryout with the Canadian Football League's Edmonton Eskimos, but that did not work out.

Loukas joined the Hartford Knights of the ACFL shortly after that and was on the Knights active roster in time for their opening preseason game on August 14 versus the Twin City Chiefs.

Loukas was a fixture at starting left guard from the time he joined the Knights. In their second regular season game, they pounded the league powerhouse, the Norfolk Neptunes, 44-13. Loukas was named ACFL Player of the Week for his outstanding line play as the Knights rolled up 197 rushing yards and he did the punting chores, replacing the injured Kevin Watts. It was the first time since high school that Loukas had punted in a game.

Loukas battled injuries throughout the season, first breaking an arm in September, causing him to miss a couple games, and then in early November he sprained an ankle, limiting his power and quickness, but he played through it.

The Knights finished the regular season tied for first place with Norfolk as they both sported 9-3 records. Hartford led the league in rushing, averaging 168.3 yards per game behind the tremendous offensive line play of tackle Pierre Marchando and guards Dennis Fitzgerald and Loukas.

Norfolk and Hartford met on November 20 in the ACFL Championship game at Hartford's Dillon Stadium in front of 8,494 ardent fans. They battled throughout and Norfolk held a slight 14-13 lead into the fourth quarter. The Knights made two critical mistakes that cost them the game. Marv Pettaway fumbled a Norfolk punt at his own 25, but the Hartford defense held the Neptunes to a field goal, keeping them in the game at



17-13. On the ensuing Hartford possession, quarterback Tom Sherman fumbled a lateral pass that was recovered by Norfolk. Four plays later, Neptunes running back John Land burst through the Knights defense for a 10-yard touchdown that clinched the game and the championship for Norfolk.

After bouncing around through three AFL teams, trying out in the CFL, and having an injury-riddled season in Hartford, Loukas called it quits after his one year with the Knights.

Following his retirement, he spent many years in the hospitality business running various restaurants and pubs in his hometown, including such popular Chicago spots as old-time favorite Irelands, the Cubbies Lounge, a sports bar across the street from Wrigley Field, and the Golden Ox.

On November 1, 1995 he purchased a mixed-use building in Wicker Park at 1576 North Clybourn in Chicago for \$1,100,000. It includes retail space and apartments and Loukas still owns the property.

He won a raffle at the NFL Alumni Club Golf Tournament in September 1996 enabling him to attend the Pro Bowl in Hawaii in February 1997.

Had it not been for the injuries costing him a starting position in Buffalo and then his frustrating injuries with the Knights, Loukas could have had a very productive professional football career.

End Notes:

ⁱ Stolze, Mark, Free Agent Loukas Makes Good, Democrat and Chronicle (Rochester, NY), September 30, 1969, p38

ⁱⁱ Stolze, Mark, Free Agent Loukas Makes Good, Democrat and Chronicle (Rochester, NY), September 30, 1969, p38

ⁱⁱⁱ Stolze, Mark, Free Agent Loukas Makes Good, Democrat and Chronicle (Rochester, NY), September 30, 1969, p38

^{iv} Stolze, Mark, Free Agent Loukas Makes Good, Democrat and Chronicle (Rochester, NY), September 30, 1969, p38

^v Stolze, Mark, Free Agent Loukas Makes Good, Democrat and Chronicle (Rochester, NY), September 30, 1969, p38