

SPORTS

Bell Relates Story Of National League In Gridiron History

By BERT BELL
Commissioner, NFL
Written for the United Philadelphia

The development of the National Football League, now in its 38th year, is one of the most remarkable sports stories of the past half century, in my opinion.

Thirteen teams were represented in Canton, Ohio, in September, 1920, when the American Football Association was formed with Jim Thorpe as president.

In June, 1922 George Halas, one of the pioneers of professional football, made a motion that the name of the league be changed to the National Football League and it was unanimously adopted.

In 1926 there were 22 teams in the league, the largest number ever. The least number of teams to play in a season was eight in 1932. Since 1951 the number of teams in the league has remained constant at 12.

Business in the league has not always been as good as it is today. Over the years 42 clubs have gone out of business, an indication that the road to the top has not been strewn with roses.

To bring about the change that has made the National Football League successful, methods were devised which stimulated competition by enabling the less successful clubs to engage and retain the services of the better college players.

Selective Draft Installed
In 1934, when I was the owner of the Philadelphia Eagles, I proposed to the league that they adopt a selective draft. This was

adopted and in 1936 the first selection was made. The annual selection operates to benefit the lower teams in the standings at the end of the season preceding the selection. The team that finished last in the standings draws first and on up to the team that wins the championship playoff game of the two conferences, which draws last.

Thus each year the teams are brought to a more equal footing insofar as player personnel is concerned. This makes for better games, keener competition among the teams, greater spectator interest and enthusiasm and in the best interest of the public and the player.

That the annual selection has borne fruit is evidenced by the paid attendance figures during the years it has been in operation. In 1936 the total paid attendance for the season was \$16,007. Last year the attendance rose to 2,551,263. In the last five years the attendance record has been broken each year.

This, of course, has meant greater income to the player, which over the last 11 years has increased on the average approximately 300 per cent. When it is considered that a player can devote approximately seven months to a full-time job when not engaged in playing football and three months part-time when he is playing his yearly financial return is excellent.

Every year I consider it part of my responsibility to tell all players that the securing of a job is of first importance and that in conjunction with his playing football he should make every effort to establish himself in a business or professional career.

Home Club City
To this end, each individual club assists those players who are either temporarily or permanently relocating their homes, and helps them become established in a gainful occupation in the city where they are to play. Over 30 per cent of the players in the National Football League are working in the city in which their home club is located.

I tell the players that professional football is not a business for them, that it is a means of establishing themselves in a business or profession that they can carry on with the remainder of their lives. A survey of the 396 players in the National Football League shows that the average term of service was less than three and one-half years, an indication that playing professional football is not a career in itself.

The game as played in the National Football League today is vastly superior to that of 15 or 20 years ago. We play a much more open game with brilliant quarterbacks who can throw passes with the accuracy of sharpshooters and great receivers who can catch those passes. Our ball-carrying backs, our linemen on both offense and defense are the nation's best.

Increasing attendance figures, season after season, is convincing proof that the style of football played in the National Football League appeals to the public. In addition millions of fans in sections of the country remote from league cities enjoy this weekly spectacle on their television sets.

This should be another great year and if we get the breaks in the weather and the races are close in both conferences we should again break the record for attendance.

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PEEWEE BEANED—PeeWee Reese, Dodger shortstop, clutches his head after being struck in the fifth inning of the Brooklyn-Chicago Cubs game in Chicago. Cubs' pitcher Bob Anderson fielded Sandy Koufax's grounder, whirled and threw to shortstop Jack Littrell (foreground) at second. The ball hit Reese in the face and he was forced to leave the game. The Dodgers won, 12-3.

Rademacher Starts Work At Issaquah for Bout

Seattle — Pete Rademacher, as confident as any fighter who ever challenged for the heavyweight crown, resumed training today for his bout with Floyd Patterson and the "biggest day of my life."

Rademacher arrived here from Columbia, Ga., Monday accompanied by sparring partners Clarence Hinnant and Joe Gannon and two trainers. He is training at Issaquah, a small town about 15 miles from here.

The Olympic champ meets Patterson in Sicks Stadium here Aug. 22 in what will be Rademacher's first professional encounter. Big Pete, a 210-pounder, is positive he will win.

"I've never felt better," Rademacher said. "I'm in terrific condition I want to snap at anything and that's a good sign. I wouldn't have gone after this fight if I wasn't confident I'll win."

Rademacher isn't alone in his confidence. Gannon, who gave Patterson a rough go three years ago, predicted the boxing world is in for the shock of its life on Aug. 22.

A lot of writers are going to have to eat the words they've been writing about this fight, he said. A reporter asked Gannon to compare Rademacher with Archie Moore the lightweight titleholder whom Patterson kayoed to win the title.

Gannon said Rademacher could hit as hard as Moore with both hands and was just as slick and cute. "You just watch," he said. "You think he isn't as good as Moore. I tell you I feel it in my heart, he is going to beat Patterson."

ADMIRAL DIES
London — Admiral Sir Arthur Lumley St. George Lyster, 69, died Monday. He commanded aircraft carriers in three Mediterranean operations during World War II.

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HAPPY HOLIDAY
Hertford, England — The Hertford Rural Council notified tenants today they will not have to pay rent for two weeks during the August bank holiday and Christmas holidays. It then announced it would raise the rents the rest of the year.

REPORT POLIO CASES
Heidelberg, Germany — Eighteen cases of polio, two of them fatal, have been reported among American military men and dependents in Europe since Jan. 1. Army medical officials said today.

APPOINTS FIRST NEGRO
Washington — President Eisenhower has appointed for the first time a Negro, the Rev. Archibald J. Carey Jr. of Chicago—as chairman of his special committee on government employment policy.

BASHFUL BEAUTIES
Whitstable, England — Fifty of the 62 girls competing in a beauty contest here backed out at the last minute Monday. They said they were too shy to go out on the stage in front of all those people and be judged.

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