



DECEMBER, 2006 • VOLUME 5 • ISSUE 2



## 2006 FANS CHOICE AWARDS

### EX-EAGLE BILL BERGEY HONORED AT BANQUET

**NOVEMBER 28, 2006** • Current and former players from all of the local teams were present Tuesday for the 5th Annual Philadelphia Sports Fans Choice Awards. Held at the Wanamaker Building, the annual event helps to raise money for the Variety Club of Philadelphia. Alumni on hand included Fred Barnett, Garry Cobb, Mike Mamula, Kevin Reilly, Frank LeMaster, Harold Carmichael, and Lifetime Achievement Award recipient, Bill Bergey.

To make the night even more special, #66 was joined by friends and family including his sons Jason and Jake and his wife of 37 years, Mickey. Family was the theme of the evening as Bill joyfully shared the news about the impending arrival of his 5th grandchild in the past two-and-a-half years. Bill's burgeoning family should keep him in game shape for years to come.

Former teammates Kevin Reilly and Frank LeMaster set the stage with stories about what Bergey's arrival in Philadelphia meant to the team and to their careers. Paul Jolovitz, Bill's partner on the WYSP postgame show, gave a stirring introduction that detailed Bergey's climb from obscurity to stardom. Coming from a small town, Bergey went unrecruited out of high school and had to pack up his scrapbook and sell himself to colleges before finally landing at Arkansas State. A knee injury in 1979 almost cost him his career but through hard work and determination, Bill was able to get back on the field for the magical 1980 season before retiring in 1981.

Congratulations Bill Bergey, recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award!



## WHERE ARE THEY NOW? JOHN WALTON • 1976-79



In football, as in life, it's all about who you know. How many head coaching jobs have gone to disciples of the West Coast offense over the past 20 years? From Mike Holmgren's Green Bay staff alone, no less than six head coaches have emerged, including Eagles coach Andy Reid. This past off-season, Brad Childress became the first assistant plucked off of the Reid branch of the West Coast tree whose roots run all the way back to the Bill Walsh Niners dynasty and beyond.

Another example of the benefit of having friends in high places can be found in a former Eagle... John Walton broke into the NFL with the LA Rams in 1969. That same year, an assistant coach by the name of Dick Vermeil joined George Allen's LA staff. After landing the head coaching job in Philly in 1976, Vermeil brought Walton along with him to the city of brotherly love.

It was during his four year stint in Philly that John experienced the highlight of his pro career. On a Monday night in 1979, Ron Jaworski took a vicious hit from Ed "Too Tall" Jones during a pivotal game against the hated Cowboys. While Jaws recovered on the sideline, Walton quarterbacked the team to ten quick points culminated by a 29-yard scoring strike to Charlie Smith. Those ten points equaled the final margin of victory in one of the biggest wins in team history.

After retiring from the NFL, Walton's connections paid off again when Dick Coury, a former Eagles assistant, coaxed him out of retirement to quarterback his new USFL team. After two fine seasons as the starting QB of the Breakers, Walton broke into the coaching ranks, first with Dick Coury, and later, as an assistant to Roman Gabriel, another Eagle connection from his past.

John played his college ball in his hometown at Elizabeth City State in North Carolina. Today, Walton is a Physical Education teacher at H.L. Trigg Community School in Pasquotank, NC.





## FOCUS ON HEALTH

### THE HIGH COST OF CONCUSSIONS

Repeated concussions brought on by blows to the head during their playing days significantly boost the chances that retired NFL players will suffer complications such as mild cognitive impairment in later life, a new study suggests.

The study found that retired NFL players also faced a 37 percent higher risk of Alzheimer's than other U.S. males of the same age.

"In this study, we had some very interesting findings," Guskiewicz said. "Our data suggest that a history of recurrent concussions and probable sub-concussive contacts to the head may be risk factors for the onset of late-life memory impairment, mild cognitive impairment and earlier expression of Alzheimer's disease. Research like this is important since more than 300,000 sport-related concussions, many of which are recurrent injuries, occur annually in the U.S. and more than 1.2 million Americans suffer head injuries each year."

The study surveyed 3,683 former NFL players who belonged to the NFL Retired Player's Association concerning their overall health.

Of the retired players contacted, 2,552 returned questionnaires or had their spouses or a close relative do so for a 70 percent response rate. Players averaged 54 years old and had an average professional career spanning 6.6 years.

"When considering prevalence of previous concussions, 1,513 or 60.8 percent of the retired players reported having sustained at least one concussion during their professional playing career. 597 or 24 percent reported sustaining three or more concussions" Guskiewicz said.

Retired players with three or more concussions had a five-fold greater chance of having been diagnosed with mild cognitive impairment and a three-fold prevalence of reported significant memory problems compared to those players without a history of concussion, he said. Physicians had diagnosed 33 players with Alzheimer's.



### THE 2006 BERT BELL AWARDS

**NOVEMBER 14, 2006** • Five Eagles alumni members were present as one of their own was honored with the Leonard Tose Award at the 2006 Bert Bell Memorial Dinner. In addition to the ex-players, former Eagles General Manager Jim Murray was in attendance and provided a stirring invocation to kick-off festivities. Alumni in attendance included Mike Evans, Roman Gabriel, Cecil Martin, Ron Jaworski, and Leonard Tose Award recipient, Vince Papale.

The Awards Dinner paid tribute to young people who have battled cancer by awarding Kim Hill college scholarships and full tuition scholarships to Saint Joseph's University and Drexel University.

Joining the Eagles of the past were current players Dirk Johnson, Shawn Barber, Correll Buckhalter and head coach Andy Reid. The annual dinner is held in memory of Bert Bell, the founder of the Eagles who went on to become commissioner of the NFL. The dinner was held by the Eagles Fly for Leukemia, a charity that was founded in 1971 when tight end Fred Hill's daughter Kim was diagnosed with Leukemia.

Since its inception, the Eagles Fly for Leukemia has donated over six million dollars toward the goal of abolishing childhood cancers and was responsible for the development of the world's first Ronald McDonald House. Today, there are 266 Ronald McDonald Houses in 30 countries around the world.





## IN MEMORY OF...

### DON BURROUGHS • 1931-2006



Former Eagle Don Burroughs, a safety who played for the team from 1960-64, passed away at the age of 75. Nicknamed "The Blade", Burroughs began his NFL career with the LA Rams who signed him as a free agent quarterback from Colorado State in 1955. He was acquired in a trade by Philadelphia in 1960 and was a member of the Eagles championship squad that year, snagging a career-high 9 interceptions.

At 6'5", "The Blade" may have been the tallest defensive back ever to play in the NFL. He ranks fifth on the Eagles' all-time interception list with 29, tied with current Eagles safety Brian Dawkins. During his 10-year career with the Rams and Eagles, Burroughs, a native of Los Angeles, CA, posted 50 interceptions.

Over the past five seasons, the Eagles and Steelers have flirted repeatedly with an all Pennsylvania Super Bowl. Both teams appeared in their respective Conference Championship games after the 2001 and 2004 seasons and have made seven conference championship game appearances between them so far this decade. They missed each other by one season when the Steelers took home the coveted Lombardi trophy one year after the Eagles fell just short. The same thing happened 25 years ago when the Eagles made it to the big game after back-to-back Super Bowl wins by the Steelers. While the Steelers' failure to make the playoffs in 1980 erased any hope of an all PA Super Bowl that year, the season prior was a much closer call.

1979 is remembered for the unprecedented fourth Super Bowl championship won by Pittsburgh over the L.A. Rams that cemented the Steelers status as the team of the decade. What most people fail to recall is how close the Eagles were to making that Super Bowl an all Pennsylvania affair..

After getting off to a 6 and 1 start that season, the Eagles finished equally strong by winning 6 of their last 7. The first win of that dominant late season run was a historic one on Monday night against the Cowboys at Texas stadium. After six straight losses against Dallas to start off the Vermeil era and only 2 wins in the prior 23 meetings with the bitter rival, the double-digit win in Big D was HUGE! The watershed victory propelled the Eagles to the best record in the conference, but the hated Cowboys joined them at the top of the NFC heap with an equal win total of 11 games. With identical division records, the tie-breaker came down to conference record and the Cowboys eked out the coveted #1 seed by virtue of one more NFC victory.

Relegated to the 4th seed, the Eagles had to battle the Bears in the Wild Card round while the Cowboys and two other teams with less wins had the luxury of a first-round bye. After 19 years without a playoff victory, the Eagles delivered an early Christmas gift to their fans with a 10-point win against Chicago at home on December 23rd. The victory set the stage for a 2nd round game against a rested Buccaneers team that would play host to the Eagles despite their inferior 10-6 record that season. The home field advantage plus a week of rest provided just enough of an edge for the less talented Tampa team to slip by the Eagles 24-17. Adding insult to injury, the Buccaneers were shut out 9-0 the following week at home in the championship game against the 9-7 L.A. Rams. *(continued next page)*

### DICK ERDLITZ • 1920-2006



Former Eagle who was an All American and captain at Northwestern has passed away at the age of 86. Between his two stints with the Eagles, Erdlitz fought in World War II for 3 years earning 11 battle stars, an Air Medal, an ATO Ribbon, an Asiatic Pacific Ribbon with 5 bronze stars, an overseas Service Bar and the Presidential Unit Citation. After his playing career, Erdlitz became a Lt. Colonel and commander of the 90th Aerial Port Squadron.

In addition to his military achievements, Erdlitz won the Knute Rockne trophy during his stay at Northwestern and appeared in the 1946 issue of "Ripley's Believe it or Not!" *(see above graphic)*

He is survived by his wife of 55 years, three children and numerous grandchildren.





### TURNING BACK THE CLOCK... THE '79 SEASON *(Continued from previous page)*

The 1979 Philadelphia Eagles may have been an even better version than the 1980 squad that went on to play in Super Bowl XV. Harold Carmichael had a banner year with a career-high 11 touchdown receptions while Wilbert Montgomery posted the highest TD (9) and rushing (1512) totals of his career. The '79 team boasted a whopping 7 Pro Bowl selections compared to 4 following the 1980 campaign.

Had things broken differently with the tie-breaker that season, there is little doubt that the Eagles would have joined the Steelers in Pasadena for an all Pennsylvania Super Bowl. Could the Eagles have changed history by defeating their cross-state rival? The Steelers victory over the 9-7 Rams that day (a game they trailed after 3 quarters) was an unprecedented and still unduplicated 4th Super Bowl triumph in six years. Most would say that there is no way to know what would have transpired had the two teams faced each other that season, but lest we forget, they DID meet on the gridiron that fateful year...

On September 30, 1979, the Eagles and Steelers went head-to-head in a heated battle for State supremacy and when the dust settled, it was the Eagles who emerged victorious over the Super Bowl champions. **Final score: 17-14!**

#### PHILADELPHIA EAGLES TRIVIA

Which of the following Alumni members was originally drafted by the Eagles?

- A. Hugh Douglas B. Ron Jaworski C. Norm Van Brocklin  
D. Bill Bergey E. Wilbert Montgomery F. Timmy Brown  
(Answer from last month: Timmy Brown)

## FINANCIAL FOCUS

### NFL ESTABLISHES DIRE NEED TRUST TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO FORMER PLAYERS AND COACHES

In keeping with its secondary mission of helping its own, the NFL Alumni has teamed with the NFL to establish a Dire Need Charitable Trust with the express purpose of providing assistance to former NFL players and coaching staff members suffering from financial or medical hardship. Eligible players are selected through an application and review process that ascertains need for medical attention, shelter and other life necessities. Medical necessities receive the highest consideration.

#### ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES

NFL Alumni Dire Need grant applications are considered on a case-by-case basis, with reference to the following eligibility guidelines:

- Applicant must be a former NFL player or NFL coach with at least two credited seasons of NFL play or employment, and such player's or former coach's spouse and children are eligible.
- Applicant does not have to be a member of the NFL Alumni organization.
- Applicant's adjusted gross income during each of the past two years must not exceed \$50,000 annually.
- First-time applicants will be preferred to repeat applicants.
- Applicants who have received more than two dire need grants in the past will not be eligible for further grants absent extraordinary circumstances.

#### REQUIRED APPLICATION INFORMATION

- NFL affiliation and season played or employed.
- Description of dire need and amount requested.
- Identity of creditor to whom funds would be paid.
- Tax returns for self and spouse for past two years.
- Net worth statement (list of assets/property and liability/debts).

For additional information or to receive a grant application, contact:

**NFL ALUMNI TRUST ADMINISTRATOR**

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## WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

If you have any unique story ideas, comments, or suggestions for the newsletter or know of any alumni members who are not receiving it, please call Harold Carmichael at 215.463.2500.

#### THE PHILADELPHIA EAGLES ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

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