



NOVEMBER, 2006 • VOLUME 5 • ISSUE 1



## EAGLES ALUMNI DAY 2006

**SEPTEMBER 17, 2006** • Over 30 members of the Eagles Alumni Association gathered together on September 17th for the annual alumni game at Lincoln Financial Field. During a half-time ceremony, each alum was introduced to the crowd before a tribute video was displayed on the video screen capturing some of the great Eagles moments from the past 50 years. Tommy McDonald was up to his old tricks as he bounced around the field like the child he is at heart.

Some of the loudest ovations were reserved for “Mr. Invincible” himself, Vince Papale, as well as Concrete Charlie, (a.k.a. Chuck Bednarik) and old number 17, Harold Carmichael.

Prior to the game, the alumni were treated to a gourmet luncheon while they shared old war stories and caught up with one another.

Despite the final outcome of the game, a memorable time was had by all, especially ex-middle linebacker Mike Reichenbach, who was effusive in his praise of the event and the efforts of the Philadelphia Eagles to make the day so special for the alumni.

Thanks to everyone who helped make the event such a success, and special thanks to all of the Alumni who participated this year. **For more photos from Alumni Day, visit: [www.Split-N.com!](http://www.Split-N.com!)**



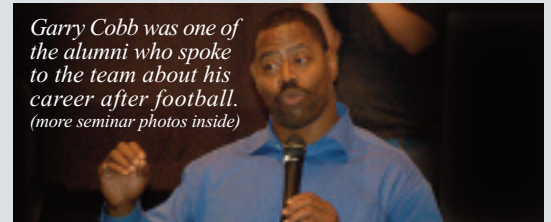
## Player Development

### LIFE SKILLS SEMINAR

**SEPT. 18, 2006** • The NFL Player Development program called upon four distinguished alumni to speak from the heart to the current crop of Philadelphia Eagles. Vai Sikahema served as the emcee and shared about his transition from the playing field into the local Philadelphia media.

Mike Quick shared some of the life lessons he learned after balky knees led to his early retirement from the Philadelphia Eagles in 1990.

*Garry Cobb was one of the alumni who spoke to the team about his career after football. (more seminar photos inside)*



Garry Cobb stressed the importance of making positive connections during your playing career; “striking while the iron is hot,” so to speak.

Kevin Reilly also contributed with an attention grabbing tale of how football cost him his left arm but prepared him for a successful career in business and broadcasting.

The players were attentive and in some cases, inspired to piggyback off what the alumni members had shared. Darwin Walker spoke about a huge opportunity he would have the following day during a meeting with executives from Sunoco. Dhani Jones followed with a story about how he took advantage of his rookie season on IR to begin laying the foundation for life after football. That was really the theme of the day and who better to drive that theme home than alumni.

A desire for more seminar time was a common theme echoed by Brian Dawkins and many of the players on hand. Rob Morrissey of the NFL Player Development program raved about the attentiveness of the players and input of the alumni and ranked the seminar tops in the league.





Highlights from the NFL Player Development Life Skills Seminar held on September 18th. (see article on front)

## FOCUS ON HEALTH

A new study has found that retired NFL linemen have a three times greater risk of dying from heart disease than players at other positions.

Data was compiled by retired heart surgeon and NFL quarterback Dr. Archie Roberts. A backup quarterback for the Cleveland Browns and Miami Dolphins in the mid-1960s, Roberts set up the foundation after he himself suffered a stroke.

Since 2003, the foundation, in cooperation with the NFL Players Association, has done screenings of about 400 retired players for the study.

“This affirms what we have long believed, that retired NFL athletes may want to consider having heart ultrasound tests and metabolic screenings to detect cardiovascular health problems before they become advanced and more likely to harm these former players,” Roberts said.



**OCTOBER 4, 2006** • For the 5th year in-a-row, Eagles alumni and rookies joined together for a special night of food, fellowship & fun at Chickie’s & Pete’s in South Philly. The 2006 roster includes 17 rookies and nearly all of them were in attendance as they had the opportunity to brush elbows with some Eagle greats from the past. Garry Cobb and LaJuan Ramsey shared a common USC Heritage. Arkansas State was well represented with Bill Bergey and Fred Barnett in attendance. Rivalries were renewed as Eagles alum Joe Pisarcik sought out his fellow New Mexico State Aggie, rookie Nick Cole, and traded jibes with New Mexico alum, Hank Baskett.

The competitive nature of everyone in attendance came to the forefront as rookies and alumni alike engaged in a heated game of trivia. Rookies scrambled to mine information from the alumni in order to position themselves for victory in the 2nd annual trivia challenge. When the dust settled, three men were left standing with perfect scores: Alumni member Garry Cobb and rookies Jason Avant and Jeremy Bloom. Other current and former players in attendance included 1st round draft choice Brodrick Bunkley, Eagles ambassador Hugh Douglas and Super Bowl champion JeRod Cherry.

Special thanks to the Eagles Youth Partnership for sponsoring the event and Chickie’s & Pete’s for hosting it.

Alum Fred Barnett flanked by rookies Jeremy Bloom & Jason Avant





## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

### MIKE REICHENBACH

*(Third from left: Mike Reichenbach joins his fellow alumni at Training Camp 2006 at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania)*

**OCTOBER 17, 2006** • The 2006 Eagles have over a dozen players on their 53-man roster that came into the league as undrafted rookie free agents. A glance at the practice squad reveals another half dozen players who have joined the league in similar fashion. In today's NFL, a player like Hank Baskett can have a huge impact just months after going undrafted through the current 7 round format. But let's go back in time to 1984 when NFL rosters were capped at 45 and the draft soldiered on for 12 rounds. Back then, "rookie free agent" was another term for "camp body" or "dead man walking." One such long shot who came out of nowhere to make the Eagles roster and go on to a productive 9-year career was middle linebacker Mike Reichenbach.

He didn't really come out of nowhere, but East Stroudsburg University has to rank a close 2nd. He was raised in Bethlehem, PA, the same town that had produced Eagle great Chuck Bednarik, but that is where the similarities end. While Concrete Charlie was the first player taken in the 1949 draft, Reichenbach went untouched through all 12 rounds of the '84 draft and landed with the Eagles after being blown away by a \$5000 signing bonus. He soon found himself toiling in a training camp that featured 120 players vying for 45 spots. Miraculously, he survived one cut down day after another until finally, after the last preseason game, it looked like he'd made the team. As fate would have it, an injury to another player led to some roster shuffling that ultimately caused General Manager Harry Gamble to utter the fateful words, "come to my office...and bring your playbook."

Despite being the last cut, Reichenbach continued to train for hours each day. Four weeks into the season, it appeared that any hope of an NFL career had slipped away, but then fate took another twist...it was actually Bill Cowher's knee that was twisted, and an injury to the future Super Bowl champion coach opened the door for this longest of long shots. After cutting a training session short and letting go of his lifelong dream, Mike Reichenbach returned home only to be greeted by his ecstatic mother with the words: **"THE EAGLES CALLED...YOU MADE THE TEAM!"**

Not only had he made the team, but by making the tackle after all six punts in his first game, Reichenbach quickly established himself as a key member of the special teams. This was only the beginning. *(continued on the next page)*

## IN MEMORY OF...

### ERNIE STEELE • 1917-2006



Ex-Eagle Ernie Steele passed away at his home in Seattle, WA at 88 years of age. Steele is survived by his wife, Jo, and his 5 children: daughters Pamela, Priscilla, Rebecca and Roberta, and son, Ernie.

Drafted by Philadelphia in 1942 out of the University of Pittsburgh, Steele spent each of his seven NFL seasons (1942-48) with the Eagles, serving as a halfback, defensive back and returner.

Having played in 69 career games, Steele ranks as the franchise's all-time leading punt returner (16.8 yards/return) and also is tied for eighth on the club's all-time list with 24 career interceptions.

Steele ended his playing days in style with a game clinching interception on the final play of his career in the 1948 championship game.



1948 NFL CHAMPIONSHIP TEAM

### VICTOR SEARS • 1918-2006



Former Eagle great Vic Sears passed away Thursday at his home in Winston-Salem, N.C. At 88 years of age and was survived by his wife, Grace.

A tackle out of Oregon State University, his Eagles career spanned 13 seasons (1941-53) and included 131 games played. He was a member of the NFL's 1940s All-Decade Team. Sears was a part of three Eagles teams that advanced to the NFL Championship from 1947-49, and registered wins in the last two trips. He was also a part of the 1943 "Steagles," a team formed when the Eagles and Steelers merged due to a lack of manpower because of World War II. The team split their home games between Philadelphia's Shibe Park and Pittsburgh's Forbes Field that season going 5-4-1.





## WHERE ARE THEY NOW? MIKE REICHENBACH

*(Continued from previous page)*

Not too long after making his debut, an injury to another player forced him into a starting role at inside linebacker where he

would be a mainstay for the next 5 seasons. It was at the end of that period of time when his greatest battle would be fought...

"After 5 seasons, all my dreams had come true, but inside, I was empty..." Reichenbach recalled. "I would drive around on our off day just weeping." It was about that time when a teenager named Rich Bozzi changed his life. "Rich was dying from Leukemia, but had recently become a Christian..." Mike reflected. "I could see in Rich's eyes that he had a peace... that he knew where he was going and that he had found assurance in Jesus Christ." "I wanted that assurance... that peace." In 1989, Mike Reichenbach committed his life to Christ and after a rocky first season in Miami, his spiritual life really began to take off. After one more season in Miami, Mike wrapped up his career in San Francisco in 1992.

When he looks back on his career, Reichenbach refers to it as "a great road to come through..." "I stood 20 feet away from Jack Lambert during a game my rookie year after growing up with his poster on my bedroom wall." "I remember shaking Walter Payton's hand at midfield as a captain preparing for the coin toss... The relationships are what I cherish the most... with teammates like Rich Kraynak, coaches like George Hill, and most of all, my relationship with Jesus Christ."

*Today, Mike Reichenbach is the head football coach at Calvary Christian Academy in Phila. He & his wife Lynne have 3 children: Mike, 13, Kelli, 12, & Joshua 7.*

### PHILADELPHIA EAGLES TRIVIA

*Brian Westbrook just became the second Eagle to record 100 yards rushing and 100 yards receiving in the same game...who was the first Eagle to do it?*

A. Duce Staley B. Ricky Watters C. Wilbert Montgomery  
D. Herschel Walker E. Timmy Brown F. Keith Byars  
*(Answer will be in next month's newsletter)*

## FINANCIAL FOCUS

### NFL, NFLPA AGREE TO IMPROVE PLAYER BENEFITS

The NFL and the NFL Players Association have agreed to a series of improvements in NFL player benefits for retired players, including significant pension increases and other new benefits.

Retired players now receive nearly \$60 million per year from the Bert Bell/Pete Rozelle Retirement Plan. In addition, there are three other funds that provide more than \$1 million a year in financial assistance to retired NFL players in need. They are the NFLPA's Players Assistance Trust, the NFL and NFL Alumni Association's Dire Need Fund, and the Pro Football Hall of Fame's Enshrinee Assistance Fund.

"We are proud to have the most extensive benefits package in professional sports," said Harold Henderson, NFL executive vice president of labor relations/chairman of the NFL Management Council. "These improvements are consistent with our commitment in every negotiation to address post-career issues and improve the benefits of retired players. No other industry reaches back like this to take care of former employees."

"The current players have great respect for the heritage of the NFL and the former players that have contributed to the league's success," said Gene Upshaw, executive director of the NFLPA. "As they have done on previous occasions, the current players strongly supported the idea of using a portion of their negotiated benefits money to fund improvements for the retired players." *For full details about the benefit plan improvements, visit: [www.nfl.com/news/story/9574122](http://www.nfl.com/news/story/9574122)*



### SAVE THE DATE! • DECEMBER 4, 2006

The 8th Annual Otho Davis Scholarship Foundation Awards Luncheon with special guest: Dick Vermeil  
For more information, please call 1-800-949-4452

## WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

We hope you enjoyed the newly redesigned Philadelphia Eagles Alumni Newsletter! If you have any comments or suggestions you'd like to make about this issue, call Harold Carmichael at 215.463.2500.

Let us know if there are any alumni members who are not receiving this or if you have any news that we could feature in a future issue.

### THE PHILADELPHIA EAGLES ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

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