



GREATEST EAGLES TEAM EVER?

“BEST OF THE NEST” TOURNAMENT CROWNS CHAMPION

Last Christmas, “Rocky Balboa” opened to rave reviews. The plot centered around a computer-generated bout between current heavyweight champ Mason Dixon and a younger version of Rocky Balboa. The fictional champion, played by real-life boxer Antonio Tarver, was enraged when the computer churned out a result in favor of “The Italian Stallion.” The cyber-snob set the stage for a “genuine” bout between the fifty-year-old Balboa (played by sixty-year-old Sylvester Stallone) and the youthful Dixon.

The movie capitalized on the age-old practice of sports fans debating the greatest teams, moments and players of all time. What if Lombardi’s Packers squared off against Belichick’s Patriots or the 1927 Yankees faced the Bronx Bombers of the Derek Jeter era? Thanks to the Web site WhatIfSports.com, anyone can conjure up their dream match-up and settle, once and for all, the age-old question: “who was the greatest?”

So who was the best Philadelphia Eagles team of all time? In honor of this being the 75th season in team history, local radio personality Glen Macnow teamed up with the Daily News and WhatIfSports.com to determine who was the “Best of the Nest.”

They started with the championship teams from 1949 and 1960, who received first-round-byes, and sprinkled in conference champions from 1980 and 2004. For good measure, they rounded out the field with fan favorite squads from 1988 and 1995 and then let the computer do its thing.

In the first round, Dick Vermeil’s 1980 NFC Champions handled Ray Rhodes’ 1995 squad 21-7 on the strength of two touchdown catches by Charlie Smith and one by Wilbert Montgomery. The next game pitted Buddy Ryan’s 1988 division champs against Andy Reid’s 2004 squad. The “46 Defense” was no match for McNabb and company as the 2004 NFC Champions rolled to a 31-17 victory.

In an upset, the 1980 team won a semifinal tilt against Steve Van Buren and the 1949 World Champions at Shibe Park. Wilbert Montgomery was the player of the game with 17 rushes for 95 yards and a touchdown in

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the 17-10 triumph over the top seed in the tournament. The following day at Franklin Field, the 2004 squad stunned the last Eagles team to win the championship with a 31-12 thrashing. Chuck Bednarik and the gang had no answer for running back Brian Westbrook who shredded the 1960 Eagles defense for 168 yards on just 14 carries. The back-to-back upsets set the stage for a title game pitting Vermeil’s team from the magical 1980 season and Andy Reid’s squad from three years ago.

The title game was held at high noon at Veterans Stadium on May 19, 2007. The 2004 club took a commanding 21-10 lead into the 4th quarter before a furious comeback turned the tables in favor of the 1980 NFC Champions. Louie Giammona was the unlikely hero with two scores on the day, including a 60-yard touchdown run with seven minutes to go that provided the margin of victory.

The final score was 25-21 and included a 2-point conversion by Harold Carmichael that wouldn’t have been possible during his playing days. Speaking of Carmichael, his current role with the Eagles placed him in a peculiar position. Old #17 had to stand on the sidelines of the 2004 squad while his younger version celebrated the victory on the opposite side of the field. Never-the-less, the bragging rights should come in handy over at the NovaCare Complex.

◀ Cyber-championship game hero • #33 Louie Giammona





FOCUS ON HEALTH

NFL FORMS ALLIANCE FOR RETIRED PLAYERS IN NEED

The NFL and its related organizations have agreed to work together to support former players in need of medical care, Commissioner Roger Goodell announced last month.

Commissioner Goodell informed NFL clubs at a league meeting in Nashville that the NFL, NFLPA, NFL Retired Players Association, NFL Alumni Association, NFL Charities and the Pro Football Hall of Fame will form the first-ever alliance to coordinate medical support services for former players with medical needs.

“All of us in the NFL want to help former players that now find themselves in need of medical care through no fault of their own,” said Commissioner Goodell. “Several NFL-related groups have been working independently over the years to provide medical assistance, but now we will work together to identify and help players more effectively in a common effort.”

Harold Henderson, the NFL’s executive vice president of labor relations, will serve as the lead executive in this new initiative.

Among the ideas being discussed:

- Better identification of players who need assistance and making the system more efficient so that help can be delivered to these players.
- Arrangements with facilities in different areas of the country where former players can obtain high-quality care at a reasonable cost.
- Collaborating with outside service groups to provide players with education and guidance on obtaining medical care at reasonable costs that would expand access to care for retired players.
- Ensuring availability of affordable assisted living facilities for former players.

Former NFL players who want to support these efforts will have the opportunity to contribute to their former teammates by participating in fund-raising efforts, including golf tournaments and online auctions.



TURN BACK THE CLOCK THE 1949 NFL DRAFT LOTTERY

Last month, the NBA held its annual draft lottery. The system was originally instituted in 1985 in response to allegations that the Rockets had lost games purposely in 1984 to set itself up for a shot at Akeem Olajuwon. With potential superstars like Greg Oden and Kevin Durant ready to join the league in 2007, team representatives arrived in New York City with high hopes. Franchise futures and front office careers were at the mercy of a bevy of little white ping-pong balls and when the dust settled, controversy reigned.

The two teams with the worst records (Memphis and Boston) were on the outside looking in as superior teams leap-frogged them for the coveted picks. To many, it was poetic justice. Down the stretch, the Celtics and Grizzlies appeared to give less than an honest effort to win games in exchange for better odds in the lottery. Both teams cried foul after the results were revealed during the nationally televised event on May 22nd, and in the aftermath, parties from both sides of the controversy have lobbied for an overhaul of the system.

No such controversy surrounds the NFL’s version of the draft. In the ongoing pursuit of parity, NFL teams are simply seeded worst to first in the selection process, but it hasn’t always been that way.

The NFL’s first draft was held after the 1936 season. Under the original system, proposed by then-Eagles’ owner Bert Bell, teams drafted in reverse order of finish, just as they do today. Ten years later, at the behest of some of the more successful teams in the league, the NFL instituted a bonus selection that would determine the number one pick by virtue of a lottery. In 1947, each NFL team was eligible for the bonus-pick and the league champion Chicago Bears hit the jackpot and were awarded the first selection. Once a team was awarded the bonus pick, they were no longer eligible for the lottery during the remainder of the twelve-year experiment.

Two years later, on December 19, 1948, The Philadelphia Eagles won their first NFL championship. Two days after that, they were victorious again as the parity-busting lottery system awarded them the coveted first pick. The timing couldn’t have been better. A local war hero and two-time All American at the University of Pennsylvania was the prize of the draft. Under the standard system, the league champion Eagles would have been totally out of the running for the future Hall of Famer. *(continued on the back page)*





WHERE ARE THEY NOW? #95 JOHN BUNTING

“Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.” - **ALFRED LORD TENNYSON**

In December 2000, Former Eagles linebacker John Bunting realized a dream he had harbored since his collegiate days. “I always wanted to get back to Chapel Hill” Bunting shared as he continued his recovery from double knee replacement surgery at his summer home in Maine. He realized his dream when he returned to his alma mater as the Tar Heels head football coach six years ago. After a strong start led to a contract extension in 2004, lean years in 2005 and 2006 led to his dismissal last season. It was the end of a dream. “Aside from the losses, it was like Camelot” Bunting reflected.

In many ways, Bunting’s entire career in football has been the stuff of legend and fairy tale. Who could have expected the 10th round pick to start 119 games during an 11-year career in Eagles green? When a torn ACL knocked him out in 1978, it looked like his storybook career had come to an end. Instead, an experimental operation and hundreds of hours of hard work brought the dream back to life. “(Eagles trainers) Otho Davis and Ron O’Neil did an excellent job getting me ready for the 1979 opener” Bunting gratefully recalled. He went on to start every game during the magical 1980 season, including the monumental victory over Dallas that led to the crushing loss in Super Bowl XV. “Roynell Young came up to me in the locker room after the Super Bowl and said, ‘don’t worry J.B., we’ll be back again next year’ but he was a rookie and had no idea how hard it was to get there” Bunting lamented.

Despite Roynell Young’s failed prediction, Bunting still found a way to bring a championship home to the city of Philadelphia. After his leading role in the players strike led to his release in 1982, Bunting walked to the other side of Veterans Stadium and joined the Philadelphia Stars of the USFL. In the final game of his playing career, Bunting and the Stars delivered a title to the city of Philadelphia with a 23-3 triumph over George Allen’s Arizona Wranglers. The following season, Bunting embarked on a coaching career that would extend his stay in the Philadelphia area to 20 years. After a highly successful stint at Glassboro State, Bunting joined the coaching ranks of the NFL in 1993 and was reunited with Dick Vermeil four years later when he joined the Rams staff in 1997.

IN MEMORY OF...

DICK HUMBERT • 1918-2007

Former end Dick Humbert passed away on May 23, at the age of 88 in Richmond, Virginia. Humbert played 60 games with the Eagles in 1941, 1945-49, and was a member of their back-to-back championship teams in 1948-49. He caught 68 passes for 731 yards and six touchdowns and posted 14 interceptions on defense.

Nicknamed “Banana Hands” by his teammates for his large hands, he led the team in receptions (29) during his rookie season of 1941 and in interceptions (7) during his final season in 1949.

Humbert was commissioned by the U.S. Navy in 1942 and served three years as the commander of a submarine chaser, until being discharged with a rank of Lieutenant in 1945. He received a degree from the University of Richmond where he lettered in four sports - football, basketball, track and baseball. Following his NFL career, Humbert returned to his alma mater to serve as a coach, professor and administrator.

Born on December 31, 1918, in Reading, PA, Humbert is survived by a brother, Jack, sisters, Priscilla Bischoff and Susannah Moore, two children, and seven grandchildren.

On January 30, 2000, John Bunting and Dick Vermeil returned to the Super Bowl with a shot at redemption. “I remember walking down to the field that day and thinking about John Spagnola and Keith Krepfle; Stan Walters and Harold Carmichael; Woody Peoples and Randy Logan and so many of the guys I had played with in Philadelphia” Bunting reflected.

On the final play of the game, one of Bunting’s pupils (Mike Jones) made a Super Bowl saving tackle at the one-yard line and at last, Vermeil and some of his former players from Philadelphia were champions. “What a privilege and an honor and what a feeling I get to take with me forever” Bunting said of his opportunity to win a Super Bowl with his old coach and mentor, Dick Vermeil.

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TURN BACK THE CLOCK...

THE 1949 NFL LOTTERY *(continued from page 2)*

Thanks to the lottery, Philadelphia was able to draft Chuck Bednarik with the first overall selection in the 1949 draft.

Concrete Charlie went on to be named All-NFL at linebacker eight times and was equally dominant on the offensive side of the ball. In 1969, Chuck Bednarik was named to the NFL's All-Time Team at center two years after his induction into the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

Philadelphia went on to win the NFL title again the following year during Bednarik's rookie campaign and added a third title in 1960 with Chuck leading the way. The last of the 60-minute men was also the last number one pick for the Eagles, and what a pick it was!

1958 marked the end of the lottery experiment in the NFL. Only two of the twelve players chosen with the bonus pick went on to have Hall of Fame careers.

JUNE TRIVIA QUESTION

Who was the 1st draft pick in NFL and Eagles history and the 1st Heisman trophy winner?

1. Davey O'Brien
2. Jay Berwanger
3. Sam Francis
4. Herman "Reds" Bassman

(Answer from last month: BILLY RAY BARNES)

2007 REGULAR SEASON SCHEDULE

| | | |
|------------------|---------------|-----------|
| Sunday, Sept. 9 | @ Green Bay | 1 p.m. |
| Monday, Sept. 17 | Washington | 8:30 p.m. |
| Sunday, Sept. 23 | Detroit | 1 p.m. |
| Sunday, Sept. 30 | @ Giants | 8:15 p.m. |
| Sunday, Oct. 14 | @ Jets | 1 p.m. |
| Sunday, Oct. 21 | Chicago | 4:15 p.m. |
| Sunday, Oct. 28 | @ Minnesota | 1 p.m. |
| Sunday, Nov. 4 | Dallas | 8:15 p.m. |
| Sunday, Nov. 11 | @ Washington | 1 p.m. |
| Sunday, Nov. 18 | Miami | 1 p.m. |
| Sunday, Nov. 25 | @ New England | 8:15 p.m. |
| Sunday, Dec. 2 | Seattle | 1 p.m. |
| Sunday, Dec. 9 | Giants | 1 p.m. |
| Sunday, Dec. 16 | @ Dallas | 4:15 p.m. |
| Sunday, Dec. 23 | @ New Orleans | 1 p.m. |
| Sunday, Dec. 30 | Buffalo | 1 p.m. |

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

#95 JOHN BUNTING *(continued from page 3)*

The realization of one dream led to the fulfillment of another when the Tar Heels came calling 11 months later. Despite the sad ending to his Carolina story, Bunting's time in Chapel Hill was not without its memorable moments, the greatest of which took place on October 30, 2004 when fourth-ranked Miami fell to his Tar Heels on a 42-yard field goal as time expired. Additional wins over Florida State and Virginia highlighted his tenure but were not enough to extend the dream. After learning of their coach's imminent departure, the 2006 squad rallied around their leader and finished strong. Near misses against the top two teams in the conference were followed up with victories in the final two games of Bunting's tenure, including a third-straight triumph over cross-town rival N.C. State.

Nearing his 57th birthday, Bunting plans to spend the summer getting his knees healthy and visiting some NFL training camps before returning to North Carolina in the fall. He and his wife Dawn, a former football player and collegiate coach herself, will oversee the completion of a new home in Hampstead, North Carolina before embarking on the next, and final phase of a storied career.

As for his Eagles legacy, Bunting was ecstatic to hear that his 1980 squad was crowned the greatest Eagles team of all time recently by a computer-simulated tournament (see article on page one). "Louie Giammona calls me every Friday and last week, he called to tell me about his winning touchdown in the final game of the computer tournament" Bunting recollected with glee. "That team was special" said Bunting. "We believed that Dick Vermeil was going to make us winners and outside of my family, there is no one I trust or believe in more than Dick Vermeil."

UPCOMING EVENTS



2007 ALUMNI DAY AT TRAINING CAMP

Alumni Day at Lehigh will be held on Saturday, August 4th. For more information, call Marie Solano at **856.939.1743**.



13th ANNUAL EAGLES CARNIVAL & AUCTION

The 2007 Eagles Carnival & Auction will be held on Sunday, August 19th, from 3 to 8 p.m., at Lincoln Financial Field.



75TH ANNIVERSARY THROWBACK GAME

Retro-uniforms will be worn during the September 23rd home game.



2007 OTHO DAVIS SCHOLARSHIP LUNCHEON

Reunite with old teammates in honor of Otho Davis on Monday, September 24th. For details, call Marie Solano at **856.939.1743**.

THE PHILADELPHIA EAGLES ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

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