

It's Still a Minor Thing

by Steven M. Brainerd

Triple Dip

Semipro football teams have played three games in a week, eight games in a month, two games in a row and even two games on one day. The Seattle Cavaliers played on a Friday, Saturday and Sunday in 1963, Friday 11/9 they played and defeated, 33-0, the Whidbey Island All-Stars (a military team). On Saturday they played and lost to the Olympic CC Rangers (18-14) and they wrapped up the weekend beating the Monroe Reformatory Tigers 22 to 6. I wonder how many of the 37 players went to work Monday morning.

Doubleheader

Steve Yonich earned himself a unique place in the semi-pro football record book. His team, the Whatcom County Lakers (Northwest International League) were playing the Snohomish County Ramblers (NWIL) September 15, 1974. Yonich played offensive tackle and was lined up as a tackle eligible and caught a six yard touchdown pass for the first score of the game. The Ramblers tied the game at 6 each. Late in the third period, Yonich again lined up as a tackle eligible and caught his second and game winning touchdown pass of the evening. The Lakers won game, 12-6.

Overtime and Again

Contrary to popular belief, the first sudden death overtime game was not the 1959 NFL Championship game, but it was a playoff game. The 1940 Eastern Pennsylvania Conference used a four game Shaughnessy playoff (that is first place versus third and second versus fourth) and two teams were tied for the fourth playoff spot. The Chester Pros and the Philadelphia Seymour AA squared off December 4th in Connie Mack Stadium to decide the issue, earlier in the season Seymour defeated Chester 7-0. The playoff game was played in a blizzard and ended regulation 0-0. Quarter five saw change in the score. The sixth quarter came and went with still no score. Ninety minutes of football and it was still 0-0. The league ended the game at this point. Chester was declared the winner on the basis of first downs 12-5. Chester lost the semifinal playoff 3-0.

What was the Score?

Scores of football vary a lot from 7-0 to 47-45, but there have been odd ones from time to time in semi-pro football. Take the 1963 Toledo Tornadoes 3, Grand Rapids Blazers 2. Sounds like a baseball score right! Wrong. The Blazers scored a safety early in the game and it held up until the third quarter when Tom Taber kicks a 30 yard field goal to win for the Tornadoes. In 1987 the Richmond Ravens 3 and the Washington Metro Bucs 2 managed to duplicate the score.

The 1987 Mid-American League saw several interesting scores. The Pueblo Crusaders defeated the Omaha River Raiders 2-0 in a rainstorm at home. The score is the usual forfeit score (sometime 1-0, 6-0 or 7-0 is used depending on the league.) 2-0 as a real score is very uncommon.

A very odd score, heretofore unknown, was the Galveston Islanders 4-0 victory over the Oklahoma City Thunderchiefs for the MAFL title. Two bad center snaps accounted for all the scoring that night.

Still Working Overtime.

The longest overtime game was October 1st, 1976 when the Marlboro Shamrocks at the Providence Kings (Eastern League) playing through four overtimes with Kings finally winning 12-6.

The 1986 Frederick Falcons (Continental Interstate League) played four overtime games, winning three.

Remember the Chester Pros and the EPFC. Well the 1940 American Association was faced with the same problem. They had to have a fourth place playoff and there had to be a winner. On December 1st, the Long Island Indians visited the Newark Bears to settle the issue and the game was hit by the same blizzard that visited Philadelphia. The game had the same result after four quarters as the struggle in Philly. No score. Instead of

going to overtime to settle things, it was decided to play another game on Wednesday for the playoff spot. But again the weather intervened and the game was canceled. Commissioner Joe Rosentover decided to settle the matter with a conference call and a coin toss. Newark guessed right three times, the Indians only twice. It would be nice to report that Newark went on to the league title, but they lost a semifinal playoff to the Jersey City Little Giants 7-6.

Why can't we win the last one?

Glens Falls Greenjackets have to be a very frustrated football team. This long time member of the Empire League has been in the playoffs 23 years. They have lost the last game 20 times. Seven years in a row they lost the final game. The Greenjackets lost five straight championship games between 1981 and 1985 including three in a row to the Scranton Eagles. The 1984 16-14 loss to Scranton was particularly tough. The Jackets were never able to defeat the Eagles in playoffs losing six times.

Hooray for Hollywood!

The 1974 version of THE LONGEST YARD featured a prison team against a team of guards. Most of the players on both squads were members of the Augusta Eagles, who were a member of the Dixie League. The Eagles played for the league championship in both 1974 and 1975.

The Orange County Rhinos, playing in the 60's Western and 70's California, were the Go to team when Hollywood needed a football team. From time to time a TV show or a movie needed an organized squad. The Rhinos could provide 40 to 50 players who had the gear and training to look like a football team. The movie LEGEND IN GRANITE was about Vince Lombardi, who was played by Ernest Borgnine. The Packer players were portrayed by the Rhinos. Nice way to get an extra paycheck.

And tonight's paid attendance was . . .

Attendance is a very important to the continuation of minor league football teams.

You don't draw, you don't last too long. The Norfolk Neptunes played from 1965 through 1971, playing 47 games (this includes one playoff). The team drew 574481 fans thru the gates at Foreman Field, averaging 12223 butts in the seats for each encounter.

The Paterson Panthers played from 1936 to 1941 and 1946-1950 drawing 596654, playing 98 games with an average of 6088 per.

There you have the good numbers. Now for the not so good numbers. The Knoxville SOK (Save Old Knoxville) drew a paid attendance of 17 on 10/15/1966 for a North American League encounter.