

SPORTS PARTY LINE

by JOHN JORDAN

In the early 1920s while professional football was still in its infancy, George Halas performed with the Decatur Staleys, a team which was to become the Chicago Bears a couple years later.

The Staley club played out of Decatur, Ill., and one day took on a tough Chicago team. During the game, Halas backed up in his own end zone to take a kickoff. But the great broken-field runner bobbled the ball and retreated a few more yards before he had control of the elusive pigskin.

Halas probably was ten yards back of the goal line when he finally set sail. And sail he did. A key block sprang the shift ball-carrier loose and he dashed all the way, 110 yards, by rough estimate, for a score.

A New Castle man claims that it was he who threw the key block which sent Halas on his way to that record-shattering gallop.

Wade Trieschman, retired Chrysler Corporation employe, was reminiscing with the writer the other evening about his football playing days and related the story among many others.

Trieschman started his football career at Knightstown where he was a member of the high school team as a 12-year-old in 1911. When he wasn't playing high school ball, he played semi-professional ball on weekends for local and area semi-pro teams. Walter Jolly and "Fat" Holland were a couple of his contemporaries.

"Even though I was a Dutchman," Trieschman told us, "I played for the Knightstown Shamrocks. There was another team in town called the Walkovers. I didn't play much but when they needed two or three yards a couple of our linemen would just pick me up and throw me over the line for the needed yardage."

In those days, just about anything went on the playing field. There wasn't such a thing as the clipping penalty, pass interference, etc. The players had no pads or face protectors, just an inadequate helmet and uniform.

In 1914 the Knightstown high school football team played New Castle, Richmond, Greenfield and other area schools, and finished undefeated. Trieschman owns a team picture showing the 14 players, just four of whom still are living.

About 1916 Wade played half-back for the Wilkinson professional team and running out of the other halfback slot, according to Trieschman, was Wilbur (Strings) Allen, onetime Trojan basketball coach. Trieschman played, also, with the Congerville Flyers of Muncie, Ferndale of Indianapolis and the Arlington (Rush Co.) Athletic Club.

The Arlington ball club, which was made up of ex-collegians for the most part from Notre Dame, Purdue, Indiana and other state colleges, played all over the state and into Illinois.

It was while playing with Arlington in Peoria, Ill., that Trieschman's great football talent came to the attention of A. E. Staley, owner of the Decatur Staleys. Staley liked what he saw and hired Trieschman to play for his team when it was scheduled to meet a particularly tough foe.

Trieschman recalls playing alongside Halas, who was to take over the team and make them into the powerhouse and cornerstone of the National Football League. Halas was in there to win," Trieschman declared. "The more he could hurt you the more he liked it. He loved that feel of contact.

"But he wouldn't make All-America today," Trieschman continued. "He wouldn't block for the other guys, so we always just let him carry the ball. He was a great broken field runner."

Trieschman only played a few games for Staley and after suffering a leg injury, he retired from the rugged sport, which he enjoyed so much.

"The game was real tough in those days," Trieschman informed the SPL. "The ball was placed down where you went down and sometimes you got shoved way back from where your forward progress stopped. But I loved that contact and the challenge of the game."

"Sometimes we would play for nothing except our expenses. Sometimes it was winner take all or we wouldn't play. And I did make as much as \$300 per

game.

"When I was with Arlington we didn't have a head coach and if you had a good idea, they'd let you run it. Ross Hutchinson and George Wilcoxon did some of the coaching and Cupey Lawrence owned the team. I averaged about \$15 a game with them," Trieschman added.

Trieschman prizes a team picture of the Arlington squad taken around 1920. He proudly points out his backfield mates like Johnny Wicker, Prudy Hawk, Dingbat Northam and Chet Northam, who could loft a 75-yard pass. The team never lost a game, according to Wade, in the three years he played with them.

Ray Keller, New Castle business man, remembers Trieschman's gridiron exploits when he played in Knightstown. "He wasn't over 5-9 and probably weighed about 165," Keller says, "but he was fast and quick as lightning. His quickness and alertness made him an outstanding player, one of the best ever to come out of that community."

Football wasn't the only sport Trieschman excelled in. He was a sprinter in track, a pitcher in baseball (he pitched some for the Maxwell nine) and he has been a consistent 220 bowler. Nearing 70 years of age, Trieschman today takes a whirl at water skiing when the opportunity presents itself and he looks a decade or so younger than he is.

Trojan football fans may remember son Edward, who was a hard-hitting All-State tackle for the Trojans in the late '40s and went on to play championship college and service ball. Another son, Frederick, resides in this community. Ed now is an officer in the U. S. Navy.

Although he's played with some of the greats of his era in many places throughout the mid-west, Trieschman's most memorable game happened right here in New Castle in a high school game. Playing his customary halfback position, Trieschman called for a fair catch on his own 40-yard line. The New Castle players hit him hard and were penalized halfway to the goal line as was the ruling in those days.

On the first play from scrimmage following the penalty, Trieschman took the ball and scampered into the end zone for the game's only score as Knightstown went on to win, 6-0.

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