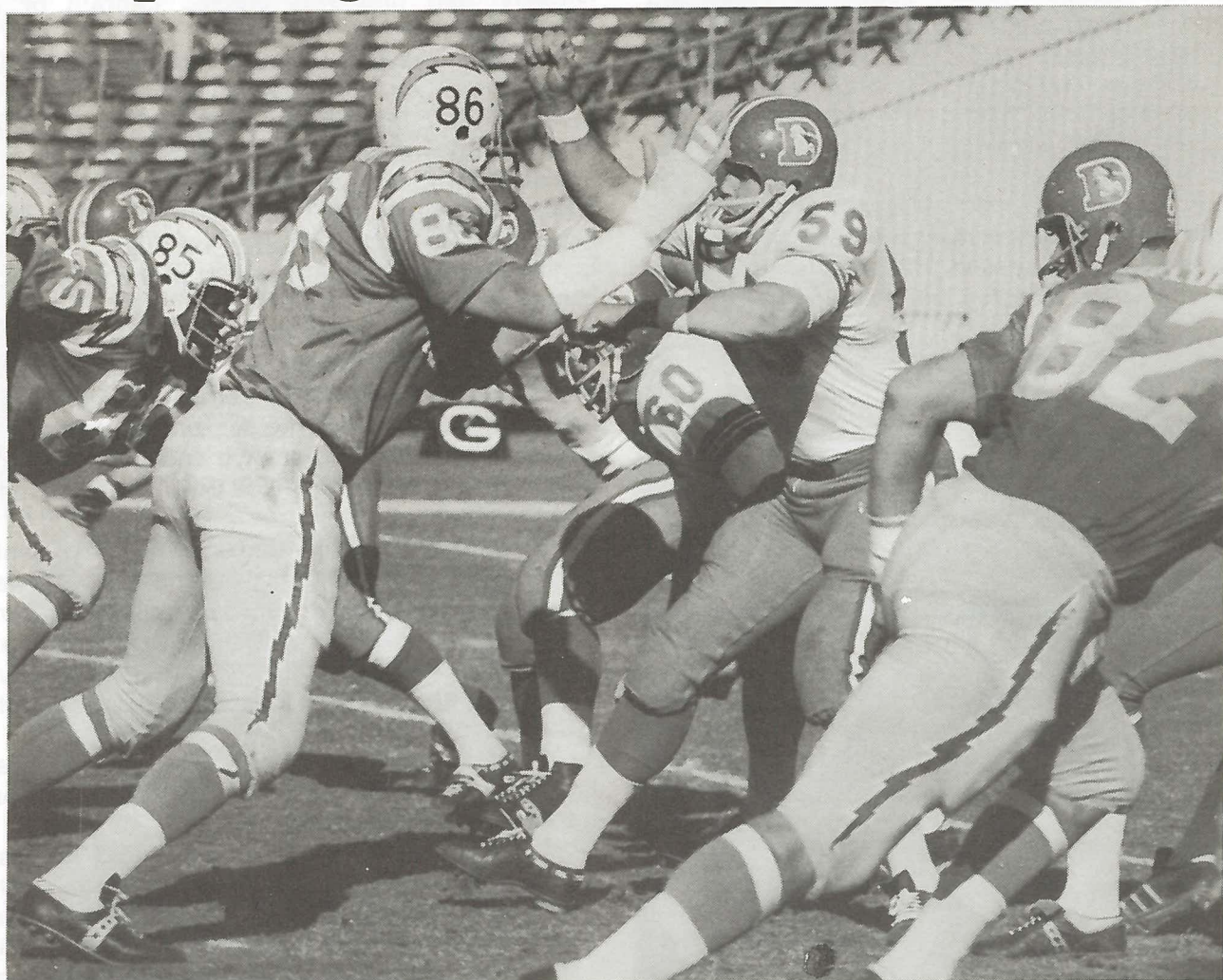


THE PRO'S

by Greg DeRosa, John Weber



Larry Kaminski Denver Broncos

Our interest in football brought us to talk with some ex-pro football players that live in our home town, Steamboat. Each of the three, Larry Kaminski, Doak Walker and Walt Barnes have all achieved high awards and honors in the sport of football. It is a real treat and honor to talk about this fantastic sport with three players who made it in Pro Football. We started our interview with Larry Kaminski.

Larry: "I was born in Cleveland, Ohio in a Hungarian neighborhood. My dad was a steel worker. Most of the people that lived in my neighborhood were people that worked very hard. Most of the time, both of the parents worked and the children were forced to do things

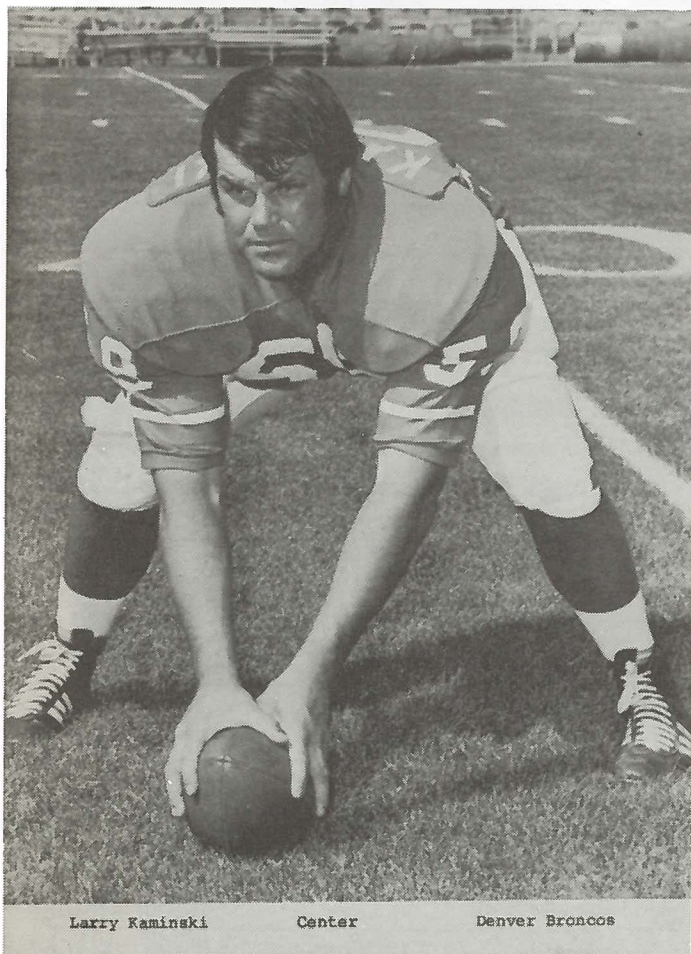
by themselves. It was a neighborhood of ethnic people: Polish, Hungarian, Italian and black people. Because of ethnic confrontations there was aggressiveness displayed. That made it tough, because sometimes the black people didn't get along with the Hungarian people. But it wasn't a tough neighborhood with people carrying guns. It was just a neighborhood where you had to be aware of the people and things around.

"School work was pretty important in those days and discipline was the big thing in the school system. Sports was something done after school. I went to grade school until the eighth grade, then I went to an all boy's Catholic school

called Cathedral Latin. The school work was tough. In that day and age if you didn't behave it was not unusual for a nun or brother to take you to a room and have you pull your drawers down and spank you with a board.

"We didn't have sports in the Catholic grade school. I just started playing in the parks against different neighborhoods. Each neighborhood would have a team and we would play street football. We started playing organized basketball in the seventh grade, so my only two years of sports were in the 7th and 8th grade.

"Believe it or not, when I was in the 8th grade I was 5'9" and 85 lbs. I wasn't very big, but I was quick. I played all sports because when you live in the type of neighborhood I lived in, you played whatever was in season. Basketball was what I got my scholarship for, but I could never make



Larry Raminski Center Denver Broncos

the team, so football became my forte. I played football for four years. As a freshman, I was only 110 lbs., but when I was a senior, I was 195 lbs. I was a good basketball player, so I got a grant to an all boy's Catholic school. In the city, if you didn't go to an all boy's Catholic school, you went to the public school system. At that time the public school that I would have gone to had close to 2,500 students. It was co-ed and quite a ways from my neighborhood. The quality of education in the public schools wasn't as good as the Catholic school, so getting this grant really helped my mom and dad out.

"To get into college, I got a scholarship for both sports and academic achievements to Purdue University in Indiana. Getting a scholarship to Purdue, you were looking at about \$20,000 because it was room, board, books and everything. So I played freshman football. I played offensive center and linebacker. I did fairly well and was elected captain of my freshman team.

"When I was a junior I didn't do very well against Notre Dame, so I got benched. It was the first time in my life I was benched and I sat out for about six games. It was an experience to watch someone else perform in your position. It's something that I think was very important. It brought me back to reality, because I found out that as quick as you make it, that's as quick as they forget you.

"As a freshman, we didn't play any games; we would just scrimmage the varsity. We had a good group of people that came in as sophomores and we were 5-4 for the season. As juniors, we were 6-3 and as seniors we ended up losing to Michigan State for the Rose Bowl. We were in the top ten in the country.

"My most exciting game was in my senior year against Notre Dame winning 14-10. We went ahead by a Griese touchdown, and they came back when there was just a few seconds left and scored a touchdown. We beat them, and it was the first time I saw everybody on the Notre Dame team cry, so it was a real thrill."

Larry started to play pro ball in 1966. He went to the Denver Broncos as a free agent and started at offensive center.

"I wasn't big. I was only about 225 lbs. as a senior when I graduated. As an offensive center or linebacker in the pros, I really lacked the size. So in the draft I was completely overlooked. But several coaches had contacted me telling me they would give me a chance. Looking at the different players around the league and seeing who I would have to go against, I felt that Denver would be my best opportunity to play professional ball. So I accepted a contract with the Denver Broncos and moved to Denver from Cleveland.

"My first year in pro ball was 1966. At that time, a local, Doak Walker, was one of the coaches. I was playing behind a kid named Ray Kubala. The first game Denver lost to Houston. I believe it was 20-7, and we never got one first down on the offense. Needless to say when we all came back, the team was hung in effigy. I didn't get in the game, and it was my first real shock, to lose that bad and be humiliated by the town-people. The coach made some changes when I was a rookie. They moved me to center and the other kid to tackle. Ray Malavassi took over, the coach for the Rams now. Well, Ray put me in at center, and I was lucky enough to play my whole

rookie year there. Then I was named rookie of the year in the sporting news.

"When I went to play football for Denver, it was the worst team in the league. The only team to have a worse record was the Miami Dolphins, because they were an expansion team. Denver was always known as a tough team and I was associated with some excellent athletes who worked very hard. We weren't fortunate enough to win. We went through so many coaches, first Max Speedy, then Malavassi, and after him we picked up Lou Saban. After him we had John Ralson, so in all those years we went through so many coaches that there wasn't any togetherness on the team. The coach would bring a new group of players with him and if you didn't fit the mold you were out on the streets. Every year they would bring in another center, because I was always 'too small,' but each year I got my position back. So I was just fortunate to stick it out with the different coaches. I started every game after the first at offensive center. The coaches thought I could do better there than at linebacker. So it was the position I stayed with.

"Walt Barnes and I played together for five years in Denver. Walt was on defense, and I on offense. To this day I don't think I have blocked him. He was one of the toughest nose men I ever had to go against. Thank God we are partners now. It was impossible to block Walter."

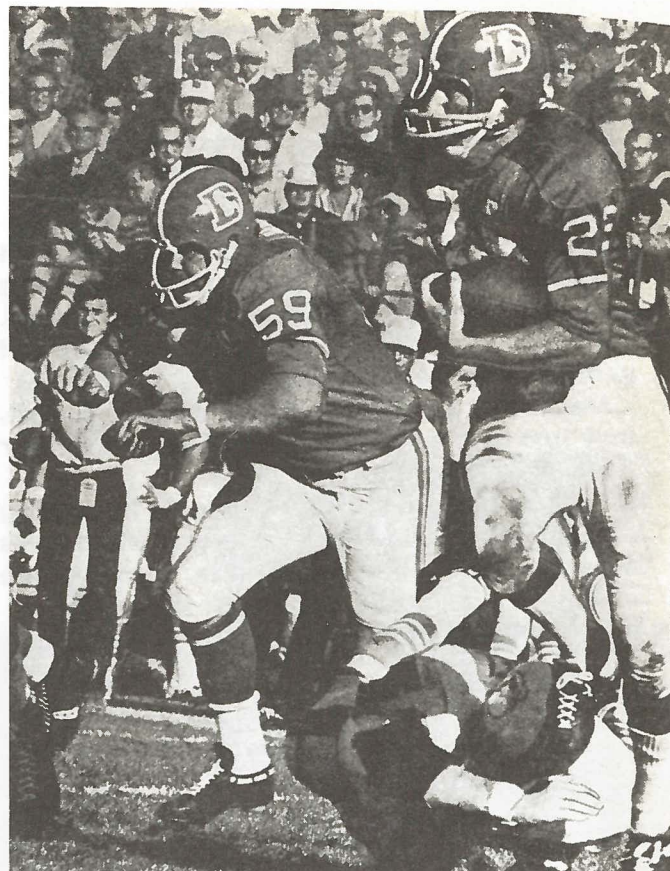
We asked Larry what his worst game was like, and he replied, "The worst game that I ever played would be a pro game against the Boston Patriots. We played them in Denver, and I played so bad I'd say I missed about 60 percent of my blocks. I did so bad that they put me on waivers.

"I started six years as offensive center, then Bobby Maples came along, picked from the Pittsburgh Steelers. Bobby and I alternated my 7th year and in my 8th year Bobby beat me out of the position, so I backed him up and played special teams.

"I saw the handwriting on the wall, but it really hurt not to play. To help anywhere possible is something that you really have to do for your team, but I wasn't comfortable not playing. I was getting too old to play the suicide squad." Larry retired in 1974 from the Broncos.

We asked Larry how he felt about the Broncos' success today. "It's nice to see them do well. Football has changed so much from back then that I don't like the attitude of the modern football player. I think the game is exciting, but if I had my preference I like the old days better. Today they walk out of training camp for petty reasons. They should be a little bit more mature."

After Larry experienced playing professional ball, he retired to the working life. We asked Larry why he moved to Steamboat. "Walt and I



"Don't put all your eggs in a sports basket..."

got into the beer business because the Northwest Colorado market was represented by one distributor who was replaced. When we were accepted by Anheiser-Busch people to be their franchise holder, we moved from Craig over to Hayden. We lived in Craig for a couple of years. Craig was a good town, but I felt that it would be a little better opportunity for us if we moved to Steamboat Springs. So we moved over our whole operation about two years ago.

"I have my own ways of doing business, and I'm not a sophisticated businessman. I feel if your business is somewhat like ours you should not just take dollars out of the community, but try to put in as much effort to create a positive influence back into the community.

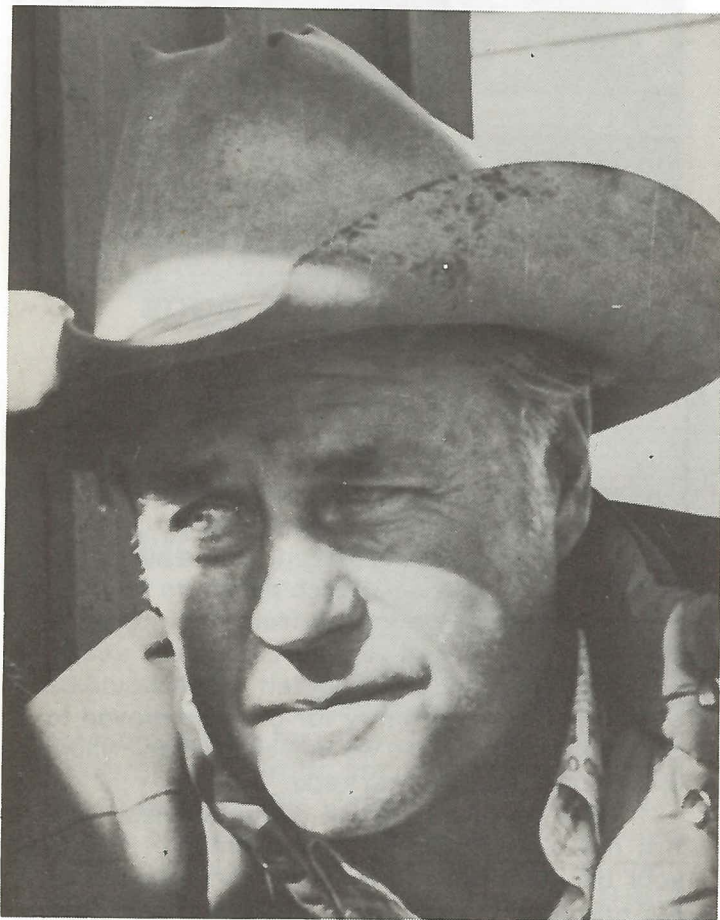
"There are a lot of people who complain about the problems in our community, but are unwilling to sacrifice the time to change the problem. We do our projects because we generate enthusiasm by a lot of young people and hopefully earn money for projects that need it. We do things mainly to get people together and generate enthusiasm for a project to return dollars for the community."

Doak Walker Detroit Lions

One of the best things about pro-football, according to Doak, are the lifelong friendships that you develop. One of his best friends is the famous and great football hall-of-famer, Bobby Layne. They still get together for an occasional golf game or to relive old times.

MacArthur once said, "Old generals never die, they just fade away." Doak expressed a similar feeling about his sports career.

"If I felt I could still be playing I'd be playing today, but as you add on a few years those holes seem to close before you get there; then it's time to quit."



"My first year I was the top scorer in the National Football League"

Doak Walker, a seemingly quiet man, has proven his ability by winning many awards and trophies for his football accomplishments.

We talked about football with Doak one sunny afternoon outside the Storm Hut, his wife's family business. We were impressed as he told us his story.

"I was born in Dallas, Texas, January 1, 1927. I went to grade school, high school, and college there. I won a football scholarship to S.M.U. At that time we played a spread formation, a single wing, double wing, and a triple wing. Back then, I called the plays which is what a quarterback would do now, but it was actually a tailback position.

"I made All-American three times at S.M.U. and won the Heisman my junior year and was runner-up my senior year. At that time I couldn't have spelled it properly, nor known what it meant. When I won it I was really in shock! I think if I would have known more about it I would have appreciated it more. Today I think it is the best collegiate award given. I went to New York to receive it and that was the first time I'd ever been to the big city. It was something special and I had never seen anything like it before."

Many football players long for an opportunity to play pro-ball. Doak told us of his opportunities.

"During those years the draft came up; I had four years from the time I entered college to the time I was drafted. I was drafted by a New York club, and also by the Cleveland Browns. Then my draft rights were traded to Detroit for Johnny Rouse, who was a quarterback. I had one more year of college, which I played, then I was on draft rights with the Cleveland Browns and Detroit. At that time the two leagues merged and Detroit got my draft rights.

"My first pro game I played pretty much the whole game -- both offense and defense. Detroit played the "T" as most pro clubs play today and did then. I don't think I was really scared. There was tension so I could make the club, and I did make the club. For my first year I was the top scorer in the National League with 128 points. In my years I played with the big names like Bobby Layne, a quarterback, Thurman McGraw, Jim David, Jack Christenson, and Big Lee Byren."

Being football enthusiasts ourselves, we wanted to know about some of his best and worst moments on the field.

"During one ball game I had over 400 yards against the San Francisco 49ers, but my best game was in 1952 when we won the championship against Cleveland. I was injured all season and the first touchdown I made was in that game. We received rings and watches, just what they give today, but not quite as extravagant. But back then, it was quite a ring. My worst game was in 1950 when we played the Rams. I was hurt so I could only play on kick-offs. They beat us 67-40. Everything we did was wrong and everything they did was right; and all of their right things were touchdowns and all of our right things were first downs. That was the difference."

Financially sports can be a profitable business if the athlete is good enough. Evidently Doak

must have measured up. He told us of his first year's earnings, which seemed substantial for 1950.

"The comparison sounds ridiculous from now but I signed a contract for \$25,000 my first year. I also did a lot of commercials on TV for Wheaties and Vitalis, and lots of endorsements. I enjoyed them and they paid in cash. In the off season, there wasn't much you could do. Most of the players like myself took sales jobs and some didn't work at all. Some started businesses and hired a manager during football season."

The love of sports seems to be all encompassing even for those who are no longer actively involved.

"After working for a couple of national companies and coaching a year for the Denver Broncos, Doak became involved in an electrical contracting company, Fishback and Moore, in Denver. He spends as much time as possible with his wife, Skeeter Werner Walker, in Steamboat, and she manipulates her schedule to spend time with him in Denver.

"Skeeter and I met in Berthoud and she invited me up for the weekend and we went skiing together. About a week later we flew to Las Vegas and were married.

"I really enjoy skiing and I think if I would have skied as a kid I maybe wouldn't have played pro ball; I enjoy it that much."

Being the veteran of our locally famous trio that includes Larry Kaminski and Walt Barnes, Doak helped influence their careers in football as Bronco assistant coach.



"Pro football, it's the ultimate,"

Walt Barnes Redskins and Broncos

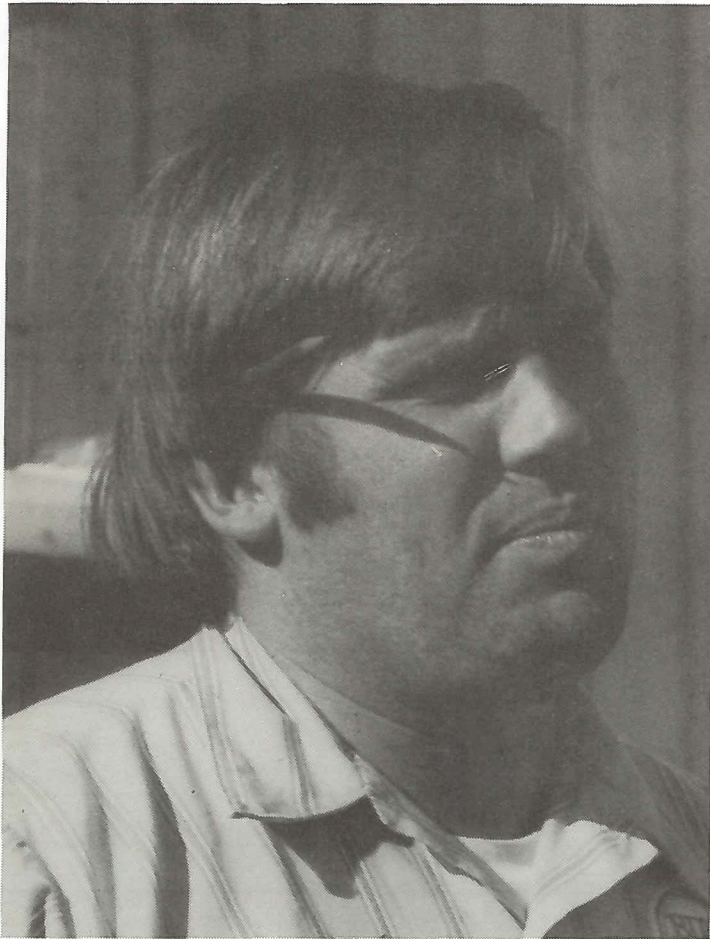
Walt Barnes' business partner, Larry Kaminski, protege of Doak Walker and friend of all who know and admire his gentle manner, has also made a name for himself in the sports world. His athletic ability resulted in his becoming an All-American college football player in 1969 and a well-known Bronco. Walt talked to us about his football success.

"I was a 'jack of all trades,' I was a defensive end, defensive tackle, offensive tackle and offensive center. My senior year, 1965, I was named to the All-American squad, as a defensive tackle. After graduation, I was drafted by the Kansas City Chiefs as a offensive center and by the Washington Redskins as a defensive tackle. At the time I wanted to play defensive tackle, so I went to Washington. We had an average team. We beat Dallas, and they beat us. That's the year they played Green Bay for the championship. We

had a chance at third place, but we lost it to the New York Giants

"I was released by Vince Lombardi and went to San Francisco for a few weeks. It was getting near the end of the season, so it was a numbers game. There were just too many bodies, so I was released, and went to the Denver Broncos, where I met Larry Kaminski. I played in Denver for the next four years. In 1972 during the summer we played an exhibition game against the Cardinals. I had a knee operation right after that game, and didn't play the rest of the year. That was the end of my career, because I couldn't pass the physical. I tried to go to Buffalo, but they wouldn't have me because my knee wasn't stable. So after that I retired and went into the beer business."

In order to become a professional football player you have to have some football ex-



"I was a jack of all trades"

perience to prepare for the pro game, whether it's in college or in a pre-season camp. We asked Walt what a day of regular season practice was like and he told us.

"We usually started a meeting at nine A.M. and got done about 11:30, then we would eat lunch and practice for about an hour and a half. We finished about 2:30. Some guys would stay after and lift weights. It was an easy day once you got into it. Sometimes it mattered if we won or lost the week before. The practices were 6 days a week, Tuesday through Sunday."

Even though practices were long and hard momentarily, perhaps playing pro ball was worth it.

"To show you how times have changed, my first year as a rookie with the Redskins, in camp, I was paid \$75 a week. When the two leagues merged the starting salary were \$100 a game, graduating up till the 5th year, like \$100 the first, \$200 the second, etc. That's more than the \$75 a week I made. And now some players make \$50,000 a year. I wish I could still play, and I don't blame anybody for making that much today.

"For injuries we were paid full salary. All hospital bills were taken care of if the injury occurred during a game or practice. Also they were sticklers for being on time. One player was fined \$1000 for breaking curfew, and he was traded the next day. Another player was fined by Vince Lombardi for not being on time. He was ten minutes early, whereas everyone else was thirty minutes early, and he had held up the meeting so was fined \$50."

Walt's background, like all of us, helped influence his career in sports. "I was born in 1944 in Oak Park, Illinois, and brought up in Chicago. I went to school at St. Naugh which was a Christian brother's high school. I was lucky enough to be recruited by Nebraska by a man named George Kelly. At that time Bob Devein had just started there, and he took the team from practically nothing to national prominence. They have been in the top ten the last twenty years."

A football player does need certain advantages, mainly in size and strength. "An average lineman in professional football is usually 6'4" and weighs close to 260 lbs. I was 6'3" and I weighed 225 lbs. Everyday in practice we did a lot of scrimmaging and had contact with the other players. The practice was always the same, yet on certain days the offense worked harder, then the defense the next day would work harder, then a combination of the two. That was when I went one on one against Larry."

We asked Walt about some of his most memorable moments in football.

"In college everyone was as big and strong as everyone else, but in the pros the switch was drastic because there was always someone bigger and stronger than you. Pittsburgh was always a threat because they were a very physical team. On the other hand, Dallas beat teams on finesse alone. They were two different caliber teams, but both were successful.

"I think my best game was against Dallas. After that game they gave me the game ball. My worst was when I had a broken wrist, and they just beat me all over. I think the score was 17-7 in their favor.

"My first pro game we played the Green Bay Packers. I was just scared to death. I got to play, but they beat us 35-0, and really made us look bad. They made playing the game look easy."

Off the field the athletes only slightly participated socially. "After a game of scrimmage we would go out and have a few beers, but nothing out of the ordinary. Larry used to work for a few breweries and had the background for the business. I didn't have anything going, so I joined him in the beer business. It's not as hard as trying to make a pro football team every year!"