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NFL Hall of Fame Inductees

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In addition to Reggie Jackson's entry into the Baseball Hall of Fame last weekend, the National Football League Hall of Fame had its induction ceremonies at Canton, Ohio, on Saturday. Five new members were inducted: Walter Payton, Dan Fouts, Larry Little, Bill Walsh and Chuck Noll. By any measure an impressive group.

They called Walter Payton "sweetness," for the way he ran and for his temperament. Twice NFL player of the year, number 34 of the Chicago Bears was one of the greatest running backs in the history of the league.

He is the career rushing leader, with 16,726 yards. He had the most 1000 yard seasons, ten; the most career touchdowns, 110; the most 100 yard games, 77; and the most yards in a game, 275.

Payton had a wonderful running style, perfect for a man not possessed with great speed or tremendous size. At 5'10" and 202 pounds he was not what you would call a prototype back, but he was remarkably durable, playing 13 seasons and missing only one game.

He played in only one Super Bowl, XX, and late in that game with the Bears pounding New England, and Payton not having yet scored, the Bears were down near the goal line. Surely Mike Ditka would allow Payton his chance. But it was not to be, and instead the Fridge was sent over the line for the TD and Payton missed his only opportunity. It was a puzzling move by Ditka at the time, and one that Payton has yet to accept.

If #34 was one of the best ever on the ground, Dan Fouts was one of the best ever through the air. Playing for Dan Coryell at San Diego, where together they made Air Coryell a byword, Fouts passed for over 43,000 yards, and is second on the all-time list. Fouts was a fiery competitor who never made it to a Super Bowl, but was a six time Pro Bowler, and four times in the playoffs. He never got the Chargers past the AFC Championship game. San Diego lost to Oakland in 1980, and then in 1981 they lost to Cincinnati in the Ice Bowl, playing in a 59 below wind chill factor at Riverfront Stadium. The week prior to that Fouts had led the Chargers past Miami in overtime in what is still considered by many, the greatest game in NFL history.

Among his other credits were player of the year, 254 touchdown passes, and leading the league in passing for a stretch of seven

out of eight years. Together Fouts and Coryell transformed the offensive side of professional football.

As everyone knows the greatest team in the History of the NFL was the 17-0 Miami Dolphins of 1972-73. Many of the members of that team have entered the Hall of Fame ahead of Larry Little, and many of those players once followed #66 on the power sweep. Now after his seventh year of eligibility Larry Little has been selected. He is the third guard, and the first right guard to make the Hall. It is not a glamorous position, but Little had tremendous quickness and led the blocking for Csonka, Kick and Morris, and struck terror into the hearts of defensive backs.

Little spent 14 seasons with the Dolphins, was six times on all-pro teams and four times in the pro bowl. He became the first \$100,000 guard in 1974, made so by the World Football League raiding of the Dolphins. Not drafted out of Bethune Cookman, Little was signed by San Diego and was later sent on to Miami, where Don Shula took 60 pounds off the 300 Larry Little was carrying, and turned Little into a Hall of Famer.

Two coaches entered the NFL Hall of Fame this year, and they are two of the all-time greats. Chuck Noll of the Pittsburgh Steelers took a team with a firmly established losing tradition and transformed them into winners. The Steelers had not been in the playoffs in 39 years. Noll is often underestimated as a coach because he had such great talent, but then how did he get it? He got it through the draft, which he directed. In five years Noll drafted Mean Joe Green, his first pick ever, Terry Bradshaw, Mel Blount, Jack Hamm, Franco Harris, Jack Lambert, Lynn Swan, Mike Webster, L.C. Greenwood, and John Stallworth to name a few.

Noll molded this talent into four Super Bowls in six years. He is the sixth winningest coach of all-time, but never was voted coach of the year.

Bill Walsh's numbers are equally impressive with three Super Bowls, and a 15-1 record in 1984. In 1981 and 84 he was coach of the year. He is considered a coaching genius, and his offensive schemes can be seen everywhere in the NFL today. Walsh considers his mentors to have been John Brodie, Sid Gilman, Al Davis, and Paul Brown. Five of the current 28 NFL coaches worked for Bill Walsh, and his pupils are to be found on both sides of the field. Just ask Lou Holtz.

On Sport and Society this is Dick Crepeau reminding you that you don't have to be a good sport to be a bad loser.

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