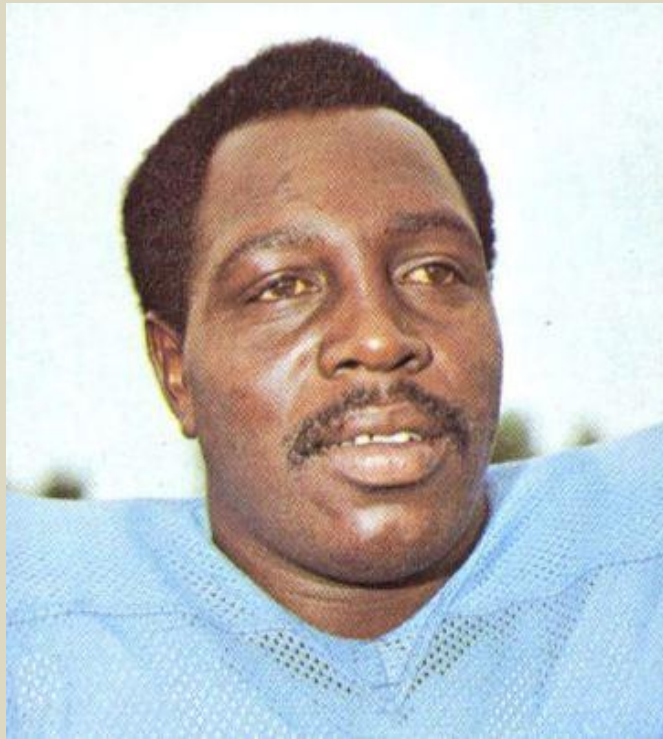


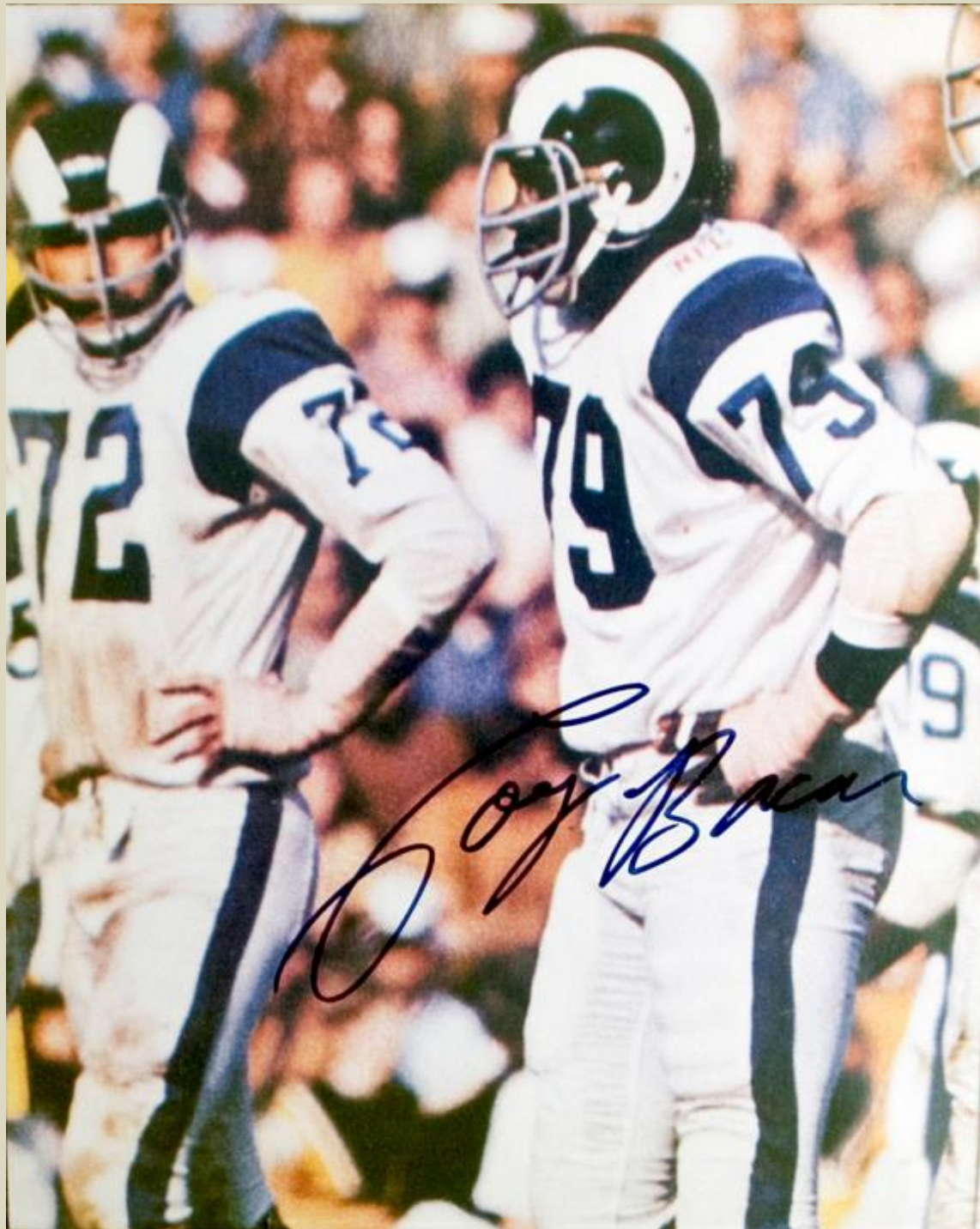
Coy Bacon: Ironton's Legendary Pass Rusher

by Jim Ridgeway



“Coy was a fabulous football player— a real ‘phenom’.”

Archie Griffin, two-time Heisman Trophy winner and former RB for the Cincinnati Bengals. (2009)



Coy Bacon (79) and Merlin Olsen (72) helped anchor the defensive line for the Rams.

Ironton lost an important and beloved member of its community with the recent passing of Coy Bacon. While Coy Bacon was known for giving NFL quarterbacks headaches on the gridiron, the residents of his hometown appreciated his warm-hearted compassion off the field.

Located on the northern bank of the Ohio River and surrounded by the foothills of Appalachia, Ironton was a hard-working, blue-collar city during Coy Bacon's youth. The region was so heavily industrialized that locals sometimes referred to it as America's Ruhr Valley.



Ironton, Ohio. (Photo by Jim Ridgeway)

Ironton is a football-loving town with a rich gridiron history. The Ironton Tanks left its mark on the annals of professional football. In 1930, the city bathed in the glory of the Ironton Tanks' victories over the NFL's Chicago Bears and New York Giants on a neutral field in Cincinnati. Unfortunately, the Great Depression ended the town's ambitious professional football plans following that memorable 1930 campaign by the Tanks.

Ironton High School, the city's only public high school, has produced some outstanding football talent over the years. Before Coy Bacon's playing days at the high school, George McAfee, a Pro Football Hall of Fame member, suited-up for the Fighting Tigers of Ironton High. Bacon's high school teammate, Danny Pride, played linebacker for the Chicago Bears. Many Ironton High athletes such as Ken Fritz, All-American offensive guard at Ohio State, have distinguished themselves on the collegiate gridiron. To this day, college football programs continue to recruit players from Ironton High School.



Coy Bacon got his football career started at Ironton High School.

Despite a plethora of outstanding athletes that have walked the halls of dear old Ironton High, it would be difficult to name a Fighting Tiger that could match the blend of size, speed, power and agility displayed by Coy Bacon.

Carl White, a former Eastern Kentucky University football player, was on the 1960 Ironton High School coaching staff when Coy Bacon was a freshman. White served as offensive-back/ defensive-back coach for former Ironton head coach Charlie Kautz.



Charles Kautz was the head football coach at Ironton High when Coy Bacon was a freshman.



Bob Shockley, Carl White, Charley Kautz, Dick Ratliff, Jim Conley



1960 Ironton High School football team was coached by Charlie Kautz (standing far right). Coy Bacon is number 75. Danny Pride is number 82.

Nearly five decades later, White still recalls taking over the helm of the Ironton football program and determining Coy Bacon's natural position on the gridiron.

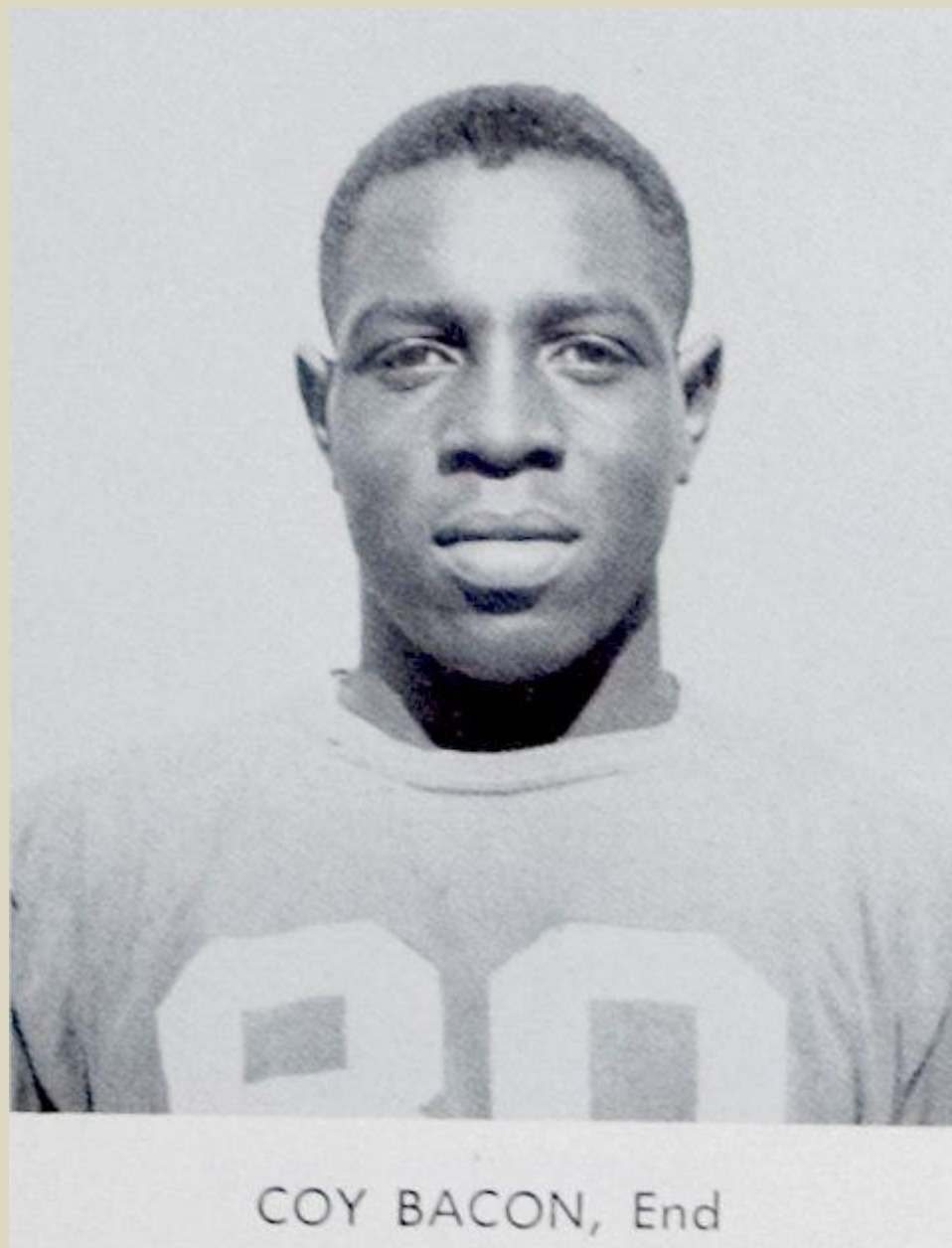
"Coy played a tackle for Charlie (Kautz). When Charlie left and went to Marshall (University), I took over the next year.

Coy had a lot of athletic ability. He could move, he could run, and he could catch a football. I put him on offensive end and defensive end.

He started for us when he was a sophomore. I put him on offensive end to have somebody to throw to. I figured he would be a pretty good-sized target. He was probably about 6'3 or 6'4 and at that time he probably weighed 225 to 230 pounds— just a real athletic— looking player. But, he had no experience.

As far as playing defense, you didn't get a whole lot of rush out of Coy. He would take a couple of steps across the line of scrimmage on passing situations. Instead of rushing, he would then fall back into coverage. His intercepted passes at defensive end weren't deflected passes.

He was just a good kid. Everything came naturally to him, but he didn't have the (football) intensity that he developed later on."



Dr. Jim Asch, a chiropractor now living in California, had the opportunity to play with Coy Bacon on the Ironton High School football squad. A former starting quarterback for the Fighting Tigers, Asch fondly remembers his high school teammate.

“In my sophomore year, the JV's occasionally got to play with the varsity— my first encounter with Coy. During one practice session, the ‘big lug’ even allowed me to ‘block’ him. Following the play, and weighing a non-exaggerated 115 pounds, I was excited and boasted about toppling the giant Coy Bacon. I ceased immediately when he tapped me on the shoulder, smiled and said, ‘That was

your only shot.’ I knew exactly what he meant, and I was a bit intimidated. Even Coach Carl White was laughing.

Coy played tight end and defense. He had player’s hands— soft enough to catch a pass with ease and stronger hands to literally crush the opposing player. We would shake our heads after witnessing his power and agility.”

In 1961, the Ironton Fighting Tigers recorded a 7 - 3 record under head coach Carl White. Bacon anchored a defense that kept the Ashland Tomcats scoreless as the Tigers defeated the Kentucky high school by a score of 13 - 0. On November 3rd, Bacon scored three touchdowns as the Fighting Tigers destroyed Paint Valley 59 to 24.

The Fighting Tigers took on the Portsmouth Trojans the following week. Bacon scored on a 28-yard interception return in the third quarter. Early in the final quarter, Bacon picked off another Portsmouth pass and ran 61 yards for a touchdown. Bacon’s two, second-half interception returns for touchdowns helped Ironton rout arch-rival Portsmouth 41 - 0.



Coy intercepts pass and returns it for a TD.

Coy Bacon had an incredible sophomore season for the Ironton High football squad. While playing end during the 1961 football season, Coy Bacon caught 23 passes for 442 yards. Bacon scored 60 points for the Fighting Tigers that football season. Bacon and tackle Butch Whitehead led the team in playing time.

Coy Bacon also handled the kicking assignment for the Fighting Tigers in 1961. Bacon’s size fourteen shoe frequently provided opponents with poor field position. Against the South Point Pointers, Bacon kicked off three times for an average of 56.7 yards per kick.



Coy Bacon (number 80) provided blocking down field for his teammate on this play during the 1961 Fighting Tiger season.

The Ironton football team's banquet was held in the school cafeteria. Approximately 400 guests attended the November event that started at 6:30 p.m. Students from the home economics department served the guests a complete turkey dinner. The food was prepared by the P.T.A. at Whitwell Elementary.

George 'Lefty' McAfee, the legendary Fighting Tiger from the undefeated state championship squad of 1935, was invited by the Tiger Clan to serve as the guest speaker. McAfee was an All-American at Duke University before starring in the backfield of the Chicago Bears. In 1961, McAfee was in his third season as an official in the NFL.

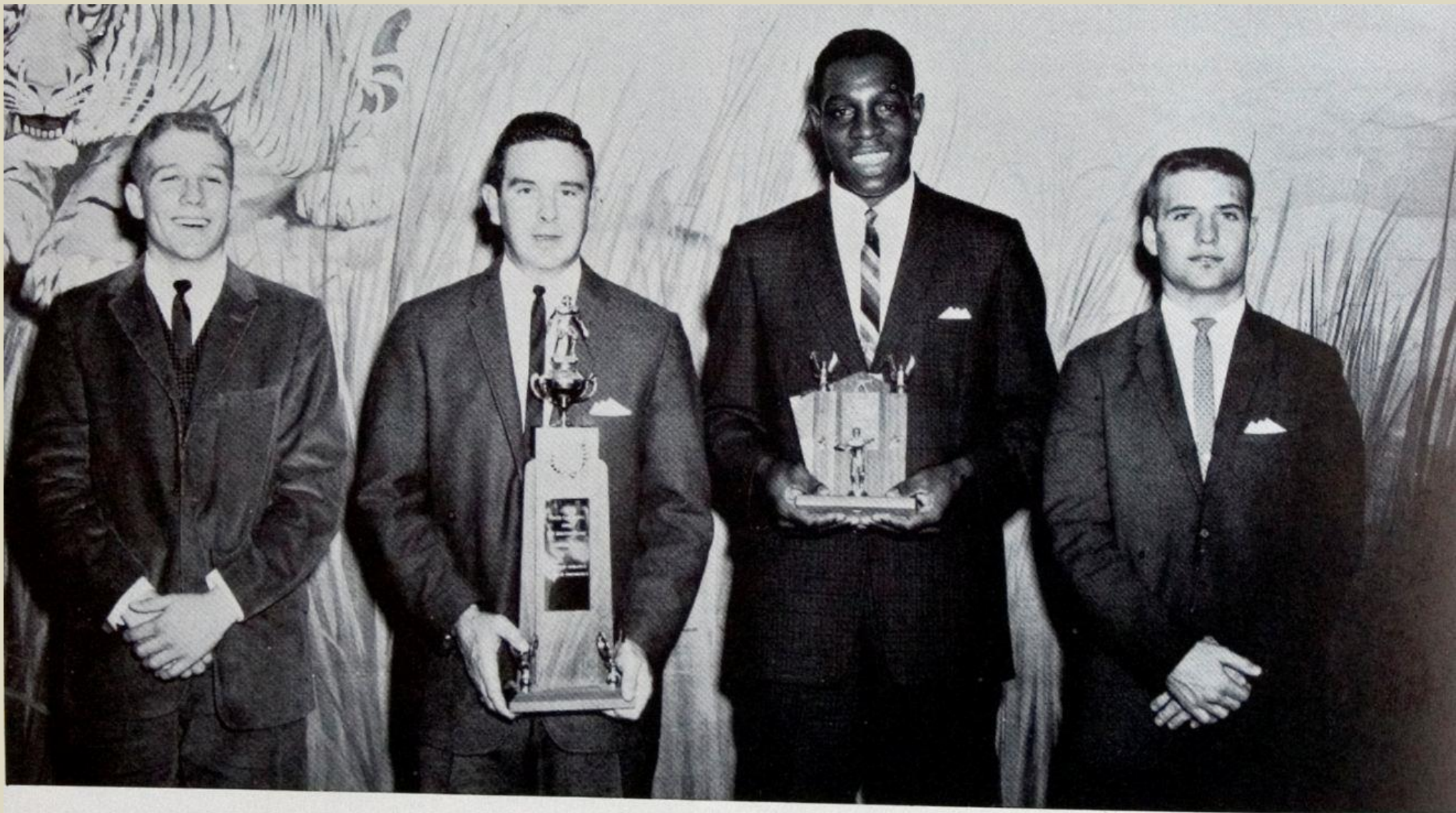
Unfortunately, McAfee was unable to make the event as his plane was grounded in North Carolina. McAfee found a former Duke

teammate to serve as a last-minute replacement speaker. Willard 'Easy' Eaves of Ashland, Kentucky filled in nicely for McAfee. Eaves told some interesting stories about George McAfee's athletic exploits at Duke. Eaves also recognized the current Tigers for their outstanding football season.

At the banquet, Coy Bacon was named the squad's most valuable player by his teammates. The *Ironton Tribune* reported that Bacon was the unanimous choice for that honor. The front page of the November 17, 1961 edition of the *Ironton Tribune* featured a photo of Coy Bacon holding his MVP trophy while standing next to Coach Carl White.



The home football stands at Ironton much as it looked when Bacon played here. Ironton basketball gym is in the background. (Photo by Jim Ridgeway)



L-R: Jim Hazelbaker, Co-captain; Coach White with trophy presented to him by his team; Coy Bacon, Most Valuable Player; Buddy Belville, Co-captain.

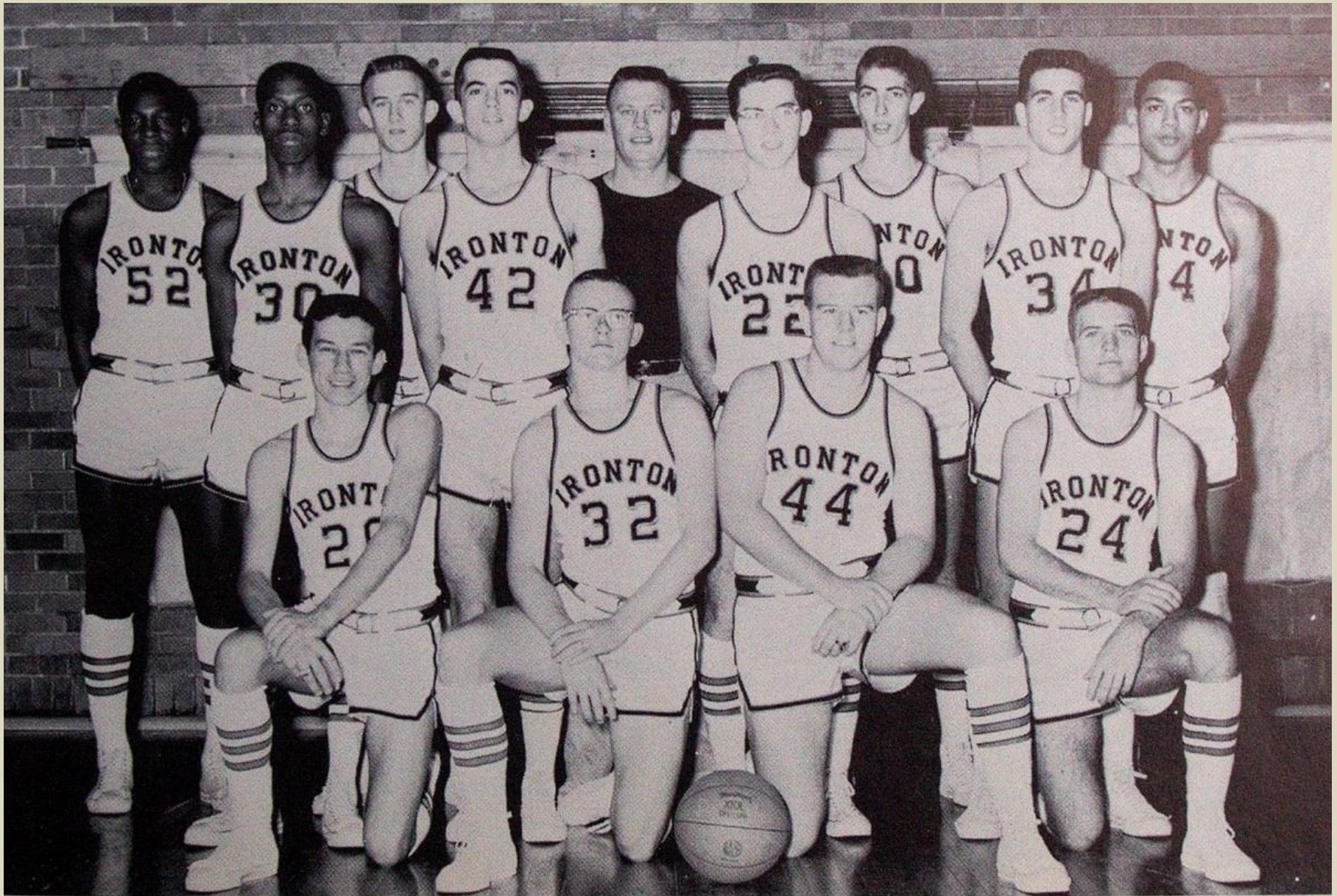
Bacon received one more honor that football season. Bacon was named honorable mention All-Ohio.

As Carl White recalled, Coy Bacon was more than just a football player for the Ironton Fighting Tigers.

“Coy played basketball. He was a good basketball player. He was athletic and big. He could move up and down the floor and get rebounds. He was very coordinated, and I am sure that paid off a lot in his career as a defensive end.”



Coy Bacon, Ironton High freshman.



FIRST: Rosebrough, Chinn, Morgan, Belville. SECOND: Smith, Lynd, Gildea, Workman. THIRD: Bacon, Saunders, Coach Shockley, Rawlins, Pride.

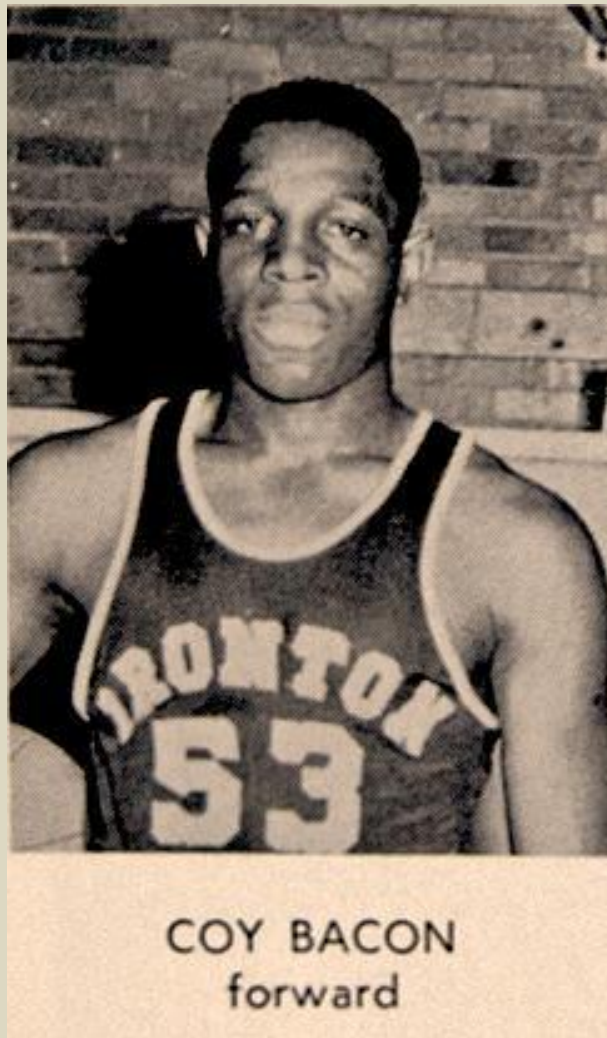
Coy Bacon was on the varsity at Ironton High as a freshman.



KNEELING: Managers: Butch Whitehead, John Steward, Chuck Lynd, Bill Collins. LEFT TO RIGHT: Buddy Belville, Rodger Marting, Lloyd Holley, Pete Cellar, Fred Kiggin, Coach Bob Shockley, Bill Saunders, Coy Bacon, Terry Null, Bob Smith, and Bill Rosebrough. ABSENT: Buddy Quarles.

Coy Bacon was on the varsity at Ironton High as a sophomore.

As a sophomore forward, Bacon (6'4") teamed with Charlie Rawlins (6'6") to form one of the tallest and most productive, inside duos in Fighting Tiger basketball history.



Coy Bacon, Ironton High sophomore.

Lancaster was one of many teams that struggled to contain Bacon. Before fouling out in the final period, Bacon collected twenty rebounds and scored sixteen points in a 67 to 57 Fighting Tiger victory.

The biggest basketball win that year probably came against the Trojans. Bacon helped the Fighting Tigers rout a Portsmouth High School squad that was defending state champions. Bacon and his teammates cruised to an 86 to 57 victory.

The Fighting Tigers took on Jackson in the AA sectional basketball tournament at Oak Hill. Jackson ended Ironton's basketball season with a 57 to 49 win. Bacon was the high scorer for Ironton with nineteen points.

At the Ironton High School awards dinner following the 1961 - 1962 basketball season, Bacon was recognized as the team's best rebounder. Bacon was also named the most valuable player on the varsity basketball squad.



L-R: Bill Rosebrough, Best Free-Thrower; Fred Kiggin, Honorary Captain; Coach Shockley; Coy Bacon, Most V. P. and Best Rebounder; Nugget Smith, Most Improved.

Bacon was a letterman in three sports at Ironton High School. In the spring, Bacon threw shot for the Fighting Tigers track team.

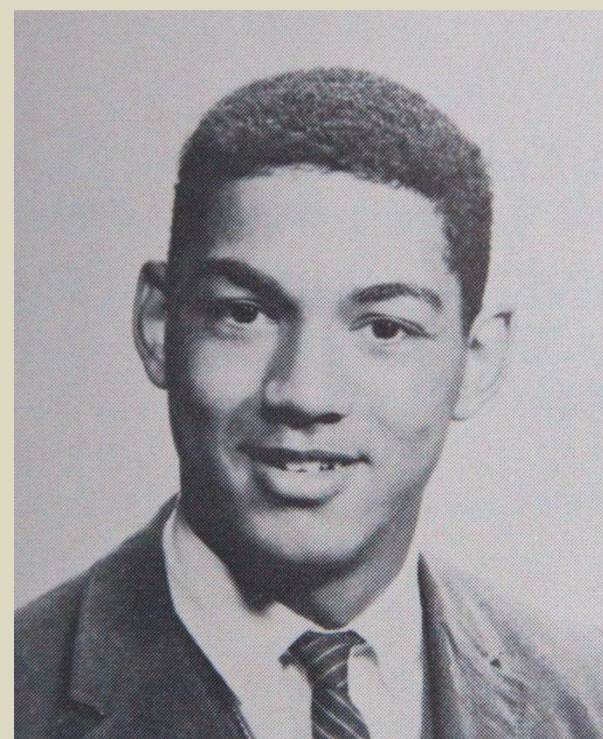
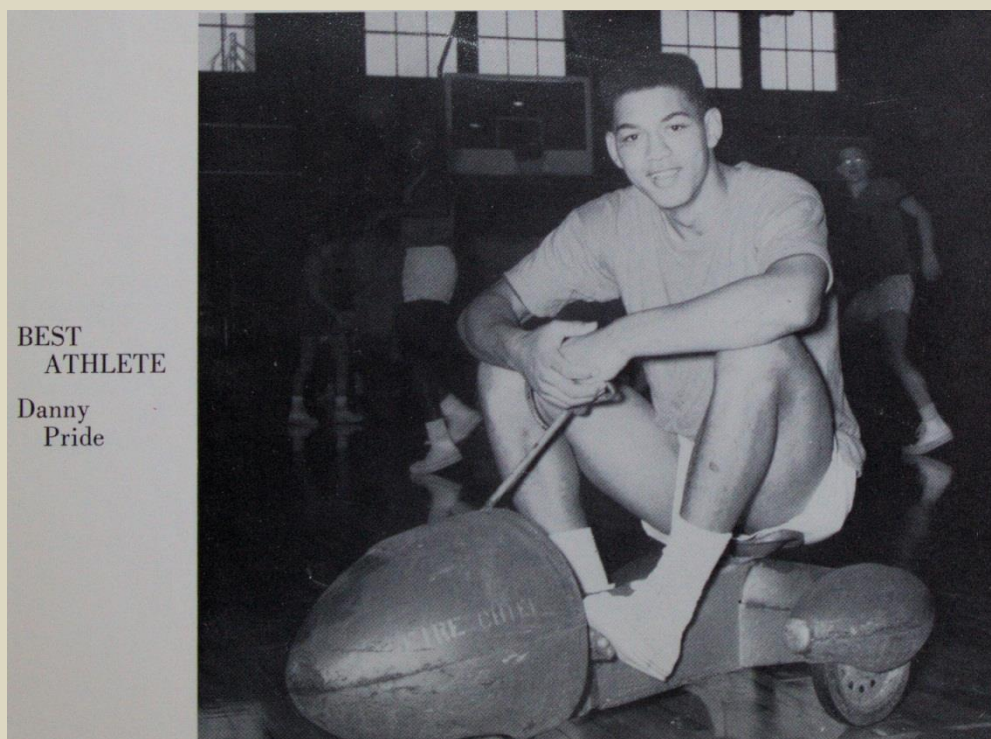
Coy Bacon started off the 1962 Ironton track season by placing third in the shot put as the Stonewall Jackson Relays in Charleston, WV. In a dual meet with Logan held at Ironton's Beechwood Stadium (now Tanks Memorial Stadium) on April 14, 1962, Bacon won the

shot put with a toss of 45' and 9.5".

Ironton hosted its ninth annual track meet on April 27, 1962 at Beechwood Stadium. The meet took place at night under the stadium's lights. Bacon won the event and set a meet record with a shot put measured at 48' and 10".

The Fighting Tigers entered the Central Ohio League for track that season. Ironton finished fifth in the school's first appearance at the Central Ohio League track meet. Bacon scored points for the Tigers by placing third in the shot put.

After his high school playing days, Coy Bacon continued to develop his football skills at Jackson State College (now Jackson State University). Bacon followed his friend and former Fighting Tiger, Danny Pride, to the Mississippi school. Bacon played defensive tackle at Jackson State. However, Bacon's stay at Jackson State was cut short when the Houston Oilers made the oversight of auditioning him in 1964 prior to the graduation of his class at Jackson State.



When Coy Bacon was a freshman, Danny Pride was the star athlete at Ironton High School. Pride later played LB for the Chicago Bears.

No football player had a more humble beginning in professional football than Coy Bacon. Bacon's road to the NFL would start only seventy-five miles from his hometown of Ironton in nearby Charleston, West Virginia. Bacon signed in August of 1964 with the

Charleston Rockets.

“Bacon has a good pair of hands for a receiver, and we could also use him as a defensive lineman,” said Coach Perry Moss about the recent addition to the Charleston club in a *Charleston Gazette* story.

In August 1965, Moss further praised Bacon’s talents in the *Charleston Gazette*. “Bacon has a tremendous future in professional football.”

Bacon’s play at defensive end made an impression with opposing coaches. In September of 1965 before a home crowd of 7,759, Bacon rushed the quarterback hard, slapped a pass into the air, caught it, and returned the interception for an 18-yard touchdown to help the Rockets defeat Newark. Steve Van Buren, Newark’s head coach and a member of the Pro Football Hall of Fame, commented on the young defensive star. “That number 81(defensive end Coy Bacon) looked great,” said Van Buren, a superstar player for the Philadelphia Eagles in the 1940s, to a reporter.

Bacon received \$42.50 a week for his football services. During the day, he worked construction. When asked in 1973 about his days in Charleston, Bacon gave reporter Jerry Magee some interesting quotes.

“At nights, when I am lying in my bed I think of those days a lot,” said Coy Bacon. “It makes a man appreciate what he’s got. It makes him want to get more.”

Bacon’s outstanding play on the field resulted in the Rockets boosting his pay to \$100 per week the next season.

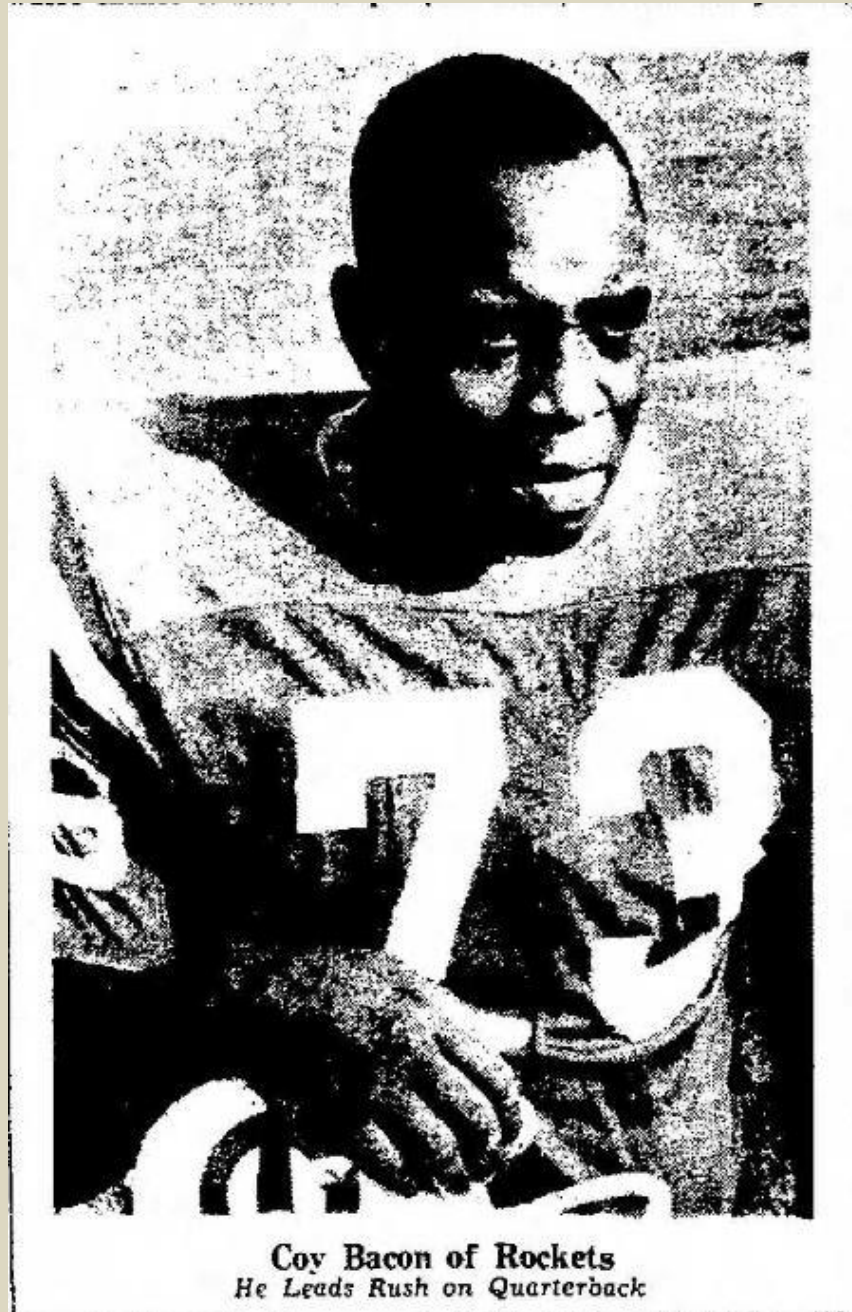
“You know”, remembered Bacon, “as young as I was then, with no family and no bills, the money was plenty. But work eight hours and then practice two hours at night, and man, you’re dead.”

The Rockets had a winning record every year that Bacon was on the roster. Bacon helped the team to a 14 - 0 regular season record in 1965. The Rockets secured a victory in the inaugural Continental Football League title game to cap a perfect season.

In his final season with the team, Bacon was named to the 1966 Continental Football All-Star squad.

Coy Bacon’s exploits in the Continental Football League eventually led to a free-agent contract with the NFL’s Dallas Cowboys for the 1967 season. The Cowboys had purchased Bacon’s contract rights from the Rockets for \$1,000 on February 19, 1967. As a player, Bacon received \$500 in the contract purchase. Bacon recalled that event for Jerry Magee.

“I was really happy when I got that \$500,” smiled Bacon. “I didn’t know what to do with all that money! I think,” Bacon recalled, “I got somethin’ to eat.”



Coy Bacon of Rockets
He Leads Rush on Quarterback

Coy Bacon was the star pass rusher for the Charleston Rockets in 1966.

Bacon served as a backup to defensive tackles Jethroe Pugh and Randy Lilly, a Pro Football Hall of Fame member. Bacon never appeared in a regular season game for the Cowboys. His only game action came in each of the five pre-season games played by the Cowboys.

Yet, Bacon had his foot in the door of the big league. Prior to returning home to Ironton to spend the off-season with his mother at her South 8th Street residence, the Cowboys inked Bacon to a two-year contract worth an estimated \$16,000.

In January of 1968, Bacon told an *Ironton Tribune* reporter that he thought the Cowboys were on the verge of winning a NFL title. Bacon also mentioned in the article that he thought Bob Lilly was probably the best lineman in professional football.

Phil Staton, a varsity football player at Ironton High School in the late 1960s, recalled Bacon publicly displaying how proud he was to be a member of the Dallas Cowboys.

“Coy was on the taxi squad of the Dallas Cowboys. During the summer when Coy was at his home in Ironton, Steve Bartram and I worked out with Coy and Danny Pride. We rode around in Coy's white Pontiac Bonneville that had Texas long horns mounted on the hood.”

Interestingly, the Cowboys had plans of making Bacon a kicker. Bacon had handled the kickoff duties in high school, college and for the Charleston Rockets. The Cowboys were seeking more distance on kickoffs and it was thought that Bacon could relieve Danny Villeneuve of that task.

However, the plan to make a kicker out of Bacon quickly became a lost part of NFL history. During the Cowboys 1968 rookie camp, Bacon displayed enough talent as a lineman in a scrimmage with the Los Angeles Rams that the team traded a fifth-round draft pick for his rights. Bacon recalled why the Rams made the deal in a 1973 newspaper article.

“George Allen was with the Rams then and that night after the scrimmage- I had a good scrimmage against Joe Scibelli and Tom Mack- he called Tom Landry and asked him, ‘Who’s that number 78?’ That was my number then,” related Coy.

“We scrimmaged Dallas and in the movies we saw Bacon and liked what we saw. When Coy became available, we made a trade for him,” said Rams assistant coach Ted Marchibroda in 1969.

The Rams already featured one of the best defensive lines in the NFL. With Deacon Jones and Merlin Olsen on the four-man front, the Rams defensive line was labeled the Fearsome Foursome. The 6-foot-4, 270-pound Bacon played in only seven NFL games and spent much of the 1968 season on the Rams reserve squad.



Coy Bacon gets after the quarterback.



Coy Bacon, Los Angeles Rams.

In 1969, Bacon's football dreams became a reality in Los Angeles as a 26-year old, never-drafted, free agent. When Roger Brown was sidelined by an injury, Bacon was inserted into the Fearsome Foursome's open, right defensive tackle spot. Bacon remembered his opportunity in a 1973 interview.

"I knew there was no way I was going to beat any of them out, no way," said Coy, "but I wanted to give it a try. Then Lamar got hurt

and I got my chance.”

Bacon quickly took advantage of his opportunity to start. In the Rams second game in 1969, Bacon was awarded the game ball by his teammates after helping the Rams beat Atlanta 17 to 7. Following the game, Bacon told Jack Stevenson, a reporter, about his unlikely road to the NFL.

“In college at Jackson State, I had no idea I would be a pro. I was only second or third string.” Bacon added, “I love football. I try to work hard every day. Now I’m trying hard to be All-Pro.”

Bacon forgot to mention that two of the men starting at Jackson State in front of him were also on NFL rosters in 1969.

By the middle of the 1969 football season, Bacon was playing at such a high level that a healthy Roger Brown, a two-time, first-team All Pro, was on the bench when the game started.

“Bacon was my roommate,” said Brown in November of 1969. “I helped him playing the position. He’s going to be one of the best in the league. He’s quick— what you might call like greased lightning.”

Bacon was listed as a Rams starter in thirteen of the fourteen regular season games that year. Bacon teamed with two future Pro Football Hall of Fame members, Deacon Jones and Merlin Olsen, to form one of the most intimidating defensive lines in NFL history.

Merlin Olsen and Roger Brown offered Bacon some advice. Bacon said they instructed him “to stay low and get penetration.” Bacon also had the pleasure of being frequently mistaken for Deacon Jones by fans.

“It used to bother me a little, but it happened so often, I go along with it now,” said Bacon. “But I sign my own name when they ask for autographs.”



Coy Bacon, Los Angeles Rams.

In 1970, Coy Bacon was moved to defensive end to replace the retiring Lamar Lundy. Bacon flourished on the outside edge of the Fearsome Foursome. Bacon even scored his first NFL touchdown in 1970 as he returned a fumble fourteen yards for a score.

Wearing jersey number 79, Bacon recorded eleven quarterback sacks in 1971 and was named 2nd team All-Pro by the Newspaper Enterprise Association. Merlin Olsen, Bacon's teammate, felt Coy Bacon should have been selected to the Pro Bowl.

"It's an honor to be selected by the NFL coaches, but I really think Coy Bacon should have been picked ahead of me. Coy had a great

season," said Merlin Olsen.

Bacon made his first Pro Bowl appearance in 1972. Yet, the Rams used Bacon to acquire a badly-needed, starting quarterback. The Rams traded Bacon and running back Bob Thomas to the San Diego Chargers for Pro Bowl quarterback John Hadl.

Harland Svare, head coach of the Chargers, called Bacon "as fine a defensive player as there is in the league today. He can play tackle or end. He is a great pass rusher, a great athlete. The defensive line has become the most important aspect of the game. He makes our defensive line solid for some time to come."

The people in Ironton elected to honor the hometown All-Pro as part of its annual Memorial Day festivities. With the annual Ironton-Lawrence County Memorial Day Parade as its centerpiece, the local NAACP chapter hosted its first All-Pro Day. Coach Tommy Prothro, Deacon Jones, Emlen Tunnel and Marion Motley were among the stars that came to Ironton to honor Bacon.

Bacon was presented the key to the city and rode in the parade. He was later presented a large trophy by the local NAACP. A 2.5-hour ceremony in the high school auditorium included praise from his old high school coach, Carl White.

"This is one of the most exciting days of my life," said Bacon. "I'm deeply honored today for such a tribute that you fans have given me."

Tommy Prothro, Rams head coach, said that Bacon, "through perseverance and diligence has worked his way to the top." He added, "Coy had an exceptionally good year this past season and he is getting better all the time. One thing in particular about Coy in his defensive role is that he is really tough on passers and that's what you want out of a defensive lineman." Prothro added, "We intend to keep him."

Peter Burke at the *Ironton Tribune* wrote, "It is our hope that Coy will remain at the top of his profession for many years into the future." Burke called Bacon, "the greatest defensive lineman in the football world."

Proclamation Of Ohio House

STATE OF OHIO
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

A Resolution

Mr. Davidson

(Congratulating Coy Bacon, star defensive end of the Los Angeles Rams, on the occasion of "Coy Bacon Day," May 29, 1972.)

WHEREAS, The members of the House of Representatives of the 109th General Assembly of Ohio are pleased to have the opportunity to honor Coy Bacon, one of the finest athletes in professional sports today, an athlete all Ohioans are proud to claim as a son of the Buckeye State, who sprang from the womb of football's cradle, Southern Ohio, and who rose to become one of the finest defensive linemen in the National Football League; and

WHEREAS, Coy Bacon's professional career dates back to 1964, however, he did not realize his potential until 1969 when he alternated at defensive tackle for the Rams, and 1970 when he won a starting position with the same team; and

WHEREAS, The star of this young man's career continues to rise, and once he was given a starting assignment he immediately drew the attention of fans and writers, not to mention opposing linemen and runners; and

WHEREAS, Last season, in a poll of the players in the National Football League, Bacon was selected as a second team All-Pro defensive end, a great honor indeed considering the glut of outstanding players currently camped at that position. In addition the Los Angeles Rams named him the club's Outstanding Defensive Lineman, a distinction which for the previous decade had been monopolized by the likes of Merlin Olsen and David "Deacon" Jones; and

WHEREAS, All true football fans know about and tremble at the mention of the "Fearsome Foursome," and when Coy Bacon achieved a position on this vaunted defensive wall and became its mainstay, truly he achieved the pinnacle of success in his profession; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That we the members of the House of Representatives of the 109th General Assembly of Ohio take pride and pleasure in commending and extending our highest praise to Coy Bacon for his achievements as a man and for his excellence as an athlete on this day named in his behalf by the Council of the City of Ironton by adopting this Resolution and causing a copy thereof to be spread upon the pages of the Journal; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Legislative Clerk of the House of Representatives transmit duly authenticated copies of this Resolution to Coy Bacon; to William Borne, Chairman, Program Committee, and Herald Smith, Chairman of the Ironton Chapter of the NAACP; to Mrs. Susie Bacon Echols; to the Los Angeles Rams football team; and to the Ironton Tribune.

Welcome Area Sports Fans to...

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ALL-PRO DAY

Monday, May 29th



Tank Memorial Stadium

Sponsored by The N.A.A.C.P.



- Parade In The Morning
- 2-4 p.m. Introduction of Sports Personalities, Autograph, etc.
- 5-7 p.m. Dinner
- 8 p.m. Program In The Auditorium

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You May Never Get This Chance Again To Shake Hands With This Many Sports Greats. Let's Give The Fellows Our Support, To Show Our Appreciation For Their Being in The Area!



Bacon led the Chargers in quarterback sacks in 1974 and 1975. Bacon also had one of his most memorable football plays as a member of the San Diego Chargers. In a flashback to his high school playing days, Bacon intercepted a Broncos pass and took it back for a touchdown. Bacon galloped 80 yards in the thin air of Denver to score his only NFL touchdown by interception.



Coy Bacon encourages the Charger Backers after a big play.

Prior to the 1976 NFL season, the Chargers and Bengals made one of the most intriguing trades of the 1970s. The Bengals traded wide receiver Charlie Joiner, a future Pro Football Hall of Fame member, to San Diego in order to acquire Coy Bacon. Right away, Bacon would prove to be worth such a high price.

General Manager Paul Brown had been trying to acquire Bacon for two years. Coy Bacon welcomed the move to Cincinnati.

“The Bengals have a good quarterback— Ken Anderson— and all the qualifications to go all the way. I’m real happy,” Bacon said.

Coach Bill Johnson said it was a “difficult decision” trading a star wide receiver such as Charlie Joiner.

“But you have to pay the price to get good people. These big, strong defensive linemen are difficult to come by. When one like Coy Bacon does come available, you feel fortunate.”

Johnson added, “He combines a great deal of size with a great deal of quickness. He’s a nine-year veteran, but he can still move like a 190-pounder.”

Bacon filled a huge void for the Bengals. The Bengals only had 27 sacks, lowest in the NFL, in 1975.

“That was their weak spot, and I can help them there,” said Bacon.

“Coy is one of the real established linemen in the National Football League. He is a top pass-rusher, has plenty of experience and wants to play for a contender,” added Paul Brown.

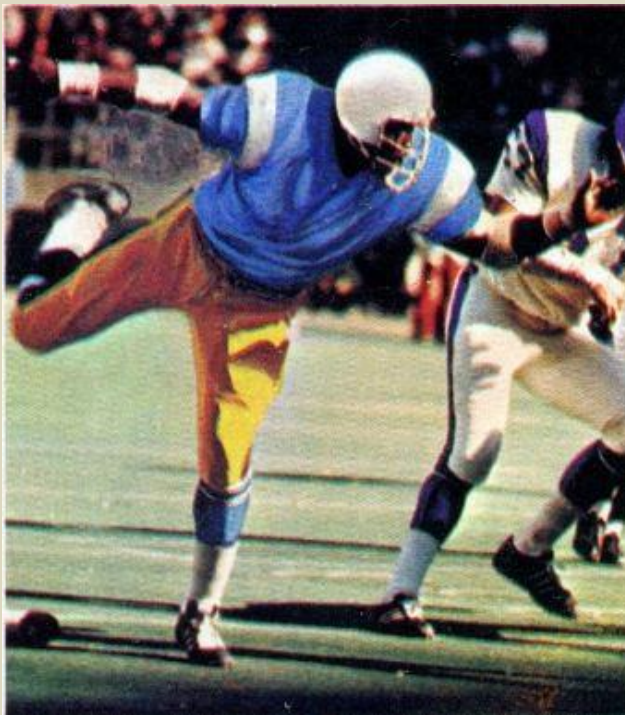
When asked about Bacon being almost 33 years old, Chuck Studley, Bengals line coach, gave the media a quick answer.

“Age hasn’t seemed to bother him.”

When a reporter tried to get his full name, Bacon said, “Coy is just taken from my middle name of McCoy. I’m not about to say what my first name is. I don’t want that getting around. I like ‘Coy’ just fine.”

After playing for two teams in sunny California, Coy Bacon finally had an opportunity to return home to play in front of his family and friends as a member of the Cincinnati Bengals.

Bacon said during training camp that the change of environment “makes me feel like a young man in his early 20s.” Bacon added, “I appreciate being with a club that cares about you.”



After being traded by the Rams, Coy Bacon played football for the San Diego Chargers.

Back on the bank of the Ohio River, Coy Bacon played his best football. In 1976, Bacon produced one of the greatest seasons by a defensive lineman in the annals of pro football.

Today, the Cincinnati Bengals credit Coy Bacon with 22 quarterback sacks in 1976 which remains a team record. Bacon helped the Bengals record a 10 - 4 record that season. On average, the defense gave up only 15 points per game.

Bacon's three sacks helped the Bengals open the season with a 17 to 7 win over the Denver Broncos. Bacon immediately drew praise from his teammates. "I went up to Coy after the game and said 'you are a pro's pro.' That's the ultimate compliment as far as I am concerned," said veteran Ron Carpenter.

"I feel like I'm 27," said Bacon after helping limit the Broncos to just 115 yards on the ground and 97 yards in the air. "Age is just a number. When you are around kids, you play like them."

Following a disappointing loss to the Oakland Raiders on Monday night football which pretty much ended the Bengals playoff hopes

for 1976, Bacon showered, dressed and expressed his frustrations to the media.

Bacon said the Bengals “blew it”. “I can’t go through this no more,” Bacon added. “It’s really disheartening. I’m 33 years old. I don’t know if I’m going to play anymore. I don’t know if I am coming back next year or not.”



Coy Bacon attacks the line of scrimmage as a Cincinnati Bengal.

A few days later, Bacon’s coach told the media he hoped Bacon would not retire from football.

“I hope he changes his mind. It’s always very difficult in the dressing room after a disappointing loss,” said Coach Bill Johnson. “Coy has worked hard, is a great competitor and means a lot to our ball club.”

“I want to talk to my accountant,” responded Bacon when asked about his possible retirement. “I’ve got mouths to feed.”

Bacon took his frustrations of not making the playoffs out on the Jets in the Bengals final game of 1976. Bacon closed out Joe

Namath's great career by sacking him four times at Shea Stadium.

"I'm satisfied with my play this year, but I'm not satisfied with the season as a whole. We should've made the playoffs," said Bacon at the conclusion of the season.

Coy Bacon was voted the Bengals MVP in 1976. Bacon helped the Bengals become the NFL's third best overall defense in 1976. Bacon was an All-Pro selection and traveled to Seattle to play in the Pro Bowl contest.

Despite being a Cincinnati Bengal, Bacon still called Oceanside, California his off-season home. Bacon sold insurance to supplement his income. Bacon also played racquetball and watched his diet to keep his weight down.

As the 1977 football season approached, Bacon was still frustrated with the outcome of the 1976 season. "We didn't get in the Super Bowl," Bacon told Ernie Salvatore of the *Herald Dispatch*. "That's what counts man."

"Determination had a lot to do with it," said Bacon in 2001 about his ability to pressure quarterbacks. "Off the ball is the best policy. That ball is snapped, and you go, and the offensive lineman is getting off late. You take your first move before they know what hit him."

Prior to the 1977 season, Coach Bill Johnson commented on what Bacon meant to the Bengals.

"I've never been associated with a ball club with so much enthusiasm. The defense is so gung-ho. I got to give Coy Bacon credit for that. Here's a guy in the league 13 years and still jumps up and down. He's that pepper-upper."

Kim Wood, Bengals strength and conditioning coach, used Bacon as an example of what a serious strength and conditioning program can do for a player.

"Coy has been with other teams that had strength coaches, but they didn't have the extensive conditioning program that we had," Wood said. "He's a believer in it. We feel it will add two or three years to his career."

Bacon had another secret weapon he used to get him through training camp.

"I need a cup of coffee to get me going," said Bacon. "Age might have something to do with it. I'm no spring chicken anymore."

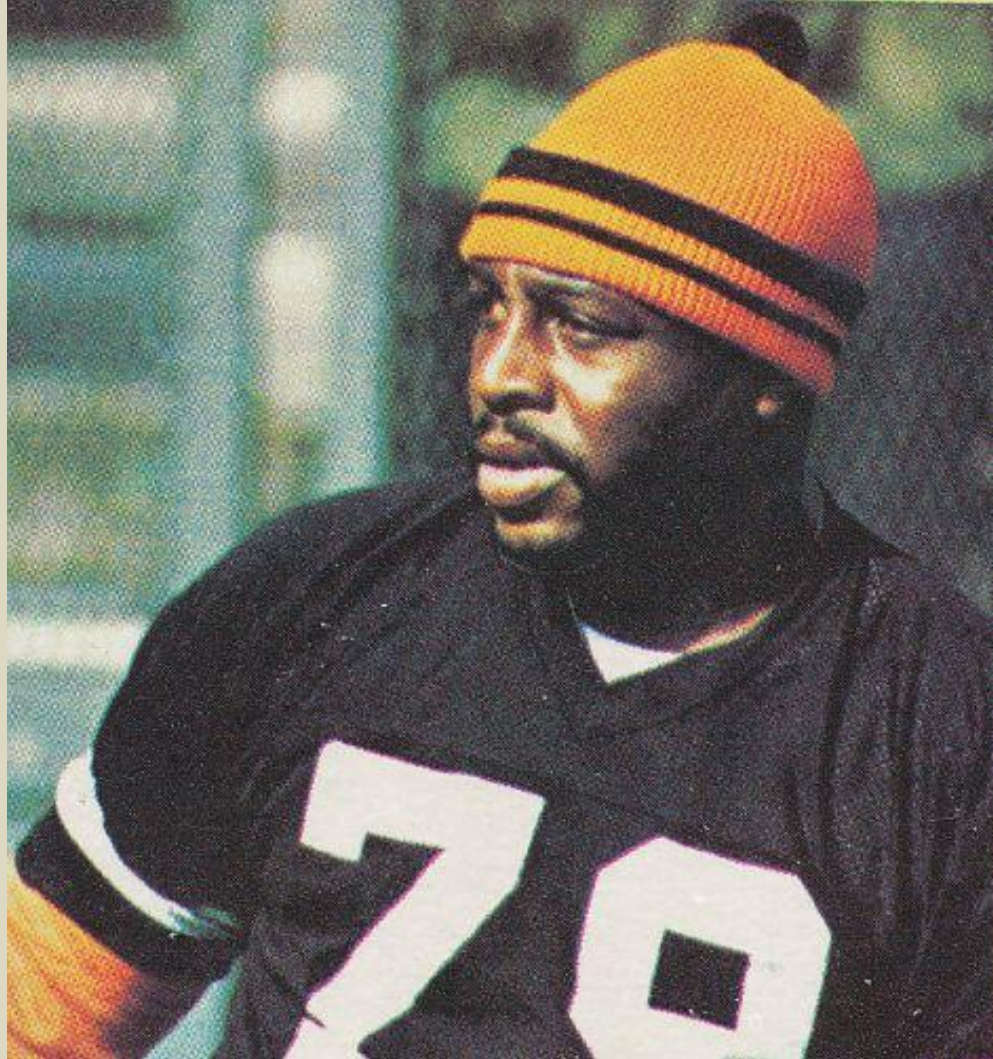
Bacon put together another outstanding season for the Bengals in 1977 and was rewarded with his third Pro Bowl trip.

Dave Lapham, a Bengals offensive tackle during Bacon's playing days in Cincinnati, recalled Bacon's pass rushing skills in a 2001

interview with Mark Curnutte of the *Cincinnati Enquirer*.

“He was the best pass rusher I ever saw. A lot of guys will stand up and shake, but he always gained ground; never wasted any steps. He could make you miss. He was a very nimble body for a guy his size. He had a body lean that was always going toward the quarterback.”

“Coy was the best rusher I've ever seen, and that would include people such as Deacon Jones,” said Bengals president Mike Brown in 2001. “He had feet as light as a dancer’s.”



Ernie Salvatore of the *Herald Dispatch* called Coy Bacon “the NFL’s King of the Sack” after his 1976 season. Bacon’s contract with the Bengals reportedly paid him \$100,000 for the 1977 season.

Coy Bacon Bengals' MVP

CINCINNATI (UPI) — Coy Bacon, the veteran defensive end who gave the Cincinnati Bengals the pass rush they desperately needed, today was named the team's most valuable player for 1976.

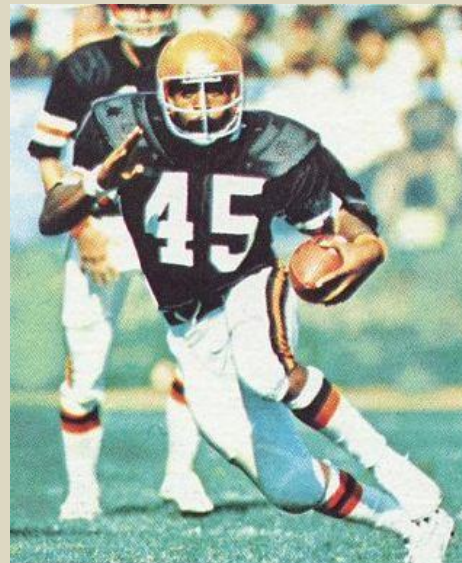
Bacon sacked opposing quarterbacks 26 times this past season, the best in the NFL, and just one less than the entire Bengals team managed last year.

The 33-year-old, nine-year NFL veteran, acquired before the 1976 season started in a trade with the San Diego Chargers, received \$1,000 and a trophy

for topping the balloting by Bengals' fans.

Officials who conducted the polling said Ken Anderson, who won the award the past two years, Bob Brown and Isaac Curtis, also received substantial votes.

Bacon, depressed after the Bengals blew their playoff chances late in the season, said earlier this month he was considering retiring, but club officials said today that Bacon intends to return next year.



Archie Griffin, Cincinnati Bengals.

Archie Griffin, the only two-time Heisman trophy winner in the history of college football, was a rookie running back with the Bengals in 1976. A three-time All-American at Ohio State, Griffin was drafted in the first round by the Cincinnati Bengals. Now the president and CEO of the Ohio State University Alumni Association, Griffin witnessed Bacon's football exploits in a Bengals uniform.

“Coy was a fabulous football player— a real ‘phenom’. When I came to the Bengals, Coy was at the end of his career, but he still set a Bengals record for sacks in 1976. He was a tremendous pass rusher which set him apart. He had great quickness and speed, even later in his career when I had a chance to be his teammate.

I didn’t often have to block Coy in practice because my responsibility was usually to take an outside or inside linebacker, not the defensive end. But I would imagine it was very difficult (to block Coy) because of the quickness and speed he had, and his knack for separating himself from blockers.”

Archie Griffin readily recalled his first meeting with Coy Bacon in 1976 and the friendship he struck with the veteran defensive end.

“The summer before I joined the Bengals I played in a celebrity tennis tournament along with guys like Dr. J, Walter Payton and Earl Monroe. At this tournament, we were given light-blue, sweat suits and these really nice light-blue, terrycloth hats. I loved that hat and wore it to camp when I went to join the Bengals.

Well, Coy liked the hat too. The first day of practice he said, “Rookie, I like that hat and want that hat.” Being a rookie and not wanting to make any waves, I gave him the hat. He wore it all year long.

Coy was a really fun guy. He was loud and always had a good time. When I started with the Bengals, they put my locker between Coy and ‘Big Bob’ Brown— two of the veteran leaders of the team. Those two guys really gave it to me all year, but we ended up developing a great friendship.

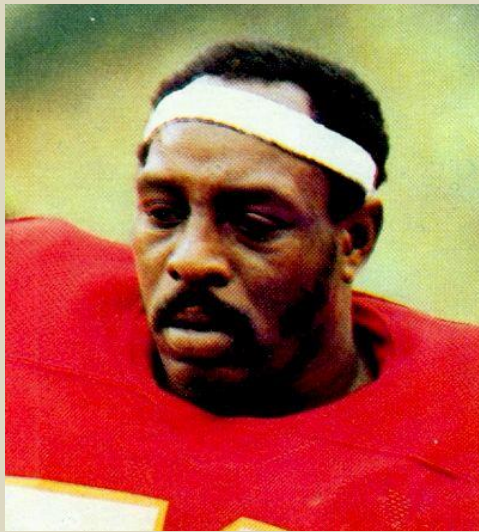
I remember at that time backgammon was very popular, and I can still hear Coy fussing loudly at players for playing backgammon after we had lost a game.”

Following two incredible seasons in Cincinnati, Bacon and Lemar Parrish were packaged by the Bengals to acquire a first-round draft pick from the Washington Redskins. Bacon became the Redskins best pass rusher and recorded 12 sacks in 1978 and 15 sacks in 1979.

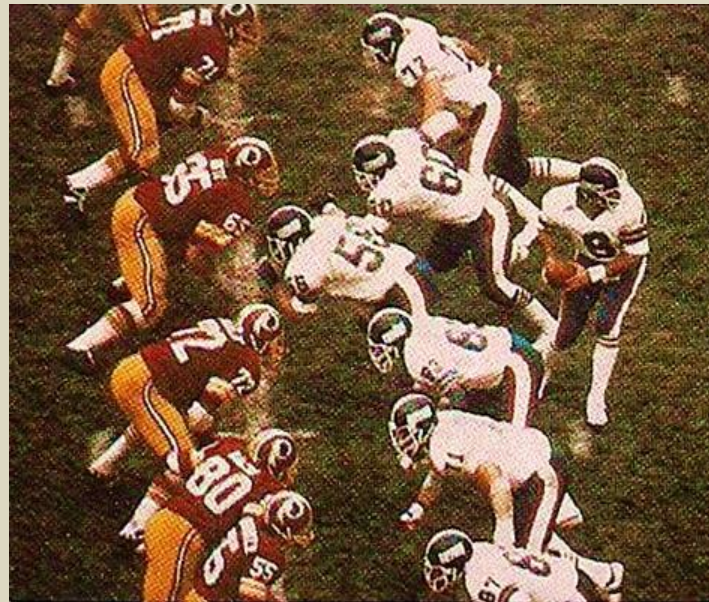
After the trade, Bacon always gave it a little extra effort against the Bengals. In 1979, Coy Bacon sacked Kenny Anderson four times in one game. Following the game, Bacon commented on his play against his former team.

“I just wanted to show them I’m not through playing football.”

In 1980 at age 37, Bacon still posted double-digit sacks as he dropped NFL quarterbacks 11 times.



Coy Bacon, Washington Redskins.

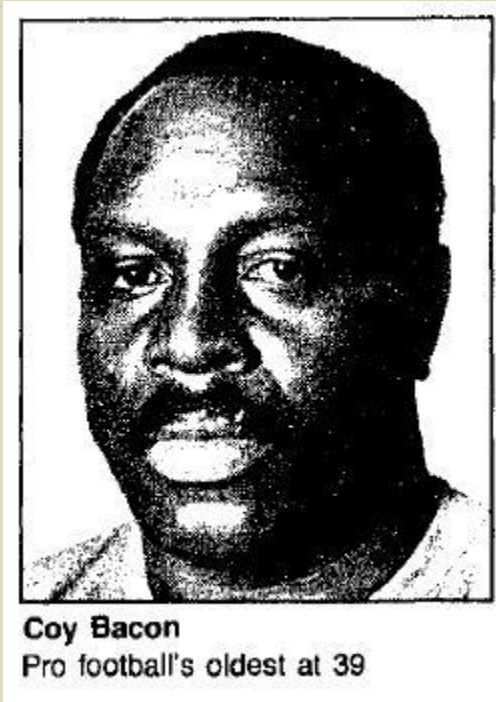


Coy Bacon (80) attacks the line of scrimmage in a game against the New York Giants.

After a falling out with Coach Joe Gibbs, Bacon's long NFL career ended when he was waived by the Redskins on September 26, 1981. Bacon was again leading the Redskins in sacks when Gibbs told Bacon to, "go home".

Bacon gave pro football one final shot as part of the USFL's Washington Federals roster in 1983. Bacon performed at a high level

despite his advancing age. Bacon started sixteen of the eighteen games that season and recorded 7 sacks for the Federals.



Despite being the oldest player in professional football during the 1983 USFL season, Bacon could still get to the quarterback.

One team thought Bacon had more football left in him. An USFL expansion franchise, the Jacksonville Bulls, made 40-year old Coy Bacon the oldest football player ever drafted in any capacity. Bacon expressed his feelings on joining the Bulls to Scott Burnside, sports editor with Kentucky New Era.

“I’m pretty excited about going to Jacksonville. It’s an honor that they want me at my age. I’ll play one or two years at least.”

“I’m really enjoying playing in the spring,” stated Bacon in reference to the USFL’s football schedule. “I could never get used to that cold.”

When asked to compare the two football leagues, Bacon replied, “Right now they’re (the USFL teams) not near the NFL because they’re young.”



Coy Bacon, Washington Federals.

Bacon had no issue with adding another team to his lengthy resume.

“Everywhere I went I made more money, so you can’t object to that.”

Bacon told Burnside he was interested in becoming a defensive line coach when his playing days were over. “After 17 years of playing, I’ve learned a lot about it,” said Bacon.

On January 21, 1984, Coy Bacon’s playing days officially ended. Bacon was released by Jacksonville to reach the USFL’s 94-player limit.

On October 15, 1986, Bacon nearly lost much more than football. The 42-year old Bacon was shot once in the doorway of his apartment in Silver Spring, Maryland by an unknown assailant at 12:15 a.m. after Bacon answered a knock at the door. The shooting came just months after Bacon and a friend had been arrested by Prince George’s County police and charged with possession of cocaine after a gram was found in their car.

Despite being severely wounded in the stomach, Bacon managed to stagger to a neighbor's apartment to call the police. Bacon underwent three hours of surgery at Washington Hospital Center and was in critical condition for two days.

Following two weeks in the hospital and a miraculous recovery, Bacon turned his life over to God and gave up big-city lights for a place where life moved a little slower. Coy Bacon moved back to Ironton and became active at Mount Olive Baptist Church.

"I lost half my blood," Bacon said in a 2001 *Cincinnati Enquirer* article. "It's a blessing I'm here."



Coy Bacon puts pressure on Fran Tarkenton.

In 1987, Bacon hosted *Gospel in Song*, a 90-minute gospel music program every Sunday morning at nine on WIRO-AM 1230. "I'm sacking Satan now," declared Bacon.

Other than a brief professional wrestling career under the stage name "Boom Boom", Bacon basically settled down in his hometown and spent most of his post-football days giving back to the community.

With a passion for improving the lives of the community's youth, Bacon became a motivational speaker and accepted a position as a correctional officer at a juvenile facility just outside of Ironton. Bacon formed a drug-free bicycle club and made presentations at numerous schools and churches challenging young men and women to get a good education and to stay off drugs.

"Jesus got my attention with a bullet," said Bacon on October 29, 1998 to students assembled at Green High School in Franklin Furnace, Ohio. "It went through my stomach and out my back then hit a gas stove. The stove should have blown up, but it didn't. Jesus said enough, I've got his attention now. He came down after the bullet and saved my soul."

"I'm here to tell you the truth and hope you don't make the same choices I did," Bacon said in the *Portsmouth Daily Times* story. "If you make those choices you'll get addicted, busted, go to jail or die."

"Be happy and have fun," Bacon advised the students. "High school is the best time of your lives, there's no responsibility. Then college comes along, and things get a little tight. Then a job and family come along, and things get even tighter. So enjoy yourselves now. Laugh, joke and have a good time. But do it without drugs and alcohol."

Bacon's resolution to stay drug and alcohol free never diminished.

"Coy wouldn't even go to the Legion and have a Pepsi with us. He didn't want to be around the temptation (of drinking a beer). I admire him for that," said Bacon's friend since childhood, Danny Pride, in an *Ironton Tribune* interview shortly after Bacon's death.

"Coy said that he was going to devote himself to the youth of Ironton. He was a Christian, and he cared about the people of Ironton. He wanted to help the kids here make good decisions," said Pride.

Coy Bacon also worked with the youth in the community by serving as a coach. Bacon got his coaching start as an assistant football coach for Piketon High School.

"The kids keep me moving," said Bacon in a *Portsmouth Daily Times* story. "I just like to be around them. That's where my heart is. I want to help them as long as I can."

"He's good," said David Commeans, a senior defensive lineman at Piketon. "I'm learning a lot. I listen to what he says. I wish he'd been here when I was a freshman or sophomore. He's a real nice guy. He would do anything for you if you'd ask him."

Bacon later coached football at Ironton St. Joseph High School and South Point High School. Bacon also took great pride in coaching girls' basketball in Ironton. Many of the elementary students he coached eventually became contributors on the ladies varsity basketball squad at Ironton High School.



Coy Bacon, Washington Redskins.

Bob Vaughn, a current member of the Ironton City School board and former city councilman, lauded Bacon's work with the community's youth.

"Coy Bacon was a hall-of-fame performer off the gridiron as well as on it. After football, Coy took on the challenge of coaching and mentoring our youth. Coy used stories about his successes and mistakes to send out a powerful message. He certainly made a difference in the lives of many in our community."

Bacon was continually honored for his football exploits and community service. The local branch of the NAACP recognized him for his work with the community's youth.

The Tiger legend was also honored at a varsity football game at Tanks Memorial Stadium. Ironton High School made October 9, 1987 a memorable day for Coy Bacon when the school retired jersey number 79 in his honor.

Coy Bacon was just the third Ironton football player to have a jersey retired by the high school. George McAfee (number 13) and Ken Fritz (number 56) are the other Fighting Tigers that have received that honor.

Mike Burcham, Ironton's athletic director in 1987, proudly presented Coy Bacon with his retired home- and away- jerseys in an emotional pre-game ceremony. Burcham was Bacon's teammate on the 1960 Ironton High football squad.

Plaques of appreciation and congratulations were also offered to Coy Bacon by the head football coach, Bob Lutz, of the Fighting Tigers, Ironton High School's principal, J. Curtis Boggs, and Ironton's school board president, Carol Allen.

Jim Walker, sports editor at the *Ironton Tribune*, recorded Coy Bacon's words of appreciation.

"It's really exciting for the Ironton school system, athletic department and fans to give me such an honor. I'm honored and thankful."

The 1987 Ironton football team did its part to make Bacon's day at Tanks Memorial Stadium a complete success. The Fighting Tigers defeated Portsmouth High School by the score of 24 - 7.

One of the most prestigious honors bestowed on Bacon took place in 1991. The Ironton Sports Day committee selected Coy Bacon as its honoree. Previous Ironton Sports Day honorees included George McAfee, Glenn Presnell and Woody Hayes.

Rick Mayne, a graduate of Ironton High School and general manager at WNXT AM & FM/WZZZ-FM in Portsmouth, Ohio, served as emcee at the 1991 Ironton Sports Day. Mayne remembered the efforts to create a video to show at Sports Day.

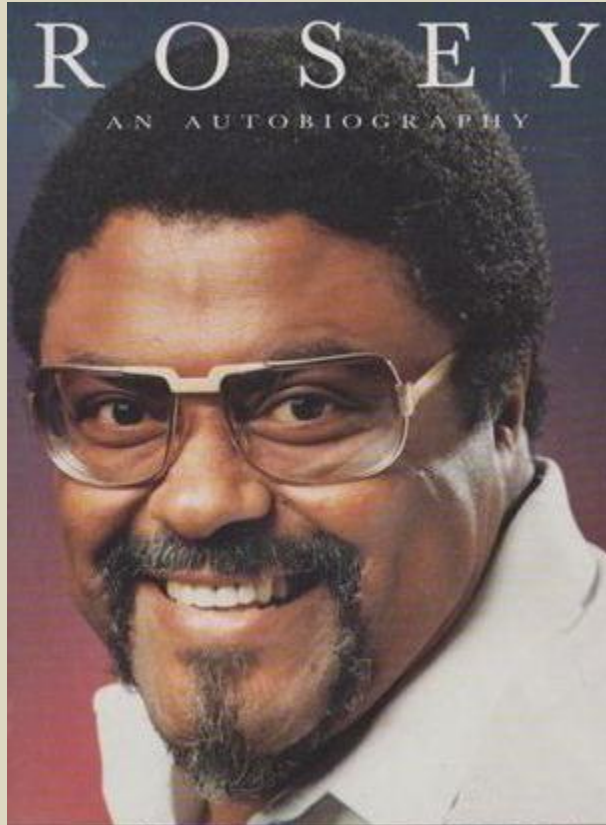
"Jim Walker of the *Ironton Tribune* served as narrator for a video segment that Ashland Oil's Media Department helped produce. Russ Irish specifically headed up this project.

We shot most of the video at Tanks Memorial Stadium. I recall Coy being very gracious as several segments of the narrative had to be re-shot due to lighting or audio issues. Each time Coy would faithfully recreate what Jim (Walker) had asked him about, and was very patient to do so.

The segment was played back during the Wednesday night reception and again at the Ironton Country Club (in the clubhouse) during Coy's 'day'."

The keynote speakers for Bacon's big day in town were professional sports stars Rosey Grier and Al Oliver. Grier, a former member of

the Rams' Fearsome Foursome and a Hollywood actor, was Bacon's close friend. Oliver, a native of nearby Portsmouth, Ohio, was a seven-time Major League All-Star selection and three-time Silver Slugger winner.



Rick Mayne can still remember Grier's arrival in town.

“Roosevelt ‘Rosey’ Grier came to town on Wednesday to conduct church speaking programs— primarily to youth. The Sports Day Committee lunched with Rosey at the old Iron Horse restaurant in the Ironton Depot building.

Rosey ordered turtle soup for lunch and insisted that all present should try it too. It was kind of hard to turn down a man who had made a career out of turning NFL quarterbacks inside out. He had a very commanding presence and voice. He specifically requested that grace be offered up over the luncheon before we proceeded. I recall how massive his hands seemed to be when he grasped his soup spoon.”

The long guest list included Bacon's former Bengals teammate, Archie Griffin. Bacon was thrilled that the two-time Heisman winner was in attendance to see him honored by his hometown.

At the 33rd annual Ironton Sports Day, Coy Bacon was presented with several gifts. Bacon received a new Bible, a color photo of his 1979 sack of Eagles quarterback Ron Jaworski, a \$250 gift certificate redeemable at Harmon's Clothing from the Ironton Sports Day committee, a NFL-textured briefcase courtesy of the Ironton Tiger Clan and a Tiger jacket courtesy of the Ironton High coaching staff.



Coy Bacon sacks quarterback Ron Jaworski.

Rick Mayne saw Coy Bacon as a humble and highly appreciative honoree.

“What I mostly remember is that Coy smiled a lot during that time. He thoroughly enjoyed the recognition by his hometown. He never passed up a moment to remind his audience that he owed all of his good fortune to God.

I believe Coy and his family always remembered his Ironton Sports Day fondly. It was certainly a highlight for me to be a small part of recognizing this Fighting Tiger legend.

Despite his many professional team nicknames along the way, he will always be a 'Giant' in regards to his accomplishments and the size

of his heart.”

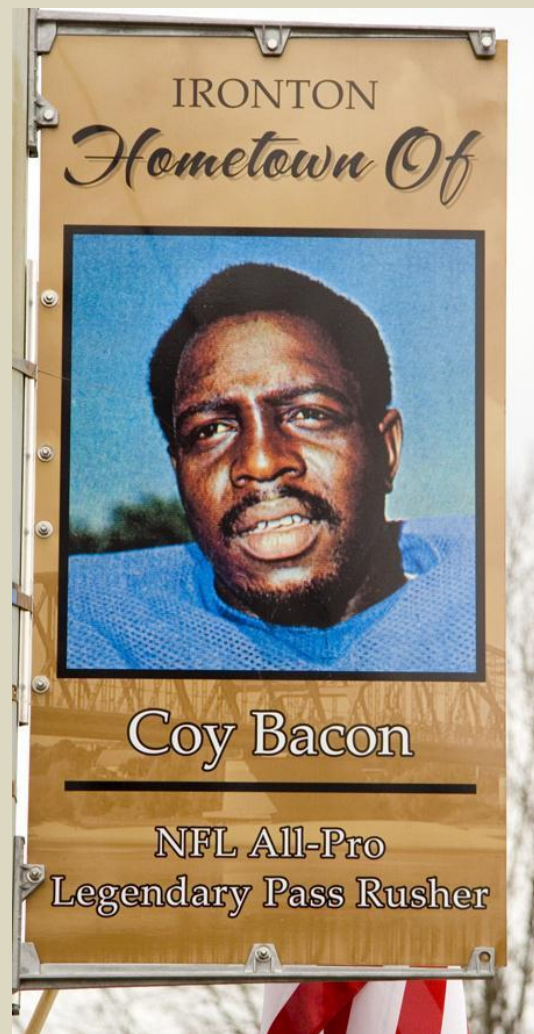


Coy Bacon, Washington Redskins.

At the 1991 Ironton Sports Day ceremony, Bacon told the *Ironton Tribune* exactly how he felt about his hometown.

“I’m happy to be back in Ironton. I don’t plan to leave Ironton unless I’m called by the Lord Jesus Christ.”

In 2006, Ironton recognized Coy Bacon with a street sign in front of the county courthouse. The sign was mounted at the corner of Park Avenue and 5th Street in a high-traffic area designated for honoring the community’s heroes.



“As a child and adult, it’s something you never dream of,” said Coy Bacon in a June 2007 interview with the *Ironton Tribune* in regards to his street sign. “It’s an honor. People of all walks of life see it.”

Katrina Keith, a City of Ironton employee, recalled in detail the day city officials erected a sign honoring Coy Bacon.

“I remember the day that we unveiled the hometown hero sign in the lobby of the Ironton City Center. Rob Slagel, an Ironton businessman, felt Coy was a great candidate for the project and sponsored Coy’s sign. Mayor John Elam, Ironton Port Authority member Jay Zornes and I were on hand for the unveiling.

When we pulled the cover from the sign, Coy’s face lit up like a kid in a candy store and tears welled up in his eyes. He was truly honored to know that people from his hometown respected him.

Later that evening, Coy stopped by the house to once again thank us for honoring him. You could definitely see the humility in his face.”

In his spare time, Coy Bacon enjoyed playing golf and attending community events. Bacon was at almost all of Ironton High’s football games, and he often sat courtside at basketball games. He would always provide a firm handshake and warm smile whether approached by close friends or total strangers.



Coy Bacon gave the author a smile and thumbs up prior to the 2007 Wheelersburg at Ironton varsity football game. Bacon arrived early and sat in the general admission section of Tanks Memorial Stadium. Since illness kept Bacon home during the 2008 football season, this was possibly his last visit to the stadium where his great gridiron career got its start. (Photo by Jim Ridgeway)

Of course, Bacon liked to talk about football. Bacon was typically very animated with his stories about his days in the NFL, and he shared those first-hand accounts with audiences both large and small. Most of his stories would start by holding up his giant hands and naming an elite list of NFL quarterbacks those hands had grasped on the gridiron.



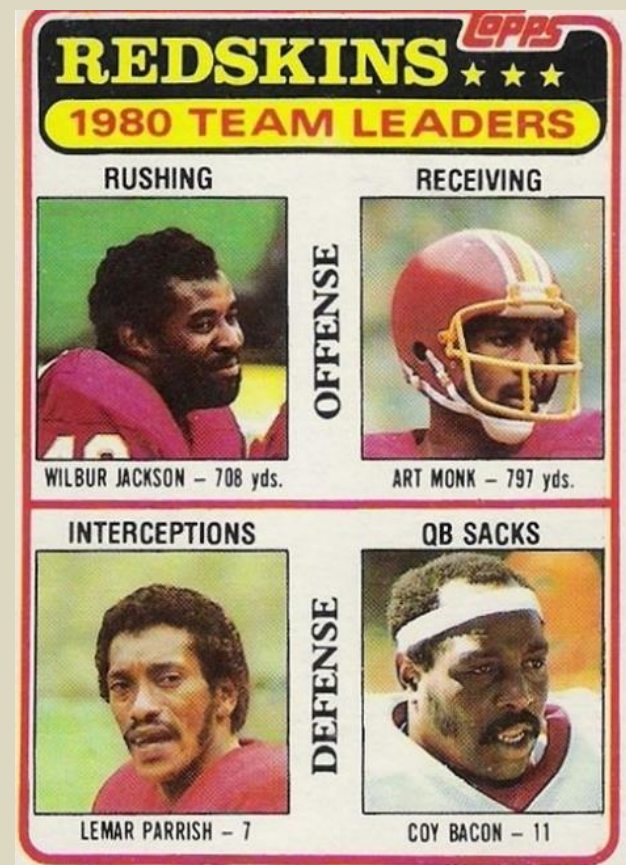
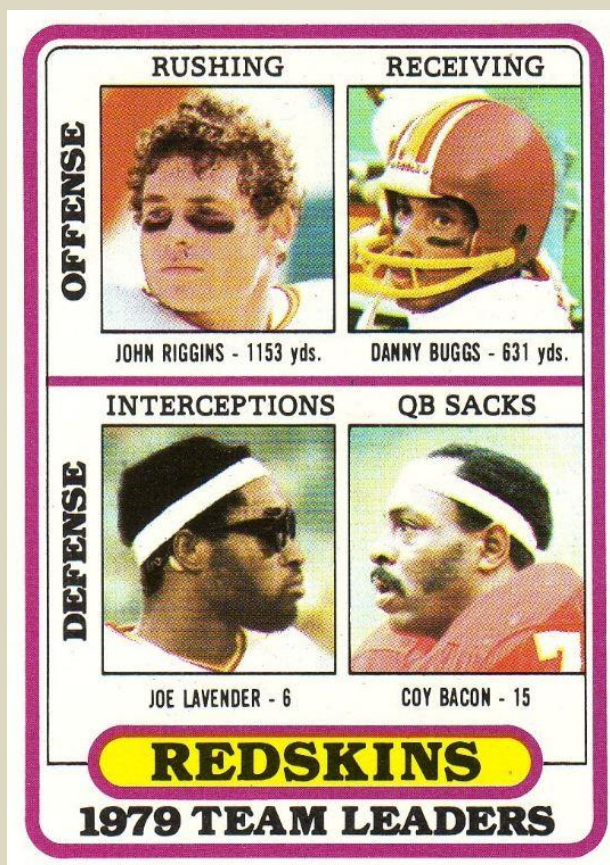
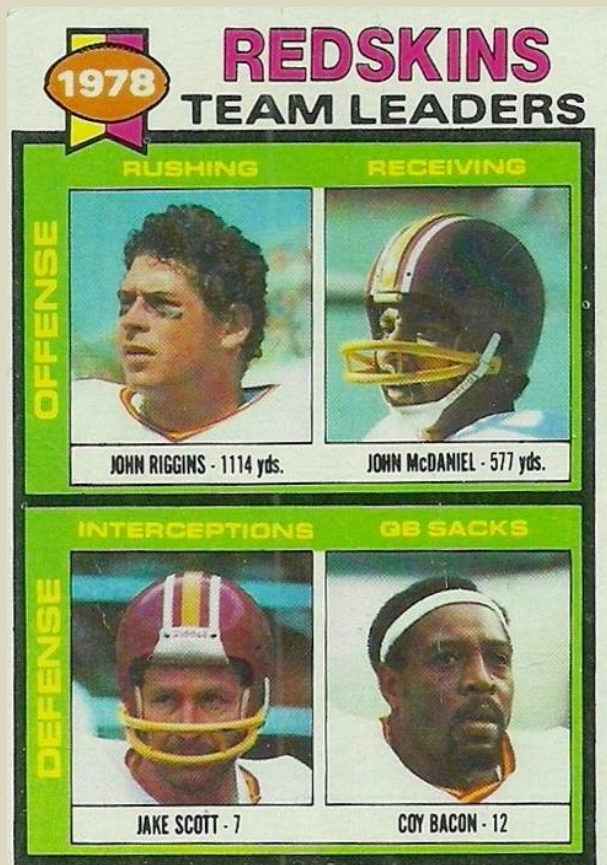
Coy Bacon knocks the ball loose while sacking Archie Manning.

Bacon reflected on his football playing days in a 2002 interview conducted by Jim Walker of the *Ironton Tribune*.

“I never got any serious injuries,” Bacon said. “It brought excitement to my life and taught me responsibility, and taught me to be a strong person.”

For a defensive lineman, Coy Bacon had a long and highly productive pro career. Coy once stated that he would have probably played just five or six years with the type of money players receive today. Considering the present shortage of NFL linemen that can get to the quarterback and the demand within the league for prolific pass rushers, a player with Coy Bacon’s pass rushing skills would be one of the highest paid players in today’s game.

Unfortunately for Coy Bacon, the NFL never made quarterback sacks an official NFL statistic until 1982 when Bacon was already out of the league. Today, Michael Strahan holds the NFL single-season record with 22.5 sacks (including the infamous quarterback dive by Brett Favre) through a sixteen game-season in 2001.




For an “unofficial” NFL statistic, it’s amazing how well the NFL and its teams kept track of quarterback sacks. Bacon was listed as team leader in sacks for the Redskins on these Topps football cards.

There is still great debate on just how many quarterback sacks Bacon accumulated during the 1976 football season. The Bengals list Bacon with a team-record 22 sacks. On the other hand, Bacon claimed that a football card listed him with 26 sacks and that the Bengals paid him for 26 sacks as a contract incentive.


COY BACON **DEFENSIVE END**

522 Height: 6'4" Weight: 270 College: Jackson State
 Drafted: No How Acquired: Trade with Bengals, 1978
 Birthdate: 8-30-43 Home: Oceanside, California

TEAM FACTS



CLIFF BATTLES OF THE 1932-37 REDSKINS WAS INDUCTED INTO PRO FOOTBALL HALL OF FAME IN 1968.



Coy has been a noted pass rusher in the NFL since 1967. He continued his superb play on Redskins' defensive line last season by topping club with 15 Quarterback Sacks during campaign. He was credited with 12 tackles of quarterbacks in 1978, his first season at Washington, and led entire NFL with 26 sacks during 1976 for the Cincinnati Bengals.

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COY BACON **DEFENSIVE END**

124

Topps

Height: 6'4" Weight: 265 College: Jackson State
 Drafted: No Acquired: Trade with Bengals, 1978
 Born: 8-30-43, Cadiz, Kentucky Home: Oceanside, California

COY HAS SCORED 2 TOUCHDOWNS DURING HIS NFL CAREER.

One of pro football's most outstanding pass rushers, Coy led the Redskins in quarterback sacks once again last season with 11. He had topped the club by registering 15 sacks during 1979, his career-high in that category was the NFL-leading 26 sacks he was credited with at Cincinnati in 1976. A 3-time member of the Pro Bowl Squad, Coy began his career in the Continental Football League in 1965.

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Bacon's 1980 and 1981 Topps cards credited him with 26 sacks in 1976.

7 Colts chosen to AFC All-Stars

NEW YORK (UPI) — The Baltimore Colts won only two games in two years ... and then along came Bert Jones.

Jones, the young quarterback who became a team leader early this season when he interceded with management for the return of Coach Ted Marchibroda after he was fired, went on to lead Baltimore to an 11-3 record and the Eastern Division title for the second straight year.

On Monday, Jones and six other Colts were selected to United Press International's 1976 American Football Conference All-Star team.

Jones received 29 votes to easily outdistance Oakland's Ken Stabler. Stabler received just five votes as runnerup from the 42-man voting board, composed of three writers from each of the 14 AFC cities.

Other members of the Colt offense selected were running back Lydell Mitchell, the leading vote-

Blount and strong safety Mike Wagner.

Also chosen on the offensive line were New England's John Hannah and Buffalo's Joe DeLamielleure at guard and Jim Langer of Miami at center.

Cincinnati veteran Coy Bacon, who had a league-high 26 quarterback sacks, was named at the other defensive end and Cleveland's Jerry Sherk joined Ehrmann at tackle. Houston's Robert Brazile was selected at the remaining outside linebacker slot, rookie Mike Haynes of New England joined Blount at cornerback and Tommy Casanova of the Bengals was voted in at free safety.

Oakland and Pittsburgh had five players each named to the second team and Cincinnati had four selected.

Jones threw 24 touchdown passes this season and Carr caught 11 of them. Mitchell caught three TD passes and

Defense

DE—Coy Bacon, Cincinnati (26)
DE—John Dutton, Baltimore (20)
DT—Jerry Sherk, Cleveland (22)
DT—Joe Ehrmann, Baltimore (18)
MLB—Jack Lambert, Pittsburgh (28)
OLB—Jack Ham, Pittsburgh (30)
OLB—Robert Brazile, Houston (13)
CB—Mel Blount, Pittsburgh (24)
CB—Mike Haynes, New England (24)
SS—Mike Wagner, Pittsburgh (17)
FS—Tommy Casanova, Cincinnati (17)
P—Ray Guy, Oakland (17)

Second Team

Offense

WR—Isaac Curtis, Cincinnati (14)
WR—Charlie Joiner, San Diego (14)
TE—Russ Francis, New England (4)
OT—Leon Gray, New England (15)
OT—Jon Kolb, Pittsburgh (11)
OG—Gene Upshaw, Oakland (12)
OG—Reggie McKenzie, Buffalo (9)
C—Bob Johnson, Cincinnati (8)
QB—Ken Stabler, Oakland (5)
RB—Franco Harris, Pittsburgh (17)
RB—Greg Pruitt, Cleveland (7)
PK—Jim Turner, Denver (7)

Defense

DE—L.C. Greenwood, Pittsburgh (16)
DE—Fred Cook, Baltimore (6)
DT—Joe Greene, Pittsburgh (12)
DT—Curley Culp, Houston (10)
MLB—Randy Gradishar, Denver (6)
OLB—Ted Hendricks, Oakland (11)
OLB—Phil Villapiano, Oakland (8)
CB—Ken Riley, Cincinnati (21)
CB—Lemar Parrish, Cincinnati (4)
SS—George Atkinson, Oakland (10)
FS—Glen Edwards, Pittsburgh (12)
P—Marv Bateman, Buffalo (13)

Honorable Mention

UPI story credited Coy Bacon with 26 sacks in 1976.

According to a recent ESPN.com article investigating the greatest sack king in NFL history, Bacon likely recorded 21.5 sacks in that fourteen-game season. That ESPN article's figure was based on the research of John Turney. Turney, a respected member of the Pro Football Researchers Association, studied the subject of quarterback sacks and compiled his own set of unofficial statistics for the pre-1982 era.

Whether you credit Bacon with 26, 22 or 21.5 sacks that season, you must take into account that feat was accomplished in a fourteen-game regular season. Strahan played a sixteen-game regular season to set the current record of 22.5 sacks. With that fact in mind, the number of quarterback sacks recorded by Bacon in 1976 was truly one of the most remarkable feats in NFL history.

Bacon's career sack total is extremely impressive considering how often he played inside at tackle while with the Rams and Chargers. John Turney determined that Bacon had 130 sacks (Rams 41, Chargers 23.5, Bengals 27, and Redskins 38.5) in his NFL career which would place him in the fifteenth slot on the all-time sack list.

Turney's list should include a couple of footnotes about changes in the game that skew an all-time, sack-total list. The emphasis on the passing game has increased greatly since Bacon retired. Additionally, the NFL adopted its in-the-grasp rule in 1979 to protect quarterbacks from injury.

Simply put, Coy Bacon played pro football in a less-friendly sack era. Bacon never saw today's pass-happy, spread offenses. Unlike Strahan, Bacon played professional football when you had to actually take a quarterback to the ground to hear the whistle blow. Furthermore, elusive quarterbacks such as Roger Stauback and Fran Tarkenton were never cooperative.

John Turney is not alone in recognizing Bacon's pass rushing abilities. Sports Illustrated writer Paul Zimmerman, a Pro Football Hall of Fame voter, wrote an article in 2000 that listed Bacon as one of his ten greatest pass rushers in NFL history.

Michael Strahan is destined for enshrinement in the Pro Football Hall of Fame. Likewise, almost all of the great pass rushers in NFL history are either enshrined or headed to Canton. With three Pro Bowl appearances and four all-Pro listings, Bacon was much more than a one-year wonder or a journeyman in the NFL. Bacon's body of work on the gridiron certainly deserves strong consideration for membership on pro football's ultimate squad.



Coy Bacon has a football resume worthy of joining the game's greats in Canton, Ohio. (Photo by Jim Ridgeway)

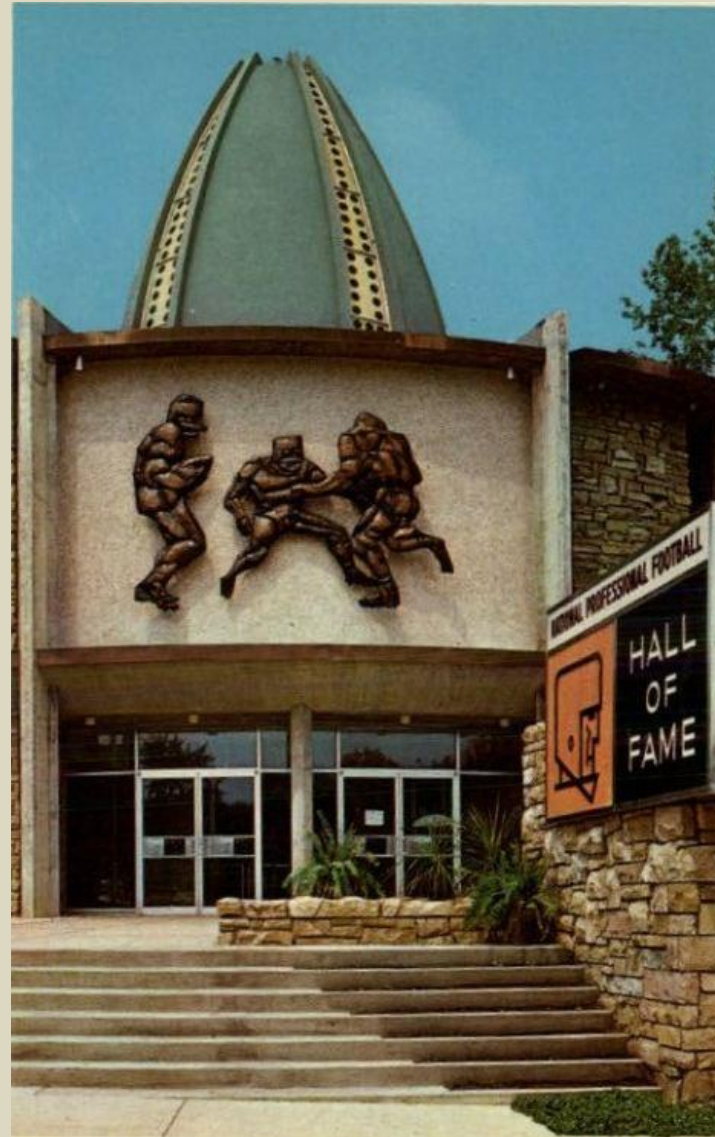
Coy Bacon's outstanding sack statistics has allowed critics to label him as just a pass rusher, a one-dimensional player. Bacon vehemently disagrees with that line of thought.

"You don't play 16 years in the NFL and not be able to play the run," Bacon told Jim Walker of the *Ironton Tribune* in a 2002 interview. "You can't be just a good pass rusher or just a good run defender. I played every down. A pass rusher plays only in pass-rushing situations."

Former Bengals head coach, Bill Johnson, saw Bacon as a complete defensive lineman with elite pass-rushing skills.

"He was at the top of the list as far as pass rushers were concerned," Johnson told the *Ironton Tribune's* sports editor in 2002. "As a run defender, he wasn't as good, but that doesn't mean he had a deficiency. He was just a better pass rusher."

“As a pass rusher, Coy had tremendous ability,” Johnson added. “Coy had excellent quickness. As a pass rusher, Gino Marchetti of the Colts and Deacon Jones were two of the best. Marchetti was really something. But Coy was equal in that phase. He was a great pass rusher.”



National Professional Football Hall of Fame, Canton, Ohio

Coy Bacon last played in the NFL in 1981. It won't be long before all of the Pro Football Hall of Fame voters will be too young to have seen Bacon terrorize NFL quarterbacks.

For Ironton resident Katrina Keith, Bacon leaves behind a legacy far greater than football statistics.

“We never knew why Coy had yet to be honored by the NFL and inducted into the Hall of Fame, but we here in the city of Ironton know that he is deserving of this honor.

Coy Bacon was not your average hometown guy. Nothing about Coy Bacon was average. He towered over people with his six-foot-plus frame. His hands were the size of baseball gloves and his voice could scare the toughest guy in a dark alley. Although he had this extra-large exterior, Coy Bacon was nicknamed ‘the gentle giant’.

There is nothing that Coy wouldn’t do for people. He loved children and wanted them to know that nothing was impossible. His life was a living testimony that if you put forth the effort, you can make something of your life.

After a long career in the NFL and a tragic gunshot wound, Coy decided to use his life experiences to encourage young people in Ironton to get an education and make a difference in the world. Coy Bacon was a devout Christian and spent every day witnessing to people that God loves us unconditionally.

Coy loved his football years and his accomplishments. But most of all, Coy was proud that he was a Christian and that he was doing his part to make a difference in the lives of the youth in the city of Ironton. Coy Bacon was truly an asset to this community and will be missed by all.”



Coy Bacon, Cincinnati Bengals.

“Coy Bacon was a hall-of-fame performer off the gridiron as well as on it.”

Bob Vaughn, Ironton school board member. (2008)



In memory of Lander McCoy ‘Coy’ Bacon

August 30, 1943 - December 22, 2008

“Coy was a tremendous player for the Bengals, the greatest pass rusher our team has ever had. After he left the team, he worked hard to make life better for youths in the Ironton area. What he did was admirable, something all of us respect. We are saddened by his passing.”

Mike Brown, Bengals owner. (2008)



Special thanks to Dr. Jim Asch, Archie Griffin, Katrina Keith, Rick Mayne, Phil Staton, Bob Vaughn and Carl White for their assistance with this article. Article is an educational tribute to a hometown, sports legend. Written and researched by Jim Ridgeway. Research conducted at Briggs Library and other sources. The efforts of the library staff were greatly appreciated.

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“But you have to pay the price to get good people. These big, strong defensive linemen are difficult to come by. When one like Coy Bacon does come available, you feel fortunate.”

Bengals head coach Bill Johnson (1976)



“He (Coy Bacon) was at the top of the list as far as pass rushers were concerned.”

Former Bengals head coach Bill Johnson (2002)



Coy Bacon happily posed for the author at the Wheelersburg at Ironton football game in 2007. (Photo by Jim Ridgeway)

“Coy has worked hard, is a great competitor and means a lot to our ball club.”

Bill Johnson, head coach of the Cincinnati Bengals. (1976)

Notes



Mr. Charles Kautz

1. Charlie Kautz joined the coaching staff at his alma mater, Marshall University, in 1961. Kautz was later named athletic director at Marshall University. Kautz, along with most of the Thundering Herd football team, was killed in a 1970 plane crash.
2. Ironton football fans have routinely packed Tanks Memorial Stadium since the arrival of Coach Bob Lutz. Sadly, fan support in Ironton was almost embarrassing in the 1960s. Coy Bacon once told the author that the stadium was so empty and quiet on Friday nights that he could easily holler back and forth with his mom in the stands during the football games.

The *Ironton Tribune*'s sports editor in the early 1960s, Jack L. Dennin, wrote a commentary prior to Ironton's final home game against Portsmouth in 1961. Dennin noted that for most of the Fighting Tigers home games that season only half of the stadium was filled by fans. Dennin urged Ironton fans to come out and support the Fighting Tigers (6 – 3) in their final game of the 1961 season.

“He’s (Coy Bacon) going to be one of the best in the league. He’s quick- what you might call like greased lightning.”

Roger Brown, All-Pro defensive lineman. (1969)

“He (Coy Bacon) was the best pass rusher I ever saw. A lot of guys will stand up and shake, but he always gained ground; never wasted any steps. He could make you miss. He was a very nimble body for a guy his size. He had a body lean that was always going toward the quarterback.”

Dave Lapham, former Bengals offensive tackle and current Bengals radio color analyst. (2001)

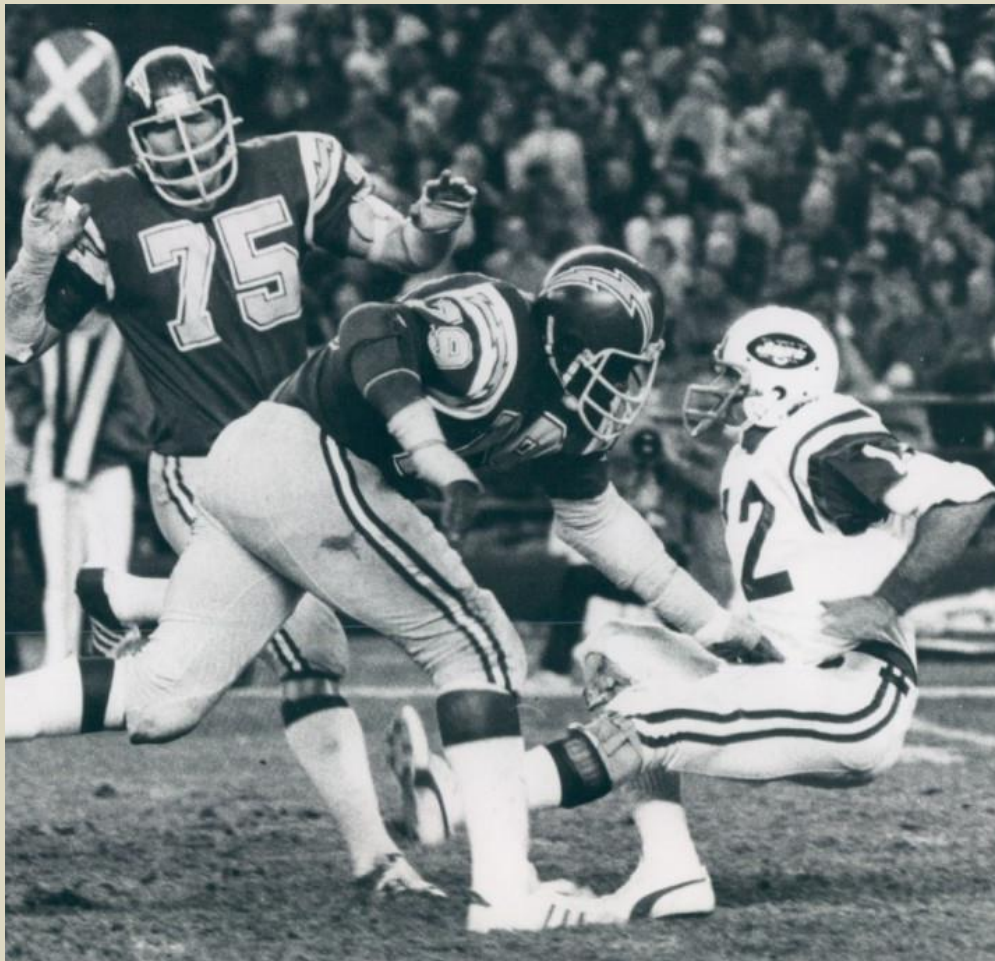


“Coy was the best rusher I’ve ever seen, and that would include people such as Deacon Jones. He had feet as light as a dancer’s.”

Mike Brown, Bengals president. (2001)

(Coy Bacon is) “as fine a defensive player as there is in the league today. He can play tackle or end. He is a great pass rusher, a great athlete. The defensive line has become the most important aspect of the game.”

Harland Svare, head coach of the Chargers. (1973)



Author's Commentary



As a kid growing up in Ironton, my initial exposure to Coy Bacon was watching him harass quarterbacks on television. Coy was living in California and playing professional football on the West Coast for the Los Angeles Rams and later for the San Diego Chargers.

When Coy made it big in pro football, he left his friends and family in Ironton for a new home in sunny California. Over time, Coy became a bit of an outsider to the Ironton community. I remember at a junior high football practice asking his nephew, Dennis Bacon, about what it was like to be around Coy. Dennis told me the family pretty much only got to see him on television too as Coy did not come home much.

Even after his playing days ended, Coy was still attracted to the glitter and excitement of the big city as he called Washington, DC home. It was in Washington where Coy found the wrong crowd and nearly lost his life to an unknown gunman.

After turning his life over to God and returning to Ironton in 1986, Bacon used his mistakes in life as a teaching tool.

“Don’t forget where you come from,” advised Bacon in a 2002 *Ironton Tribune* story. Ironton is a great place.”

“It’s a fast life and it gets faster,” warned Bacon about big-city life. “It’s easy to get involved (in drugs) in a big city.”

Living in a small town like Ironton, Coy could simply be Coy. Coy could be around family and old friends who actually cared about him. Coy could be the “good kid” his old high school coach remembered so well. Instead of getting high on drugs, Coy could get high on Jesus.

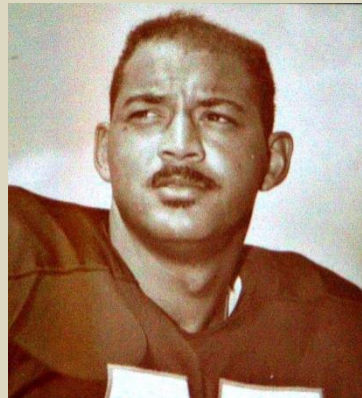
Coy Bacon made a huge life change. Coy became a respected and highly active member of the Ironton community. He spent the last two decades of his life helping make a difference in the lives of young people.

“He found a niche in society that he’s happy in,” said Mike Brown of the Bengals in a 2001 *Cincinnati Enquirer* article. “He’s become a good citizen.”

I was fortunate to get to know Coy Bacon after he moved back to his hometown. Coy was always friendly. He would extend his huge hand at you for a handshake while giving you a great, big smile.

A few years ago, I remember sitting next to Coy Bacon while watching the Ironton High girls’ basketball squad in action. Bacon pointed out on the floor and said, “I coached that one, and this one and that one way over there.” Coy was extremely proud so many members of his grade school team were now playing varsity basketball at Ironton.

Coy also positively impacted the lives of adults in our community. Danny Pride, a former NFL linebacker from Ironton, was among the many Bacon inspired.



Danny Pride, former Chicago Bears linebacker, played football and basketball at Ironton High with Coy Bacon.

“Coy was a dear friend of mine,” said Pride at Bacon’s memorial service covered by the *Ironton Tribune*. “He’s helped me tremendously.”

Rev. Douglas Carter, Bacon’s pastor at First Baptist Church in Burlington, stated what Coy meant to him at Bacon’s life celebration.

“He was a jewel in my life. I am a better man today because of Coy Bacon,” Carter told the *Ironton Tribune*. “As a pastor, it’s hard to have someone to lean on. Coy was one of those persons.”

Mike Brown, Bengals president, expressed his sentiments in a press release when he learned of Bacon’s passing.

“Coy was a tremendous player for the Bengals, the greatest pass rusher our team has ever had. After he left the team, he worked hard to make life better for youths in the Ironton area. What he did was admirable, something all of us respect. We are saddened by his passing.”

Coy certainly made a name for himself in the NFL. He was a player with an ideal blend of size, speed, power, agility and durability. His NFL resume included multiple Pro Bowls and All-Pro listings. His number of quarterback sacks in 1976 remains one of the most amazing feats in NFL history. Yet, it’s what he did after his football playing days were long over that stands out for many Ironton residents.

“Coy loved Ironton and Ironton was proud of him, and not just because he was a great NFL player,” said Mike Burcham, Bacon’s high school football teammate and former athletic director at Ironton High, in an *Ironton Tribune* story. “Coy tried to help the kids of Ironton and it didn’t matter who they were or if they were rich or poor. He wanted to do what was best for the kids, and he gave his time to help them. I think that’s the best way to remember him.”

Whether or not the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio ever recognizes Bacon’s contributions, Coy Bacon will always be a hall of famer in the Ironton community.

Jim Ridgeway 2009, 2019

About the Author



Mr. Ridgeway graduated from Ironton High School in 1981. An outstanding business student in college, his real passion was always history. In his spare time, he enjoys researching the history of his hometown and the development of professional football in Ironton, Portsmouth and Ashland. A member of the Portsmouth Spartans Historical Society, he appeared in *Before the League*, a TV documentary on early professional football that aired nationally in 2015.



The Cincinnati Bengals placed a large poster at Paul Brown Stadium to honor the franchise's greatest pass rusher, Coy Bacon.

“Coy loved Ironton and Ironton was proud of him, and not just because he was a great NFL player. Coy tried to help the kids of Ironton and it didn’t matter who they were or if they were rich or poor. He wanted to do what was best for the kids, and he gave his time to help them. I think that’s the best way to remember him.”

Mike Burcham, former Ironton High A.D. and Bacon’s high school football teammate (2008)





“When I came to the Bengals Coy was at the end of his career, but he still set a Bengals record for sacks in 1976. He was a tremendous pass rusher which set him apart. He had great quickness and speed, even later in his career when I had a chance to be his teammate.”

Archie Griffin, two-time Heisman Trophy winner and former RB for the Cincinnati Bengals. (2009)

Lander McCoy 'Coy' Bacon



Fast Facts

Born: August 30, 1943

High School: Ironton High School

Honorable Mention All-Ohio in 1961

Retired Ironton High School jersey number: 79

Ironton High School Athletic Hall of Fame: 2013 (inaugural class)

College: Jackson State

Professional: Charleston Rockets (1965, 1966). Undrafted free agent with Dallas Cowboys (1967)

Height: 6'4" Weight: 270

1966 Continental Football League All-Star squad

NFL teams: Dallas Cowboys (1967), Los Angeles Rams (1968 – 1972), San Diego Chargers (1973 – 1975), Cincinnati Bengals (1976 – 1977), Washington Redskins (1978 – 1981)

USFL: Washington Federals (1983)

Pro Bowls: 1972, 1976, 1977

1971 All-NFL: Newspaper Enterprise Association (2nd team)

1972 All-NFL: Pro Football Writers (2nd team)

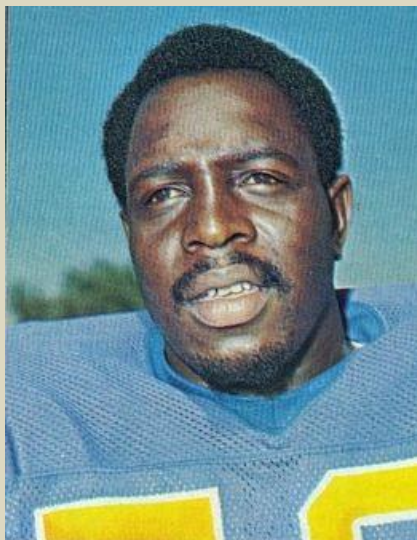
1976 All-Conference: Associated Press (1st team), *Pro Football Weekly* (1st team), *Sporting News* (1st team), UPI (1st team)

1976 All-NFL: Pro Football Writers (2nd team), Newspaper Enterprise Association (2nd team)

1976 AFC Defensive Player of the Year: Tied for second in voting behind winner Jack Lambert (UPI)

1977 All-Conference: *Sporting News* (1st team), UPI (1st team)

Other honors: Named to Paul Zimmerman's (*Sports Illustrated* writer and Pro Football Hall of Fame voter) list of 10 best pass rushers in NFL history. (2000)



“Coy is one of the real established linemen in the National Football League. He is a top pass-rusher...”

Paul Brown, Pro Football Hall of Fame coach and Bengals General Manager. (1976)



Coy Bacon: Ironton's Legendary Pass Rusher

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