

CARL BRUMBAUGH: A DARNED GOOD QUARTERBACK

By Carl M. Becker

On Sunday, December 8, 1940, at Griffith Stadium in Washington, D. C., the Chicago Bears under Coach George Halas demolished the Washington Redskins 73-0 for the NFL championship. On January 1, 1941, Stanford University under Coach Clark Shaughnessy defeated the University of Nebraska 21-13 before a Rose Bowl crowd of 90,000. Though hardly as stunning as the Bears-Redskins' contest, the game concluded an undefeated season for Stanford, a team that had won but one game the year before.

The games at Washington and Pasadena, where appropriately Shaughnessy and Halas sat on each other's benches, formed a convergent landmark on the football landscape. Both the champions of professional football and the undefeated Rose Bowl champions had employed the T formation. Their success was a lesson to American football. Teams at every level, from professional clubs down to rinky-dink sandlot teams, abandoned the single wing and other formations for the T. By the end of the decade, 250 of 350 collegiate teams were using the T. All but one team in the National Football League had installed it.

It was an astonishing turnaround in American sports history. As late as 1940, Fielding Yost, one of the "grand old men" of American football, had proclaimed that there was "no longer any distinctive system in football" and that "there was only one formation that's any good and it is the single-wing." Already, though, the single-wing was on its way to the ashcan of history, in part because of the play of Carl Brumbaugh, a wily quarterback from a small high school in Ohio.

In the Beginning

In a sense, the T returned American football to its roots. Early in the 1880s, soon after Walter Camp fixed the scrimmage line, strategists were using a rudimentary T, the center snapping the ball to the quarterback with his foot, the quarterback in turn giving the ball to a runner. The Princeton V and the flying wedge, though, dominated offensive play for more than a decade. Relying on mass momentum, these formations exerted brutal, even lethal, power as ball carriers ran behind or within moving shields of flesh.

For a few years beginning in 1894, after Princeton, Yale, Harvard, and Penn prohibited the use of the V and the wedge, several coaches, notably George Woodruff at Penn and Amos Alonzo Stagg at the University of Chicago, were devising what essentially were T formations. Woodruff had his quarterback standing directly behind the center, with three backs behind him lined up close to one another in a row parallel with the linemen; the guards moved into the backfield -- "guards back" -- in front of a halfback, leaving five linemen positioned in a row nearly foot- by-foot (by 1912 seven players had to be on the line of scrimmage).

Because of the close quarters, the center could not easily snap the ball with his foot, evolving instead in a few years new methods of delivering the ball to the quarterback -- first rolling it to him, next tossing it a yard or so to him, and then finally virtually handing it to him. By whatever means he received the ball, the quarterback, with little faking, gave the ball to a running back and became one of the five men in the backfield mounting a ferocious attack as mass interference, usually at a point within the ends.

It was a "close" T that was not conducive to end sweeps because the phalanx of blockers could not sustain coherence in the face of increasing yardage. Stagg, who used tackles back, opened it up slightly when he introduced a "flier," a man-in-motion who ran away at an angle from the backs and took a lateral pass from the quarterback.

Coaches continued to experiment with offensive strategy, and the T saw declining use early in the century, the single-wing, the Minnesota shift, and the Heisman shift becoming the dominant formations. At the University of Illinois in 1914, Coach Bob Zuppke effected some alterations in the T, splitting the ends and halfbacks out a yard or so; but he soon abandoned the formation in favor of the single-wing and

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an I, saying that it was "old fashioned." In the 1920s, the single-wing, the double-wing, and the Notre Dame box, usually shifted into from the T, were in general use in collegiate football. All required a snap to a back standing from two to six yards behind the line of scrimmage.

What was also common to them was their reliance on power, on the concentration of multiple blocking at the point of attack, often between the tackles. All the backs serving as blockers, the formations did not permit the deployment of many pass receivers. Additionally, the configuration of the football -- the short axis around the middle was twenty two inches -- inhibited passing.

Throughout the 1920s, only one team of any stature in American football, the Bears of the newly-organized National Football League, employed the T. The Bears' coach and co-owner, Halas, who had learned the T when he played for Zuppke at Illinois, ran a slightly more open version of the traditional T. He had the offensive line from tackle to tackle tightly spaced, the guards one foot from the center the tackles one foot from the guards. He did split the ends about a yard from the tackles but would not go beyond that innovation in line spacing.

His backfield lined up in a T, with the quarterback directly behind the center, the fullback four or five yards behind him and the halfbacks split a yard on either side of the fullback. Taking the ball from the center, the quarterback pivoted and handed or lateralled the ball to one of the backs, the other backs becoming blockers, seldom receivers. It was a formation designed to drive ahead.

As Halas put it, the "objective then was power, power, power. Power in a tight backfield. Power in a tight line."

Power worked for Halas and the Bears for a while. From 1922 through 1927, the Bears finished second five times and third once in a league numbering as many as twenty-two teams. Late in the decade, though, they faltered, winning but seven of thirteen games in 1928 and but four of fifteen in 1929. Opponents were ridiculing the Bears' T, which seemed an anachronism and which was not rolling up many points despite the efforts of the great runner, Red Grange. Moreover, aging players punctuated the lineup.

Worse yet, Halas and Edward "Dutch" Sternaman, the co-owner, were squabbling over offensive strategy, Halas arguing for an "open" game, Sternaman for a "tight" game. One player remembered that "we had two offenses, one, devised by George and one by Dutch. Nobody knew what to expect on any play. People were running into each other on the field." Later, Halas admitted that the two coaches were "miscoaching." They did agree, finally, to turn over the coaching to a new man.

The New Guy

The man was Ralph Jones, who, probably more than any other strategist, became the architect of the modern T formation. Jones, an assistant coach under Zuppke when Halas played at Illinois, had gone to Lake Forest College near Chicago as head coach midway in the 1920s and there began to experiment with the T. Arriving at the Bears' practice field in 1930, he set out to shape the structure for the metamorphosis of the T from a sluggish chrysalis to a darting butterfly. He wanted to spread the defense, creating in it cavities vulnerable to exploitation by a fluid running attack.

To spread the defense, Jones spread the offense: he split the ends two to five yards from the tackles, the tackles a yard from the guards, the guards a yard from the center. Because defensive linemen now had greater opportunities to penetrate the backfield, he sought to speed up action among the backs, whom he spread two and three yards from one another, and had all blockers deflecting defensive guards and tackles for a few second for fashioning quick opening plays.

Requiring more speed and deception, he introduced his distinctive signature to the T: the man-in-motion. As the quarterback awaited the snap from center, a halfback ran laterally toward the sideline, thus becoming a flanker able to move at the snap to take a lateral, block, or receive a pass. The Bears could now develop a wider running attack to complement power plays and also could enhance their passing game.

As a playwright required a great actor to give life to his script, Jones needed a quarterback who could meet the physically precise demands of his system -- taking the ball from the center, pivoting and handing or lateralling the ball to a running back, faking a hand-off and passing -- who could exploit the improvisational opportunities in the T and integrate them into the playbook, and who could coordinate all

with his teammates. His quarterback had to possess physical skills, individualized intellect, and a team mind. Jones found his man in Carl Brumbaugh.

The Florida Kid

Brumbaugh came to the Bears by a circuitous route. Born in 1906 in West Milton, a small town about fifteen miles northwest of Dayton, Ohio, he revealed early on his characteristic resolve to play a football. His father, Levi Brumbaugh, the owner of an automobile agency, saw football as a violent game and denied his son permission to play on the high school team.

Knowing that the youngster did not respect his decision, he stood vigil at the entrance to the practice field, determined to bar him passage. Equally determined to play, the son sneaked on to the field through a rear gate. According to local lore, the father, fearing such a deception, attended the first game of the season, arriving just in time to see the boy streak sixty-five yards for the winning touchdown. Thereafter, the father became an enthusiastic supporter of the team and his son the football player.

If Brumbaugh did run for a dramatic touchdown witnessed by his doubting father, the local newspaper, the West Milton Record, which only sporadically ran stories on the games, took no note of it. Young Brumbaugh did appear in its occasional accounts, suggesting that he was the bellwether of the team for three years. As a sophomore starting regularly as a halfback, he scored all fourteen points in one of the team's few victories. The next year playing against a neighboring school in a hint of things to come, he "ran the team in a remarkable manner, choosing the right plays at the right time." As a senior he scored the winning touchdown against a traditional rival and was clearly one of the "stars" of the team.

After his graduation from high school in 1924, Brumbaugh enrolled at Ohio State University. Dark complexioned, standing 5'10" and weighing about 160 pounds, he was a shifty and speedy halfback -- supposedly he could run the hundred-yard dash in ten seconds -- who fully expected soon to become a starter for the Buckeyes, then coached by Dr. John Wilce. He earned freshman numerals but did not play much as a sophomore. Though he played well in the spring practice game of 1926 and heard coaches assuring him of more play in the fall, he had already decided to depart the horseshoe stadium at Columbus. Apparently he was ready to go to Georgia Tech when Charlie Bachman, the head coach at the University of Florida, persuaded him to come to Gainesville.

Soon Brumbaugh was starting and starring as a single-wing halfback on teams that steadily improved, their record going from 2-6-2 in 1926, to 7-3 in 1927, and 8-1 in 1928. For the team, Brumbaugh -- now the "Florida kid" -- and Bachman, 1928 was an annus mirabilis. The Gators led the nation in scoring, with their one loss coming by but one point to Tennessee.

Brumbaugh, who ran for three touchdowns in seven minutes against Auburn, ranked second in the nation in scoring with 106 points. Perhaps presaging his professional play, he was one of the few Florida players in the Tennessee game who, one Florida sportswriter asserted, played as though he understood that a national title was at stake. He liked the "thrills out of life," the writer added. Later Bachman remarked that Brumbaugh "made me a great coach in 1928."

Brumbaugh wanted to play a fourth year for Florida, but early in 1929 a committee of the Southern Conference, noting that he had been at Ohio State for two years and had played for Florida for three years, ruled him ineligible because of a conference rule requiring students to complete their athletic play in five academic years.

A Spartan in Ohio

Determined to play, almost immediately he left Florida in a search for more football. He found a berth with the Portsmouth, Ohio, Spartans, a semi-professional industrial club that the Portsmouth Football Association had organized in 1928, one of a succession of teams representing the river community since early in the century in play against other semi-pro teams in the Ohio Valley. Anticipating entry into the National Football League in 1930, the management of the Spartans stocked the 1929 roster with college stars, among them Brumbaugh and Roy "Father" Lumpkin, a burly back publicized as the "original Rambling Wreck from Georgia Tech." A writer for the Portsmouth Times thought that Brumbaugh, a "pack of bone and muscle and fast and shifty," would vitalize the Spartans' offense.

Brumbaugh had a bittersweet season with the Spartans. In the opening games, playing as a halfback and quarterback in the single-wing, he gave a good account of himself. Against the Middletown Armcos, he had the longest run of the day, a thirty- three yard dash off tackle. Playing before a crowd of over

5,000, he was an "outstanding performer" against the Ironton Tanks, a perennial rival of Portsmouth teams, until he suffered an ankle injury late in the second quarter. Again he had the longest run of the day, one of thirty yards. "The little lad," said the Times reporter, "was a real field general in the two quarters he played."

Perhaps his early departure was a factor in the Spartans' loss of 3-0. Glenn Presnell, the Tanks' player coach who later became a stellar halfback with the Spartans and the Detroit Lions, remembered Brumbaugh in the game as an outstanding runner but did not then perceive him as a quarterback directing a team. Harold Rolph, a rookie tackle for the Tanks, recalled him as a speedy halfback whose moves left tacklers grabbing air rather than legs. Brumbaugh saw less play as the season wore on, evidently because of injuries. At the tag end of the season, he was not among players signing contracts for 1930.

And then he left the Spartans to play for the Chillicothe Eagles in their last game of the season, a defeat at the hands of the Spartans. A reporter for the Times, which had heretofore praised Brumbaugh, seemed to take delight in noting that when he "muffed a pass" the Chillicothe fans shouted "take him out." Spurned by the Spartans, apparently he agreed to play for the Tanks in 1930, and as late as August of that year was on their roster.

A Boy Who Can Help

In the meantime Charlie Bachman, who had played with Halas on the Great Lakes Naval team in 1919, was urging him to give Brumbaugh a try-out with the Bears. "I think I have a boy down here," he told Halas, "who can help you." Halas asked Brumbaugh to come to Chicago at about the moment that Jones began to redesign the Bears' T.

Once in Chicago, he saw that he had to battle for a position. The roster numbered but eighteen, and he had to compete with several players, among them Red Grange, for retention as a halfback. "I came up as a halfback," he recalled, "but when I saw Red Grange and some of the others on the team, I decided I was a quarterback."

Among the "others" was his roommate, Bronko Nagurski, also a rookie, a pile-driver of a fullback who made the team and was soon performing legendary feats in power-running. Brumbaugh did not make the team as easily as Nagurski did. He had to compete with Joey Sternaman, the younger brother of Dutch Sternaman and long-time quarterback with the Bears, and another candidate for the position. As he later explained he resorted to a subterfuge to show his stuff and win a place on the roster:

"We had another quarterback behind Joey, but I was sure that if I got the chance I could beat him out for the job. Every night I practiced in my room and Bronko helped me. But a whole week went by without my getting a chance to run a play in scrimmage. When we were talking about this one night, I said, 'Bronko, if I ever get in, I'm going to call a buck. Will you arrange to stub your toe so I can run a quarterback sneak? I want to show the coach I can move the ball.'

"Bronko agreed, and a few days later we had a chance to put the plan into operation. I was put into a scrimmage as quarterback and right away I called for a buck by Bronko. When I got the ball from center I made a half turn, and when Bronko 'stubbed his toe,' I quickly spun into the hole and got going. I made about 35 yards and Jones was impressed. From then on he used me a lot in the scrimmages." Brumbaugh, of course, was still running behind Joey Sternaman.

Sternaman was injured in the Bears' 1930 opener against the Brooklyn Dodgers, their first game under Jones. Brumbaugh replaced him and, though the game ended in a scoreless tie, played well. For the next five years, the "first of the modern T formation quarterbacks" directed the Bears, becoming, in the view of one observer, "one of the truly great quarterbacks" Constantly he gave it new twists and turns. Because his innovative tactics came largely on the playing field, almost always they were collaborative in nature; and, like his teammates, he could not easily lay claim to full credit for them.

Collaboration was the case in the first significant change in the use of the man-in-motion. When the Bears met the Green Bay Packers in the second game of 1930, "Brumbaugh and Grange," as one historian of the Bears chronicled it, "discovered how to use the man-in-motion effectively."

As Brumbaugh remembered their discovery, "During the first half Red was going in motion to his right, the regular move for a left halfback. The Packers kept shifting a man over to cover him. Finally, Red got tired

of being used as a decoy. During a time-out he suggested a change. He'd take a step to the right as usual, then reverse and go in motion toward the left sideline."

At Grange's first reverse, the Packers' linebacker followed him out, and Nagurski, with no linebacker to meet him, pounded beyond the line for forty-five yards. In a slightly different version of the story, one giving Brumbaugh greater credit for the innovative maneuver, Halas recalled that "Brummy noted the defensive halfback followed Red, creating a gap in the secondary. Brummy told Red to go in motion but only as a lure. Brummy gave the ball to the fullback who went through an opening in the line, on through the gap and 54 yards for a touchdown." Brumbaugh also threw a pass to an end uncovered by a defensive back following Grange. As Brumbaugh and Grange developed the man-in-motion, they rendered the old seven-man defensive line nearly useless.

The Nagurski Pass

Brumbaugh, Nagurski, and Grange worked together in an innovative play in the game against the Portsmouth Spartans for the league championship in 1932. Playing indoors in the Chicago Stadium on a dirt-covered floor only eighty yards long, the teams were in a tense tie in the fourth quarter. Then Brumbaugh devised a play that, Halas later declared, "was to revolutionize football, to make it the aerial circus it is today."

The Bears were at the Spartans' one-yard line, Nagurski having been stopped for no gain on two bull-like charges into the line. On fourth down, Brumbaugh handed the ball to Nagurski, who moved forward, then retreated for two yards and threw a pass to Grange for the winning touchdown.

Potsy Clark, the Portsmouth coach, exploded, furiously arguing that Nagurski had not been five yards behind the line of scrimmage for the pass as required by the rules. But the officials, insisting that the call was but a matter of judgment, let the touchdown stand.

Early the next year, the rules committee of the league approved a rule permitting passes from anywhere behind the line of scrimmage. Henceforth, quarterbacks had much more latitude in deciding whether to run or pass.

In retrospect, Brumbaugh assessed his role in the "revolution" in a pragmatic way, saying that the old rule made "it awful tough on the quarterback. You see, you had to turn and back up five yards and you'd turn your back to the defense and also to your men where you couldn't follow them down the field."

Halas saw Brumbaugh as a cerebral player. Often he characterized him as a "smart" quarterback who could devise and execute innovative plays. Grange's reverse, he declared, "showed how a smart quarterback could use a wide-ranging man-in-motion to put holes in the defense the entire width of the field. He could literally open up the attack from sideline to sideline." Halas did not, however, slight Grange as an innovator, arguing that in Brumbaugh and Grange, Jones had the "ideal experimenters." In the view of one historian, the three men composed a holy trinity of football: "Jones, Brumbaugh, and Grange ... opened up a trail for future generations of T formation quarterbacks to follow."

Innovations Pay Off

Brumbaugh did not limit his interest to offensive formations. He and George Trafton, the Bears' outstanding center, joined their skills in improving the snap from the center to the quarterback. They developed the one-handed snap, which gave the center a free arm for more effective blocking. They practiced and perfected a snap permitting the quarterback to stand more nearly erect. Thus he was able to carry out his spins, fakes, and hand-offs with greater deception. They also developed a snap giving the ball to the quarterback with the laces in the correct position for passes, punts, and attempts at extra points and field goals.

Brumbaugh worked closely, too, with "Automatic" Jack Manders, the Bears' place kicker. Receiving the snap from center, he spun the ball so that he could place it on a dirt tee with the lacing pointed toward the goal posts or away from them; lacings at the side, he believed, might permit wind resistance to alter the flight of the ball.

Brumbaugh, of course, had to translate innovation, precision, and physical ability into success on the scoreboard -- and did. Obviously, with an improving cast of players, the Bears had more than a revamped formation going for them early in the 1930s. Surely, though, Brumbaugh and the T were elements in the record.

In 1930 the Bears reversed the disastrous season of 1929, winning nine games and finishing third, with only a few points separating them from the league title. The next year they finished with a record of eight and four, again ending up in third place. In 1932, when incredibly they played to six low-scoring ties -- the T still sputtered on occasion -- the Bears won the championship in a playoff game with the Spartans -- the game of the disputed pass.

With Halas returning as head coach, they repeated as champions in 1933, defeating the New York Giants in the first playoff game between winners of the eastern and western divisions of the league; Brumbaugh won praise in that game for his improvised direction of the Bears' offense, particularly for his part in the scoring of the winning touchdown.

The next year occasionally he ran the team from the single-wing because Halas wanted to make more effective use of Beattie Feathers, a rookie and superb runner from Tennessee. Victorious in all thirteen regular season contests, one game won when, as Halas described it, Brumbaugh threw a daring and unorthodox pass into the end zone for a touchdown, the Bears expected to claim the championship with another triumph over the Giants. But the Giants, making their celebrated second-half use of tennis shoes on a frozen field, rallied to take the game. Brumbaugh blamed himself for the defeat because a Giant receiver stripped him of the football for a crucial touchdown after he had apparently intercepted a pass near the goal line.

All Hail!

The loss to the Giants notwithstanding, Brumbaugh had earned status as one of the leading quarterbacks of the day. Certainly his teammates and opponents, his coach, and sportswriters viewed him in that light. Comparing him with Harry Newman, the Giants' quarterback, on the eve of the decisive game of 1934, a sportswriter for the Chicago Tribune, reported that the Bears regarded their quarterback as the "best field general in the National League."

Red Grange, whose language was an exercise in prosaic understatement, once asserted that Brumbaugh was "my idea of a darned good quarterback." On another occasion, he portrayed his teammate as a "fine pilot and faster than greased lightning." Rolph of the Tanks, who played against him in 1930, marveled at his feinting with the ball.

Repeatedly and almost monotonously, Halas depicted him as a "smart" quarterback or as the "smartest" quarterback in "post-graduate" football. Sportswriters employing the same language also portrayed him as a fiery leader. Profiling the Bears in 1932, a journalist spoke of him as a picaresque figure: "Here was Carl Brumbaugh, the dark-skinned daring quarterback whose insane recklessness won more than one game for the Bears."

In a moment of self-deprecation, Brumbaugh acknowledged that he had come rather slowly, even grudgingly, to his "smartness" as a quarterback. Through his initial years with the Bears, he wanted, he noted, to carry the ball every play; "you would have thought it was my only child the way I hugged it to my bosom, but now I believe I am getting smarter."

As he became "smarter" on the gridiron, Brumbaugh also was developing greater confidence in his role as a veteran leader, a bearing that he was still manifesting as his playing days came to an end. As a quarterback, he gave forceful, almost proprietary, direction to his teammates and expected them to heed his orders.

He could mete out ironic punishment for careless play, as Ray Nolting once learned. A rookie in 1936, Nolting was playing in one of his first games and forgot a signal. Brumbaugh, angry with him, called on him to run off-tackle for eight consecutive plays and then, with the ball on the two yard line, denied him the thrill of scoring a touchdown, instead sending Nagurski into the end zone. He offered Nolting no solace: "I guess that will teach you not to forget your plays, you freshman so-and-so."

Seriously but pointedly, he was willing to lecture Halas on his behavior on the sidelines. Against Brooklyn, backed up to their own one-yard line, the Bears incurred a penalty because Halas swore at the officials, the ball going back even closer to the goal line. Brumbaugh sprinted to the bench, calling to Halas, "If you want to cuss some more, do it now George; we can lose only a few inches."

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Reporting to the Bears' training camp at Delafield, Wisconsin, in 1936, Nolting, a relatively unsung halfback from the University of Cincinnati, immediately met Brumbaugh, who asked him where he came from. At his answer, Brumbaugh snorted, "Who in the hell ever heard of Cincinnati?" Sheepishly Nolting walked away but went on to turn in a good practice. Brumbaugh then sought him out, saying casually "Cincinnati is not such a bad place after all. Do you know where I'm from? West Milton." The veteran and the rookie broke out in laughter.

A Year Away

For all his stature or because of it, Brumbaugh found himself engaged in a salary dispute with Halas through the season of 1934. According to Bachman, with whom Brumbaugh discussed the issue, the trouble began in 1930. As Bachman explained it to Halas, Brumbaugh had understood then that Halas and Dutch Sternaman had agreed to give him a "better contract" after a season or so; but he could not "get the two" together and continued, he thought, to be underpaid for four years. Apparently he wanted, as a starting point, an increase from \$100 to at least \$125 a game.

Bachman, echoing Halas' estimate of Brumbaugh, called him "the smartest quarterback I ever coached" and told Halas that "you will have to agree with me that he made your coaching problem simpler by his presence on your teams." He also called Halas' attention to Patsy Clark's praise of Brumbaugh as the "smartest quarterback in the league." Cordially but clearly, he urged Halas to treat Brumbaugh fairly: "Why don't you give the boy a break and pay him a salary in line with his ability and his value to the club. In other words, take the fish hooks out of your pocket."

Brumbaugh had no doubt that he deserved a higher salary, and he knew that, in view of the impending birth of his first child, that he and his wife Marjorie needed it.

Bachman's counsel availed nothing. Halas and Brumbaugh could not come to an agreement, and the "smartest" quarterback left the Bears in 1935, taking a position as an assistant coach under Charles "Trusty" Tallman at West Virginia University, the first step in an increasingly nomadic career as player, coach, and consultant on the T.

As he arrived at Morgantown, he became the subject of a minor controversy over his salary. The "wolves" at Morgantown, wrote Bill Parrott of the Morgantown Post, were complaining that his salary of \$3,000 was too high. Asserting that Brumbaugh had taken a cut of \$2,000, Parrott declared "that is a hell of a reception for one who deliberately shortchanged himself of more than \$2,000 to take the local post!" Moreover, though he was no "miracle man," his knowledge of the game, his record as a "field general," and his enthusiasm would make him of "more than ordinary worth" to the Mountaineers. Still the columnist feared that fans were already putting Brumbaugh on a scaffold, expecting him "to make touchdowns out of old shoe laces and field goals from the press box."

Brumbaugh, indeed, brought no sovereign elixir from Chicago; he could not turn a sow's ear into a silk purse. What he knew about the T proved of little value to a team running from the single-wing. Besides, the Mountaineers were simply short of talent, the returning veterans from 1934 numbering but a handful. Not surprisingly, they posted a lacklustre record of 3-4-2.

Back to the Bears

His quarrel with Halas patched up and evidently receiving a modest increase in his salary, Brumbaugh returned to the Bears in 1936. He bore, as it were, a gift. Along with Bill Karr, a Bears lineman and a former player at West Virginia, Brumbaugh urged Halas to take Joe Stydahar, a tackle from West Virginia, in the first draft of college players in 1936. Halas did so, and "Jumbo Joe" became a stellar lineman for him.

As the rookie lineman played more and more, the veteran quarterback, having lost a step or so, played less and less. He started two games early in the season, passing for a touchdown and scoring on a pass in one game, and then, except for a token start in the last game of the year, played only as a substitute or sat on the bench for the remaining games. Bernie Masterson and Gene Ronzani ran the T in his stead.

Midway through the next year, 1937, even as he continued to call Brumbaugh the "smartest field general" in the game, Halas sold him to the Cleveland Rams, a new franchise. There he was a player and assistant coach under Hugo Bezdek, a controversial and innovative football man. He started against the Detroit Lions in the Rams' initial game but played little for a month and then started two consecutive games, one a losing effort against the Bears.

Then the Rams returned him to the Bears. He had hardly unpacked his bags before Halas sold him to the Brooklyn Dodgers. He was with the Dodgers for but three games, playing in two as a substitute. At the end of the season, he joined the Bears for an exhibition tour.

Halas intended to sign Brumbaugh as a backfield coach in 1938, but, as Brumbaugh explained it, "the quarterback didn't turn out so good so George asked me to get in shape and take over." They made a mistake. The Bears, their T beginning to creak, finished at 6-5, their poorest record since 1929; and Brumbaugh, clearly at the end of his playing string, could not lift them to their old standards. He appeared in no starting lineups and played as a substitute infrequently. Facing the Rams, he fumbled a punt that led to a crucial touchdown. On November 6, against the Packers, he played for a few minutes and then put his pads away forever.

Recalling his final season twenty years later, Brumbaugh laughingly admitted that he knew that he had "played one year too long" when he "kept aching till about Saturday after a game on Sunday." "Smartness" could not stay time; and then time, always relentless, forced Brumbaugh to "swell the rout of lads that wore their honours out."

Through these years of deteriorating play, perhaps as a result, surely not as a cause, on occasion Brumbaugh was drinking too much.

The Teacher

Demonstrating that he placed stock in his valuation of Brumbaugh as a field general, Halas asked him to remain with the Bears in 1939 as an assistant backfield coach, with a special responsibility to instruct quarterbacks in the complexities of the T. His was an important assignment because collegiate players coming to the Bears, or other professional teams, seldom had any experience with the formation.

Among his first group of students was Sid Luckman, who became the Bears great quarterback of the 1940s (but who was not, as one writer declared, the "team's first T formation quarterback"). For Luckman, Brumbaugh was the consummate student and teacher of the T. Luckman, who had run and passed from the single-wing at Columbia, had no experience in the T -- had never seen it in person. At Delafield in 1939, after each practice Brumbaugh spent long hours working with him on the snap from the center, setting up, spinning, and more. He became, Luckman recalled, the "most important" man in his success, a dedicated, an intelligent, a friendly teacher. Brumbaugh motivated him to become "another Carl Brumbaugh."

Brumbaugh viewed Luckman as the consummate student: "He was a pleasure to work with, and every time I hear the word 'coachable' I think of Sid. He followed me around asking questions all the time. Sometimes he would call me late at night to ask me a question. He'd be up studying the play book and something would puzzle him and he'd reach for the phone."

Brumbaugh had played the T under the tutelage of Jones and Halas, and now he instructed it increasingly informed by contact with Clark Shaughnessy. Coming to Chicago in 1933, Shaughnessy began to attend the Bears' games. Their T intrigued him, and soon he was working with Halas in the elaboration of the formation, particularly in creating plays for skirting the ends, which Jones, for all his ingenuity, had not developed. By 1937 Halas and Shaughnessy, employing an intricate blocking system, had devised at least twenty-one plays specifically intended to sweep the ends.

First acting as a voluntary coach and then receiving an annual stipend of \$2,000, Shaughnessy continued to refine and rehabilitate the T for the Bears. He fashioned counterplays turning the offensive attack in the opposite direction from the man-in-motion. He had the quarterback pivoting closer to the line of scrimmage as he handed the ball off to backs with his back to the offensive line; hence defensive linemen who heretofore could see the quarterback, fullback, or wingbacks in the single-wing handing the ball off to other backs momentarily lost sight of the ball, with the consequence that they reacted less rapidly.

He gathered explosive speed at a narrow point of attack where blockers from the backfield or on the line sought to brush-block defensive players. Now the ball did not go back to a ball carrier; he moved forward to the ball. In large part what he was doing at this point constituted improvements, not essential changes, in Jones' methods. To stretch the defense further and thus render it more vulnerable to passing, Shaughnessy sent the man-in-motion wider and closer to the sidelines than Jones did. More or less

piecemeal, Shaughnessy introduced his system to the Bears and then installed it in a panoplied way at Stanford.

Certainly Shaughnessy shared his innovative concepts with Brumbaugh -- even though their convivial habits were worlds apart: Shaughnessy was a dour and eccentric Puritan whose idea of a night on the town was drinking a milkshake at an ice cream parlor. Especially in planning for a particular game, the two men huddled, notably for the Bears-Redskins' historic game in 1940. Studying a film of the earlier meeting in the year, Shaughnessy noticed that the Redskins stayed in a five-three defense and always moved their linebackers toward the man-in-motion. He and Brumbaugh saw that counterplays sending runners away from the linebackers' movement could be effective, as indeed they were.

Shaughnessy came to believe that Halas did not give him sufficient credit for his innovative ideas. But biographers always insisted otherwise. In their view, Halas, though making significant contributions to the development of the T, gave primary attribution to Jones and Shaughnessy for their concepts. Late in life, Shaughnessy asserted that he derived his concept of the T from General Heinz Guderian's book, *Achtung! Panzer!*, the instructive text for the German assault on France in the spring of 1940.

More likely, Shaughnessy depended largely on his own keen intellect as the fount of his T. But in the opinion of Ray Nolting, who played for the Bears late in the 1930s, Shaughnessy "borrowed" many of his ideas from the Bears' assistant coaches -- from Luke Johnses, Hunk Anderson -- and Carl Brumbaugh. According to Nolting, Shaughnessy could only claim exclusive credit for rationalizing the numbering of the Bears' plays, which had become unwieldy and confusing under Halas.

Luckman, though giving primacy to Shaughnessy in creating the concept and use of counterplays, believed that the entire coaching staff, all devoted to the Bears, authored the redesigned T that he directed.

Halas, Brumbaugh, and Shaughnessy, he noted, labored into the small hours of the day developing the techniques and strategy of the T. And Brumbaugh understood it as well anyone.

Moving On

The great victory of 1940 history and his repute as a T strategist enhanced, Brumbaugh moved to new fields. Early in 1941, Denny Myers, the new head coach at Boston College, asked Brumbaugh to join him as a backfield coach in installing the T for his team. Boston College thus became the first major college team in the East to adopt the T. Brumbaugh worked particularly with Edward Doherty, one of the several quarterbacks. As Doherty remembered the instruction, Brumbaugh "knew more about the T formation" than any other man in the East. He was a "daring" man who was always "thinking of different things to do."

Before the Orange Bowl game against Alabama in 1943, Brumbaugh, having had a drink or so, cornered Doherty in a men's room and proposed that the quarterback use wide-receiver plays not yet practiced. Doherty refused to do so. Mike Holovak, another back at Boston, also saw Brumbaugh as an inventive coach. He was especially adept at detecting the opponents' defensive weaknesses -- he had the "eye of a hawk."

In 1942 he could take great pride in the T at Boston. The team was undefeated until the final game of the season when archrival Holy Cross, a decided underdog, won a smashing victory 55-12. (Perhaps the defeat spared the lives of some Boston players. The team had intended to celebrate a victory over Holy Cross at the Coconut Grove night club but cancelled the party after the loss. A fire that night killed about four hundred people at the club).

Along with nearly all the coaching staff, Brumbaugh left Boston College in 1943, apparently because the team was playing an abbreviated war-time schedule. For the moment, Brumbaugh took employment at the Fore River Shipyard at Weymouth, Massachusetts. He returned to the Bears in 1944 as an assistant coach but resigned at the close of the season to join his father in West Milton in the operation of a frozen food locker. Halas and Hunk Anderson wanted him to remain with the Bears, and evidently Notre Dame offered him a position as an assistant coach. He had cast his lot with business and turned them down.

Brumbaugh could not, however, easily withdraw from a game around which a powerful associative network had developed. In 1945 Ray Nolting became the head coach at his alma mater, the University of Cincinnati, which was reviving its prewar search for a place in big-time football. Nolting intended, of

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course, to use the T and, believing that Brumbaugh "understood the theory" of the formation as well as any other man, asked him to instruct his quarterbacks and to scout. Brumbaugh, out of his "great friendship for Nolting and love of the game," accepted the offer as a part-time coach, commuting between West Milton and Cincinnati.

The Bearcats thrashed through an ordinary season in 1945, winning four and losing four, and then tasted real success on the Saturdays of 1946, winning eight of ten games and going on to a victory in the Sun Bowl. Brumbaugh played a distinctive role in their success, calling as he did the scoring play that led to a triumph over a favored Indiana team. Perhaps he felt a pang of regret at the Bearcats' win over Michigan State, which prompted the Spartans' coach, Charlie Bachman, his coach at Florida and advocate before Halas, to resign. Brumbaugh resigned, too, in 1947, apparently finally ready to give up his life in football for the business in West Milton.

He was not quite ready, though, to turn his back on coaching. A year later, in 1948, Bill Osmanski, another Bears' teammate and now head coach at Holy Cross, offered him a position as an assistant backfield coach. Off to Massachusetts he went. His was but a sojourn there, an unhappy one at that. After the Crusaders managed to win half of their game in 1948, they won but one game the following year, losing their final game to Boston College 76-0. Both Osmanski and Brumbaugh then resigned, Brumbaugh repairing to West Milton again, this time for good.

Surely Brumbaugh had wished to become more than an assistant coach, but apparently he never actively sought an appointment as a head coach at any college or university. Probably he was reluctant to do so because of his problem with alcohol. A man of pride, he might, he knew, become a rejected applicant because of his reputation or worse yet a head coach publicly embarrassed by his personal failing. As an assistant coach, he enjoyed at least a degree of protection from humiliation.

Throughout the 1940s, Brumbaugh also served as a consultant for various teams working on the T. While working at Fore River in 1943, nearly every day he attended the practices of the Weymouth high school football team, then coached by Harry Arlenson, who was installing the T. Learning who Brumbaugh was, he asked him to assist him. Brumbaugh was delighted and soon became an unpaid assistant coach.

Arlenson found him to be a "terrific," a "great" coach. Effectively configuring the T for Arlenson, he was instrumental in making Weymouth a model for other Massachusetts teams. According to Arlenson, Brumbaugh was "responsible for putting the modern T into high school football [in Massachusetts]."

Years later, Arlenson remembered the quarterback as a selfless man: "He did so much for me at Weymouth, and he didn't get a dime for it. He helped me be a very successful coach. I thought he was a wonderful guy."

In the summer of 1946, Bernie Moore, head coach at Louisiana State University, hired him to teach the T to his team. Evidently his pedagogy was fruitful; Louisiana lost but one game in 1946. That fall Charles Bidwill, owner of the Chicago Cardinals, brought Brumbaugh to Chicago to help install the T and to be a spotter in the press box. Again he must have been an effective teacher; the Cardinals even defeated the Bears. According to a local legend never fully substantiated, he also served as a consultant at Northwestern and Notre Dame sometime in the 1940s.

Still Thinking Football

At his father's death in 1950, Brumbaugh again entered the family business, setting aside all lingering desire to return to football as a coach or consultant. He entered ventures in real estate and construction. But he remained interested in the sport, spending many hours viewing games on television and muttering from his chair unheard counsel to scrambling and sacked quarterbacks.

He believed that he might use his knowledge of football in the communicative professions. He was hired in 1953 as the play-by-play radio announcer for University of Dayton games. His color man recalled Brumbaugh was not effective at the microphone; he to overwhelm his audience with detailed analyses of plays -- of Xs and Os. He departed broadcasting after one year.

A decade later, in 1964, his inventive mind still at work, he rushed off to New York City to present a proposal to the sports department of the American Broadcasting Company on the televising of football. Noting his record as a spotter, he wanted to become the "play-caller" for the "production backfield"

covering games. He also had suggestions about the use of isolated cameras on instant replay. Nothing came of his effort, except a belated letter of appreciation from ABC.

Shortly before his death, he developed a concept for a radio or television program to be called "Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow in Sports." The format called for an athlete of the past, Red Grange, for instance, to comment on his life in football; then a contemporary luminary in football would describe his career in a comparative way. Brumbaugh copyrighted the idea, but again nothing came of it.

He died in 1969, the victim of a heart attack. Local obituaries and a few elsewhere took brief but hardly adequate notice of his career in football. But Carl Brumbaugh cared little for memorialization in museums. Glory for him was in the game -- in playing and coaching it. And until the day of his death, he "could remember with advantages what feats he did" as a master quarterback of the T formation.

* * * *

Carl L. (Brummie) Brumbaugh

QB - 5-10 170

Ohio State; Florida * West Milton HS [OH]

b: 09/22/06, West Milton, OH - d: 10/25/69, West Milton, OH (63)

1930-34, 1936 ChiB N; 1937 Cle N; 1937 Bkn N

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