

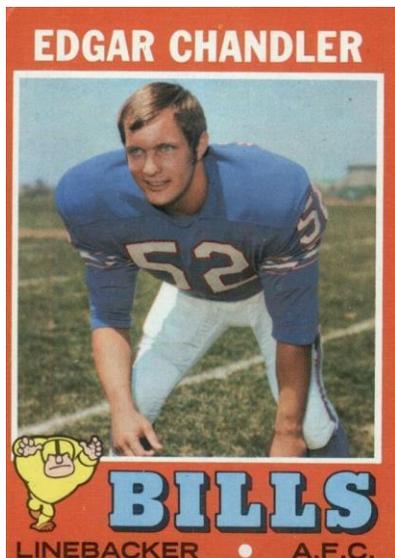


Edgar Chandler

This article was written by Robert Blackstock.

Edgar Chandler, the pride of Cedartown, Georgia was an outstanding high school athlete, a college football All-American, and an NFL football linebacker for the Buffalo Bills, New England Patriots and the WFL's Birmingham Americans.

Edgar Thomas Chandler, Jr. was born August 31, 1946 to Edgar and Nova Chandler of Cedartown, Georgia. The population of Cedartown was around 9,000 in 1946. In high school, Edgar excelled in football, basketball and shotput. He was captain of both the football and basketball teams. Chandler was the 1963 Georgia High School Lineman of the Year and led Cedartown High School to its first state football championship.



After high school Chandler attended the University of Georgia. He was Georgia Football Coach Vince Dooley's first recruit. Chandler, 6'4" 205 lbs., had a great career as the right tackle for the Bulldogs. Dooley observed that he was "as good as a sophomore tackle as I've ever seen."ⁱ When Chandler was a junior Dooley commented, "Edgar gets off the mark about as fast as anyone I have ever seen. He really bolts across the line of scrimmage. Coaching a boy like him is a real pleasure. He has a lot of natural ability and he goes all out in every practice. He's a soft spoken determined boy who leads by example."ⁱⁱ Dooley noted, "every time we had to have yardage this season, we just took the ball right over him. He seems to be his best when the pressure is on, too. For instance, in our big drives in the Georgia Tech, Clemson and Auburn games he really did some blocking....helped us get touchdowns we had to have to win. The most outstanding thing



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about him is his ability to explode off the line of scrimmage. He is an intense competitor, too.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Chandler led Georgia to a Cotton Bowl Championship in his junior year. Chandler was named to eight All-American teams in his senior year. He was invited to multiple college all-star games including the Blue-Gray, North-South, Senior Bowl and the Hula Bowl in 1967. Eventually he played in the North-South and Hula Bowls and the Liberty Bowl with the University of Georgia. Edgar appeared on the Bob Hope and Ed Sullivan television shows with other All-American college football players. Jesse Outlar, the sports editor for the *Atlanta Constitution*, wrote that Chandler was “perhaps the finest blocking lineman ever to play in Georgia.”^{iv}

Cedartown held an Edgar Chandler, Jr. Day to honor him for his outstanding football accomplishments at Cedartown High School and the University of Georgia on February 27, 1968. The day included a parade attended by about 9,000 individuals that featured Chandler and Georgia coach Vince Dooley. The day long festivities were climaxed by a banquet with 500 people in attendance. Dooley was the first speaker at the banquet and said, “Edgar Chandler is the finest offensive football player I’ve ever seen in college. And I know his future in professional football and in later life will reflect the caliber of person he truly is.”^v City Council Vice-Chairman Dr. Don Smith read the citations and presented Chandler with the key to the city. He said, “the key to our hearts and the key to our city in salute for what you stand for and in an effort to let you know how proud we are of you.”^{vi} Chandler was presented with plaques, cash, and many gifts from his appreciative neighbors and friends. He said, “There is no way to measure the sincere thanks in my heart for you people and what you’ve done for me. Today is the most heartwarming day of my life and I can never say thank you with enough emphasis. Your inspiration has driven me to whatever success in life and in football...that I’ve attained. Cedartown is, has been and shall always be my home.”^{vii} The Georgia House of Representatives and Senate passed a resolution commending and congratulating Chandler. The resolution cited Chandler’s three years of all-star play at Georgia, his “Southeastern Conference Lineman of the Year by the Atlanta Touchdown Club and his All- Southern and Lineman of the Year awards at Cedartown High School... unanimous choice for All-American in every All-American poll conducted by sportswriters magazines and football coaches.”^{viii} He was selected as Georgia’s 1967 amateur athlete of the year by the *Atlanta Constitution* (Hank Aaron was named the professional athlete of the year).

Heading into the 1968 pro football draft some reports had pro scouts rate Chandler the “top draft choice among this year’s college crop of potential professional guards and will be drafted as such in January.”^{ix} However, Chandler was drafted in the fourth round by the Buffalo Bills. During the college all-star game in June, Chandler was switched from



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offensive line to defensive end because his size was too small to be an offensive lineman in the NFL. His smaller size compared to other NFL offensive linemen resulted in him falling in the draft. Chandler said, “There just wasn’t any way I was going to be a lineman (in the NFL). When I reported, I think I weighed only 218 pounds. I was a linebacker right from the beginning, even though I’d never been outside the offensive line in my life.”^x

The Bills finished 1-12-1 under head coach Joe Collier in Chandler’s rookie season. He played primarily on special teams. Chandler’s “rookie season was a year of transition and frustration.”^{xi}

In Chandler’s second season in 1969 the Bills replaced Collier as head coach with John Rauch. The Bills finished 4-10. Chandler started his first game on November 9 against the Jets in a 16-6 defeat. He replaced Paul Guidry who was injured. Chandler made a game high eight solo tackles. He had a season high nine tackles in the December 7, 22-19 loss to Kansas City. That was the most tackles for a Buffalo linebacker all season. Chandler said the transition to defense was difficult, “It was a slow learning process. There I was, after being away from defense for so long, having to step in and call defensive signals. That’s tough because you’ve got to know all the strong and weak points of your defense plus the overall strategy.”^{xii}

Heading into the 1970 season Chandler was optimistic about the Bills. He said, “We are all excited at Buffalo as Coach Rauch goes into his second season. What a football mind he has, and let me tell you, he can be strict and demanding. Coach Collier can be a great guy, but perhaps a little too easy on the players, No one is going to run over Coach Rauch.”^{xiii} Some of the stars on the Bills roster included O. J. Simpson, Marlin Briscoe, and Paul Maguire. Chandler predicted that Simpson would be a great runner even after Simpson’s slow start in 1969. Chandler said, “there’s no doubt in my mind that O. J.’s a great runner and he’s going to get better. He’s had a problem learning his blockers as well as the system. Once he learns the system...look out.”^{xiv}

Chandler started all 14 games at middle linebacker in 1970. The highlight came during the November 1 game, a 45-10 win over the Boston Patriots. Chandler intercepted a pass from Patriots quarterback Joe Kapp and ran 59 yards for the touchdown, his only career pick six. Chandler said, “It’s hard to believe. I never scored a touchdown even in the backyard. Sure feels different.”^{xv} “What did I do with the ball after I got into the end zone? When I saw those two ones on that red jersey (Joe Kapp), I just wanted to make sure he didn’t nail me.”^{xvi}

The win over Boston brought the Bills’ record to 3-4 at the halfway point of the season. Unfortunately the Bills went 0-6-1 the rest of the way to finish with a 3-10-1 record.



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Chandler was concerned about Coach Rauch's future after the last game, a 45-7 loss to the Miami Dolphins. He said, "If we had given him a better effort at times he may have given us a better side of himself. You can't pat a losing team on the back too much. I certainly hope he's back. He has tremendous knowledge of the game."^{xvii} Unfortunately, Rauch was replaced by Harvey Johnson as head coach during training camp.

Columnist Craig Stolze of the *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle* newspaper wrote his Christmas wish was to give him the "credit he deserves for Buffalo Bills middle linebacker Edgar Chandler one of pro football's very best."^{xviii} During the off season Chandler graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Education degree from the University of Georgia on June 5, 1971.

The 1971 Bills finished 1-13 under Johnson. Chandler started all 14 games at middle linebacker. He intercepted Minnesota quarterback Norm Snead during the October 3 game, a 19-0 loss to Minnesota and he returned it 13 yards. He also tackled running back Cid Edwards in the end zone for a safety on October 31 in a 28-23 loss to St. Louis.

After the 1971 season Chandler was a free agent and said, "I am open to all considerations,"^{xix} but eventually resigned with the Bills. After their miserable 1-13 season the Bills replaced Johnson with Lou Saban. Saban had been the Bills' coach from 1962-1965 leading them to two AFL Championships. Chandler started the opener against the Jets but unfortunately tore his ACL and was out for the season. The injury probably curtailed Chandler's football career. The Bills finished 4-9-1 in 1972 and the foundation was laid for continued improvement.

During the off-season Chandler and teammate Paul Guidry opened Mothers Restaurant in Buffalo. Chandler and Guidry were good players, but Erik Brady of the *Buffalo News* wrote, One of their "most lasting contributions to Buffalo, though, is a certain restaurant on Virginia Place. Guidry and fellow linebacker Edgar Chandler opened Mothers (originally Mother's Bakery) in 1972."^{xx} Chandler said "we average 150 lunches per day. At night we have a good dinner trade and then bring in the band. We do well on weekends. Friday nights are very good."^{xxi} When the restaurant opened it was a hangout spot for athletes from the Buffalo professional teams: the Bills, NBA Braves (today they are the L.A. Clippers) and the NHL Sabres. Players from the Sabres included the famous French Connection line of Gil Perreault, Rick Martin and Rene Robert. Chandler and Guidry sold Mothers a few years after it started but it is still in business 50 years later in 2021.

Heading into the 1973 season Chandler participated in spring drills while recovering from ACL surgery. During one of the sessions Chandler remembered, "Lou Saban (the coach) had come over to me during one of the drills, put his arm around me and told me that he



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really needed me. He said he needed my experience”^{xxii} Then a few weeks later on April 30 Chandler was traded to the New England Patriots in a six player trade. The Patriots received Chandler, running back Wayne Patrick and Jeff Lyman and the Bills received middle linebacker Jim Cheyunski, lineman Halvor Hagen and center Mike Montler. Also, Paul Guidry was traded to the Houston Oilers in the off season.

Initially Chandler thought playing in Boston would not conflict with running the restaurant. He said, “Oh, it’ll be all right; we will keep the restaurant. We’ll be fine. We pay well and we’re doing well and we’ve been able to attract good people to work for us. There won’t be any problem when we are away.”^{xxiii} However, Chandler couldn’t find anyone to run Mother’s and as a result did not report to camp on time because he had to run the restaurant. *Boston Globe* writer Leigh Montville called Chandler, “the reluctant chef from Buffalo”^{xxiv} because he would not report to the Patriots’ camp. Also, Chandler was spending a week a month in Kentucky looking after a small cattle business he owned. Eventually he found someone to run the restaurant and he reported to camp.

Chandler struggled initially with the Patriots. “Chandler cites an older injury as the basis for early-season troubles.”^{xxv} He notes that missing a year of football with a knee injury is a lot more damaging than he thought it would be. “I wasn’t reacting as I had in the past. I was new to the system and combined with the layoff, it really hurt. I knew what I was supposed to do, but I was having trouble getting to where I was supposed to do it.”^{xxvi} Chandler eventually settled in and started 11 games at middle linebacker.

The opening game of the 1973 season was against Chandler’s old team the Buffalo Bills. The Bills won 31-13 and O. J. Simpson tied the record for most rushing yards in a single game with 250. The record was set by Spec Sanders with the New York Yankees in 1947 in the All-American Football Conference on October 24, 1947 in a game against the Chicago Rockets. On Simpson gaining 250 yards Chandler stated, “Embarrassing? Yeah I guess it was. You go for something you think is there and all of a sudden you don’t have anything. Nobody should gain that much.”^{xxvii} Chandler talked about being overcautious, not being aggressive enough, he concluded, “250 yards. That’s a lot of yardage, even for Secretariat.”^{xxviii}

In a rematch against Buffalo on December 9, Simpson was only 280 yards shy of Jim Brown’s season high record of 1,863 yards. Prior to the game, Chandler said, “I’ll tell you one thing; he’s not going to get 250 yards. He’s not going to get 200 yards. I don’t care HOW good he is.”^{xxix} Simpson gained 219 yards and Buffalo won 37-13. During the game, Simpson was angered at what he thought was a late hit by Chandler. They started fighting. Chandler said, “Simpson looked up and saw me. He stopped and said, Edgar I didn’t know it was you.”^{xxx} “Yeah we had some words. He got mad at me, saying that I



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was always hitting him a little late. I told him if he would go down on the first lick, I wouldn't have to do it.”^{xxxi}

The Patriots finished the 1973 season 5-9 under Coach Chuck Fairbanks. Heading into the 1974 season, the Patriots changed their defense from a four man front to a 3-4 and Fairbanks determined his linebackers from 1973 were too slow. As a result, Fairbanks cut all his linebackers from the 1973 team including Chandler right before the start of the season. Fairbanks said of Chandler and fellow linebacker Ron Acks, “it wasn't an easy decision. Both of them were good team men, but maybe to a degree they might have been handicapped by our new system of defense.”^{xxxii} Patriots rookie linebacker Sam Hunt thought that Chandler, “had no wheels.”^{xxxiii} Chandler's NFL career was finished.

After he was cut, Chandler signed with the Birmingham Americans of the World Football League. The Americans won the only WFL Championship. This was Chandler's last year in professional football. He retired at age 28.

After football, the talented Chandler was involved in various businesses including public relations for All-American Contel Communications. In 1976, Chandler visited his business partner and former teammate Paul Guidry in Guidry's hometown of Breaux Bridge, Louisiana. It was fairly big news in Breaux Bridge and was reported in the local newspaper that Chandler had crawfish for the first time and raw oysters that he liked very much.

In 1978 Chandler attended a taping of the Tonight Show with Don Rickles as the guest host. Rickles interviewed some members of the audience including Chandler. The 5'6" Rickles looked pretty small compared to the 6'4" Chandler. It resulted in “hilarious consequences.”^{xxxiv}

Chandler had a great collegiate career and then a solid professional football career until the ACL injury slowed him up. His football accomplishments were recognized after his retirement. In 1976 he was selected as one of the tackles on the University of Georgia's post 1950 all-time football team. He was inducted into the State of Georgia Sports Hall of Fame on February 20, 1988 and into the Cedartown Sport Hall of Fame in November 1998. Chandler was selected to the all-time University of Georgia football team in 1999 and as the all-time great number 63 in Georgia amateur or professional sports by the *Macon Telegraph* in 2013. In Cedartown, a statue of Chandler was unveiled as part of the Polk County Walk of Fame in 2016.

Chandler's plaque at the Walk of Fame states:

“A native of Cedartown, Edgar Chandler won varsity letters in three sports at Cedartown High School. As an All-American offensive lineman, Edgar's on-field leadership helped



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the Cedartown Bulldogs win their first State Championship in football in 1963. Edgar also competed in track and field, winning an individual State Championship in the shot put. Edgar earned a football scholarship to the University of Georgia where he started at offensive right tackle. As a senior at Georgia, Edgar's outstanding play led to first team All-SEC honors, and recognition as a consensus All-American. Edgar's play also helped Georgia win a Cotton Bowl Championship in 1967. Drafted in the fourth round by the Buffalo Bills, Edgar's athleticism, speed and agility allowed him to switch positions and play linebacker in the National Football League. Edgar played five seasons for the Buffalo Bills, and one season for the New England Patriots. In his final season as a professional, Edgar led the Birmingham Americans to the World Football Championship.^{xxxv}

Chandler passed away at age 46 on October 17, 1992 from cancer. He was survived by three sisters and his mother. Kent Lawrence, a teammate and roommate of Chandlers at Georgia said, "The thing about Edgar is he not only was an All-American athlete, but an All-American person. He was a total team player."^{xxxvi}

End Notes:

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- ⁱ Bill Clark, 'Gresh Up with Rotenberry-Dodd,' *The Atlanta Constitution*, September 15, 1965, 38.
- ⁱⁱ Mickey McCarthy, "Chandler, Kohn Star," *The Atlanta Constitution*, November 24, 1966, 1C.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Wayne Minshew, "Pro Scouts Rate Chandler Tops," *The Atlanta Constitution*, November 30, 1967, 61.
- ^{iv} Jesse Outlar, "The Losing Exit," *The Atlanta Constitution*, December 18, 1967, 33.
- ^v Hal Hayes, "Cedartown Honors Grid Star Ed Chandler," *The Atlanta Constitution*, February 28, 1968, 37.
- ^{vi} Hal Hayes.
- ^{vii} Hal Hayes.
- ^{viii} "Solons Cite Ed Chandler," *The Atlanta Constitution*, January 19, 1968, 53.
- ^{ix} Wayne Minshew. "Pro Scouts Rate Chandler Tops," *The Atlanta Constitution*, November 30, 1967, 61.
- ^x Leigh Montville, "He Was Bakin,' Deal Was Cookin,'" *The Boston Globe*, May 14, 1973, 26.
- ^{xi} Richard Hyatt, "Better Days Up Ahead for Bills' Chandler," *The Atlanta Constitution*, November 14, 1969, 7D.
- ^{xii} Richard Hyatt.
- ^{xiii} Al Thomy, "Rauch Is the Boss," *The Atlanta Constitution*, July 6, 1970, 4C.
- ^{xiv} Richard Hyatt, "Better Days Up Ahead for Bills' Chandler," *The Atlanta Constitution*, November 14, 1969, 7D.
- ^{xv} Al Thomy, "TD Soothes Gariel-Ellison Spat," *The Atlanta Constitution*, November 11, 1970, 4C.
- ^{xvi} Craig Stolze, "Bills Crush Pats 45 – 10," *Democrat and Chronicle* (Rochester, New York), November 2, 1970, 35.
- ^{xvii} Gary Long, "Bills Conduct an Autopsy, Heap Praise on Dolphins," *The Miami Herald*, December 21, 1970, 7F.



- ^{xviii} Craig Stolze, "Mr. Whiskers: All I Want for Christmas," *Democrat and Chronicle* (Rochester, New York), December 21, 1970. 1D.
- ^{xix} Al Thomy, "Chandler Open to All Offers," *The Atlanta Constitution*, May 5, 1972, 3D.
- ^{xx} Erik Brady, "Ex-Bills Linebacker Paul Guidry Intercepted Unitas and Namath – and Started Mothers," *Buffalo News*, October 30, 2019.
- ^{xxi} Leigh Montville. "He Was Bakin,' Deal Was Cookin,'" *The Boston Globe*, May 14, 1973, 26.
- ^{xxii} Leigh Montville.
- ^{xxiii} Leigh Montville.
- ^{xxiv} Leigh Montville, "They're Lined Up at Linebacker," *The Boston Globe*, July 11, 1973, 60.
- ^{xxv} Leigh Montville, "Bills vs Patriots (the Trade Scene)," *The Boston Globe*, December 6, 1973, 59.
- ^{xxvi} Leigh Montville, "Bills vs Patriots (the Trade Scene)," *The Boston Globe*, December 6, 1973, 59.
- ^{xxvii} Ray Fitzgerald, "He's 210 pound of Fog," *The Boston Globe*, September 17, 1973, 21.
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- ^{xxix} Leigh Montville, "Buffalo Game No Longer a Dog," *The Boston Globe*, December 9, 1973, 96.
- ^{xxx} Leigh Montville, "Fairbank's Lack of Faith in Defense Shows," *The Boston Globe*, September 18, 1973, 30.
- ^{xxxi} Larry Whiteside, "Even Snow Can't Stay Mighty OJ," *The Boston Globe*, December 10, 1973, 24.
- ^{xxxii} John Powers, "Patriots' Vets Sent Packing," *The Boston Globe*, September 12, 1974, 58.
- ^{xxxiii} Leigh Montville, "Sam K. Hunt Did Just Fine," *The Boston Globe*, September 16, 1974, 39.
- ^{xxxiv} "Edgar Chandler," https://AmericanFootballDatabase.fandom.com/wiki/Edgar_Chandler.
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- ^{xxxvi} David Davidson, "Funeral Service Held for Dogs' Chandler," *The Atlanta Constitution*, October 21, 1992, D14.