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SEYMOUR SIWOFF SELECTED TO RECEIVE RALPH HAY PIONEER AWARD FROM HALL OF FAME

FORMER OWNER OF ELIAS SPORTS BUREAU CONSIDERED
'FOUNDING FATHER OF STATISTICS' FOR NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE

CANTON, OHIO – **Seymour Siwoff**, former owner of the National Football League's Official Statistician, Elias Sports Bureau, will receive the prestigious Ralph Hay Pioneer Award from the Pro Football Hall of Fame this summer.

Siwoff guided the Elias Sports Bureau for 67 years and was associated with the National Football League from 1961 until his death in 2019. His work expanded knowledge and interest in the National Football League and helped preserve its statistical history.



"Seymour was a semifinalist for the Class of 2026 in the Contributor category, and following the presentation made on his behalf, it became apparent he was a true pioneer whose career aligned perfectly with this award," said **Jim Porter**, president & CEO of the Hall of Fame. "Seymour used his knowledge, talent and passion for numbers to help the NFL record and preserve its history through a game-by-game, consistent application of statistics, and over time the creation of new statistics to track.

"You cannot tell the history of the NFL without its statistics," Porter continued, "and Seymour – and his decades of work at Elias Sports Bureau – did more in that area than any other individual."

The Ralph Hay Pioneer Award, named for the former owner of the Canton Bulldogs who hosted the NFL's formational meeting in Canton in 1920, was established in 1972. It is presented in recognition of "significant innovative contributions to professional football."

Since its inception, the Pioneer Award has been presented only 11 other times. The first recipient was **Fred Gehrke**, the Los Angeles Rams halfback who devised the idea of a helmet logo in 1948. **Fernando Von Rossum**, a trailblazing Spanish-language broadcaster, was the most recent winner, in 2024.

“My grandfather would be honored, said **Joe Gilston**, current president and owner of Elias Sports Bureau. “He gave his life to this company. He worked seven days a week for nearly 70 years. Seymour undoubtedly would have wanted to share this honor with all his Elias colleagues past and present, as well as his legion of friends at the League office, the NFL’s teams and in the media.”

Gilston will be the Hall’s guest in Canton this August to receive the award on behalf of Siwoff at the Enshrinees’ Gold Jacket Dinner program Friday, Aug. 7.

Born in Brooklyn, New York, on Nov. 1, 1920, Siwoff began working at Elias as an intern in 1939 while attending St. John’s University. After graduating with an accounting degree and serving in the U.S. Army during World War II – and earning a Purple Heart for his bravery – he returned to Elias in 1948, then purchased the company in 1952.

In 1961, the Elias Sports Bureau, which had been the Official Statistician for the National League in Major League Baseball, became the Official Statistician for the National Football League. Under Siwoff’s leadership, Elias expanded and reorganized the NFL’s record book and established a streamlined procedure for verifying and authenticating weekly statistics. Each week during the season, Siwoff reviewed film at the league office to ensure any unusual plays had been scored correctly.

In addition, Siwoff began a painstaking project to review and correct any mistakes in the League’s statistical records from 1932, when the NFL first began recording individual statistics, through 1960. This required examining all game scoresheets and cross-referencing them with information recorded for each player.

Under Siwoff’s direction, Elias became a trusted resource to both media members and the clubs. Elias’ development of individual and team statistics by component categories – now called “splits,” which parsed data by home and road, fourth quarter, third down, red zone and last two minutes – provided greater statistical context for analysis.

Consistently conjuring better ways to use data to capture descriptions of the game, Siwoff contributed to the development of new statistics, including sacks and net punting yards, as well as a revision of the NFL’s passer rating system. For his contributions to the growth of sports statistics, Siwoff was inducted into the New York Sports Hall of Fame in 1992.

Siwoff passed away on Nov. 29, 2019, shortly after his 99th birthday.

RALPH HAY PIONEER AWARD WINNERS

2024 – Fernando Von Rossum: Trailblazing announcer who introduced millions of fans to “American Football” with Spanish-language TV broadcasts.

2022 – Marion Motley, Woody Strode, Kenny Washington and Bill Willis: Reintegrated pro football after a 13-season absence of Black players in the game.

2016 – Joe Browne: Worked for more than 50 years at the NFL, helping turn it into the most popular sport in the world as the League’s top public relations director.

2012 – Art McNally: Devoted his entire professional career to officiating; pioneered numerous innovations for the NFL, including instant replay.

2007 – Steve Sabol: President of NFL Films and honored filmmaker.

2004 – City of Pottsville, Pennsylvania: Loyal supporter of the NFL with an undying spirit and pride in the history of the defunct Pottsville Maroons of the 1920s.

2001 – George Toma: NFL’s longtime head groundskeeper known as the “God of Sod.”

1992 – David Boss: Vice President and Creative Director for NFL Properties and noted photographer. The Hall of Fame’s annual photography award is named in his honor.

1986 – John Facenda: Legendary voice of NFL Films.

1975 – Arch Ward: Chicago Tribune sports editor who initiated Chicago All-Star Game that featured NFL champions vs. College All-Stars.

1972 – Fred Gehrke: Los Angeles Rams halfback who devised the idea of logos on helmets and painted horns on Rams helmets in 1948.

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ABOUT THE PRO FOOTBALL HALL OF FAME

Located in Canton, Ohio, the birthplace of the National Football League, the Pro Football Hall of Fame is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit institution with the Mission to Honor the Greatest of the Game, Preserve its History, Promote its Values, & Celebrate Excellence Together.

The Pro Football Hall of Fame is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. AAM accreditation is national recognition for the museum’s commitment to excellence and the highest professional standards of museum operation and public service. Hundreds of thousands of fans from across the globe travel to Canton annually to experience an inspirational, interactive museum that chronicles America’s most popular sport. Fans can also enjoy the Hall of Fame Store at the Hall, and online at www.profootballhof.com/store, for merchandise from all 32 NFL clubs plus the Hall of Fame. Proceeds from the Store support the Hall’s Mission.