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BRYCE TODD



BRYCE TODD, LOS ANGELES RAMS "AIR PUKA" - NOV. 17 2024

"It's all about the light," the panel of judges said in summarizing their choice for the 57th Dave Boss Award of Excellence as Photograph of the Year. The image was submitted by Bryce Todd, an assistant team photographer for the Los Angeles Rams.

Todd first learned black-and-white film photography after needing to fill an elective credit in college. He quickly developed a passion for the art, which he turned into an internship with the New York Yankees before joining Los Angeles.

Todd studied photography in the footsteps of his brother, Brandon, who became the youngest African American head photographer in the NFL with the Carolina Panthers in 2019.

"Air Puka" shows Rams wide receiver Puka Nacua fully airborne and extended to make a touchdown catch near the front corner of the end zone. The sunlight in Gillette Stadium on that day created a near-halo effect around Nacua.

Recognized as the best Action photo from the 2024 season, Todd's image edged out the top Feature photo to earn the Dave Boss Award.

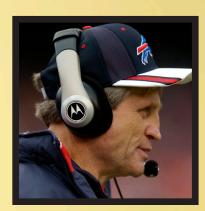
Assistant Coaches



DICK HOAK

ELIJAH PITTS



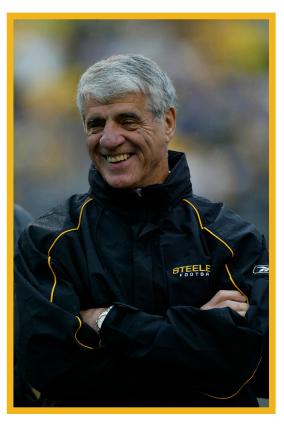




DICK HOAK

After playing for the Pittsburgh Steelers, Dick Hoak was brought back to the organization in 1972 by Chuck Noll as the team's running backs coach. He remained in that position for 35 seasons and was the only member of the coaching staff to be retained by incoming head coach Bill Cowher when the franchise transitioned its leadership.

Throughout Hoak's time with the Steelers, he won five Super Bowl rings and, in recognition of his impact, became a member of the Steelers Hall of Honor as a part of the inaugural 2017 class. During Hoak's tenure, no team in the NFL rushed for more yards than the Steelers. Among the players



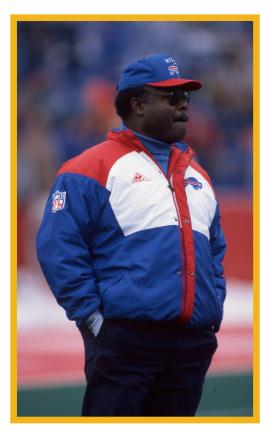
Hoak coached are Pro Football Hall of Famers Franco Harris and Jerome Bettis, who each tallied over 12,000 rushing yards.

"While work was demanding, he always found the time to take us with him to practices, meetings, training camps and games," said Kelly Shuster of her father. "The Award of Excellence is a nice reward and recognition for all of my father's years of hard work, dedication and loyalty during his time in the NFL."

Hoak found a deep joy coaching the Steelers and, while he might have had opportunities to rise in the coaching ranks, he chose to remain in Pittsburgh. His strong relationship with the

Rooney family and the relationships that he had made with everyone in the organization kept Hoak with the organization.

ELIJAH PITTS



A former player in the NFL, Elijah Pitts sought to continue to contribute to the game after his retirement. Pitts began as a scout for the Packers before becoming a running backs coach for the Los Angeles Rams. Under Pitts' leadership in Los Angeles, the Rams reached the playoffs in each of his four seasons with their rushing offense never finishing lower than top seven in the league.

When head coach Chuck Knox left for Buffa-

lo, Pitts followed and joined him for three seasons. After his stop in Buffalo, Pitts had short coaching stints with the Houston Oilers and Hamilton Tiger-Cats (of the CFL) before returning to Buffalo once again in 1985, where he coached until his retirement in 1997. Pitts helped the Bills reach four consecutive Super Bowl appearances in the 1990-93 seasons.

"There was a type of respect that he had from his players," said Pitts' son Tony. "That respect came from the care that he had for his players."

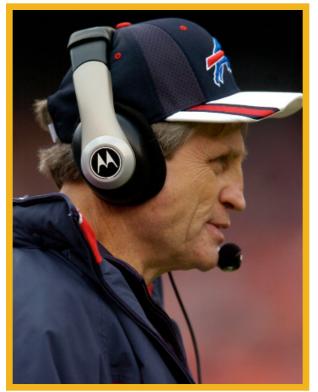
Pitts is remembered for his love for coaching the game of football and his deep care for others.

"He worked hard for this at a time when coaches weren't recognized," said Pitts' son Ron. "He had his heart for both football and his family."

Pitts had the opportunity to mentor Hall of Famers Earl Campbell and Thurman Thomas during his coaching career.

JIM MCNALLY -

Offensive line guru Jim "Mouse" McNally spent 43 seasons coaching and consulting in the NFL. McNally arrived in Cincinnati in 1980, the same season Hall of Famer Anthony Muñoz was selected in the first round of the NFL draft. McNally and the Bengals appeared in two Super Bowls (XVI and XXIII), and McNally appeared again later with the New York Giants (XXXV).



Before his career in the NFL, McNally

coached at the University at Buffalo until the program temporarily ended due to financial issues. He then got a job in Huntington, W.Va. at Marshall University in the season following the tragic plane crash in 1970. McNally is credited with helping to rebuild the Marshall football program and is represented in the movie "We Are Marshall."

He climbed the coaching ladder, making stops at Boston College and Wake Forest, until 1980 when Forrest Gregg called McNally and offered him a job with the Bengals. Stints with the Carolina Panthers, Giants and Buffalo Bills followed until McNally "retired" in 2007. Sean Payton, with whom McNally coached in New York, immediately called McNally and asked him to come in as a consultant in New Orleans. McNally continued to consult with various NFL teams until his second retirement in 2023. Recognized for his impact on the way offensive linemen play football, McNally's name hangs in the Pro Football Hall of Fame forever.

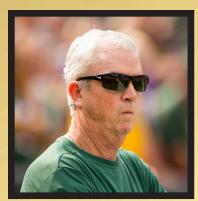
"It sums up the hard work that I've put in researching, developing and finally coaching the greatest position on the team," said McNally.

Whetic Trainers



ED BLOCK

PEPPER BURRESS





JOHN NORWIG

ED BLOCK

Before cementing his legacy in the NFL, Ed Block earned a Purple Heart for his service and bravery in World War II under Gen. George S. Patton. In 1954, he joined the Baltimore Colts as their head athletic trainer and remained with the team until 1977. Block was invited to join the Colts by head coach Webb Ewbank and worked with Pro Football Hall of Famers Raymond Berry, Lenny Moore and Johnny Unitas.

In 1974, Block was inducted into the National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA) Hall of Fame. Named on his behalf, the Ed Block Courage Award Foundation was created as an organization dedicated to recognizing NFL players who exemplify sportsmanship and courage. It also works to support programs that benefit abused and neglected children.

"The lesson Eddie taught me is how to deal with people and how to take care of them, and not only take care of people's injuries but also take care of their heart," said Mike O'Shea about his colleague.

Block will be remembered as one of the most innovative and educated athletic trainers of his era. Along with his medical expertise, Block is remembered through shared stories as someone who cared deeply for every individual he worked with.



PEPPER BURRESS

Pepper Burress transformed a childhood fascination with athletic logistics and emergency medicine into an extraordinary 42-year NFL career. Beginning with the New York Jets in 1977 as an assistant athletic trainer, he helped the team earn the NFL's inaugural "Athletic Training Staff of the Year" award.

Burress is credited with being an integral part of Dennis Byrd's rehabilitation process. Byrd, who damaged his fifth cervical vertebrae in an in-game contact injury, was immediately stabilized by Burress on the field. The injury could have left Byrd as a lifelong quadriplegic but, as a testament to his faith and determination and the quick and responsive actions of the Jets' staff, he made a miraculous recovery.

Burress joined the Green Bay Packers in 1993 as head athletic trainer. Over 26 seasons in Green Bay, he helped the Packers win two Super Bowl championships, was named the NFL Physicians Society's Outstanding NFL Athletic Trainer in 2012 and received numerous honors, including serving on

the NFL Head, Neck and Spine Committee.

"It's the ultimate punctuation mark to the magnificent award the PFATS members gave me," said Burress about attending the Awards of Excellence ceremony.

Burress served for two terms on the Professional Football Athletic Trainers Society Executive Committee as an AFC and NFC representative. He has also been inducted into the Wisconsin Athletic Trainers Association Hall of Fame.



JOHN NORWIG

John Norwig dedicated 43 years to athletic training, including 32 years as the Pittsburgh Steelers head athletic trainer. While with the Steelers, Norwig hired the NFL's first female full-time Athletic Trainer in 2002.

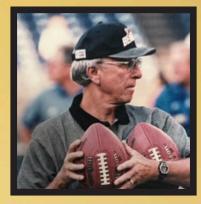
Because of Norwig's dedication and contributions, he was inducted into the Pennsylvania Athletic Trainers' Hall of Fame in 2015. That same year, he also received the prestigious Faith-Cain Memorial Award, which is given annually to a member of the Professional Football Athletic Trainers Society (PFATS) who best reflects the virtues of a certified athletic trainer and displays the highest level of professionalism, from the NFL Physicians Society.

Norwig also served as the PFATS president from 2008-2014 and earned numerous accolades, including the National Athletic Trainer's Association Most Distinguished Athletic Trainer Award in 2008.

"It is both an honor to be recognized and

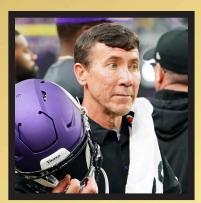
at the same time humbling to be selected by my fellow athletic trainers," said Norwig. "As with most accolades, it is not an individual accomplishment, but a result in my case of being supported by an exceptional staff of athletic trainers, physicians, physical therapists, coaches, athletes and an array of additional health care professionals."

Equiptment Managers



TOM GRAY

DENNIS RYAN



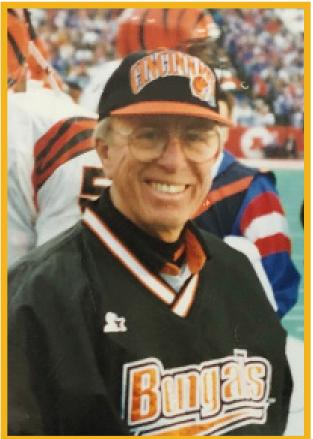


GEORGE LUONGO

TOM GRAY

As a native of Northeast Ohio, Tom Gray volunteered with Paul Brown and the Cleveland Browns for over 14 seasons in the 1950s and 1960s. While volunteering, Gray was tasked with moving equipment and handling other gameday duties, including recording and compiling statistics.

He joined the expansion Cincinnati Bengals of the American Football League in 1968 and did not miss a single preseason, regular season or postseason game until 1999. Gray's streak extended to 644 consecutive games.



Gray oversaw the Bengals' move to Riverfront Stadium in 1970, and he played an instrumental role in the design of the equipment aspects within the equipment rooms, locker rooms and loading docks of Paul Brown Stadium (now Paycor Stadium).

"I spent a lot of time with him at the practice facility and the stadium," Tom Gray Jr. said on behalf of his father. "I saw first-hand how hard he worked and how efficiently things ran. He was very well liked among the players and staff and built a lot of strong relationships. ... It means everything to me and our family that he has been recognized with this prestigious award."

Tom Gray is remembered for his hard work and dedication to his job, but also the relationships that he created with the players and coaches.

DENNIS RYAN

Dennis Ryan, then a teenager, began his career with the Minnesota Vikings in 1976 as a part-time employee. In 1981, he became the NFL's youngest equipment manager at 21 years old. He stayed with the organization for 47 seasons, accumulating a streak of 705 consecutive games worked until COVID protocols kept him off the sidelines.

"It is humbling," said Ryan, "to be permanently included in a section of the Pro Football Hall of Fame. It is such a legendary place with so many NFL greats. This is a very high honor to be included in this way. I owe gratitude to all the people who worked with me and supported me for so many years."



He twice received the Whitey Zimmerman Award, which honors the NFL's Equipment Manager of the Year (1996 and 2017). In 2024, he received a Lifetime Achievement Award at the NFL Equipment Managers Meeting.

In 2023, the Vikings named their equipment room in his honor.

"He poured his heart into this team to set our players and staff up for success," said Vikings Owner/President Mark Wilf. "His impact goes far beyond the equipment room as a trusted friend, mentor and cornerstone of our franchise."

GEORGE LUONGO

George Luongo began working part time with the Patriots from 1960 to 1965, then worked full time through the 1993 season. He was an established member within the Patriots and experienced many franchise changes, including the name change from the Boston Patriots to the New England Patriots, five different home stadiums, 12 head coaches and three different owners. Over the course of his career, he helped outfit more than 1,500 players.

Luongo's career highlights include the Patriots' first Super Bowl season in 1985 and receiving the 2019 Gridiron Club of Greater Boston Man of the Year Award. Luongo was very well liked and respected by coaches and officials. He took his career very seriously and was notorious for running a very tight and organized equipment room according to his friends and family.

"He genuinely loved what he did, it didn't feel like a job and he took it very seriously," his daughter Dianne Gilberti said. "I know Dad, Bubba to us, would be honored and grateful for this prestigious award."



As a WWII Army veteran before working with the Patriots, Luongo lived till the age of 102 before passing away in 2019.

Film/Video Directors



LARRY CLERICO

JON DUBÉ





DAVID HACK

LARRY CLERICO

Arry Clerico spent 28 seasons with the Los Angeles and St. Louis Rams. He is credited with leading the club through a multitude of successful film and digital changes. A champion of technological advancements, Clerico led the franchise's transition from film to digital formatting.



"I am honored that I served the St. Louis and Los Angeles Rams for over 28 years," said Clerico, "where many individuals had a huge impact on my career. Because of so many individuals' impacts, I found a career that I truly loved and enjoyed every day. As I reflect, I do know that no matter what career one chooses, it is always about the people you work with and those that are in your corner."

For nearly three decades, Clerico's responsibilities included heading for "all things technology" for the Rams' organization. He was a liaison for all NFL game-day technology as well as emerging technology for the organization and was responsible for videotaping practices, games and managing the vast digital library the coaches, scouts and players used.

Prior to his career in the NFL, Clerico worked as a film manager for UCLA's athletics department from 1984-1990.

JON DUBÉ



on Dubé spent 41 NFL seasons with the Baltimore Ravens (28 seasons) and Cleveland Browns (13 seasons). Dubé, along with other pioneering video directors, helped shift the NFL from film to digital.

Dubé's career began in Cleveland, when the scout team would take Polaroid pictures and run them down to the players and coaches during practice to study. Over 42 years, Dubé has worked to overhaul and revitalize the way that process works.

He is credited with making the trend-setting shift from film to video, then from video to digital. When Dubé began making DVD cutups for players to take home and study, directors around the NFL quickly copied his system. As a member of the NFL Video Directors Committee, which he served on for 13 years (2011-23), Dubé initiated the process of players and coaches having access to tablets on the sidelines of games.

"Receiving the Pro Football Hall of fame Award of Excellence is such an honor," said Dubé. "It embodies the culmination of hard work, dedication, loyalty and passion. It reflects not only the countless hours that I put into my career, but also the relationships I have built, and the challenges and rewards along the way."

DAVID HACK



David Hack worked for 35 seasons with the Miami Dolphins in their video department. After working 11 years as an assistant, Hack became the director of the department, a role he held for 24 years. Hack captured every practice and game for the Dolphins, and his expertise extended to numerous college bowls and all-star games, including the Orange Bowl, Car-Quest Bowl and Senior Bowl.

At the time of his retirement, he was the longest-tenured employee of the Dolphins' franchise. Other than Dan Marino himself, Hack holds the distinction of being

the only person to attend all of the Hall of Fame quarterback's 260 combined regular-season and playoff games and see all 452 career touchdown passes.

"To me, the Award of Excellence is more than a title," Hack said about receiving the honor for Film/Video Directors. "It is recognition of the hard work, long hours, sweat equity and quiet determination that l poured into what I did in the NFL. It reminds me that my effort was seen and valued by my peers."

Marino acknowledged Hack's efforts and dedication at his retirement news conference, noting Hack's deep care for the game and dedication to his position as a film/video director.

Public Rolations Directors



PETE ABITANTE

JASON JENKINS





BILL KEENIST

PETE ABITANTE

Let Abitante extended a college summer internship in the late 1970s into a 46-year career with the National Football League. He got the internship after sending a handwritten letter to the desk of NFL Commissioner Pete Rozelle.

He began in the communications department, where he learned under NFL PR icons Don Weiss, Jim Heffernan and Joe Browne. Abitante then worked through the Paul Tagliabue era of the NFL and became a Special Assistant to the Commissioner for Roger Goodell in 2006. He held that role until 2017, when he transitioned to a "special projects" role, including spearheading the NFL's 100th Season celebration.



"I love football," said Abitante. "I love the NFL and its history and have always had deep respect for the Pro Football Hall of Fame and the players, coaches and contributors who are enshrined in Canton."

Abitante took 20 trips to Japan, numerous visits to Berlin shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and championed 40 games in eight countries over four continents in his pursuit of growing the game internationally.

JASON JENKINS

Ason Jenkins was described as the "heart and soul" of the Miami Dolphins organization throughout his 14-year career in Miami that ended suddenly with his passing in August 2022.

Before his passing, he was named the Dolphins vice president of communications and community affairs. He directed more than 50 individuals and oversaw the team's vast community relations and charitable efforts.

While Jenkins worked in Miami, he championed the Dolphins Football UNITES program, which focuses on "improving relationships, fostering understanding and experiencing culture in a way that will ignite positive change." Still in existence, this program strives to achieve the same purpose today.

"It means everything. Jason never did the work for recognition, he did it out of a deep love for the game and an even deeper commitment to people," said his wife, Elizabeth. "To see him honored with the Pro Football Hall of Fame's Awards of Excellence is both humbling and incredibly moving. It

validates the impact he made not just in football, but in life. ... I'm grateful to have the chance to represent him, and even more grateful that our children get to witness this moment. That's something we'll hold in our hearts forever."

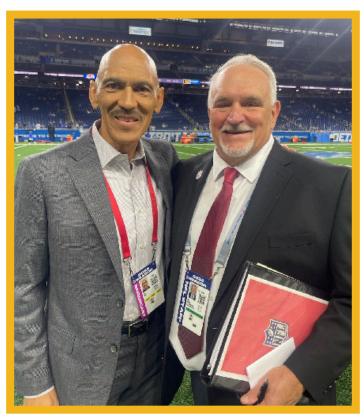


BILL KEENIST

Bill Keenist joined the Detroit Lions in May 1985 and stayed with the organization and the William Clay Ford family until retiring in 2021. He held several positions in the Lions' front office: assistant public relations director, PR director, director of marketing, vice president of administration and vice president for communications. In 2018, he was named by the Lions as their first Team Historian. Keenist worked 29 Super Bowls, including five as "co-captain" of the event's public relations team.

Keenist cited his gratitude for the opportunity to spend his career working with Pro Football Hall of Famers Barry Sanders, Calvin Johnson and Charlie Sanders. But, when Keenist looks back at his time in Detroit, he remembers the team as a whole.

"The Barrys and Calvins and Matthews were great players," he said. "But, the beauty of football is that it's the whole team and [I had] some great



memories with players that didn't achieve the same level of notoriety."

Keenist highlighted moments that he still remembers, including noticing Barry Sanders working out in the middle of the night the week that he clinched the NFL rushing title against the stout San Francisco 49ers defense.

When asked about what winning the Award of Excellence meant to him, Keenist expressed his gratitude for those who impacted his journey.

