

It's a Minor Thing by Steven M. Brainerd

What's in a name?

The American Football League was credited with being the first to put player's names on the backs of jerseys for TV. This a practice now followed by all but a few baseball team in professional sports. However minor league football was there years ahead of the AFL. The Hollywood Bears, of the Pacific Pro League pioneered the name on jersey concept back in 1945.

The Kick is good!

Pete Gogolak was the first soccer style kicker in pro football, right? Wrong, again. Bob Kressler, of the 1962 Providence Steamroller, was the first kicker who didn't do it straight. That year he scored 9 points (33XP and 2FG) and helped get Providence into the Atlantic Coast League championship game indoors at the Atlantic City Convention Center. The game went into double overtime with the Paterson Miners winning 17-14. Kressler had a chance to win the title in the first overtime, but missed from 38 yards out. The Steamroller did what many teams do; in 1963 they got a new kicker who did it the old fashioned way.

What's in a name II?

Minor league/semipro football names cover a wide range between the sublime to the ridiculous. The NFL supplies a lot of the handles used in minor league football. The Raiders are far and away the most popular with more the 75 old and new teams using that name. The Bears are a distant second with 31 and the Vikings third with 26. Only two NFL clubs have failed to supply a nickname (the Bills and 49ers). Other pro sports supply names also, the most popular being 21 Tigers, 17 Hawks and 16 Indians. 35 Stars are the most popular non major league nicknames, followed by the Bulldogs, Mustangs and Panthers.

The NFL didn't like the fact that semi-pro clubs were using their names. NFL Properties wrote to minor league teams claiming that this might cause confusion to fans who might think that the Gary Golden Bears and the Chicago Bears might somehow be connected and the NFL offers to help any teams find a new name.

The Tuscarawas Vikings take exception to this. We started playing at least 10 years prior to the Minnesota Vikings. We will assist the other Viking in finding a new nickname. The NFL dropped the whole thing.

Rivals

One of the best things a minor league football can do is develop a strong rivalry with someone, but that is hard to do as most teams come and go after only a few seasons. It can do a lot for. The Binghamton Jets and Scranton Eagles have engaged in many games since 1971. Thru 1981, the two clubs split 28 games even. To the end of the competition. In 2002, the Eagles won 11 and lost only 4. This would include an eight games Eagle winning streak. The start of the series in 1971 proved too tremendous at the gate. The first game in Binghamton drew 8000, the rematch in Scranton drew in excess of 12000. The rubber game was Empire League championship in Scranton drew 11000.

The Manitowoc Chiefs and the Sheboygan Redwings went at each other off and on from 197 through 1975 67 times, with the Chiefs winning 48, Sheboygan 14 victories and playing to 5 ties. This is the most games played by two clubs.

Two original members of the Empire League, the Glens Falls Greenjackets and the Hudson Vikings have the second longest series with 43 games. The Jackets lead with 31 wins and only 12 loses. At one point, they won 14 in a row.

What's in a name III?

You've learned about the most common names for minor league football and now you'll learn about some of the more unusual and interesting.

Minor league football is the cat's meow: Alpharetta Cougars, Lathrope Leopards, Falls River Lions, Ironwood Panthers, Durham Bobcats, Los Angeles Wildcats, Cincinnati Bengals, Lynchburg Jaguars, Vancouver Cats and Waynesboro Tigers.

Semipro football is bad: New London Sea Raiders, Kansas City Rustlers, Brea Outlaws, San Jos Bandits, Washington (DC) Buccaneers, Portsmouth Pirates, Albany Metro-Mallers, Springford Marauders, Richmond Renegades, Ottawa Bootleggers. Lake Tahoe Gamblers, Willimantic Wreakers, Richmond Raiders and Houston Head Hunters.

Just when you thought it was safe to go back on the field: San Diego Sharks, Wausau Muskies, Oregon City Steelheads, Mobile Tarpons and he West Palm Beach Barracudas.

Games can be played in all kinds of weather: Charlotte Storm, Panama City Suns, Tulsa Thunder, Orange Tornadoes, Rohert Park Rainbows, Saybrook Tides, Columbus Winds. Bellflower Hurricanes and Plano Cyclones.

Minor leaguers can be armed and dangerous: Detroit Arrows, Louisville Tanks, Waukegan Rifles, Oneida Silver Bullets, Flint Sabres, Columbus Stingers, Elgin Torpedoes, Pasadena Pistols and Long Island Tomahawks.

Players come from all types of occupations: Paterson Miners, Boston Sweepers, Atlantic City Senators, Virginia Sailors, Sacramento Statesmen, Redondo Beach Crew, Clintonville Truckers, Fond du Lac Brewer, Kaukauna Merchants, Portland Loggers, Hammonton Bakers, Poughkeepsie Diplomats, Vancouver Millionaires, Indianapolis Tailors, Humboldt Foresters, Houston Drillers, Fresno Prospectors, San Pedro Longshoremen and Newport News Shipbuilders.

Semipro football is for the birds: Baltimore Eagles, Jersey City Jays, Cleveland Falcons, Madison Cardinals, Houston Seagulls, Charlotte Bantams, Portland Sea Hawks, Northwest Chicago Fighting Turkeys, Sacramento Condors, Richmond Roadrunners, Chicago Owls, Chicago Ravens, Huntsville Hawks, Baltimore Orioles, Baltimore Bluejays, Jacksonville Robins, Lake Charles Pelicans, Columbia Sandlappers, La Canada Ducks and Petaluma Leghorns.

Players can be very tough: Wichita Roughnecks, New Kensington Rough Riders, Cedar Rapids Crushers, Columbus Bullies, Pittsburgh Ironmen, Schuylkill Coal Crackers, Youngstown Hardhats, Ashland Ironmasters and Syracuse Stormers.

The game is full of action: Oklahoma City Stampede, Wabash Express, Shreveport Steamer, East Los Angeles Ramblers, Sharon Blasters, Chicago Flash, Orland Park Fury, Palos-Orland Force and Bartlesville Quickicks.

Team nicknames are often colorful: Braddock Black Knights, Bel Air Big Red, Kansas City Blues, Columbus Green Wave, Watertown Red & Black, Los Angeles Maroons, Boca Raton Blue Wave, and Stamford Golden Bears.

Some of the players are strong like . . . Anderson Bulls, Lakeland Brahmas, San Antonio Toros and Kansas City Steers.

General Custer, General Custer, we're surrounded by . . . Long Island Indians, Chattanooga Cherokees, Cincinnati Mohawks, Rock Island Blackhawks, Monterrey Golden Aztecs, San Jose Apaches, South Boston Chippewas and Tulsa Seminoles.

There's a women on the field!

Twice in minor league football's long history, women have played on the field with the men. They both were the holder for a placekicker. Pat Palinkas has the honor of being first. She played in one exhibition game with the 1970 Orlando Panthers. She held the ball for husband Steve. Orlando cut Mr. Palinkas, but offered her \$5000 for the season. However she went home with her husband and back to teaching. Needless to say this drew a lot of newspaper coverage

Joann Ramirez was the ball holder for the 1975 Sacramento Statesmen. She played in at least four regular season California League games at 5'2 and 115 lbs. This was confirmed in the newspaper SACRAMENTO BEE. The Statesmen didn't do well, going 3 and 5.