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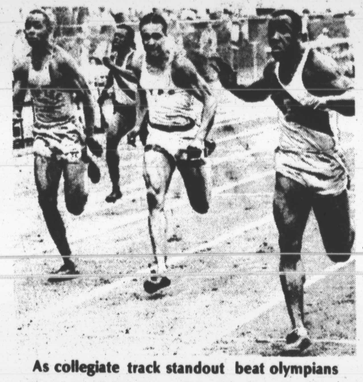
Authority: Murphy for Mayor Campaign, Herbert L. Singleton, Treasure

Profile: Buddy Young as we remember him



As collegiate track standout beat olympians Barny Ewell, Ed Conwell in '44 championships

Claude "Buddy" Young: 1926-1983

As celebrated arrival in Baltimore played with first Colts teams after New York, Dallas

As a newcomer to Baltimore-area radio accepted offer to do disco jockey for WEBB

As hard-working, often bruised star in ACC played with New York and Dallas teams prior to NFL Colts

As longtime friend-advisor to late Big Daddy Lipscomb with wife Geraldine accompanied once great tackle to social functions

As proud father of sons Zollie and Jeffrey youngsters often travelled with famous football father

As serviceman in U.S. Navy in 1946

As youth booster at Project Survival Dinner

The little man who became a giant

By Sam Lacy

If you never saw Claude "Buddy" Young, you never saw a 5-foot, 4-inch giant.

And he was that in every respect: as a person, son, father, humanitarian and athlete — not necesarily in that order.

Buddy Young, who died in a single car accident early last Sunday morning, puts to test all who attempt to eulogize him adequately.

Several thousand friends, admirers and former college and professional teammates gathered at the Thomas Rayner Funeral Home in Chicago Thursday night and at Bethel AME Church Friday morning topay homage to and witness burial of the one-time University of Illinois track and football star who later became one of pro football's most feared running backs.

This writer has fond recollections of the bubbly, round-faced little man who wore the perpetual happy look and impish smile.

Remembered also is the quiet conversation we had while sitting in his hotel room the evening he arrived in Baltimore for his contract discussions with the Colts.

"I'll probably always regret signing to play pro ball after coming out of the Navy," he said. "I wanted the money — fact is I needed it — but I most certainly would have liked going to the Olympics in 1948.

"I think I'd have gone to London for'em," Buddy continued, "since I had beaten some of the fellows who went. Barney Ewell, Eddie Conwell and Herb Thompson — I had outrun them both indoors and outdoors while I was in school. So, I felt I could have made the team."

What may have sounded like a boast was not so interpreted after Buddy had finished his statement.

"My mother raised nine kids on very little money and an awful lot of love. Each of us served a solemn oath that as soon as we were able we would help lift the load. When the opportunity came to earn quick money, I had no choice."

Ironically, it was his love of sports that paved the way to reaching his family goal. The same irony required him to try football instead of track. In track, there was no money (then). In football where there was money, there was no room for a midget.

That blow struck him early. He was rejected by the football coach at Englewood High School because "he said I was too small."

So with mom's permission, he transferred to Wendell Phillips High and proceeded to score five touchdowns against Englewood in the Mayor Kelly (Chicago) High School Classic at Soldier Field in 1942.

At Illinois in 1944, playing beside Paul Patterson, Buddy broke all the Big Ten rushing records set by the highly touted Red Grange. Also he won the AAU nationa, NCAA and Big Ten 100-yard dash championships, and was favored to win the Big Ten low hurdles when he suffered injury.

His humanitarian efforts were climaxed by the crash death, it occurring as he was driving to the Dallas-Fort Worth Airport after attending memorial services for Joe Delaney. Delaney, a former NFL star, died last summer in an attempt to save three pre-teen boys from drowning near his home in Louisiana.

It was Buddy who instigated the hiring of Earl Banks to succeed Eddie Hurt as Morgan football coach in 1960.

It was Buddy who flew to Miami in 1963 to sign Willie Richardson to a Colts contract at the site of the Orange Blossom game featuring Jackson State. Richardson went on to become a 7-year fixture at wide receiver for the Baltimore eleven.

It was Buddy who led two black teammates — George Taliaferro and rookie Mel Embree — on a walkout of a dinner greeting the 1954 Colts at the Lord Baltimore Hotel. They had been denied service at an open bar that was connected with and adjacent to the dinner.

And it was Buddy Young who campaigned — successfully — for the creation of the NFL Office of Player Relations, the first such venture in professional sports designed to steer washed-up players into gainful occupations.

There also is recollection of the Buddy Young who rode triumph and tragedy with equal poise.

His dedication to rescuing the ill-fated Gene "Big Daddy" Lipscomb was unavailing when the big, sensational defensive tackle died from a drug overdose in 1963.

And his tireless search for help for his cancer-stricken son, Claude Jr., in 1978 left him bereft.

But Buddy Young never lost the cherubic smile which though buried with him Friday, remains etched in the hearts of widow Geraldine and their three children, Paula, Jeffrey and Zollie.

And all of ours.

Claude Young Jr. cancer victim in 1978

Calude Young Sr. mourning at son's funeral

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