

Pro Grid Leagues Retain Loophole On Early Inkings

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The professional football leagues have passed a rule, with teeth in it, barring the signing of college players until they have completed their eligibility, including bowl games. But they have left the signing of redshirts—the five-year-man—particularly open.

Now if a redshirt starts his final year he will not be bothered. But the pros have decided that if a redshirt drops out of school on his own for personal reasons and does not register for his fifth year, he may be signed.

In other words, the pros could talk the redshirt into not taking the final year. But if he does take his final year the pros won't sign him until he finishes his eligibility—there will be no signings during the season, secret or otherwise, and the redshirt can play in a bowl game before his eligibility is declared at an end.

There is considerable opposition to the redshirt program, accentuated by the recent controversy over George Sauer, the Texas end who quit college football with plans of signing a pro contract.

It now appears that the action taken by the pros might have more effect on getting rid of this program than the opposition among the college people.

The colleges may take the view that it would be senseless to have a redshirt program since the pro clubs might talk the five-year men into signing before they decided to take their last season.

There are strong arguments on both sides regarding the redshirts. Whether the good overbalances the bad is what is causing all the talk.

The Southwest Conference has had a redshirt program for at least 30 years. It was inaugurated with some very worthwhile objectives.

It was designed to help the boy who might be injured and lost a season, give the boy who ran into scholastic difficulties a chance to make it up and still have his four years of college competition, aid the boy who might have to stay out of school for personal reasons and to help the junior college transfer.

The boy who came from a junior college was guaranteed four years of college competition. The

one-year junior college boy got four years at a senior college to get in three (he had to stay out his first year just like the regular freshman). The junior college graduate's eligibility started as soon as he reached senior college and he had three years to obtain two varsity seasons.

But the rule has been used in other ways. The coaches would hold a boy out his sophomore season if he seemed to need development or if the team was well-stocked with players at his position. In some instances the boys were held out in their junior seasons.

This, said some, was in conflict with the educational processes—a boy should get through college in the regulation time and not be held over a year just to play football. Also, it allowed a boy to actually get in five years of football since he would be with the squad and work out like the others even in his redshirt year.

Also, some said, it provided the larger and richer schools with an advantage—they could sign up more boys than they needed and hold out players that the other schools might use if they had them.

But, in favor of the rule, came the observation that many students needed five years to get through college, especially if they took difficult courses like law, medicine and engineering. Also, the athlete, who was playing for his school and thus putting money into the athletic treasury, didn't have as much time to study as the non-athlete.

And there was still another point cited by the lovers of sport: the redshirt program made better football. This, however, wasn't a strong point since it seemed to emphasize sports over education.

Prominent redshirts in the Southwest Conference the past few years have included Don Trull, the great passer at Baylor; Fred Marshall, star of Arkansas' undefeated, untied team that claimed the national title when it won the Cotton Bowl; Donny Anderson, Texas Tech's All-American halfback; Eddie McLaughlin, ace quarterback of Texas A&M; Steve Garmon, TCU's all-conference guard; Marvin Kristynik, Texas quarterback.

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BUFFALO, N. Y. (AP)—Cookie Gilchrist stormy fullback of the Buffalo Bills, was traded Wednesday to the American Football League's Denver Broncos for fullback Billy Joe, the AFL's Rookie of the Year in 1963.

It was a straight player deal and no cash was involved, a Bills' spokesman said.

Gilchrist, with the Bills for three seasons, was fired temporarily Nov. 17 for what Coach Lou Saban said was "the good of the team."

He was let go, Saban said, because he refused to reenter the

Boston game just before halftime and complained in the dressing room at intermission that quarterback Jack Kemp had not given him the ball often enough.

Thirty-six hours later, Gilchrist was reinstated after he asked his teammates for another chance. He also apologized to Saban for his actions off and on the field.

Gilchrist, who was paid \$28,000 last season, reportedly had asked the Bills' owner, Ralph Wilson Jr., for a \$3,000 bonus after Buffalo had defeated San Diego for AFL championship in December. He did not receive it.

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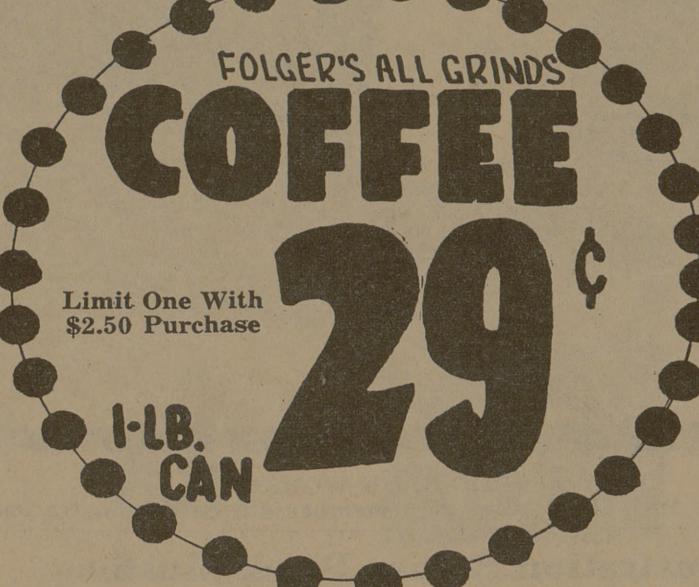
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