

Dec. 21-27, 1969

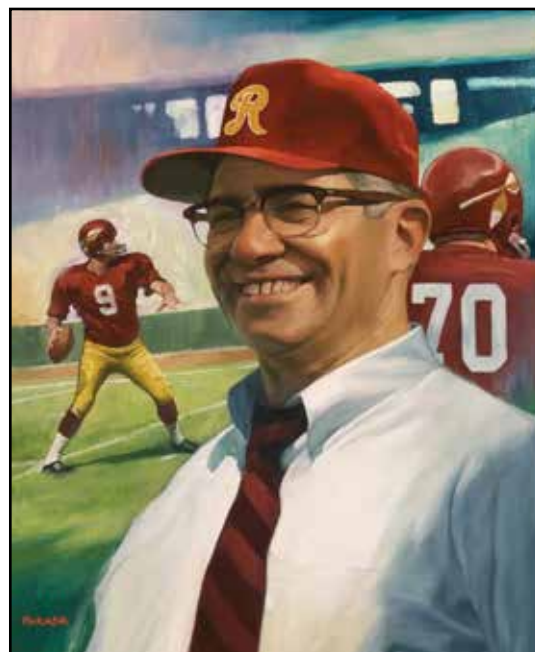
By Tom Bodle

It was the last week of December, the last week of the year and the last week of the decade, but it began with the first day of winter. Northern Ohio was welcomed by the Winter Solstice on December 21st with a blast of cold air (a 29 degree high) and over one inch of snow. Greater Clevelanders nestled in their warm homes to be entertained by their favorite Sunday past times, football and Ed Sullivan.

The Cleveland Browns completed their regular season schedule on that Sunday afternoon with an uninspirational 27-14 loss to the New York Giants. The Browns had sealed the Century Division title the previous weekend against the St. Louis Cardinals. In the game against the Giants, prime time players rested in preparation for the looming NFL East championship game against Dallas. Overall Blanton Collier's 1969 squad performed well, with a 10-3-1 record. Ten players were selected to the Pro Bowl game, six from the offense and four from the defense. One Brown of note was Paul Warfield. Number 42 had an outstanding year and would eventually be elected to the Hall of Fame, but regrettably this would be his last year with the Browns while he was in his prime.

Also on this Sunday, NFL legend Vince Lombardi coached his last game. Lombardi had built the Green Bay Packers into an NFL juggernaut in the '60's. Green Bay won five NFL titles in seven years, including the first two Super Bowls under Lombardi's reign. Lombardi retired after the 1968 season but returned in 1969 to lead the Washington Redskins. Washington had a disappointing 7-5-2 season and lost Lombardi's final game 41-28 to Dallas. The following year, Lombardi was diagnosed with colon cancer and was unable to coach again. He passed away in September of 1970.

Ed Sullivan's popular Sunday night variety show would also reveal a legendary change. For the last time on television, Diana Ross performed as a member of the Supremes. Ross would move on to a star studded independent career. Fittingly, the Supremes "Some-





day We'll Be Together" reached the top of the Billboard chart for this last week of 1969.

As Viking students began to enjoy their Christmas break, the halls of St. Joe were far from quiet. Vyto Zagarskas, Ernie Brown and their committee of band members were decorating the gym and preparing for the band's main social event, "The Military Ball." The theme of this gala was "A Winter's Night." The band expanded their guest list to include the Glee Club and even students from other schools. The gym was resplendent in holiday decorations, a canopy of streamers and the reflective crystal dance ball so often used at school dances. About 400 couples attended, dancing into the night to the sounds of the Harry Hershey Orchestra.



Any vacation time during the school year offered the opportunity for increased interscholastic sports competition. The wrestling team had no time off as Monday and Tuesday before Christmas they were tossed into the "frying pan" of the Ohio Catholic Invitational. Coach John Storey's charges proved worthy against some of the best wrestlers in Ohio as they emerged from the tournament held at St. Edward with the 3rd place trophy. The grapplers completed a successful December as they looked forward to a Christmas Day off.

The basketball team likewise was busy as they garnered bookend victories about Christmas Day. On December 23rd, West Tech entered the "Purple Palace". Pat Lyons, Jim Hill and company bounced the Warriors 75-57 to present Coach Bob Straub with his seventh win of the year. On "Boxing Day", December 26th, Geneva hoped to manipulate the fast pace of the Vikings into a slow down event. After a slow start, the hoopsters were able to unwrap the Eagles' effort to pull away with a 79-59 victory. St. Joe completed their 1969 portion of the schedule on a four-game winning streak and an 8-2 record.



Not being able to resist a pertinent basketball trivia stat, it was this last week of December that LSU star Pete Maravich netted 30 of 31 free throws, an NCAA record.

May your New Year be as outstanding as "Pistol Pete's" shooting touch. God Bless!