

Error made in omitting Floyd Little from Hall

*By George E Curry
Special to Sentinel-Voice*

Over the Super Bowl weekend, which finally featured an event that lived up to its pre-game hype, the Pro Football Hall of Fame announced the induction of six new members. It announced that a second Denver Bronco would join John Elway in the elite club — but it picked the wrong Bronco. Instead of selecting Floyd Little, sports-writers who vote on the honor picked former tackle Garry Zimmerman, whose career was split between Minnesota and Denver.

It's not that Zimmerman is not worthy — he is — but he doesn't deserve receiving the NFL's highest compliment before Little, the first No.1 draft choice to sign with the Broncos. When he retired in 1975, Little was the seventh leading rusher in NFL history. The six ahead of him — some with less impressive stats — have been already enshrined in Canton, Ohio. After the annual enshrinement ceremonies in August,



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there will be 247 inductees. Little, who owns a Ford-Lincoln-Mercury car dealership in suburban Seattle, says he has been passed over so many times that he doesn't care about winning the honor anymore. But I care, and so do many other football fans who recognize Little as one of pro football's premier running backs. Before signing with Denver, Little had firmly established his credentials as a superstar. He was a three-time All-American at Syracuse (1964, 65 and 66), eclipsing school records set by two others that had worn the famed #44 jersey for the Orangemen — NFL great Jim Brown and

Ernie Davis, the first African-American to win the Heisman Trophy.

Little broke most of their records, rushing for 2,704 yards, returning punts for another 845 yards, kickoffs for 797 yards and passed for 19, a total of 4,947 combined yards. He scored 46 touchdowns in the 30 games he played in, including five in one game. In the 1966 Gator Bowl, he ran for 216 yards against Tennessee, averaging 7.4 yards on 29 carries.

Sunday's Super Bowl featured the answer to a sports trivia question: Who played in the same Syracuse backfield as Floyd Little and Larry Csonka? Answer: New York Giants Coach Tom Coughlin.

Writing in his book, "Tales From the Broncos Sideline," Little recalled that Coughlin "got on the nerves of a few guys because he not only knew all the plays, he also memorized all of the assignments of every player. If quarterback Rick Cassata

called a play in the huddle and he mispronounced it or called the wrong formation, Tom would correct him. And if someone was unclear on an assignment, Tom wouldn't hesitate to tell them what they needed to do."

Before there was a John Elway, before there was a Randy Gradishar, before there was a Terrell Davis and, yes, before there was a Gary Zimmerman in Denver, there was Floyd Douglas Little, nicknamed "The Franchise."

At 5'10 and 195 pounds, even small by standards of the day, Little pioneered small running backs being featured in an NFL offense. An exciting runner that could cut on a dime and give you a nickel in change, Little was a human highlight film. At his size, he could drag would-be tacklers an extra five or six yards. And in the open field, the best view tacklers had of him was reading #44 on the back of his jersey as he crossed the goal line.

Unlike most players today, Little played his entire career with one team. From 1967 to 1975, he collected 12,103 all-purpose yards, including a team record 2,523 on kickoff returns. He led the NFL in rushing in 1971 and played in five All-Star/Pro Bowls.

Entering the Hall of Fame is not always a fair process and some teams and former players are inevitably slighted. Twelve players from the Pittsburgh Steelers teams of the 1970s are in the Hall of Fame. But the San Francisco 49ers, also the victor in four Super Bowls, has only four representatives. The Dallas Cowboys, winner of three Super Bowls, has only two members. Retired Oakland Raider punter Ray Guy, in his 17th year of consideration, still has not been selected.

In an introduction to Little's book, Jim Brown adds: "I've said for years that

Floyd deserves to be in the Hall of Fame. There's no question in my mind that he's one of the game's greatest players."

Others that share the same view have created a website, www.littleinthehalloffame.com, to collect petitions on his behalf.

The tragedy isn't just that Little has been passed over, he was not even among the finalists to be considered for the honor this year. When pro football writers on the 44-member selection committee meet in Canton next August, they will have yet another opportunity to correct this travesty.

In the meantime, sign the petition online protesting this slight and contact sportswriters in your community, urging them to voice their support. The ball is now in our hands.

George E. Curry is a keynote speaker, moderator and media coach.

Jackson tars MLB for umpire checks

NEW YORK (AP) - Jesse Jackson criticized Major League Baseball recently for sending investigators to the hometowns of umpires to ask neighbors questions that include whether the ump belongs to the Ku Klux Klan. "Major League Baseball has done a disservice to its progressive social history by equating Southern Whites with White supremacists," Jackson said in a statement.

"I am surprised the professional league which helped change social attitudes in all sports leagues about segregation, by championing Jackie Robinson, would make such a destructive move."

World Umpires Association president John Hirschbeck and union spokesman Lamell McMorris said recently that Tom Christopher, the Milwaukee-based supervisor of security and investigations in the commissioner's office, had asked questions about Klan membership to neighbors of umpires Greg Gibson and Sam Holbrook, who reside in Kentucky. In addition, Hirschbeck said similar questions had been asked to neighbors of umpire Ron Kulpa, who lives in suburban

St. Louis, Mo. "In a year with the injustice of Jena Six, nooses hung around the country and the Tiger Woods-Golfweek scandal, Major League Baseball's false impersonations of friendships and ill-conceived questions further press sensitive racial stereotypes, with no basis for suspicion," Jackson said. "They have essentially defamed their people in their own neighborhoods."

Baseball stepped up background checks last August, after it became public that the FBI was investigating NBA referee Tim Donaghy for betting on games. Donaghy pleaded guilty to felony charges of conspiracy to engage in wire fraud and transmitting betting information through interstate commerce, and he awaits sentencing.

MLB asked umpires to sign authorizations allowing the sport to conduct financial backgrounds checks, but umps balked.

"We did not anticipate that they would approach neighbors posing as a close colleague and friend of the umpire's and asking them questions, such as: Do you know if umpire 'X' is a member of the Ku Klux Klan? Does he grow marijuana?

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This position is dependent upon fiscal year funding.

Qualified persons may apply by forwarding a letter of interest and resumé with experience described in detail to:

Brian Abbington
Chief, Capital Habeas Unit
Law Offices of the Federal Public Defender
411 E. Bonneville, Suite 250
Las Vegas, Nevada 89101.
No phone calls please

The application package must be received no later than February 29, 2008
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**LAS VEGAS-CLARK COUNTY LIBRARY DISTRICT
REQUEST FOR STATEMENT OF QUALIFICATIONS
RFQ NO. 08-06
CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT SERVICES-PROJECTS
FROM JULY 1, 2007 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2011**

The Las Vegas-Clark County Library District is soliciting statements of qualifications from qualified and experienced firms to provide construction management services for District projects started from July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2011. This Statement of Qualifications will assist in the selection process for professional services for a variety of new construction and remodel projects at various existing facilities.

Submittals will be accepted at the Reception Desk of the Las Vegas Library, 833 Las Vegas Boulevard North, Las Vegas, Nevada 89101, on or before 3:00 PM (PST), Monday, February 25, 2008. Submittals received at 3:01 PM (PST) or after will be returned unopened to the FIRM.

Specification documents will be available after 11:00 am (PST), Monday, February 4, 2008, as follows:

- Documents may be obtained at the Reception Desk, Las Vegas Library, 833 Las Vegas Boulevard North, Las Vegas, Nevada 89101.
- Documents may be mailed by submitting a fax request to (702) 507-3573 or calling (702) 507-3590, specifying RFQ number and description. Be sure to include company name, address, contact person, and telephone and fax numbers.

To request a faxed copy of this Request for Statement of Qualifications notice, call the Clark County Fax on Demand System at (702) 455-5428 and request document #501.

Questions regarding this Request for Statement of Qualifications may be directed to Stephen J. Rice, General Services Director, telephone number (702) 507-3740, or Daniel L. Walters, Executive Director, telephone number (702) 507-3611.

Board of Trustees
Las Vegas-Clark County Library District
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