

The NFL Champs Who Left Too Soon: A Forgotten Era of Greatness (1936-1945)

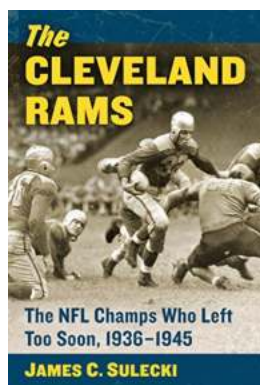
The Early Years of NFL Championships

The National Football League (NFL) has a rich history dating back to its founding in 1920. Over the years, numerous teams have etched their names in NFL glory by winning championships and eternally cementing their legacies. However, amidst all the celebrated champions, there is an often overlooked era spanning from 1936 to 1945, where a handful of NFL teams left the league too soon, denying themselves the recognition they deserved.

The Rise of the NFL

In order to truly appreciate the significance of this forgotten era, let's take a step back and delve into the circumstances that shaped professional football in the 1930s and 1940s. During this time, the NFL was still in its infancy, striving for recognition and popularity amongst sports fans across America.

As the country was gradually recovering from the Great Depression, football emerged as a form of entertainment and escape for the masses. Amidst the economic turmoil, the NFL grew in popularity, with teams striving to secure their place in history by becoming the league champions.



The Cleveland Rams: The NFL Champs Who Left Too Soon, 1936-1945 by James C. Sulecki (Kindle Edition)

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The Early Dominators

Amongst the teams that left their mark during this period were the Green Bay Packers, the Chicago Bears, and the New York Giants. These franchises, led by the likes of Curly Lambeau, George Halas, and Steve Owen respectively, brought their cities multiple championships.

Notably, the Green Bay Packers dominated the early to mid-1930s, winning an unprecedented three consecutive NFL championships from 1936 to 1938. Led by the legendary coach Curly Lambeau and featuring star players like Don Hutson and Arnie Herber, the Packers were a force to be reckoned with.

In 1940, the Chicago Bears, led by the renowned George Halas, stormed to victory in the NFL championship game against the Washington Redskins. With a stellar defense and an innovative T formation offense, the Bears set the standard for excellence in the league.

Just a year later, in 1941, the New York Giants captured their third NFL championship. Under the guidance of coach Steve Owen, the Giants proved to be a formidable team, with players like Mel Hein and Tuffy Leemans leading the way.

The World War II Disruptions

As the world was plunged into the devastating darkness of World War II, the NFL faced numerous challenges, including player enlistments and game cancellations.

With many players serving their country, several teams were left depleted, forcing them to merge and discontinue their operations.

While the Green Bay Packers, Chicago Bears, and New York Giants managed to withstand the disruptions and continue their success after the war, several other promising teams were not as fortunate.

The Cleveland Rams' Premature Departure

One such team was the Cleveland Rams, who were crowned NFL champions in 1945. Led by quarterback Bob Waterfield and coach Adam Walsh, the Rams had a strong roster and showed great promise for the future. However, financial difficulties forced the team to relocate to Los Angeles just a year after their championship success.

Although the Rams went on to find success in Los Angeles in later years, it was a bittersweet moment for the city of Cleveland, losing their champion team just as they were starting to achieve greatness.

The Philadelphia Eagles' Missed Opportunity

Another team that left too soon during this era was the Philadelphia Eagles, who won the NFL championship in 1948. Behind the leadership of quarterback Tommy Thompson and coach Earle "Greasy" Neale, the Eagles displayed exceptional performance on their way to clinching the title.

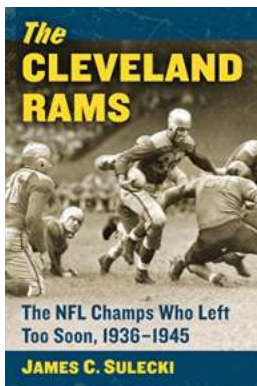
Despite their triumph, the Eagles were plagued by financial woes and struggled to maintain their success. Just a few years after their championship victory, the team fell into a period of mediocrity and had to wait several decades before experiencing further glory.

The Forgotten Legacy

Although these teams, along with a few others, managed to win NFL championships during this forgotten era, their achievements often go unnoticed and underappreciated. The disruptions caused by World War II, financial difficulties, and other factors prevented these teams from solidifying their legacies and further advancing the sport.

As we reminisce about the great teams and players that have graced the NFL throughout its history, it is essential to remember and acknowledge the champions that left too soon. They may have faded away into obscurity, but their contributions to the growth and development of American football should never be forgotten.

So let us honor the Green Bay Packers, the Chicago Bears, the New York Giants, the Cleveland Rams, the Philadelphia Eagles, and all the other teams who were deprived of a longer run in the NFL. They may not have left a lasting mark on the league's record books, but their success during these trying years remains an integral part of NFL history.



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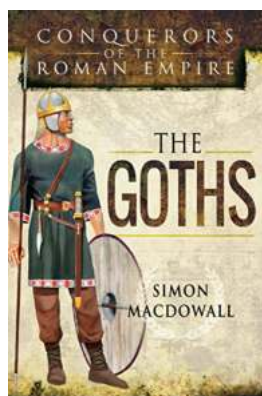
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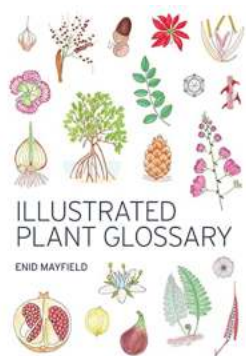
In 2016 the Rams left St. Louis for Los Angeles--having departed L.A. for St. Louis in 1995--and caused much heartbreak among fans. NFL teams are notorious for decamping to more profitable markets and the Rams' history of opportunistic moves goes back to 1946, when they left Cleveland, their original hometown, where fans had cheered them to a championship a month earlier. The move to L.A. from Cleveland shocked the NFL and shook up its power structure. It also jolted the all-white league into reintegration, prepared the way for the Browns, and made the Rams the only NFL champs ever to have spent the following season in a different city.

This is the story of how the Rams went from a home-grown Ohio team funded by local businessmen to the first major-league franchise on the West Coast, and how their departure jumpstarted a chain of events in Cleveland that continues to this day.



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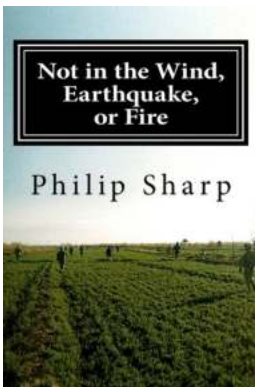
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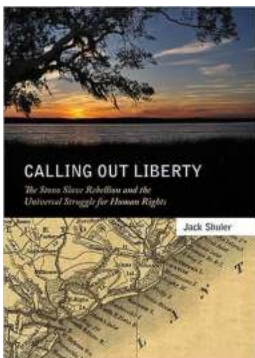
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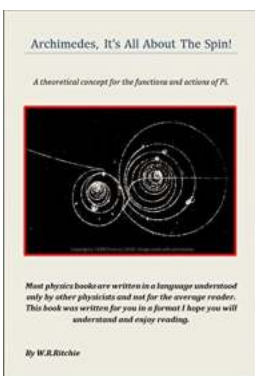
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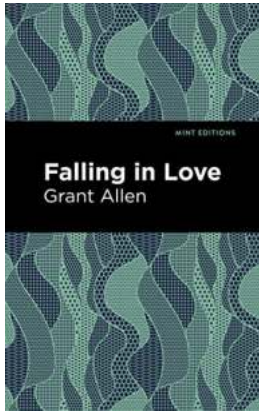
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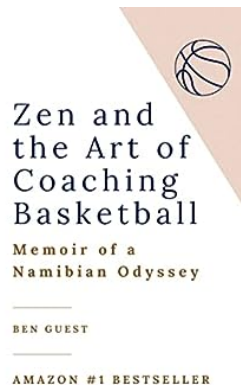
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