

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Andrew E. Masich
President & CEO

A Fun-Filled Football Fall



Western Pennsylvania has a history unlike any other region in the world. To fully grasp our incredible past, it's important to understand our region's deep-rooted connec-

tions to sports. Sports are a source of pride for our region and a rallying point for the far-flung Pittsburgh diaspora. Our sports history reflects the human condition, our triumph and tragedy, and our sports traditions are now an integral part of who we are and aspire to be.

For generations of Western Pennsylvanians, football in particular was embraced by immigrants and their children and reflected the ethos of hard work that permeated their

lives. Football provided a way out of the mills and mines, a means to an education for the children of steel workers and coal miners, and a recreational activity on Friday nights. Football brings communities together, whether it is rival high schools battling one another, one of our local colleges or universities, or our beloved Steelers battling for another Super Bowl.

The region is also important to the history of the sport—the first professional football game was played in Pittsburgh in 1892. On November 12 that year, the Allegheny Athletic Association squared off in a grudge match against their rivals from the Pittsburgh Athletic Club. The game took place in Allegheny City, just a stone's throw from Heinz Field on today's North Side.

Both teams would do almost anything to win the game. To prove it, the Allegheny Athletic Association paid \$500 to William “Pudge”

Heffelfinger, an All-American guard from Yale, to help beat their rivals. The plan worked; Heffelfinger scored the game's only touchdown, leading his team to victory.

Over the next 120 years, football has left an indelible mark in the region. Western Pennsylvania is nationally recognized for the quality of its high school football and the region has produced four Heisman Trophy winners (John Lujack, Leon Hart, John Cappelletti, and Tony Dorsett);


even the trophy's namesake, John Heisman, grew up in Titusville. We're known as the “Cradle of Quarterbacks” for cultivating nearly four dozen professional signal callers, including some of the games' all-time greats, such as Johnny Unitas, George Blanda, Joe Namath, Joe Montana, Jim Kelly, and Dan Marino.

Our college football tradition spans numerous All-Americans, and the University of Pittsburgh has produced eight NFL Hall of Famers, the third most of any school in the nation.

The Rooney Family's enduring leadership of the Steelers, which started with Art Rooney in 1933, has made the Steelers one of the most popular teams in the world. A total of 25 Hall of Famers and a record six Super Bowl championships will tend to do that.

Beginning October 6, the History Center is proud to be the premier venue of a major national touring exhibition, *Gridiron Glory: The Best of the Pro Football Hall of Fame*. This exhibition recognizes the game's pioneers from Knute Rockne and Jim Thorpe all the way up to today's stars such as Tom Brady and Drew Brees through nearly 200 unique artifacts from the Pro Football Hall of Fame collection. A dozen interactive activities and videos from the vaults of NFL Films will make sure every visitor experiences the passion and pride of America's most popular sport.

Please join us throughout the fall as the History Center honors the legends of the gridiron. Special weekend programs will feature the Steelers' six Lombardi trophies, the busts for every Steelers player inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame, and a special commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the “Immaculate Reception” – the NFL's most famous play – in December.

Lace up your shoulder pads and tighten your chin strap. It's football season in Pittsburgh. 



Jack Butler rose from an undrafted free agent to a four-time Pro Bowl (1956-'59) defensive back for the Steelers. He was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 2012.

Courtesy of the
Pro Football Hall of Fame