

FROM BIOCHEMISTRY TO BLITZ PACKAGES

There was a time when the prestigious Ivy League routinely produced some of the NFL’s brightest stars.

Chicago drafted the eminent quarterback **SID LUCKMAN** out of Columbia University. Defensive star **CHUCK BEDNARIK**, after whom the top college defensive lineman award is named, spent his college days chasing down ball carriers for the University of Pennsylvania. Super Bowl champion **CALVIN HILL**, a Yale graduate, carried the ball for the dominant Dallas teams of the 1970s.

But over the years the conference comprised of many of the nation’s top academic institutions became a relative blip on the NFL’s radar, with few players getting a serious look from the professional ranks. It was Cowboys defensive end **MARCELLUS WILEY**, a second-round draft choice out of Columbia, who changed all that back in 1997.

NFL scouts started to notice the diamonds scattered throughout the Ivy League’s rough after Wiley became an immediate impact player for the Chargers. A sterling example of that fact is, that in 2003, for the first time since 1928, every Ivy League school was represented by at least one player on NFL rosters.

“I don’t think there’s been a considerable change in the caliber of player in the Ivy League,” says New York Giants General Manager **ERNIE ACCORSI**. “Maybe we’re doing a better job at looking at them.”

Among the other star players hailing from the Ivy League are Minnesota’s Pro Bowl center **MATT BIRK** (Harvard) and Miami quarterback **JAY FIEDLER** (Dartmouth). As the conference’s players continue to have more and more success at the next level, scouts are keeping a closer eye on the Ivy teams.

“[Wiley and Fiedler] opened up the door for me and I was able to get my foot in the door and stay here,” says Seahawks linebacker **ISIAH KACYVENSKI**, a Harvard graduate.

In the NFL this year, keep an eye out for Yale tight end **NATE LAWRIE** and Dartmouth H-back **CASEY CRAMER**, who were both selected by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in the 2004 NFL Draft. Lawrie was chosen in the sixth round, while Cramer was selected towards the end of the seventh round.

The following former Ivy Leaguers were contributors on NFL rosters a year ago:

PLAYER	COLLEGE	NFL TEAM
Sean Morey, WR	Brown	Philadelphia Eagles
Marcellus Wiley, DE	Columbia	San Diego Chargers
Seth Payne, DT	Cornell	Philadelphia Eagles
Jay Fielder, QB	Dartmouth	Miami Dolphins
Matt Birk, C	Harvard	Minnesota Vikings
Isiah Kacyvenski, LB	Harvard	Seattle Seahawks
Jim Finn, RB	Penn	New York Giants
Ross Tucker, G	Princeton	Buffalo Bills
Dennis Norman	Princeton	Seattle Seahawks
Chris Hetherington, RB	Yale	Oakland Raiders



THEY WALKED ON, ALL THE WAY TO THE NFL

Not every player in the NFL was a scholarship athlete in college. A surprising number were “walk-ons,” those players who try out and make the team.

Giants center **SHAUN O’HARA** has gone from walk-on to NFL starter. This offseason, he inked a multi-year deal with his hometown team, the Giants, after starting for the Browns for four seasons.

“I knew I was a long shot, but I had a lot more faith in myself than a lot of other people did,” says O’Hara of his walk-on days at Rutgers. “Coming up the way I did made me work harder and appreciate the little things. Sometimes, when you’re given things, you don’t appreciate them as much.”

A list of NFL players who were college walk-ons:

PLAYER	COLLEGE	PLAYER	COLLEGE
TE Richard Angelo, Minnesota	W. New Mexico	WR Greg Lewis, Philadelphia	Illinois
S Jeremiah Bell, Miami	Eastern Kentucky	FS Jon McGraw, NY Jets	Kansas St.
WR Drew Bennett, Tennessee	UCLA	TE Chad Mustard, Cleveland	North Dakota
WR Wayne Chrebet, NY Jets	Hofstra	C Shaun O’Hara, NY Giants	Rutgers
S Will Demps, Baltimore	San Diego St.	DB Jerrell Pippens, San Diego	Nebraska
C Hank Fraley, Philadelphia	Robert Morris	T/G Chester Pitts, Houston	San Diego St.
LB Scott Fujita, Kansas City	California	LB Justin Riley, San Diego	Ball State
LB Barry Gardner, Cleveland	Northwestern	RB Jamal Robertson, San Francisco	Ohio Northern
CB Rich Gardner, Tennessee	Penn State	LB Adrian Ross, Cincinnati	Colorado St.
OL Joaquin Gonzalez, Cleveland	Miami	CB Jeff Shoate, Denver	San Diego St.
C Nick Hardwick, San Diego	Purdue	OL Josh Sewell, Denver	Nebraska
CB Roderick Hood, Philadelphia	Auburn	LB David Thornton, Indianapolis	North Carolina
CB Reggie Howard, Miami	Memphis	TE Jed Weaver, Denver	Oregon
DL Corey Jackson, Cleveland	Nevada	S Greg Wesley, Kansas City	Arkansas-Pine Bluff
TE Chad Lewis, Philadelphia	Brigham Young	C Cory Withrow, Minnesota	Washington St.