



60 YEARS AGO: NFL GOES NATIONAL IN LOS ANGELES

It made the National Football League...national.

Sixty years ago next Friday (on September 29, 1946), the NFL champion and newly transplanted (from Cleveland) Los Angeles Rams played their first regular-season game in their new home town. The 10-team NFL, with teams only as far "west" as Chicago and Green Bay up to that point, was now truly national.

Rams owner **DANIEL REEVES** had received approval from the NFL on January 11 of that year to move the club west.

By the time the Rams took the field on September 29, they had made history by their move and who they signed.

On March 9 and March 21 of that year, the club signed halfback **KENNY WASHINGTON** and end **WOODY STRODE**, respectively. Both players were from UCLA. The signings marked the reintegration of the NFL – a year before the Brooklyn Dodgers signed **JACKIE ROBINSON** (a roommate of Washington's at UCLA). (Later that year, head coach **PAUL BROWN** of the Cleveland Browns of the All-America Football Conference continued the reintegration of pro football by signing fullback **MARION MOTLEY** and guard **BILL WILLIS**.)

Washington and Strode joined the team as it trained at Compton College in Los Angeles.

On September 29 in its inaugural Los Angeles game, the Rams were defeated by the "hard-driving" (as the Associated Press described them) Philadelphia Eagles, 25-14.

Many of the phrases and descriptions used by A.P. in recounting the game seem quaint by today's standards:

- "A hard-driving Philadelphia Eagles team pounded and kicked a 25-14 victory over the champion Los Angeles Rams in the first National Football League game played in the West."
- "Some 30,500 fans braved a sweltering and occasionally sprinkling day."
- "The first of Roy Zimmerman's boots stung the Rams into action. With Bob Waterfield passing and directing the strategy, they marched 75 yards with Pat West banging over from the one."
- "A 72-yard breakaway smash over center by West set up the Rams' other touchdown."
- "Los Angeles lost something in the second half, however, after Waterfield...was badly shaken in a hard tackle. After his departure, the Rams' offense fizzled and the Eagles began clicking."
- "Southpaw passes by the Eagles' Al Sherman [Ed. note: future New York Giants head coach] pulled the game out of the fire."

The Rams would finish their first season in Los Angeles in second place in the NFL's Western Division with a 6-4-1 record. They would stay in the city through 1994, compiling a 364-299-18 (.549) record. In that time, they would win an NFL championship (1951), five conference championships, 10 division titles and have 13 players/coaches selected for the Pro Football Hall of Fame (**GEORGE ALLEN**, **ERIC DICKERSON**, **TOM FEARS**, **ELROY "CRAZYLEGS" HIRSCH**, **DAVID "DEACON" JONES**, **TOM MACK**, **OLLIE MATSON**, **MERLIN OLSEN**, **DANIEL REEVES**, **JACKIE SLATER**, **NORM VAN BROCKLIN**, **BOB WATERFIELD** and **JACK YOUNGBLOOD**).

The Oakland Raiders also would play in Los Angeles from 1982-94.

The NFL plans to return to Los Angeles. "I think we will have a team back in Los Angeles," says NFL Commissioner **ROGER GOODELL**. "We'd like to do it as soon as possible, but it's more important that we do it successfully. The most important thing is not a timetable. It's more about doing it correctly."