

Former Loggers Make Good

Pros Return Home

By Don Cole

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It was just one year ago that Mark Lomas, Charlie Brown and Rusty Tillman were awaiting the outcome of the professional football draft.

This year they were doing the same thing, but in the capacity of professional football players.

The three, members of the 1969 Lumberjack football squad, converged on the campus of Northern Arizona University this week to further their educational goals.

Before Brown can finish his degree, however, he must report to Texas, for a stint with the Army Reserve.

Lomas, who played defensive end under former coach John Symank at NAU, signed with the New York Jets.

His first break came when starter Jerry Philbin was injured in the opening game of the pre-season schedule. Lomas moved into the starting slot and stayed there for the remainder of the 1970-71 season.

Lomas credits his line coach, Buddy Ryan, with his chance at the starting role, but added, "Defensive tackle Steve Thompson gave me the most individual help. He taught me a lot about the men who played across the line from me."

The Jets, despite their 4-10 win-loss record, were number one on defense in both the American Football Conference and the National Football League.

Lomas needs one semester to finish up his degree in physical education and then he'll return to training camp, in July, at Hoffstra University, on Long Island.

Brown was drafted by the Detroit Lions as a wide receiver, but didn't see much action this season as the receivers ahead of him were the fleet-footed Earl McCullough and Larry Walton.

He did see action on specialty teams though and managed to get into the action as a wide receiver.

His philosophy on professional football changed considerably when he arrived in training camp last summer. Before camp he thought it was an "individualistic" effort that gained a spot on the roster, but after being in camp he found, "Everybody

helps the other, in order to get the best performance out of an individual."

His praise goes to coach John North, who he said, "Was responsible for my making the squad." Brown noted that, "I was pretty well prepared for the camp though, because of the efforts of coaches John Symank and LaMar McHan."

Signing with the Washington Redskins as a free agent, Tillman went to summer camp as a linebacker.

His big job was competing with the likes of linebackers Marlin McKeever and Dennis Galbatz for a spot on the club. He made the grade and was used mainly on speciality teams during his rookie season.

Under the late Vince Lombardi, Tillman had much praise for the legendary coach. "He was a master psychologist" said Tillman, "who knew how to handle individuals. He didn't just tell you what you were expected to do, he got right down and showed you."

He played in most of the 1970-71 contests for Washington and started in the final two games of the season against the Eagles and the Cardinals. "We won both those," the former NAU captain said jokingly, "and we're going to be tough this year."

Tillman is majoring in physical education and has two semesters left to obtain his degree.

All three pros agreed on one aspect about the professional game of football: "The most difficult hurdle in becoming a member of a pro team is the mental pressures involved."

At one time or another during the past season each of the rookies met the other on the playing field. They also ran into another 1969 Lumberjack in Sonny Campbell, who plays for the Atlanta Falcons.

"Yeah, I played against Sonny," said Lomas, "and that was a day when he scored two TDs." Atlanta won that one.

All three former Lumberjacks performed well during their rookie seasons and are looking forward to contributing more to their respective teams during the 1971-72 seasons.