

Pro Football's Hall of Fame

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FROM DON SMITH

HALL OF FAME TOP TWENTY RECEIVERS

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(Second of a series)

CANTON, Ohio -- Don Maynard of the New York Jets edged toward the ranking as the all-time leading pass receiver in 1971 when he caught 21 passes. That upped his career total for 13 seasons to 603 catches, just 28 shy of Raymond Berry's all-time record total of 631 receptions.

This impending contest for top all-time honors was emphasized again today with the announcement of the updated figures in the Pro Football Hall of Fame's Top Twenty display.

The Top Twenty display, created three years ago at the time the Hall was beginning a general expansion and updating program, is an attractive, three-dimensional ranking of the Top Twenty all-time individual pro football leaders in rushing, scoring, passing and pass receiving. The display is changed weekly during every football season and is particularly interesting when leaders change on the board during the various stages of the season.

Berry, who starred for 13 years with the Baltimore Colts, has been the unchallenged all-time receiving leader for many years now, but Maynard and Lance Alworth of the Dallas Cowboys now must rank as definite threats to take over the No. 1 spot, depending on how long either or both elect to play.

Maynard already is the all-time leader in pass reception yardage with 11,306 yards accounted for with his 603 catches. Alworth, who jumped three spots to the No. 4 position in 1971, is the only other player to show more than 10,000 yards. The super-smooth star, who moved to Dallas in 1971 after nine great years with the San Diego Chargers, has gained 10,071 yards on his 527 receptions. In passing Tommy McDonald, Billy Howton and Bobby Mitchell in 1971, Alworth moved to within 104 catches of the top spot.

At the start of the 1971 campaign, there were only two other active players on the Top Twenty rushing list. One was Boyd Dowler, who came out of retirement with the Washington Redskins. The other was another Redskin, Charley Taylor.

Dowler caught 26 passes to up his total to 474 and move into the No. 10 spot ahead of Pete Retzlaff. Taylor caught only 24 passes before being sidelined for the season with an injury, but that was enough to move him all the way from No. 18 to No. 13. Taylor now has 420 catches.

Two other players joined the Top Twenty in 1971. One was Mike Ditka of the world champion Cowboys. His 30 catches moved him not only onto the elite list, but all the way to a 14th-place tie with Charley Hennigan, formerly of the Houston Oilers. Each has 410 receptions.

Carroll Dale of the Green Bay Packers was the second newcomer to the Top Twenty. He had 31 receptions to increase his career count to 408 and that is good enough for the No. 16.

Players honored in the Hall's Top Twenty display are credited for their play in the All-America Football Conference, as well as the American and National Football Leagues. But the 1971 season saw the disappearance from the Top Twenty receiving list of the last player with AAFC experience.

The last AAFC player to drop from the list was Hall of Famer Elroy (Crazylegs) Hirsch. Chris Burford, a veteran of AFL play, also was a 1971 "casualty."

Joe Morrison of the New York Giants (390 catches) and Jackie Smith of the St. Louis Cardinals (367 catches) are the most likely newcomers in the 1972 season. Jimmy Orr and Tom Fears, each with 400 catches and tied for No. 19, will be the first to go when new names are welcomed to the list.



LEADING LIFETIME RECEIVERS

(At Conclusion of 1971 Season)

| Rank | | Player | Pre-1970 League | Yrs. | No. | Yds. | Avg. | TD |
|------|------|------------------|--------------------|------|-----|-------|------|-----|
| 1 | (1) | Ray Berry | NFL | 13 | 631 | 9275 | 14.7 | 68 |
| 2 | (2) | Don Maynard * | NFL-AFL | 13 | 603 | 11306 | 18.7 | 86 |
| 3 | (3) | Lionel Taylor | AFL | 9 | 567 | 7195 | 12.7 | 45 |
| 4 | (7) | Lance Alworth * | AFL | 10 | 527 | 10071 | 19.1 | 83 |
| 5 | (4) | Bobby Mitchell | NFL | 11 | 521 | 7954 | 15.3 | 65 |
| 6 | (5) | Billy Howton | NFL | 12 | 503 | 8459 | 16.8 | 61 |
| 7 | (6) | Tommy McDonald | NFL | 12 | 495 | 8410 | 17.0 | 84 |
| 8 | (8) | Don Hutson | NFL | 11 | 488 | 7991 | 16.4 | 100 |
| 9 | (9) | Art Powell | AFL-NFL | 10 | 479 | 8046 | 16.8 | 81 |
| 10 | (11) | Boyd Dowler * | NFL | 12 | 474 | 7270 | 15.4 | 40 |
| 11 | (10) | Pete Retzlaff | NFL | 11 | 452 | 7412 | 16.4 | 47 |
| 12 | (12) | Bobby Joe Conrad | NFL | 12 | 422 | 5902 | 14.0 | 38 |
| 13 | (18) | Charley Taylor * | NFL | 8 | 420 | 5996 | 14.3 | 54 |
| 14 | (--) | Mike Ditka * | NFL | 11 | 410 | 5614 | 13.7 | 42 |
| 14 | (13) | Charley Hennigan | AFL | 7 | 410 | 6823 | 16.6 | 51 |
| 16 | (--) | Carroll Dale * | NFL | 12 | 408 | 7768 | 19.0 | 51 |
| 17 | (14) | Billy Wilson | NFL | 10 | 407 | 5902 | 14.4 | 49 |
| 18 | (15) | Jim Phillips | NFL | 10 | 401 | 6044 | 15.1 | 34 |
| 19 | (16) | Jimmy Orr | NFL | 12 | 400 | 7914 | 19.8 | 66 |
| 19 | (16) | Tom Fears | NFL | 9 | 400 | 5397 | 13.5 | 38 |

* Active in 1971 season

Number in (parenthesis) indicates rank at the start of the 1971 season.

NOTE -- Chris Burford (391 receptions) and Elroy Hirsch (387 receptions) were displaced from the Top Twenty during the 1971 season.