

1927 Hominy Indians vs “New York Giants” Football Game

By Michael J. Moran ©2020

In 1927 the Hominy Indians won a football game that has become the stuff of legend and, in 2018, the focal point of a movie, *Playground of the Native Son*. This caught my attention because the game was billed as Hominy vs. the 1927 NFL Champion New York Giants. The Giants, the story goes, were making a post-season swing out to California and stopped in Hominy thinking it would be an easy scrimmage for them but got beaten 13 – 6. This raised questions for the research I was doing on Steve Owen, who started every game for the Giants that 1927 season at left tackle. He went to college in Oklahoma and after he played in 1926 with the Giants, newspapers in Tulsa, Oklahoma, reported he signed on with Jim Kendrick’s Buffalo Rangers for the final game in a series of three contests with the Hominy Indians. But I had no evidence he actually played against Hominy in 1926 and no mention anywhere that he played in 1927

A 1992 article by Arthur Shoemaker in *The Coffin Corner* (the newsletter of the Professional Football Researchers Association) was entitled: *Hail to the Real ‘Redskins’ - All Indian team from Hominy, Okla. , Took on All Comers*. In it Shoemaker talks about the 1927 game and notes: “Newspaper accounts of the Indians-Giants fray tell of outstanding plays made by Giant halfback Ben Hobson and tackle Rudy Comstock. Interestingly enough, neither of them played for the Giants in any league games that year (Comstock played for Frankford, Hobson for Buffalo), which suggests that this was a barnstorming team with a number of “ringers” filling in around a nucleus of players from the champs. Whoever their opponents were, it’s certain that John and George Levi, Joe Pappio and George Nix (the Eskimo) led the Indians to a 13-6 win.”

So the question remained, exactly how many players from the 1927 Giants actually played in this game? In 2019, I found an article in a December 1927 Frankford Yellow Jacket program that stated: “The New York Giants have called off their proposed tour to the Pacific Coast. Business at the gate hasn’t been any too good for the Mara-March crew and the owners didn’t care to gamble on west-coast gates.” This undercut one premise of the setup for the story of the Hominy game – that the Giants were on their way to the west-coast and made this stop in Oklahoma along the way.

Frankford A. A. Official Program

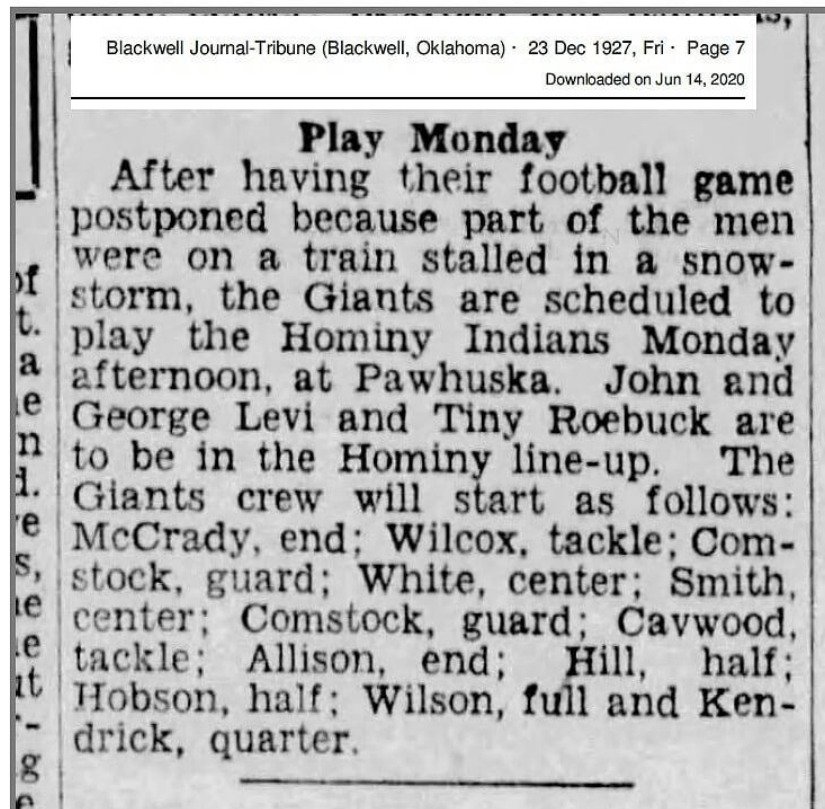
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10, 1927

...for the Giants. The Redskins threatened in the fourth quarter but their air drive went bad in the goal posts’ shadow.

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The curtain will be pulled down on the National league season this Sunday. The Duluth

Then in 2020, I found an article that gave the proposed line-up of both teams.



Here are the players listed as Giants and where they spent the 1927 season.

Larry McCrady - never played in the NFL

Ned Wilcox – Frankford Yellow Jackets

Rudy Comstock – Frankford Yellow Jackets

Phil White - New York Giants, played in 12 games, started in 3

Clyde Smith - Cleveland Bulldogs

Ed Comstock - did not play in the NFL until 1929

Les Caywood - Cleveland Bulldogs, 2 games, New York Giants 1 game, Pottsville Maroons 5 games

Neely Allison - Buffalo Bisons

Cowboy Hill - did not play in the NFL in 1927, played for the Giants in 1926

Ben Hobson - Buffalo Bisons

Mule Wilson - New York Giants, played in 13 games, started in 8

Jim Kendrick - New York Giants, played in 8 games, did not start in any

The Giants were declared champions after defeating Red Grange's Yankees in December 1927. Below is the article from the Daily News with the lineup. Wilson was the only starter from that game who was listed to play against Hominy. Joe Guyon, Jim Thorpe's teammate both at Carlisle and on the 1922 and 1923 Oorang Indians NFL team, started and played 60 minutes for the Giants in this game against the Yankees. I suspect if he had traveled to Hominy for the later game it would have been big news.



DAILY NEWS, MONDAY, DECEMBER 5, 1927

GIANTS GRID CHAMPIONS

GRANGE AND YANKS LOSE 14-0 BATTLE

By WILL MURPHY.

UNDISMAYED by a snow-covered field and a blinding downpour of hail, the New York Giants clinched

Red Grange Hinkey Haines
Yankee pilot and Giants' star.

the championship of the National professional football league by a decisive victory over the equally metropolitan Yankees at the Polo Grounds yesterday afternoon. The score was 14 to 0, but the Giants' margin of superiority was even greater than that.

that turned out.

| GIANTS. | Pos. | YANKES |
|----------|-------|-----------|
| Corgan | L. E. | Flaherty |
| Stahlman | L. T. | Scott |
| Garvey | L. G. | Michalske |
| Murtagh | C. | McArthur |
| Nesser | R. G. | Hall |
| Owen | R. T. | Earps |
| Hubbard | R. E. | Lawson |
| Haines | Q. B. | Grange |
| Guyon | R. H. | Tryon |
| Wilson | L. H. | Baker |
| McBride | F. B. | Fry |

The score by periods:

| | | | | |
|---------|---|---|---|------|
| Giants | 7 | 0 | 7 | 0—14 |
| Yankees | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0—0 |

Scoring: Touchdowns—Haines, McBride. Points after touchdowns—McBride 2.

Substitutions: Giants—Haggerty for Haines, Jappe for Nesser, Haines for Haggerty, Kendrick for Corgan, White for Wilson, Imlay for McBride. Yankees—Harvey for Scott, Kramer for Hall, Marks for Fry.

Officials: Referee—C. A. Hastings, Syracuse. Umpire—Mike Madden, Yale. Linesman—John Hennessey, Brooklyn.

Among the players announced for the Hominy game, White and Wilson were solid for the Giants in 1927; but missing from that roster are the top two scorers, Hinkey Haines and Jack McBride, and stalwarts on the line like Steve Owen, Cal Hubbard, Al Nesser and Mickey Murtaugh, along with backfield stars Doug Wycoff, Jack Haggerty, Tut Imlay and Joe Guyon.

When you turn to the game summaries, it appears that Wilson and White did not make it to Hominy for the game and were replaced by two local athletes.



Hominy Indians Triumph Over New York Giants

Levi Throws 60 Yard Pass for Winning Counter

Hobson Stars

Miller, Comstock, and Hobson Star for Giants

The Hominy Indians triumphed over the New York Giants yesterday 13 to 6 in a hard fought, spectacular game at the High School Field. The New York Giants using Vic Miller, local athlete, Herb McKenzie, and "Rudy" Comstock to take the place of several of the regulars who failed to arrive in time for the fray, flashed a brilliant passing game which undoubtedly would have meant a victory if "Dutch" Hill had been himself. Dutch dropped four perfect passes in the first quarter that would have been good for substantial gains had he been playing his customary flashy game.

It took Ben Hobson, Giant half, to furnish the thrills of the encounter. Hobson played a smashing game taking Capt. Kendrick's passes on the run and smashing through the line with regularity. Hobson showed that he was the real football player that he was purported to be, tackling hard, showing a playing spirit that is seldom seen on a pro team.

In the second quarter Hobson caught one of Kendrick's passes and galloped twenty yards where he was downed on the five yard line; following this he took the ball on an off tackle play and crashed over for the Giants only touchdown.

Comstock played a wonderful game making beautiful tackles behind the line and stopping the Great John Levi time after time. Vic Miller, who was recruited from the wrestling ranks, showed the boys how football was played in Texas and won the applause of the entire crowd by his hard tackling and strong line work.

The much heralded John Levi was in there fighting and plunging for the Indians, and showed that he was truly and All American player. Levi's drives were the feature of the game, his ballet like passes coupled with his smashing drives were responsible for the Hominy victory. In the third quarter, Levi threw a 60 yard pass to Pappio who made a beautiful running catch on the goal line for the Indians second counter.

Their first score came in the first quarter when a fleet Indian end snatched a pass from the air after Hill for the Giants had fumbled, and raced 50 yards for a touchdown. Nix, Pappio, Geo and John Levi played a bang up game for the Indians while Ben Hobson, Comstock, and Miller shone with equal brilliance for the Giants.

Eleven men such as Hobson playing against eleven men such as Levi would present about the best football team that possibly could be assembled.

Whitey Shelton, Indian half, was handicapped by a bad leg, but returned punts and circled the ends in the flashy speedy style that has earned him the name of the fastest back in Southern Pro football.

The game was a fitting climax to the football season in Oklahoma with fair weather and a large crowd, the Giants and the Indians flashed a grand game of football; they kept the sidelines in doubt as to the outcome until the final whistle.

The other game summary is from the Osage County News Friday December 30, 1927

PAWHUSKA, OKLAHOMA, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 30, 1927.

Hominy Indians Defeat N. Y. Giants

Levi Makes Brilliant Play; Comstock, Miller and Hobson Play For Giants

Jim Hendrick's champion New York Giants were downed by John Levi, former all-American half back, and his Hominy Indians, last Monday at the high school field. The score was 13-6.

The Indians scored first in the opening period of play when an Indian end intercepted a Giant pass and raced half the length of the field for a touchdown.

In the second quarter Ben Hobson, formerly of Centre College, caught one of Kendrick's passes and galloped twenty yards where he was downed on the Indian five yard line. On the next play he crashed right tackle for a touchdown. This tied the score.

In the third quarter Levi threw a 60 yard pass to Pappio who made a neat running catch a yard from the goal line.

Rudy Comstock, formerly of Pawhuska, now playing pro-football with the Frankfort Yellowjackets, was recruited by the Giants and played a brilliant game at guard. Vic Miller, local wrestler, and Herb McKenzie, also of Pawhuska, were in the Giant lineup.

Hobson, Comstock, and Miller starred for the Giants, while the Levis, John and George, Nix and Pappio furnished the punch in the Indian lineup.

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So, there is not a single player who started for the New York Giants in 1927 named in either of those two game summaries. In fact, the only 1927 Giant named is Jim Kendrick, the man who had brought the Buffalo Rangers to Hominy in 1926. Allison, Caywood and Wilson had also played for the Rangers at Hominy in 1926.

My best guess is that at one point Kendrick arranged for the Giants to stop in Hominy on their way to the west-coast but, when that tour was canceled, he pulled together a team with a core from his 1926 Buffalo Rangers, a few other players from Oklahoma and Texas, and two local boys. The game was promoted as Hominy vs. the NFL Champion New York Giants and that, rather than reality, became the stuff of legend.