

by Howie Carr

Golden Days Long Gone For Queens Swingers

If you don't think 1968 is a long time gone, just ask Coach Webb Ewbank of the New York Jets.

Back in those golden days the high-flying Jets were rolling along at the top of the heap, on their way to the Super Bowl and an immortal niche in sports history.

Now, two long, long years later, the Queens swingers are preparing to meet their crosstown rivals from the Bronx with a team that resembles the Seventh Cavalry after the Battle of the Little Big Horn.

Quarterback Joe Namath is out for the year. So is fullback Matt Snell. Defensive end Steve Thompson and offensive tackle Roger Finnie have been sidelined indefinitely with injuries, while Gerry Philbin, one of the best defensive ends in the conference, has not yet fully recovered from a pre-season shoulder separation.

As if this weren't enough, the team found out Wednesday that regular halfback Emerson Boozer will be out for at least three weeks with some torn cartilage in his rib cage.

Still, even with a 1-5 record, the Jets get a good press. The one Jet that has appeared in the headlines most often recently isn't even with the team anymore. His name is Johnny Sample, a man most people assumed would

sink into oblivion after the Jets cut him last year for striking Otto Graham, the coach of the College All-Stars.

Johnny Sample has refused to fade away, and now he's back with an amazing new book entitled "Confessions of a Dirty Ballplayer." (I thought Eric Barnes had a patent on that name.)

Sample's Confession

Sample begins his book with, oddly enough, a confession. "Mention my name to most anyone who knows anything about pro football," he writes, "and they'll tell you I'm a 'troublemaker,' or a 'dirty ballplayer,' or that I have a 'big mouth.' For 12 years, on four teams in both leagues, I've carried that reputation so you're probably thinking that there must be something to it. And you'd be right. By the standards that guys like Vince Lombardi and Pete Rozelle hold forth, I am a troublemaker."

Sample is black, but his hates transcend the color line. Perhaps the man he most despises (along with Otto Graham and Pete Rozelle) is Buddy Young, a black who ranks as one of pro football's greatest running backs. Young acted as a "house nigger" for the NFL during its battle with the AFL in the early 1960's, when he used his name and prestige to get black collegians to sign with the older league for less than their worth.

His observations other players are equally as interesting. Fran Tarkenton: the worst quarterback in pro football. Don Meredith: "probably one of the most overrated ballplayers ever to make the pros." Lance Alworth: the greatest ever. Paul Brown: "the master." Sam Huff: "I can name 30 linebackers as good."

Taliaferro A Loser

His description of Mike Taliaferro ("as long as Boston has him as quarterback they'll be lucky to win three games a year") smacks of prophesy in the wake of the Pats' acquisition of Joe Kapp.

At least temporarily. Joe Namath is out of the headlines, but the way he bowed out (six interceptions by a rebuilding Colt secondary) obviously did nothing to quell the rumors about his association with gamblers.

All the trouble started back in 1968 when Namath was intercepted five times by both the Buffalo Bills and the Denver Broncos, neither of whom could be classified as the cream of the league.

Namath has claimed that the FBI has been tailing him ever since, and the Bachelors III incident did nothing to help his reputation. During that controversy Sports Illustrated reported that underworld figures were running crap games in Namath's apartment on the East Side.

At any rate, as Leonard Shecter writes, "Don't bet that the last has been heard on this subject."

Meanwhile, the Jets carry on, reduced from battling for the championship of the world to fighting for the championship of New York City.

Top 10 Get Breather

College football's eighth weekend should be a breather for most of the nation's top-ranked teams, and the lack of good games can be most easily detected by TV viewers in the Northeast, who will watch the Holy Cross-Buffalo Classic this Saturday afternoon.

Number-one Ohio State is at home against perennial doormat Northwestern, a team the Buckeyes whipped last year, 35-6.

Darrell Royal's second-ranked Texas Longhorns host SMU in Austin, while the Fighting Irish of Notre Dame travel to Philadelphia to play Navy in JFK

Stadium. Coach Ara Parshegian's charges did not play last weekend.

Fourth-rated Nebraska, coming off a 65-31 stomping of Oklahoma State, meets the erratic Colorado Buffaloes, and Michigan, 39-13 victors over Minnesota last weekend, faces Wisconsin. The hapless Badgers' next opponent is Ohio State.

Sixth-ranked Stanford and number seven Air Force, who oppose each other in two weeks, both have easy opponents. The Indians will probably scalp Oregon State, while the Falcons can most likely bomb Arizona.

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