

## Hall of Fame Inductee Walt Clay – Pueblo

“Walt Clay is the toughest s.o.b. I ever saw,” says former coach, official and current radio talk personality Irv Brown.

The paragraph in the Chicago sports page of September 1946 made for interesting reading: “The Rockets have a dream backfield and one nightmare.” The Chicago Rockets were beginning play in the fledging professional All-America League. Their backfield starters were quarterback Bob “Hunchy” Hornchmeyer, Elroy “Crazy Legs” Hirsch at left halfback and Bill Daly at fullback. They were a dream, or so the writer felt.

The nightmare was Rocket’s right halfback Walt Clay, a 6-foot-1, 228-pound ex-Marine who led Longmont High School to a state football co-championship in 1940 and, as a freshman, was a first-team All-Big Seven fullback at the University of Colorado in 1942. “Clay is a bulldozer with forward gear only,” the story went on to add. “A man with a passion for collision.”

Walt cemented his place in Colorado sports history as a junior fullback at Longmont. In the 1940 state championship, he played despite a separated shoulder, which was taped down with a horse harness. Yet, when Grand Junction led 6-0 with time running out, and Longmont with a first-and-goal at the 3-yard line, Walt got the call. He rammed over the right guard, carrying two tacklers over the goal line to tie the score. A nightmare indeed.

Born in the Shamrock Coal Mining Camp just outside Erie, Colorado, Walt was the seventh of nine children. The family moved to Longmont just as he entered grade school.

Walt was an all-state pick in football and basketball. He not only was a brilliant and punishing football collegiate fullback and defensive back, he also played guard for the AAU Denver American Legion basketball team, which lost in the 1943 national finals to the Phillips 66ers.

He cut short his college football career to join the Marines in 1943. After the service, Walt rampaged in Chicago and Los Angeles of the AAFL before the league folded in 1949.

Walt went back to coach at CU where he received his degree in 1951. From there, it was off to Pueblo as basketball and football coach at Centennial High School. After a nine-year stint on the sidelines for the Bulldogs, Walt took to officiating. He was an official in basketball and wrestling for 28 years, football for 25 and baseball and softball for 20.