

## Football Findings

*Artifacts From The First 100 Years of  
American Football*

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### Earl Potteiger

Posted on [May 23, 2013](#) by [MM](#)





Earl Potteiger was the coach for the New York Giants in their first championship season, 1927 (team photo detail above) – yet it is doubtful that many Giants fans would be familiar with his name. He was a rough and tumble guy from the anthracite coal region of Pennsylvania, and his sports career before and after the New York Giants is a mix of professional and semi-professional football and baseball. Although his contract was bought by the New York Yankees from Worcester (Eastern League) in 1919, there is no record he ever appeared in a MLB game. His greater success came in the NFL.

The Professional Football Researchers Association says: His NFL career is rather odd in that he played in eight different seasons from 1920 to 1928 yet appeared in only 21 games. The reason may be that he was a coach or assistant in those seasons. One source says he became a pro in 1920 when he played two games for Buffalo, but it is likely he was being paid as early as 1913. In 1920, he was either 27 or 29 (sources vary). Either way, he was rather advanced in age for a pro at that time.

Apparently Potteiger was also involved in a basketball team the New York Giants put together as part of a 1925 post-season tour to Florida. A January, 1926 newspaper article promotes an upcoming game:

### **Kenyon and Palm On Giant Cage Team**

Jacksonville, Fla., Jan. 9 (By A. P.).—Professional basketball will make its advent in Florida this season with a game between the New York Giants and the Jacksonville Greenbacks here Tuesday night.

The Giants, founded by some of the members of the professional football team by that name, will be managed by Earl Potteiger, former Ursinus player. Other members of the team include Matty Brennam, Lafayette; Lynn Bomar, Vanderbilt; Bill Kenyon, Georgetown; Joe Williams, Lafayette; Phil White, Oklahoma State; Heine Binkert, Rutgers, and Mike Palm, Penn State.

Potteiger's career after football brought him in front of a judge on more than one occasion for violations of the prohibition laws – he was facing three years in prison when the laws were repealed.

#### **Football Star Bailed on Wet Charge.**

VILLANOVA, Pa., Aug. 18 (AP).—Earl Potteiger, former Ursinus College football star and later a professional football player and manager, was arrested here today as the alleged convoy of a truckload of beer and released in \$5,000 bail to await trial. This is the third time this year Potteiger has been arrested on a liquor charge. George S. Bleim, driver of the truck, was also held in \$5,000 bail.

Earl Potteiger died on April 7, 1959 – not one obituary mentioned his distinction of being the coach of the New York Giants for their first championship season.

## 4 Responses to *Earl Potteiger*



**John Fenton** says:

July 15, 2013 at 9:25 pm

Rough and tumble indeed. I've read several accounts of Potteiger's roguish behavior. Here's a taste of his exploits from 1915.

At the close of the 1915 baseball season, Potteiger left Worcester took his place as fullback in the lineup of the Conshohocken Athletic Club football team. On October 9th, during a 25-0 victory over the Frankford AA, Potteiger suffered an "injury to the eye and an ugly bruise on the arm." The following week, during a 32-0 thrashing of local rival Pottstown, he was injured again. This time it was a fairly serious gash above the eye. Following that contest the Conshohocken Reporter noted, "Potteiger is extremely unfortunate in getting injured again but many of his injuries can be attributed to Earl himself. He is a fierce player and goes into the game just as hard when his team is safely in the lead as he would if they were behind in the score. This is foolishness and it was playing of this kind of a game that cost George Gay his life at Phoenixville two years ago. Earl is a star but there is nothing to gain in taking foolish chances and then again he is apt to be crippled just when his services are worst needed. Safety first is not Potteiger's slogan in foot ball."

Finally, on November 6th, his season ended abruptly after he was involved in a nasty incident during the final quarter of a contest against the visiting Bethlehem Blue Stars. Potteiger engaged a Bethlehem defensive lineman named Lehr. A brief scuffle ensued in which he delivered a hard shot to Lehr's jaw, knocking him cold. The Bethlehem defender was carried from the field and was unable to return. Potteiger, suffering a serious laceration to the hand, also left the game. He claimed Lehr had bit his hand, and that was the reason for the slugging. Whether the injury was due to a bite or merely the result of his hand connecting with Lehr's teeth when he threw his punch is unclear. But one thing is certain – Potteiger's style of play had proved every bit as fateful as the Reporter had predicted it might. The wound subsequently became infected. Within two weeks he developed blood poisoning (septicemia) and was admitted to Samaritan Hospital (today Temple University Hospital) and it was feared that he might lose the limb. While there he underwent at least one and possibly two surgeries on his hand before ultimately recovering.

On a lighter note, the Reporter also mentioned as an aside in another report that at the end of the 1915 baseball season Philadelphia Phillies manager Pat Moran had "drafted this speed demon and he will be taken South with th eteam [sic] early next spring." According Potteiger's SABR bio, however, it was Connie Mack and the Philadelphia Athletics who took an interest, offering to buy him from Worcester for \$500. But the seriousness of the complications from his injury in November (the SABR bio says December) caused the Athletics to drop out of the deal.

[Reply](#)



**MM** says:

July 15, 2013 at 10:50 pm

Thanks, John – and anyone who read this should check out John's website at <http://home.comcast.net/~ghostsofthegridiron/>

[Reply](#)



**Barry Keller** says:

December 21, 2013 at 10:33 pm

Earl Potteiger was my great uncle. He was my grandmother's (Hattie Potteiger Keller) brother. I don't really remember him but I do remember my dads stories about him. Really great to be able to read these stories about him.

[Reply](#)



**MM** says:

December 24, 2013 at 12:42 pm

Thanks for leaving a comment and glad you found your way to the site.

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