

How the 'Skins Pulled One Out

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By RUSSELL BAKER

WASHINGTON, Nov. 18—One of our neighborhood's more manic football zealots works for President Nixon at the White House. His name is Chuck, and he is passionately involved with the Washington Redskins.

As with so many who work for Presidents, Chuck idolizes Mr. Nixon and has picked up, perhaps without being aware of it, most of the President's mannerisms and attitudes.

Last Sunday Chuck's favorite team, the Redskins, played a close game with the New York Giants and lost. Or at least the preliminary figures strongly suggested they had lost.

According to C. B. S. the score was Giants 35, Redskins 33. The New York Times next morning said, "Giants Top Redskins, 35-33," which left little doubt how The Times read the scoring figures. The Washington Post placed much the same interpretation on the scoring, but went a step further to suggest that the Redskins had been "blown out" of competition for the championship of their league division.

Chuck, the car-pool driver Monday morning, gave us the first good news we had received since the start of the fourth quarter in New York. We would all be gravely mistaken, he said, to interpret the game's outcome as a loss for the Redskins.

"Sports columnists and postgame-wrapup commentators," he said, "are already busy creating myths about what really occurred in New York yesterday and structuring great predictions. . . ."

Since Chuck was driving, the rest of us fell off to sleep at about that point.

That night, however, the telephone summoned a few select neighbors to

OBSERVER

Chuck's house for a deep-background briefing. Behind drawn curtains we were told that we had been invited because Chuck had long known all of us to be exceptionally loyal to the Redskins.

Chuck said he was dismayed by the way the press as well as the neighborhood were painting the Redskins-Giants score as a setback for the Redskins.

In 1935, he pointed out, Tuffy Lee-mans, himself a New York Giant, had said that a team playing on its own field started off with a 3-point advantage. In Sunday's game, Chuck went on, the Giants, though playing on their own field, had ended with only a 2-point advantage.

It should, therefore, be obvious to any but the most biased commentators and sports columnists that the scoring figures reflected a considerable victory for the Redskins, Chuck said.

At this point the last neighbors had drifted away with feeble excuses about having to do the children's homework, so that nobody heard how Chuck's analysis came out.

Tuesday a bunch of us neighbors found ourselves being notified to stand by to come in for a conference call initiated by the White House. The initiator turned out to be Chuck.

"I am writing letters to a number of sports editors pointing out that since the Las Vegas gamblers had made the Giants 1-point favorites and since the Giants had a 3-point advantage by playing on their home field, a score of Giants 35, Redskins 33 can only be interpreted as a 2-point vic-

tory for the Redskins," Chuck said. "The Giants, you see, in order to have won a true victory would have had to win by a score of 38 to 33, since . . ."

All down the conference line you could hear telephones being delicately hung up.

Around bedtime that night a long telegram was delivered. It was from Chuck. "My fellow Redskin victory celebrant," it began, and argued at considerable length that "we should all be proud that the Redskins had the courage to make the trip to New York and campaign against long odds since the Giants would have otherwise run up many more points than they did. The mystifyingly close score that resulted. . . ."

This seemed a good place to stop reading.

In the car pool this morning, Chuck was glowing with triumph. The sports commentators had deceived themselves and betrayed the public about the real outcome of Sunday's game, he said.

"The key fact," he said, "is that New York's last 21 points were the result of an intense passing game. And what team has always stood up for the philosophy of the forward pass? From Slingin' Sammy Baugh to Sonny Jurgensen, it has been the Washington Redskins who have consistently championed forward-pass ideology. In resorting to the pass to score their 21 points, the Giants gave the Redskins ideological control of the game. Moreover. . . ."

Several of us jumped from the car when it stopped for a red light.

It is afternoon now. The phone is ringing. If only we were built to let the telephone ring and ring and ring. . . . "Hello? No, Chuck, I'm not here. Really Chuck, now. . . ."