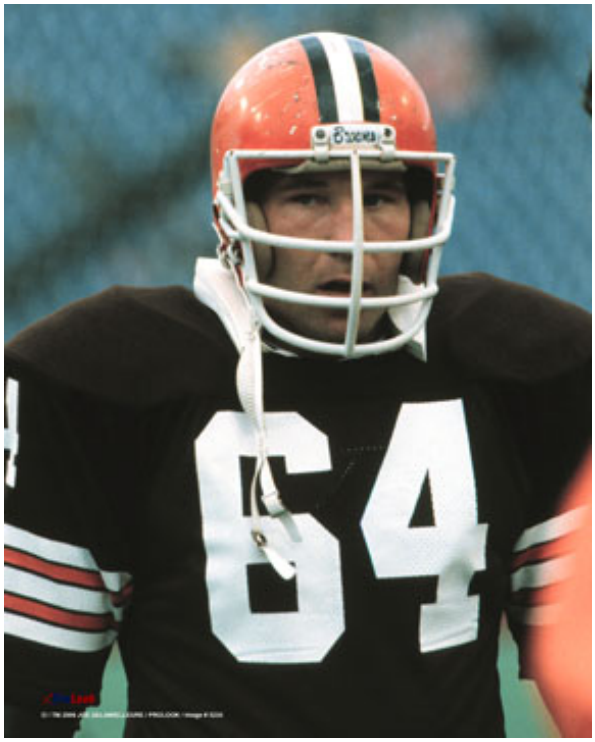

By 1980, the boy had turned 18. His interests had begun to transition away from sports, to the general avoidance of growing up.

His Cleveland Browns were respected on a national level; they were a proud franchise that had long been a pillar of professional football. It had been several seasons since they were title contenders, though, and by the end of the ‘70s, nobody expected them to challenge again as such anytime soon.

So the boy was looking the other way when the Sam Rutigliano-led Browns began to emerge as an offensive powerhouse. Ozzie Newsome was helping to revolutionize the tight end position; he was a matchup nightmare as a large-body receiver with some speed and great hands. Multi-purpose threat Greg Pruitt was hobbled by nagging injuries, but Mike “No Relation” Pruitt was establishing himself as a top powerback. Receivers Reggie Rucker, Dave Logan and Ricky Feacher were all dependable and dangerous. Quarterback Brian Sipe was becoming a household name as he and Coach Sam transformed the Browns into the Kardiac Kids- who seemed to rally from behind on a weekly basis to win games in dramatic fashion.

The offensive line was acknowledged as a strength of the team. On the left side were tackle Doug Dieken and guard Henry Sheppard. On the right side were tackle Cody Risien and guard

Robert E. Jackson. The center was Tom DeLeone. The line was solid at every position. Other than DeLeone, they were tall, rangy, seasoned pass-blockers. Offensive line chemistry is important, and the Browns' line had it.

Just prior to the start of the season, the Browns pulled the trigger on a trade with the Buffalo Bills. The Browns sent the Bills a second round pick in 1982 and a third round pick in 1983 for All-Pro guard Joe DeLamielleure. It was a head-scratcher, since conventional wisdom held that the defense was where the Browns had holes. Also, 'Joe D' was considered to be more of a run-blocker. And again, the Browns weren't considered to be contenders, and figured to need those picks. Observers close to the team assumed that Dieken's contract holdout in training camp that year may have prompted the Browns to seek some depth. The solid character of the linemen was such that the resulting demotion of Jackson did not adversely affect their play.

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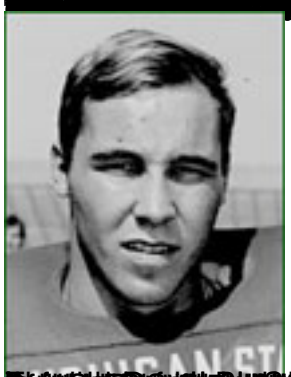

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PRO FOOTBALL
HALL OF FAME

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