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“New” Soldier Field-from Frustration to Reality

On September 29, 2003, the much maligned "new stadium at" Soldier Field will open with fanfare when the Chicago Bears host the Green Bay Packers on Monday Night Football. Love the new stadium or hate it-and there are plenty of denizens in each of those camps-Chicago will have its first new football venue in its history. Those that feel the stadium looks strange should know the story behind its creation is equally eccentric.

Soldier Field was built in 1924 as a public, multipurpose sports venue, and was originally named Municipal Grant Park Stadium. Soon thereafter, its name was changed to honor American military personnel that fought in World War I. The building played host to a wide variety of sporting events from its construction until 2001. Those events included the 1927 Dempsey-Tunney boxing match, ski-jump competitions, religious festivals, concerts, world cup soccer, and 41 college football all-star games.

The Chicago Bears began playing their games full-time at Wrigley Field (then known as Cubs Park) in 1921, and continued to play there for 49 years. In 1970, the National Football League ruled that all teams must play in stadiums that seated more than 50,000 fans, and the Bears were forced to find a new home. After losing a bid to move to Northwestern University's Dyche Stadium, the Bears' new den became Soldier Field



“New” Soldier Field on July 14, 2003.

on September 19, 1971.

To Bears' owner George Halas, Soldier Field was never intended to be a permanent home. 47 years had taken its toll on the structure, and no significant renovations were done for the team before it moved in. Additionally, the stadium was designed for a plethora of different events but was not perfect for professional football. Though it was not lamented during the era of aging and multipurpose baseball/football stadiums, Soldier Field's "sightlines" were poor. Because the stadium's seating areas rose at a low pitch, fans were taken farther away from the action as the seats rose. This configuration also contributed to crowd noise leaving the stadium. These problems would linger throughout the organization's search for a new home.

During the 1970s, after Halas announced the team would look into building a stadium in suburban Arlington Heights, Chicago Mayor Richard Daley stated the team would need to change their name to the "Arlington Heights Bears," should they move to the suburbs. In his book *Chicago's Cubs*, author Jonathan Alter captured the discussion:

"I think that's fine, George. You're a businessman. Do what you have to do. By the way, our lawyers say you can't take the name Chicago with you out there. We'd have to take you to court. That could take years. I wonder how many people will come out to see The Arlington Heights Bears? I wonder how excited the network people will be about broadcasting The Arlington Heights Bears?"

Continued on next page

Soldier Field, continued

You're a fine businessman, George. You make the call."

In 1978, the team and the Chicago Park District, which owned and operated Soldier Field, reached an agreement. In exchange for a 20-year lease from the Bears, Soldier Field would be renovated over the course of the following three seasons. Individual seats replaced benches, the stadium was reconfigured into a bowl from a horseshoe, and new skyboxes, press boxes, concession areas and restrooms were constructed. These renovations were completed prior to the 1982 season. Although the stadium was much more functional than it was prior to these upgrades, terms of the lease agreement would haunt the team and drive it along its path to finding an alternative to the then-55 year old building.

Stadium peace lasted from the completion of Soldier Field renovations through the Bears' remarkable 1985 Super Bowl run. Just a few years after the new lease was signed, however, a new motivator for a redesigned Bears stadium came into play. That force was the almighty dollar. During the late 1980's, teams that built skyboxes and negotiated leases which allowed them to share concession, parking and advertising revenues found financial windfalls, while teams that did not fell short. The Bears' lease with the Chicago Park District gave them only a portion of the revenues from concessions, and none from parking or signage within the stadium. As other teams maximized these revenue streams, those without begged for renegotiations of leases or for new stadiums.

Thus began a full 13 years of stadium talk in Chicago. In 1986, Chicago business organi-

zations proposed building a new Bears stadium south of Soldier Field, and in late 1989, Chicago heard its first utterance of the word "McDome."

McDome was a proposal for a new domed Bears stadium, similar in style to those built in Indianapolis, Minnesota and Detroit. (One of these stadiums is now vacant, the other two have very unhappy tenants and visitors). The dome was proposed to the Illinois Legislature as a part of the McCormick Place expansion plan. Bears President Michael McCaskey aligned with Governor Jim Edgar on the proposal, but the plan was rejected by the Illinois Legislature in late 1990. Although it's safe to say the vast majority of Bears fans were relieved to learn the team would not be playing indoors, McCaskey was disappointed, and for the first time indicated that the organization would consider all alternatives, including relocation, to acquire a new stadium.

1991-1994 was quiet on the new stadium/relocation front, although Daley did propose further renovations, including installation of a jumbo video scoreboard, in 1992. In exchange, the team would need to sign a lease extension. The proposed renovations were pulled off the table by Daley after the firing of Mike Ditka on January 5, 1993.

In 1995, the Bears organization, led by McCaskey, came out firing. McCaskey announced that the team planned on beginning the 2000 season in a new stadium at any cost. "If time slips away on this, we'll have to consider other alternatives," McCaskey said as he imposed a deadline at the end of 1995 to come to resolution on the issue. The team presi-

dent didn't wait long to make his first announcement. Early that year, the Bears purchased options on land in suburban Hoffman Estates and Aurora, and proposed that a \$285 million open-air stadium be constructed. That figure would require \$185 million in public funds; the issue would never be brought to the legislature for a vote.

In a more striking development, McCaskey announced in September of that year that he and a group of Northwest Indiana developers had come to an agreement to build an entertainment complex called "Planet Park," which would include a new Bears stadium, in Gary, IN. A month later, Daley responded to the Bears with an offer to spend \$156 million to completely renovate Soldier Field. The construction would be completed during the offseason in 1998, would drop the field 18 feet and create an upper deck, add skyboxes, a scoreboard and an exclusive restaurant. While McCaskey called the proposal a "more thorough plan than we expected," he also stated that he "didn't think renovating Soldier Field will be the answer."

McCaskey missed his self-imposed deadline at the end of 1995 for having a new stadium plan in place. In December he dismissed Daley's stadium proposal, asked Edgar to reconsider the McDome plan, and kept the Gary site as his trump card. Speaking of the Gary plan, the developers had asked the team to sign a letter of intent on the deal by mid-February 1996 prior to them placing a Lake County, IN tax increase on that year's ballot.

On February 2, 1996, the Lake County Council rejected

Continued on next page



Soldier Field's original configuration.

"By the way, our lawyers tell us you can't take the name Chicago with you out there. I wonder how many people will come out to see the Arlington Heights Bears." -Chicago Mayor Richard Daley to George Halas

Soldier Field, conclusion

the plan, and "Planet Park" was dead.

Perhaps the most grandiose plan for a Bears stadium was proposed in September, 1996, when Daley unveiled a \$395 million proposal to refurbish the existing stadium and equip it with a retractable roof. The translucent roof would cover the north end zone seats and could be closed in 10 minutes. Although Daley's latest plan would satisfy Edgar's desire for a multipurpose facility and the Bears' want for an open air-stadium, it was ultimately rejected for not addressing the field's other flaws, such as sightlines.

In 1998, Daley suggested that the Bears share Comiskey Park with the White Sox. Concurrently, the team was working on another project. During that year, McCaskey signed an agreement with Alan Busse on an option to purchase 69 acres of his land near Elk Grove Village, IL. The move would prove to be McCaskey's swan song on the stadium matter. The team president's plan was to build a 68,000 seat outdoor stadium north of the village, and the majority of citizens in the community were outraged. Several town meetings were held to voice the people's opposition to the plan, and officials in the village planned to place a referendum on the issue on the April, 1999 ballot. The referendum never was necessary, as the team pulled the plug on its latest project in January 1999. Little did anyone know that the political landscape for a new Bears stadium was about to change dramatically.

January and February 1999 would prove to generate the most Bears news since the 1985 Super Bowl season. Head Coach Dave Wannstedt was

dismissed on December 28th, and a flurry of new coaching prospects visited Halas Hall during the first three weeks of January. On the 22nd, McCaskey called a news conference to announce former Bear LB coach Dave McGinnis had accepted the Bears' head coaching position before he offered the job to him. On February 2nd, Walter Payton disclosed that he had a liver disease that would eventually take his life, and on February 10th, Virginia McCaskey announced that she was replacing her son Michael as CEO with team VP Ted Phillips.

Phillips, long designated the "point man" by Michael McCaskey on stadium issues, would finally get the stadium job done, most thought. In March, the new team president signed a five-year lease extension at Soldier Field, and declared that the Bears should always play within Chicago's city limits. Such talk was refreshing to the city, considering McCaskey's penchant for referring to the option of "relocation" over the previous five years. In May 1999, talk began to surface that the City of Chicago and the Bears were discussing a plan to raze all but Soldier Field's columns, and build an entirely new stadium within. In August 2000, word had it that a \$500 million renovation plan was close.

And on November 22, 2000, the City of Chicago and the Chicago Bears formally unveiled their plan for the new stadium at Soldier Field. The

\$587 million plan would build the new 61,500 seat stadium within the shell of the old venue, preserving the historic colonnades and exterior walls. Included in the plan were the creation of parkland surrounding the stadium, a new parking garage to the north, and numerous modern amenities within. More importantly for the team, the new facility would generate much more income, with the organization finally getting the majority of revenue from advertising, parking, concessions, and luxury box leases.

The proposal quickly gained legislative approval in December 2000, and despite numerous lawsuits, construction began immediately following the team's playoff loss in January 2002. Amid scathing criticism of the stadium's appearance, the new structure will open on September 29, 2003 as the Bears host the Green Bay Packers on Monday Night Football.

As long as the new stadium will stand on the shore of Lake Michigan, its detractors will call it the "mistake by the lake." Those who make use of the stadium to watch their favorite football team play will be overjoyed at the modern amenities which Chicago lacked through the 20th century. From Halas and Richard Daley Sr., through Ted Phillips and Daley Jr., and after the many, many days when it seemed it would never get done, on September 29th, Chicago will have its 21st century icon at last.

New Stadium Facts

- Soldier Field opens on September 29, 2003.
- The Bears won their first and last regular season games at the old stadium.
- The stadium will seat roughly 61,500 fans, approximately 6,000 less than the old field.



The destruction of "old" Soldier Field began immediately after the Bears' playoff loss to Philadelphia on January 19, 2002.



By February 2002, one month after the project began, the stands had been gutted and the foundation work began.



"New" Soldier Field is nearly completed as of this date.



The colonnades have been preserved and will be accessible year-round.

2003 Bears-Will the Club Finish 13-3 or 4-12? It's Anyone's Guess



Will the 2001 defense return in 2003? Will Ted Washington stay healthy? Many questions face the 2003 unit.

It would clearly be easy to write off the 2003 Bears as another 4-12 team. With matchups at San Francisco, Minnesota, New Orleans and home games against Green Bay and Oakland in the season's first five weeks, it is feasible that the team could start 0-5. But it was also easy to predict a last-place finish in 2001, which most did, and the club responded by winning a division championship. As a result, this prognosticator will no longer attempt to gauge the team's final record. Instead, it's more logical to examine the scenarios in which the team could finish in first place, or last. Thus:

The 2003 team could realistically finish 4-12 if:

-"Bad" Kordell Stewart takes the field more often than "good" Kordell. Stewart was a pro bowl quarterback in 2001 and led his team to the AFC Championship game twice. He was also unable to advance the Pittsburgh Steelers farther than that game, and was benched numerous times in his career there. Should Kordell's strengths not be emphasized, or if he fails to grasp John Shoop's

offense, this could turn out to be the second coming of Rick Mirer. And the 2003 team doesn't have an Erik Kramer to fall back on as they did in 1997. Even if Stewart doesn't pan out, at least the team didn't throw away a first-round draft pick this time.

-Injuries decimate the team as they did in 2002. This obviously goes without saying. With the exception of right tackle Marc Colombo, the team is happy with the current health of its roster. However, should the offensive & defensive lines, linebackers, running backs, defensive back and quarterback positions lose key starters again, there is not a team in the NFL that would have a winning season. (Unless that team's quarterback is Brett Favre, who has proven he can win with extremely questionable talent surrounding him).

-John Shoop does not dramatically improve the play calling skills he has shown over the last two seasons. On numerous occasions in 2002, Shoop called similar plays on consecutive downs and failed to convert short-yardage situations

into first downs. This, along with questionable play calling on third-and-long, resulted in the offense being ranked fifth-worst in third down percentage in the NFL. Olin Kreutz commented that the Bears will not change their philosophy even if teams take their gameplan away, meaning the team intends to continue to run the ball even when they can't. Head Coach Dick Jauron has been loyal to Shoop to a fault, but if his team finishes 4-12 and doesn't score points again, both may be looking for a job in 2004.

-Players that tailed off in 2002 fail to play to their potential again. After breakout seasons in 2001, Anthony Thomas, R.W. McQuarters, Jerry Azumah and Mike Green's performance slid. All have shown that they can be playmakers in the NFL, but if their performance does not rebound, long-term changes will need to be made at their positions.

The 2003 Chicago Bears could realistically finish 12-4 and win their division if:

-Kordell Stewart grasps the offense, it takes advantage of his strengths, and he wins over his teammates and the fans. If this happens, the fans and the city will be his for the taking, as the previous few successful Bears quarterbacks have proven. Stewart brings the most athletic potential to the QB position in Chicago since a young Jim Harbaugh waited in the wings. While Jim Miller showed flashes at being a serviceable veteran, he does not possess Stewart's mobility, durability, and athleticism. Stewart needs a fast start, however, or Chicago fans may forget that #10 is no longer worn by Henry Burris.

-The team rallies around its embattled coach. It was re-

ported that Brian Urlacher prepared a speech early in camp to fire up the players for the Jauron crusade. Urlacher subsequently denied the report, but the fact remains that the coach probably needs at least a winning record to finish his contract, which runs through 2004, in Chicago. In 2001, the team played their hearts out for Jauron and won 13 games, so this effort did work before.

-Key second-year players perform well. Marc Colombo, Roosevelt Williams, Bobby Gray, Brian Knight and Adrian Peterson are being counted on to perform. Knight, Peterson and Gray showed flashes, Colombo and Gray were lost to injury, and Williams disappointed in 2002. If Colombo can recover from his devastating injury, Knight can replace Roosevelt Colvin and the rest threaten to crack the lineup, Chicago will not only win in '03 but be comfortable in their depth for the next five years.

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Did you know?

The Bears will wear a patch on their home uniforms this fall celebrating the new stadium. They also will wear an orange shamrock on their helmets in honor of the late Ed McCaskey, Chairman of the Chicago Bears Board.



Mike Ditka took the high road in response to Buddy Ryan's barbs from 1986-1988, but finally hit back after the 1989 contest.

*"He's just jealous. We all know who would win Ditka vs. Ryan. Ditka, hands down."
-Mike Ditka
10/2/89*



Ryan and his players took every opportunity to trash talk, but were defeated in each contest.

Ditka versus his "Buddy"-Eagles-Bears 1986-1989

Typically, a rivalry in the NFL is forged after year upon year of continuous play between two teams. Bears-Packers and Bears-Lions are the league's two oldest continuous conflicts, stretching back to 1921 and 1930, respectively. Although the Philadelphia Eagles began league play in 1933, the Bears have played them only roughly every other year. The 34 total games between the two pale in comparison to the 165 played between the Bears and Packers.

The Bears-Eagles series did gain rivalry status between 1986 and 1989, however, when opposing head coaches Mike Ditka and Buddy Ryan faced off. The best part about it: Chicago dominated.

James "Buddy" Ryan began his career as Bears defensive coordinator after being brought on by head coach Neill Armstrong in 1978. Following Armstrong's firing after the 1981 campaign, many players and staffers thought the head coach position would be given to Ryan. Defensive tackle Alan Page wrote a letter to George Halas, imploring the aging owner to retain Ryan. The letter was signed by all of Chicago's defensive players. In response, Halas was driven in a golf cart to address the defense on the practice field. According to a 1988 article by the *Chicago Tribune's* Don Pierson, Halas told the players that "Buddy Parker is a fine coach, you have nothing to worry about." Halas re-signed Ryan to a new deal as coordinator before hiring Mike Ditka as head coach shortly thereafter. Thus began the famous Ditka-Ryan feud.

To say Ryan's defenses were stellar for the Bears from 1982-1984 would be an understatement. His defenders usu-

ally led the NFL in all defensive categories, even when the team's record was poor in '82 and '83. And Ditka, although he preferred a more conservative 3-4 alignment, gave Ryan full reign over his unit. Safety Dave Duerson (1983-1990) has stated that Ditka only interfered in a defensive meeting once, when Ryan told him to "get out, this is my team, these are my players."

During halftime of the 1985 loss to the Miami Dolphins, the ill feelings came to a head. After Ryan refused Ditka's orders to insert a cornerback to cover WR Nat Moore instead of linebacker Wilbur Marshall, Ditka offered to take Ryan outside to resolve the situation. "We can do it any way you want to. We can go right out back and get it on or you can shape your ass up," Ditka recalled. Whether the fight ever occurred is a mystery, but Chicago did lose the game en route to its Super Bowl 20 victory. The night before that game, Ryan announced he was leaving to become head coach of the Eagles. Players and Ryan cried before DT Steve McMichael (1981-1993) threw a chair that stuck into the wall to dry the group's tears with testosterone. With Ryan's departure, and a 1986 matchup already scheduled between Chicago and Philadelphia, an intense rivalry was born.

September 14, 1986 featured the first matchup of Ryan and Ditka at Soldier Field. Ditka remained diplomatic as the media questioned him on his reunion with his bitter former assistant. "I don't have a psychiatric degree, so if you guys want to talk football, we can talk. They guy that was here in 1982, I liked, but he's not here anymore," Ditka told reporters. At the same time, Ryan didn't see fit to muzzle

himself. He told one publication that the Bears "didn't have a chance" to repeat as world champions. "Any team in history has a tough time. You just can't do it. Too many things have to go right for you." To this, McMichael, never a huge Ryan fan, responded by saying "The old fat man has been talking a little stuff in Philly, ain't he?" Eagles running back Mike Waters called the Bears "pansies" and "babies" prior to the game, which Chicago won in overtime, 13-10.

The following season, Chicago and Philadelphia again faced off, this time in Veteran's Stadium. Most bantering between the two coaches was silenced, as this would be the first game played after the NFLPA called a strike. The contest would feature replacement players, better known as "scabs", on each side of the ball. The two field generals looked at the "scabs" in entirely different ways, which probably influenced the outcome of the game. Ditka embraced the players as "the real Bears," while Ryan called his team "the worst bunch of football players I've ever seen." The AFL-CIO in Philadelphia threatened a disturbance at the game, and the Teamster's union circled the field with semi trucks. Bear players arrived for the game at 5 a.m. to avoid the conflict, just over 4,000 fans showed up, and Chicago prevailed 35-3.

The teams didn't meet during the 1988 regular season, an eventful campaign for both clubs. Ryan's Eagles took the NFC by surprise, winning the East with a 10-6 record, their first winning season since 1981. In Chicago, the team rebounded from key personnel losses, injuries, poor treatment by the media

See Rivalry, Page 7

Bears Trivia

1. What Hall-of-Famer did the Bears defeat as they opened Soldier Field in 1971?

2. What record does Rex Grossman's former coach, Steve Spurrier, hold against the Bears?

3. Why did the original Bears uniform have vertical stripes sewn into the jersey?

4. Chris Chandler extended his NFL record among quarterbacks in 2002. What was the record?

Good Luck!
Answers on back page

2003 Draft Class-Definitely Quantity, Hopefully Quality



Seems we've learned our lesson-Chicago concealed its interest in Rex Grossman prior to draft day.

Rather than draft consensus #4 pick Bernard Robertson, on April 25th Bears GM Jerry Angelo sent the Bears' pick to the New York Jets for their #14 and #22 selections in the draft. Speculation immediately had the Bears using that second pick on a quarterback or cornerback. This would be the first draft since 1989 in which the Bears had multiple first-round picks. In that draft, the team took DE Trace Armstrong and CB Donnell Woolford. Both of those players went on to stellar careers in the NFL; time will tell if good fortune will prevail on this year's pair. How the 2003 draft shaped up:

Michael Haynes, Round 1 Pick 14, DE, Penn State: Led Big Ten in sacks during 2002 season, Defensive MVP of Senior Bowl, during which he logged four sacks. Bears coveted a defensive tackle, but early selections of Dwayne Robertson, Jonathan Sullivan, Kevin Williams, Jimmy Kennedy and Ty Warren led them to select Haynes. Will get immediate work in the Bears' defensive line rotation. Has been hindered by minor injuries in training camp.

Rex Grossman, Round 1 Pick 22, QB, Florida: The possibility of selecting Rex Grossman didn't seem possible to most Bears prognosticators prior to the 2003 draft. Most buzz involving Grossman had him being courted by Green Bay, which they subsequently denied. Grossman was a Heisman Trophy finalist after the 2001 season, but his performance tailed off under new coach Ron Zook in 2002. It is reported that Grossman doesn't have the strongest of NFL arms, but his release has been compared to Brett Favre's. All reports have Grossman looking excellent in camp.

Charles Tillman, Round 2 Pick 35, CB, Louisiana-Lafayette: Tillman reported to camp four days late after a brief holdout but has impressed coaches since his arrival. Coaches and fans have huge expectations for the 6' 1" corner, who has been penciled in as the starting third CB in the Bears' nickel package. Tillman's selection was surprising to some who had him listed on their draft boards as low as a third or fourth-round pick.

Lance Briggs, Round 3 Pick 68, LB, Arizona: Reported to be in the "Zach Thomas" mold, small but fast and hard-hitting. Played MLB in college but is lining up outside in camp. Has been impressing.

Todd Johnson, Round 4 Pick 100, S, Florida: Hard-hitting safety has been compared to Buccaneers' John Lynch. Excellent in run support in college.

Ian Scott, Round 4 Pick 116, DT, Florida: Failing to nab a defensive tackle in the first round, Chicago drafted several in the mid-rounds. Scott has good burst off the ball and can

be disruptive in the backfield. Second-team all-SEC two years straight at Florida.

Bobby Wade, Round 5 Pick 139, WR, Arizona: Wade was penciled in as the team's top returner prior to camp. Reportedly has been catching everything thrown near him at Bourbonnais. Compared to former Bear Bobby Engram, doesn't possess blazing speed but concentrates on running sharp routes and catching the ball.

Justin Gage, Round 5 Pick 143, WR, Missouri: Singled out by General Manager Jerry Angelo as the man to push David Terrell. At 6' 4", Gage towers over opposing cornerbacks, but is slightly skinny at 217 pounds. Caught passes for 1,075 yards and nine touchdowns in 2002 for the Tigers.

Tron LaFavor, Round 5 Pick 171, DT, Florida: Durable defensive tackle with above-average quickness, LaFavor became the fourth Florida Gator selected by the Bears in 2003.

Joe Odom, Round 6 Pick 191, LB, Purdue: Could provide depth on defense and special teams, has surprised coaches with his athleticism in training camp.

Brock Forsey, Round 6 Pick 206, RB, Boise State: Rushed for over 1600 yards his senior season and scored an amazing 32 touchdowns for Boise State. Has been pointed out several times by coaches for his play during camp.

Bryan Anderson, Round 7, Pick 261, G, Pittsburgh: Durable offensive lineman missed only one game in four years at Pitt.

Rivalry, continued

and a Ditka heart attack by compiling a 12-4 record and securing home-field advantage throughout the playoffs. It seemed like karma, then, that the Eagles were scheduled for a divisional playoff game at Solider Field on New Year's Eve 1988. Ditka again took the high road when asked about Ryan, calling the matchup "just another game." "Our team will play their team. I doubt that he will make any tackles, or I will make any catches. Team against team, that's what it will be," Ditka said. But as usual, Ryan chose the opposite route. Ryan called the Eagles' personnel "better than the Bears at every position except middle linebacker," a nod to his former best student, Mike Singletary. Ryan also proclaimed the Eagles to have home field advantage in Chicago, since he never lost a playoff game there, unlike Ditka. Adding to the verbal barrage in 1988 was former Bear safety Todd Bell, now playing weak-side linebacker in Ryan's 46 defense. Bell was fired up before, during and after the game, taunting Bears players and decrying his treatment by Ditka and the Bears' organization while he played there. By the time the actual game got started, after the prior week of media frenzy, the temperature was unusually balmy for December

31st along Lake Michigan. Chicago opened up a 17-9 lead on Ryan and the Eagles, thanks to several major gaffes committed by Philadelphia. Then suddenly a fog descended upon the field which shrouded the stadium and created perhaps the most peculiar football game in history. The Bears held on to win despite the Eagles penetrating Chicago's 25-yard line nine times. The recalcitrant Ryan was brave as he met the media, giving credit to the Bears' defense-but not their coaching. "Credit the Bears. And hold your head high," he told his players. "You have nothing to be ashamed of."

It's doubtful that either coach could sense that their Monday Night matchup on October 2, 1989 would be their last, but it certainly seemed that way. Even the Soldier Field crowd got into the feud in a big way. Fans displayed banners that read "Ryan's no buddy of ours," chanted "Bud-dy, Bud-dy" constantly, and even pelted the coach on the field with french fries in an allusion to McDonald's commercials in which Ryan had starred. Chicago won this final matchup 27-13 and harassed Eagles QB Randall Cunningham all night, despite him throwing for 401 yards. After the game, Ryan said "you don't lose that many times to anyone and stay in this league

long." The Eagles' defense was joined on the field by another Bears castoff, Al Harris, and Todd Bell again showed his fervor against Chicago by getting into a heated argument with Richard Dent. Bell broke his leg in the contest. And finally, Mike Ditka hit back at Ryan after the game, after remaining silent on the subject for nearly four years. Sounding like the quintessential Ditka, he said "I'm the duck and it's like water off a duck's back" in reference to Ryan's constant remarks. "He's just jealous. You know what they say. Empty tin cans make the most noise, and he's an empty tin can. This game is between the Bears and the Eagles, not Ditka and Ryan. We all know who would win that one. Ditka, hands down," the Bears icon said. Perhaps Chicago safety Shaun Gayle finalized the feud best when he suggested a solution. "Maybe what we could do after the game is all the players circle our cars in the parking lot and we let the two of them go at it."

This final matchup between the two coaches may have been the crescendo of each team's success. Chicago held a 4-0 record after the Eagles victory, but would lose eight of the next ten to finish 6-10. Many point to this season as the beginning

of the end for Mike Ditka, who was fired three years later. Ryan's teams would finish 11-5 and 10-6 in '89 and '90, but the outspoken coach was released after the 1990 season for failing to win a playoff game. Ryan then served a two-year stint with the Arizona Cardinals in '94 and '95, after which he retired to his horse ranch in Kentucky. Ditka tried to reprise his glory from 1997-99 with New Orleans, who also fired him after three frustrating seasons. Ditka "retired" to continue to make millions on endorsements, restaurants and broadcasting jobs.

As an amusing epilogue to this story, Buddy Ryan finally managed to beat the Bears while coaching a pre-season contest against Dave Wannstedt in 1995. Chicago held a 16-14 lead with just minutes left, when Ryan re-inserted his starting players, an unusual practice in the preseason. The Arizona first team, playing against players that would soon be cut by Chicago, moved down the field and kicked the winning field goal with seconds remaining. After posting an 0-5 record against Chicago from 1986-1994, Ryan's own actions confirmed he savored that one victory against his former club.

2003, continued

-The team finds a way to beat Brett Favre and the Packers in Chicago. G Chris Villarrial has now played more games with the Bears than any other current player, but his team has never beaten the Packers in Chicago in his eight years. Even worse, the team has lost nine in a row to Green Bay at home. A win

over the Packers in Soldier Field's inaugural game would prove to be an invaluable confidence booster for this young club.

-Quite simply, better play from players with potential. Observers have seen how well Dez White, Stewart, Anthony Thomas, David

Terrell, Jerry Azumah, Phillip Daniels, R.W. McQuarters and Mike Green can play at times, but these great performances have been sporadic. If these Bears at important positions perform consistently, it will mean a winning season for the team.

Expectations were low in

2001; the team won the division. Hopes were sky-high in 2002 and they (stunk). We should know by now that our expectations mean nothing until the 2003 team takes the field on September 7th. On that day, many of these questions will be answered.

BearsHistory Trivia Answers

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- 1. In their first game after permanently moving into Soldier Field, the Bears beat second-year QB Terry Bradshaw and the Pittsburgh Steelers 17-15 on September 19, 1971. Ironically, Chicago could have picked Bradshaw, but lost a coin flip for the #1 pick to the Steelers prior to the 1970 draft.**
- 2. Spurrier threw 5 touchdown passes against the Bears at Soldier Field on November 19, 1972 while playing for San Francisco. This ties him with several others for most in a game.**
- 3. The vertical stripes were sewn on the uniforms to help players hold on to the ball, according to founder/owner/player/coach George Halas. The A.E. Staley company allowed the team to keep the same uniforms when they moved to Chicago, and they were used for several more years after the relocation.**
- 4. Chandler extended his NFL record when he started a game a quarterback for his seventh team on October 21, 2002 at Detroit.**

Tailgating 2003-Familiar Surroundings, Different Situation

Chicago tailgaters are already scrambling to make their plans to party in the lots this fall. Problem is, most don't know how.

The Bears organization has been extremely vague regarding the status of tailgating at the new stadium during its construction. They've stated that they are mindful of the great tradition of tailgating at Soldier Field. Few details have been provided, however, and equally few are available to those trying to research on the web.

The new "stadium in a park" will feature two parking garages—one to the north of the stadium and one to the south. The only official tailgating lot will reside directly south of the



We'll be back in Chicago, albeit in a different lot.

south garage. Standard Parking, Inc. recently announced a lottery to purchase passes for that lot, but a limited number are available, considering the number of tailgaters wanting to be there. Additionally, "our" lot at the Planetarium will be

reserved for buses and RV's only. Apparently the only option for those of us looking for cash parking will be 31st Street and several Michigan Avenue lots. Stay tuned to BearsHistory.com for the latest details.