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## Article Title: "Deacon Jones Preyed On The QBs "

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It was April 1965.

**Deacon Jones**, one of the most talented defensive ends in pro football, wanted to be even more menacing.

Watching a tape of a Muhammad Ali-Sonny Liston heavyweight title fight, Jones saw how Ali used jabs, quick combinations and excellent footwork to defeat Liston by technical knockout in six rounds.

Jones thought that incorporating similar moves into his game would provide an edge when he squared off against offensive linemen.

Entering his fifth season, he possessed the speed and power to outmaneuver opponents, but needed another weapon to make it even harder for them to stop him.

He thus refined his use of the head slap, a move the National Football League has since outlawed.

Lining up in a sprinter's stance mostly at left end, he'd charge off the line with all his fury and use his left hand to hit an offensive lineman upside the helmet and sometimes his right hand to pop him on the other side. His goal was to daze an opponent and make him blink as he blew past him in hopes of sacking the quarterback.

"It's a softening-up process because those blows hurt," Jones told IBD. "Those guys would start closing their eyes. We played the game from the top of your head to the bottom of your feet. Your knees were in play, your head was in play. My whole game was based on hitting people in the head."

As Jones turned the single and double head slap into one of the most feared moves in football, his career rose to new heights. In 1965, he went to the first of his eight Pro Bowls and earned the first of five straight consensus first-team All-NFL distinctions. A major news service tapped him as NFL Defensive Player of the Year in 1967 and 1968.

Jones retired in 1974 after 14 seasons, his first 11 with the Los Angeles Rams, two with the San Diego Chargers and a last one with the Washington Redskins. A first-ballot inductee into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1980, he was named to the NFL's 75th anniversary team and the league's team of the 1960s.

Today he runs the **Deacon Jones** Foundation, which tries to mold inner-city youth into contributing members of society. On the football side, he appears as an analyst on TV and radio talk shows, including Fox's "NFL This Morning."

He sure has strong credentials. It's widely believed that his career total for sacks rivals if not exceeds the greatest sack figures in NFL history, although sacks didn't become an official statistic until 1982. The NFL Network recently aired a feature that ranked him as the No. 1 pass rusher to ever play the game.

"He was fantastic coming off the ball," Bob Windsor, a San Francisco 49ers tight end from 1967 to 1971, told IBD. "He had the greatest head slap anybody could have. Our right tackle, Cas Banaszek, had ice bags on his head after every game against the Rams. His head was swollen by inches of pounding, Deacon hit him so hard."

Windsor felt the head slap while trying to block the 6-foot-5, 272-pound Jones in a 1967 exhibition game.

"He had these big eyeballs open like light bulbs," Windsor said. "He was in a sprinter's stance ready to take off. He's glaring and snorting, raring to take somebody apart. He said, 'Rookie, I'm coming to get you, buddy.'"

"He hit me with his head slap about five times before I even knew it. I'm down on my back, and these big feet are clumping over my chest. I look around and see, POW! He smacked (quarterback) John Brodie as hard as you could ever smack him. John got up with blood caked all over his helmet and up his nose. On his way back, Deacon said to me, 'I'll do that the next play, too.'"

Jones, who played with a chip on his shoulder pads, intimidated many quarterbacks, whether by sacking them or delivering a hard blow after a pass was thrown. He considered QBs his "sworn enemies" and said reducing their effectiveness was like "cutting off the head of a snake."

"In every given situation, the quarterback must be hit," he said. "He must be punished in hopes that in the third or fourth quarter he's starting to throw wobbly passes that we're picking off."

Jones had humble beginnings. Born David Jones in 1938 and raised in Eatonville, Fla., a rural town, he worked in the fields with his father, Ishmeal Jones, during time off from school and on weekends. They pitched watermelons and picked oranges from trees, both exhausting work. All the while, Ishmeal instilled a strong work ethic in his son, plus discipline and toughness.

A strong athlete, Jones began playing college football at 6 feet 4 inches and 225 pounds. He starred at defensive tackle at South Carolina State and later Mississippi Vocational College, the forerunner to Mississippi Valley State. Both schools played only other all-black colleges and didn't get much attention from pro scouts, and Jones was uncertain whether the pros would draft him.

But he often reminded himself of a quote by Abraham Lincoln when he was a young lawyer: "I will study and prepare myself, and someday my opportunity will come."

Patience paid off when the Rams drafted Jones in the 14th round in 1961. Three games into the season he started at defensive end, a position where the coaches felt his speed could be used best. He was named Rams Rookie of the Year.

Jones was a marketing maverick. In his early years in the league, defensive linemen were obscure players to the average fan. He nicknamed himself Deacon to give himself a special identity that fans and the media would remember. He also coined the term "sack" to give players credit for tackling quarterbacks behind the line of scrimmage. Doing so helped glamorize the positions of defensive end

and tackle.

"When I entered the game, there was no way of identifying what the defensive linemen did, so I tried to find a term that fit what I was trying to describe," Jones said. "To me, you put all offensive linemen in a burlap bag, take a baseball bat and beat on the bag. The word sack came out of that. By putting some notoriety and flamboyancy in there . like a quarterback throws the football, a running back runs the football . it helped defensive linemen rise on the pay scale."

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