

PAUL KRAUSE

By Michael Richman

When Redskins' history buffs recall the 1964 season, they are likely to remember a thrilling, high-octane offense led by quarterback Sonny Jurgensen, running back Charley Taylor and flanker Bobby Mitchell.

The defense wasn't the team's focal point, although it featured a future Pro Bowler, linebacker Sam Huff, and a promising rookie. That player, free safety Paul Krause, intercepted a league-high 12 passes and was named to the Pro Bowl. He earned Pro Bowl honors again in 1965.

But Krause was gone after the 1967 season. The Redskins traded him to the Minnesota Vikings for linebacker Marlin McKeever and a seventh-round draft choice. It goes down as arguably the worst trade in Redskins' history.

Playing for Minnesota, Krause was selected to six more Pro Bowls. He finished his 16-year career as the NFL's all-time leader in interceptions with 81, a record that still stands. Overall, he made the All-NFL team four teams and was All-NFC five times. He was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1998.

Why was he traded?

Apparently, Redskins' defensive backfield coach Ed Hughes didn't think much of Krause's playing ability and persuaded coach Otto Graham to trade him to Minnesota. At the time, Krause, who had amassed 28 interceptions in four seasons, was bitter about the deal.

"I didn't care for Otto Graham," he said in July at the Bobby Mitchell charity golf tournament in Lansdowne, Va. "Graham listened to one of his defensive coaches who didn't know what he was doing. Then Graham traded me, so I don't think he knew what he was doing, either."

Huff didn't understand the trade, as well, and tried to convince the coaching staff to keep Krause in Washington. Ironically, Huff had been involved in a bitter transaction when the New York Giants traded him to the Redskins before the 1964 season.

"They traded Paul Krause because he wasn't a great tackler," Huff said. "I told them, 'Don't trade him. This guy can play weak-side safety like nobody, like Willie Mays in the outfield.' They said, 'He doesn't tackle.' I said, 'I make all the tackles, that's what I get paid for.' They traded him anyway, and he's in the Hall of Fame. But what do coaches know?"

But hindsight may say it wasn't that bad a trade for Krause. He played for Vikings' teams that reached four Super Bowls. He was also part of some of the best defenses in NFL history, including teams in the late 1960s and early 1970s that featured the "Purple People Eaters," the famed defensive line of Alan Page, Carl Eller, Gary Larsen and Jim Marshall.

"I don't know that it was blessing that I was traded," he said. "But I had 12 good seasons with the Minnesota Vikings, went to four Super Bowls and had some great years. I would have liked to stay with the Redskins, but that's not the way it worked out."

Krause never earned a Super Bowl ring, though. The Vikings fell 23-7 to Kansas City (Super Bowl IV); 24-7 to Miami (Super Bowl VIII); 16-6 to Pittsburgh (Super Bowl IX) and 32-14 to Oakland (Super Bowl XI). The repeated losses were frustrating for Krause.

"We should have won at least one or two of those Super Bowls, but that's in the past," he said. "What are you going to do? We played as hard as we could play, but we didn't win. That's history. We can't do a thing about it."

A Missouri native, Krause played football at Iowa and was a second round draft pick of the Redskins in 1964. He immediately began revolutionizing the free safety position with his drive, knowledge and

THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 24, No. 1 (2002)

aggressiveness on the field. He showed an excellent sense for anticipating where the quarterback would throw the ball.

Krause's 12 pickoffs in 1964 leave him tied with the Los Angeles Rams' Woodley Lewis for third place all-time in most interceptions by a rookie. He's tied with nine other players for third place in most single-season interceptions.

Krause liked playing for Bill McPeak, who coached the Redskins from 1961 to 1965, all losing seasons. But McPeak was fired after the 1965 season, and the Redskins replaced him with Graham, a Hall of Fame quarterback whose only head coaching experience was at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. The Redskins improved to 7-7 in 1966, but after a 5-6-3 season in 1967, Krause was traded.

Team President Edward Bennett Williams was a Krause-favorite. But he was out of town when Graham made the trade and, by the time he returned, there was nothing he could do to bring Krause back. He apologized to his star safety.

In addition to disliking Graham's player personnel moves, Krause never thought highly of his coaching ability.

"Otto Graham came in and tried to do something different," Krause said. "I don't think he was a great pro football coach. Nice guy, nice guy, I liked him as a person. But I didn't care for his coaching."

Williams felt the same way. He fired Graham after the 1968 season and hired Vince Lombardi.

Krause retired after the 1979 season. He said his key to intercepting so many passes was linked to a combination of mental and physical prowess.

"I knew what I could do, and I also knew the game very well," he said. "I also knew what the offense was trying to do to the defense. So I put myself in the positions I was supposed to be in to get the interceptions."

Although Krause doesn't follow much pro football today, he knows that what defines a solid defensive back is the same compared with his era.

"You have to tackle and catch and play injury-free," he said. "I don't care if it's now or back then. The game itself hasn't changed. But some of the coaching is trying to change the game. You still have to tackle, run, block, catch. If you can't intercept the ball, cover somebody, or tackle, you can't play."

Paul James Krause

Safety 6'3", 200. Iowa

Bendle High School, Burton, Michigan.

Born February 19, 1942, Flint, Michigan.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Team</u>	<u>Gm</u>	<u>Int</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Team</u>	<u>Gm</u>	<u>Int</u>
1964	Was	14	*12	1972	Min	14	6
1965	Was	14	6	1973	Min	14	4
1966	Was	13	2	1974	Min	14	2
1967	Was	13	8	1975	Min	14	10
1968	Min	14	7	1976	Min	14	2
1969	Min	14	5	1977	Min	14	2
1970	Min	14	6	1978	Min	16	0
1971	Min	14	6	1979	Min	16	3
16 years						226	81

- Led league