

= Lynn Bomar =

Robert Lynn Bomar (January 21 , 1901 ? June 11 , 1964) was an American football end in the National Football League (NFL) . Bomar played college football , basketball and baseball for Vanderbilt University , following coach Wallace Wade and classmate Hek Wakefield there from prep school , and was a unanimous 1922 All @-@ Southern selection and a consensus 1923 All @-@ American selection in football . The latter season included a first @-@ team All @-@ American selection by Walter Camp , rare for a player in the South . A paralyzing injury ended Bomar 's college career , but he quickly recovered and sat on the bench for all of his team 's games . He played for the New York Giants in 1925 and 1926 , retiring abruptly after a separate injury . Bomar was nicknamed " the Blonde Bear " .

He had a later career in law enforcement . In his position as Tennessee 's Commissioner of Public Safety and Patrol chief , Bomar supervised the ransacking of black households during the 1946 Columbia race riot . He was the warden of Tennessee State Prison from 1955 until his death , and oversaw several executions . In 1956 , Bomar was the first Vanderbilt football player elected to the College Football Hall of Fame .

= = Early life and education = =

Bomar was born on January 21 , 1901 , in Bell Buckle , Tennessee to Oliver Eugene Bomar , a blacksmith , and Elizabeth May McAdams . Vanderbilt records indicate that he spent part of his youth in Gallatin . Bomar attended Webb School in his native Bell Buckle , and spent a year at Castle Heights Military Academy .

= = = Fitzgerald and Clarke = = =

Bomar then attended preparatory school at the Fitzgerald and Clarke Military Academy in Tullahoma , Tennessee . In 1920 , he was a member of teams which won the state prep @-@ school football and basketball championships . In both sports Bomar played under head coach Wallace Wade . While Wade coached at Fitzgerald and Clarke , the school 's overall football record was 15 ? 2 . With him on the football team was future college teammate and All @-@ American Hek Wakefield . On March 14 , 1922 , while Bomar was in college , the school burned to the ground and was never rebuilt .

= = Vanderbilt University = =

= = = Football = = =

Bomar played for head coach Dan McGugin 's Vanderbilt Commodores football team at Vanderbilt University from 1921 to 1924 . Wallace Wade was hired as Vanderbilt football 's assistant and line coach for 1921 and head coach of the basketball and baseball teams for 1922 . Bomar and Wakefield enrolled at the school in the same class .

He was prominent on Commodore teams which compiled a win ? loss ? tie record of 26 ? 5 ? 4 (.800) and three straight conference titles during his four seasons . Bomar was an All @-@ Southern and All @-@ American selection in 1922 and 1923 . In addition to playing end and tackle (offense and defense) , he made the kickoffs . Bomar 's play was described :

The Blonde Bear was one of the world 's greatest football players , who never missed an open field block . When one considers he made Walter Camp 's All @-@ America team when he was backing up the line on defense and blocking and catching passes on offense , his greatness is realized .

[Bomar] plucked passes out of the ozone that seemed impossible to get , and then raced through the enemy like they were tied . " Often he started games at fullback , shifted to halfback or end , and finished at tackle . In backing up the line , [he] hurled back all comers with the same savage vigor .

His favorite refrain to opponents was , " I hope you don 't like it . "

== = 1921 == = =

During Bomar 's freshman season at Vanderbilt , he was already a standout player as a starting fullback . In a game against the Longhorns at the Texas State Fair in Dallas , the Commodores won 20 ? 0 after they were expected to lose by two touchdowns . Texas had been undefeated in 1920 , winning the Southwest Conference . The 1921 squad was considered possibly the best in Longhorns history , and Vanderbilt football seemed to be in decline when Georgia Tech defeated the Commodores 44 ? 0 the previous year . Dan McGugin gave a speech invoking late former Vanderbilt quarterback Irby Curry before the game . According to Edwin Pope 's Football 's Greatest Coaches , " The Texas game , sparked by McGugin 's unforgettable oratory , was the big one ; and Vandy got out of the year without a loss . " Bomar scored on a 40 @-@ yard interception return for a touchdown in the fourth quarter , increasing the Commodore lead to two touchdowns . In the sixth game of the season , Vanderbilt defeated the Alabama Crimson Tide 14 ? 0 at Birmingham . The victory was expected by insiders (then often called the " dope ") , with Vanderbilt favored by two touchdowns . Early in the first quarter several runs by Jess Neely , a long pass from Neely to Tot McCullough and a 17 @-@ yard run by Neely brought the ball to the nine @-@ yard line . After a run by Frank Godchaux , Bomar bucked over the line for a touchdown . The game against the Georgia Bulldogs decided the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Association (SIAA) championship that season , with Bomar excelling at linebacker . " Georgia would have trampled Vanderbilt to atoms but for Lynn Bomar , " wrote Nashville Tennessean sportswriter Blinkey Horn . " Lynn Bomar was the stellar performer of the game . In the first @-@ half he made two @-@ thirds of the tackles " , and reportedly prevented five Georgia touchdowns that day . The Commodores tied the Bulldogs 7 ? 7 on a fourth @-@ quarter onside kick for a share of the SIAA title , finishing the season with a 7 ? 0 ? 1 record .

== = 1922 == = =

Vanderbilt had its second straight undefeated season in 1922 , with Bomar playing his preferred position at end . He was a starter in the scoreless tie with Michigan at the dedication of Dudley Field , spending much of the game tackling Michigan runners . According to the school yearbook , Bomar " tore through the Wolverine line constantly , and always emerged after a play on the far side of the defense " and the game included a goal line stand . Another account read , " Thousands of cheering Vanderbilt fans inspired the surge of center Alf Sharp , guard Gus Morrow , tackle Tex Bradford , and end Lynn Bomar , who stopped Michigan cold in four attempts . " The next week against Texas at the Dallas State Fair , Vanderbilt won 20 ? 10 . Bomar made an interception and caught a 23 @-@ yard pass from Jess Neely , running 20 yards to set up a Gil Reese touchdown . Against the Tennessee Volunteers , he scored the second of two touchdowns on a short pass from Neely in a 14 ? 6 victory .

Bomar 's best offensive performance that year was against Georgia . Neely made a long pass from a few yards behind the line of scrimmage at the 45 @-@ yard line ; Bomar caught it near the seven @-@ yard line , and was tackled by Georgia halfback Loren Chester (Teany) Randall at around the three @-@ yard line before Reese scored the touchdown . Neely and Bomar were among the best pass @-@ receiver combinations in Vanderbilt history : " Bomar , unquestionably , was Vanderbilt 's best receiver , snatching everything thrown at him . "

A similar play in the game 's second half scored another touchdown . Quarterback Doc Kuhn dropped back for a more than 40 @-@ yard touchdown pass to Bomar . The pass went 28 yards in the air , with Bomar running the rest of the way . Georgia running back Dave Collings tackled him as he crossed the goal line (injuring himself) , and Bomar also made an interception in the 12 ? 0 Vanderbilt victory . The season 's final game , against Vanderbilt 's oldest rival Sewanee , had a trick play by the Commodores . A fake run ended with Kuhn tossing the ball to Bomar , who was left open behind the defense and easily ran it in ; Vanderbilt won , 26 ? 0 .

After the season , Bomar received first @-@ team All @-@ American honors from Frank G. Menke . He was also chosen a second @-@ team All @-@ American by Walter Camp , a third @-@ team All @-@ American by Walter Eckersall and appeared on Billy Evans ' National Honor Roll . Bomar and Red Barron of Georgia Tech were the two unanimous All @-@ Southern selections . Grantland Rice wrote the next year , " There was no better end in the country last fall " and Camp described Bomar :

Bomar , of Vanderbilt , is only shaded a little by two other ends , largely through the experienced gained by his rivals against stronger opposition . He weighs 200 pounds , is tremendously fast , and a hardy , defensive player . On attack he is able to pick the forward pass out of the air on the full run , and , running with a high @-@ knee action quite like that of the redoubtable Ted Coy , if he cannot get by his man , runs him down and goes on over him , still on his feet .

===== 1923 =====

In 1923 , assistant coach Wallace Wade was hired as head coach at Alabama and was replaced by former star tackle Josh Cody . A rematch against the Michigan Wolverines at Ferry Field was a 3 ? 0 Vanderbilt loss , with consensus All @-@ American center Jack Blott scoring Michigan 's field goal . According to the Michigan Alumnus , Harry Kipke could not return punts for fear of fumbling ; when he received the ball , Vanderbilt ends Hek Wakefield or Bomar would tackle him . In a diagram of the game 's plays , Vanderbilt 's only completed pass was from Bomar to Kuhn . Bomar excelled against Tulane , blocking a number of punts in a 17 ? 0 victory . Times @-@ Picayune sportswriter Ed Hebert wrote , " Take Bomar out of the Vandy lineup and Tulane would have won the game by three touchdowns . " A postseason charity game was played against former and contemporary Princeton Tigers all @-@ stars . The game was a 7 ? 7 tie , with Vanderbilt 's touchdown scored on an 18 @-@ yard pass from Kuhn to Bomar .

Vanderbilt and Washington and Lee finished the season as Southern Conference co @-@ champions . A sportswriters ' poll chose the Commodores as best team in the South , awarding them the Pickens Trophy (awarded from 1923 to 1926) . Bomar was a consensus All @-@ American , receiving first @-@ team honors from Collier 's Weekly (Walter Camp) and second @-@ team honors from Athletic World magazine . He was one of the first players from the South to receive first @-@ team honors from Camp , who described the player :

Bomar of Vanderbilt is an experienced end of 200 pounds in weight , with speed , initiative , and an uncanny perception in diagnosing plays . Bomar can back up a line when needed , can not be swept out by swinging interference and is powerful enough to hold his own even when big guards and tackles come at him .

As a receiver of a forward pass , he has , besides the skill , the excellent quality of being very hard to knock off his feet , and when he and the defense both try for the pass at the same time , Bomar is far more likely to get the ball on account of the fact that he outweighs the majority of defensive players . He has been used in all sorts of positions this year , both in attack and defense and this had broadened his scope and increased his value .

===== 1924 =====

During Bomar 's senior season (when he moved to halfback) , the Commodores tied the Quantico Marines 13 ? 13 . Bomar , picking up a fumble , ran 84 yards for a touchdown . According to a newspaper account , " It was Lynn Bomar 's gigantic figure that broke up what looked like a Marine cakewalk . After receiving the kickoff , the Marines drove steadily to Vanderbilt 's 10 @-@ yard line as Goettge repeatedly completed short passes . At the 10 , Groves dropped back . The pass from center was low . He missed it . He reached for the ball . It trickled off his fingers . The Commodores were boring in . Wakefield was in there . Then Bomar came charging through . He picked up the ball and with a twist was out of Groves ' grasp . He came out of the bunch with a long , charging run . Then he seemed a little undecided . One fleeting glance behind him and he struck out . Up came his free arm to brush off his headgear . His thin , yellow hair stood out . On he swept like a thundercloud

of vengeance across the goal . Bedlam broke loose . " Captain and guard Tuck Kelly was injured during the game , making Bomar the interim captain two weeks later against the Georgia Bulldogs .

In the Georgia game Bomar had a brain hemorrhage after he was kicked in the chin , and half his body was paralyzed for two days . It was thought that he would never play football again : " Not a player on the team could talk of Bomar 's injury without tears coming to his eyes " , and Bomar sat on the bench for the rest of the season 's games . Known as a devastating blocker and " lightning fast , " he was the first Commodore football player elected to the College Football Hall of Fame in 1956 . At his induction Bomar said , " I just wish all the men who played with me at Vanderbilt between 1921 and 1924 could also receive this coveted award . They deserve it more than I do . After all , they made it possible for me to be chosen . "

He was a member of the Kappa Sigma fraternity . Nashville sportswriter Fred Russell , who entered Vanderbilt in 1924 , told a story about Bomar in his autobiography Bury Me In An Old Press Box : " As a freshman I had pledged Kappa Sigma fraternity , which at that time had many varsity athletes . Among them was Lynn Bomar , selected All @-@ American end in 1923 ... I also had the responsibility , as a freshman , of awakening Bomar in time for him to get to classes , and at the end of the school year I did this one morning by rolling the biggest lighted firecracker I ever saw under his bed . When it exploded I feared the whole corner of the fraternity house had been blown off , and I was so scared that even Bomar in his BVD 's chasing me across the street and deep into the campus couldn 't catch me . "

According to Vanderbilt 's All @-@ Southern halfback and 1924 captain @-@ elect Gil Reese , " He would never let them jump on me . Whenever anyone would threaten me , Bomar was always right there to say ' Keep your hands off that boy ' . They always did , too . Bomar always looked after me , and he always called back to me when we started on end runs . No one could run interference like Bomar . " Bomar and Reese were on an all @-@ time Vanderbilt team in the school 's 1934 yearbook , and Bomar was chosen for an Associated Press Southeast Area all @-@ time football team for the era from 1920 to 1969 .

= = = Basketball = = =

Bomar also played baseball and basketball at Vanderbilt , and was a forward on the basketball team . He attracted large crowds at basketball games because of his football prowess .

= = = = 1922 ? 23 = = = =

The 1922 ? 23 team had a 16 ? 8 record , beating the LSU Tigers but losing to the Virginia Tech Hokies in the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Association tournament . An account of the LSU game read , " Either Vanderbilt was in rare form or L.S.U. has a good fighting team with no shooting ability . Fans were treated to the most one @-@ sided contest of opening day when these two clubs met , the Commodores scoring 13 points before the Louisianans had counted once , winning 36 to 10 . " Bomar scored two points in the game .

= = = = 1923 ? 24 = = = =

The team , coached by Josh Cody , had a 7 ? 15 record . In the SoCon tournament , Vanderbilt defeated Clemson 42 ? 13 and Bomar scored seven points . According to one account , " Reese and Bomar used to be famous for their forward pass work . They are still using it in basketball . Most of Bomar 's passes to Reese are caught over the right shoulder with the recipient facing away from the passer . " Along with Reese , All @-@ Southern forward Alvin Bell was also a teammate . Vanderbilt lost the next game to the eventual tournament champions , Jack Cobb and Cartwright Carmichael @-@ led North Carolina , 37 ? 20 . When Bomar was sidelined by a football injury in 1924 , Gil Reese became the basketball team captain .

= = = Baseball = = =

He was a catcher on the baseball team . Cliff Wheatley spoke of the many good catchers from which to choose for his 1922 All @-@ Southern baseball team , " And up at Vanderbilt , Lynn Bomar made a splendid record . "

= = New York Giants = =

= = = 1925 = = =

Bomar fully recovered from his injury and played professional football as an end for the inaugural 1925 New York Giants of the National Football League (NFL) with Jim Thorpe , Century Milstead , and Owen Reynolds . He was signed to the Giants by Harry March .

The first noteworthy game for Bomar was a 14 ? 0 loss to the Frankford Yellow Jackets . After the Giants ' poor first half , the Yellow Jackets led by 14 points . During the second half the Giants recovered somewhat , with good passes from Jack McBride to Bomar but no chance of a comeback . In a 13 ? 0 victory over the Rochester Jeffersons , McBride threw a 27 @-@ yard touchdown pass to Bomar . A 13 ? 12 win over the Providence Steam Roller had a 24 @-@ yard touchdown pass from McBride to Bomar and an interesting ending . The Giants were backed up near their end zone , faced with a fourth down and leading 13 ? 10 . Providence was set for a blitz on the punter , but when he caught the ball he knelt in the end zone for a safety (not enough for Providence to win) . Against the Kansas City Cowboys , several passes from McBride to Bomar netted 24 yards in a 67 @-@ yard touchdown drive for a 9 ? 3 victory . Bomar had possibly his best day in a 23 ? 0 victory over the Dayton Triangles before a crowd of 18 @,@ 000 . Six of McBride 's completed passes that day were to Bomar , including a 45 @-@ yarder for the Giants ' first touchdown . Bomar was selected to NFL president Joseph Carr 's all @-@ star team .

Although the Giants played well , the team experienced financial hardship during its first year . Player salaries were so low that most had to take additional jobs to support themselves . The team 's brief practices , held at 4 : 30 pm each day to accommodate outside @-@ work schedules , enabled little in @-@ season improvement . Overshadowed by baseball , boxing and college football , professional football was not a popular sport in 1925 and owner Tim Mara spent \$ 25 @,@ 000 of his own money during the season to keep the team going . The financial struggle continued until the 11th game of the season , when the visiting Red Grange and the Chicago Bears drew more than 73 @,@ 000 fans (a pro @-@ football record) and an additional 20 @,@ 000 were turned away . This gave the Giants much @-@ needed revenue , possibly altering the team 's history . In the 19 ? 7 Bears victory , Grange intercepted a pass intended for Bomar and returned it for a touchdown .

= = = 1926 = = =

In the season 's second week Bomar scored against Providence on a 15 @-@ yard pass from McBride , and he scored on a 37 @-@ yard touchdown pass from Walt Koppisch against Kansas City . However , his football career ended abruptly when he dislocated his knee in a game against the Brooklyn Lions .

= = = = Longest pass = = = =

From the top of the American Radiator Building to the ground in Bryant Park , a drop of 324 feet (98 @.@ 75 m) , Bomar completed a pass to Hinkey Haines for a record on November 12 . Haines caught the ball on the fifth attempt . On Bomar 's first attempt , the New York Times reported that the ball " hit the sidewalk and burst " and the third pass knocked Haines over . The stunt took place two days before a game with the Los Angeles Buccaneers . " It was as much as anything a playful jab at Brick Muller " (the Buccaneers ' end) , who caught a pass thrown from atop the Telephone Building

? a drop of 320 feet (97 @. @ 5 m) ? in San Francisco the year before to advertise the first East @- @ West Shrine Game .

= = Personal life = =

Bomar married Veturia Edna Hicks on November 20 , 1927 in Williamson County , Tennessee . Their only son , Robert , was a resident surgeon at Vanderbilt Hospital . Bomar was a Baptist .

= = Law @- @ enforcement career = =

After football and marriage , Bomar was assistant manager of the Colonial Hotel in Springfield , Tennessee for seven years . He sold life insurance , but found it dull . Bomar then began a long career in law enforcement , beginning in the United States Marshals Service office from 1934 to 1939 . In 1939 he became a division chief with the Knoxville Highway Patrol and a year later became director of public safety , overseeing the city 's police and fire departments . For a few months the public @- @ safety position was eliminated , and Bomar was again the Highway Patrol division chief . Governor Prentice Cooper promoted him to chief on a trial basis in 1942 , when the incumbent went on active duty in World War II .

= = = Commissioner of Public Safety = = =

In 1945 , Bomar was appointed as both state commissioner of public safety and patrol chief . In this capacity he worked for the Tennessee Motor Transportation Association , Universal Tire and Appliance Company and the Tennessee Superintendent of Public Works .

= = = = Columbia Race Riots = = = =

In 1946 , Bomar supervised the ransacking of African @- @ American households in the Columbia Race Riot . A February 25 fight between James Stephenson , an African @- @ American Navy veteran , and a white shopkeeper reportedly ignited the unrest . Later that day there was gunfire , fighting and rioting between whites and African Americans in Mink Slide , Columbia 's African @- @ American business district . When black citizens shot out the street lights , three officers and a chief responded to the gunfire ; all four were shot . Bomar , described by one writer as commanding " the firing line of the State Highway Police , " led the team sent in after the shootings with permission from the state attorney general to search homes and businesses for weapons . None of the accused were granted bail or allowed legal counsel , and 12 were charged with attempted murder .

Under oath in court , Bomar said that he had no search warrant and anticipated that he would not have a warrant the next time he searched similar properties . He called journalist Vincent Sheean a " lying Communistic yellow ? ? . " According to a contemporary account , " In this situation , even though it ? s fair to say [Bomar] was just doing his job , it ? s equally clear that he was a loose cannon . His personality dominated the scene , and it was the personality of a bully . "

= = = Warden = = =

Bomar was warden of Tennessee State Prison from 1955 until his death . He oversaw the execution of several men including William Tines , an African American convicted of raping a 45 @- @ year @- @ old white woman , who was executed in the electric chair . Tines was the last man executed by electrocution in Tennessee , and the last person executed until Robert Glen Coe in 2000 .

= = = = The Prisonaires = = = =

Bomar supported the Prisonaires , a doo @- @ wop quintet of inmates who received a BMI award

for their hit " Just Walkin ' in the Rain " in his office . A spoken @-@ word track on their album , Only Believe ... , was " Message from Prison Warden Lynn Bomar " .

= = Death = =

On June 11 , 1964 , Bomar died a few hours after a heart attack . In 1966 , he was posthumously inducted into the Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame .