

= Mark Bavaro =

Mark Bavaro ( born April 28 , 1963 ) is a former American football tight end who played for the New York Giants ( 1985 ? 1990 ) , Cleveland Browns ( 1992 ) , and Philadelphia Eagles ( 1993 ? 1994 ) in the National Football League ( NFL ) . Bavaro was selected to the Pro Bowl for his performances in the 1986 and 1987 seasons and was a member of the Giants teams that won Super Bowls XXI and XXV .

After an All @-@ American career at the University of Notre Dame , Bavaro was drafted by the Giants in the fourth round ( # 100 overall ) in the 1985 NFL Draft . He quickly emerged as a starter in his rookie season and became renowned during his Giants career for his blocking , toughness , and receiving skills . After a degenerative knee condition forced him to sit out the 1991 season , he returned to play three seasons for the Browns and Eagles before retiring in 1995 . Since retiring Bavaro has done work as a pro @-@ life activist . His brother David also played in the NFL for four seasons .

= = Early life and college = =

Bavaro was born in Winthrop , Massachusetts . He attended Danvers High School in Danvers , Massachusetts , where he was a high school football All @-@ American . He was a well @-@ rounded athlete who also excelled in track and field at Danvers . After being intensively recruited by several colleges , he chose to play collegiately for the University of Notre Dame . He was recruited by head coach Dan Devine but played his four years under coach Gerry Faust . He played behind star tight end Tony Hunter as a freshman , then missed all but three minutes of his sophomore season due to a hand injury . He established himself as a starter as a junior , but grew home @-@ sick and briefly contemplated quitting the team to move back home following the season . After Faust talked him into staying , he won All @-@ America honors his senior season , when he totalled 32 receptions for 395 yards . Bavaro developed a reputation for playing through injuries while at Notre Dame . " He plays with pain better than any player I 've seen in my 37 years of coaching " Faust later stated . He left Notre Dame after graduating in 1985 despite having one season of eligibility remaining ( due to the redshirt status of his sophomore season ) and was selected in the fourth round ( # 100 overall ) of the 1985 NFL Draft by the New York Giants .

= = Professional career = =

Coming out of college , Bavaro was known mostly for his blocking ability and was expected to play the role of a run blocking tight end as a professional . He earned the nickname " Rambo " early in his rookie season due to his intense playing style , quiet personality , and physical resemblance to Sylvester Stallone . After starting tight end Zeke Mowatt suffered a season @-@ ending injury before the start of the 1985 season , coach Bill Parcells , who had called Bavaro the most impressive rookie during training camp , installed Bavaro as the starter . Bavaro finished his rookie season with 37 receptions , 511 yards , and 4 touchdowns . He also set a team record with 12 receptions in one game during quarterback Phil Simms ' 513 yard passing effort against the Cincinnati Bengals on October 13 , 1985 . After the game , which the Giants lost 35 ? 30 , Bavaro responded in the low @-@ key manner that would typify his career , " [ i ] t was nothing special , the plays were the same stuff . I don 't know what they did . I just caught a lot of balls . I 'd rather win , that 's all . " Bavaro was named to the NFL All @-@ Rookie team for his performance during the season .

Bavaro continued his emergence in the 1986 season . He remained the starter after Mowatt 's recovery from injury and emerged as a favorite target of Simms . He finished the season with 66 receptions , 1 @, @ 001 yards , and 4 touchdowns and was selected to his first Pro Bowl . His 66 receptions broke the Giants record for receptions by a tight end previously held by Bob Tucker ( 59 ) . Perhaps the most well @-@ known play of Bavaro 's career occurred in a Monday Night Football game in 1986 . Here is a description of the play taken from a Monday Night Football broadcast in

2005 : " On Dec. 1 1986 , New York Giants tight end Mark Bavaro cements his reputation as one of the toughest men in the NFL . With the Giants trailing , Bavaro catches an innocent pass from Phil Simms over the middle . It takes nearly seven 49ers defenders to finally drag him down , some of which are carried for almost 20 yards , including future Hall of Famer Ronnie Lott . Bavaro ? s inspiring play jump starts the Giants , who win the game and eventually the Super Bowl . " This reputation as a tough player was further cemented later in the season when he played for six weeks with a broken jaw that forced him to sip food through a straw . He continued to establish his reputation as an excellent blocker during the season , and was described as " the premier tight end " in the league by 49ers ' coach Bill Walsh before the team 's playoff matchup . The Giants finished the regular season 14 ? 2 and defeated the Denver Broncos 39 ? 20 in Super Bowl XXI . After the season Bavaro was chosen to appear on the cover of Sports Illustrated 's NFL preview issue for the 1987 season . Bavaro was pictured on the cover in a cutoff shirt holding his shoulder pads over his shoulder , the caption reads " The Living End : Mark Bavaro of the New York Giants " . The cover also featured Bavaro celebrating a touchdown in the trademark manner of his career . Bavaro , a Roman Catholic , would genuflect in the end zone and motion the sign of the cross after each touchdown .

Bavaro performed well during the 1987 season and was again selected to the Pro Bowl . He finished the season with 55 receptions , 867 yards , and 8 touchdowns . He followed that with 53 receptions , 672 yards , and 4 touchdowns in 1988 . After failing to miss a game due to injury in his first four seasons , Bavaro struggled with knee injuries in 1989 and was limited to seven games . He came back to play in 15 games in 1990 . The Giants started the season 10 ? 0 and finished 13 ? 3 . They advanced to Super Bowl XXV where they played the Buffalo Bills . During the game Bavaro made two key third down receptions to keep scoring drives alive as the Giants won 20 ? 19 .

Bavaro struggled with a degenerative knee condition throughout the 1990 season and was rarely able to practice . The Giants cut him in July 1991 because of the injury . After some initial dispute , the Giants signed him to a one @-@ year US \$ 310 @,@ 000 contract and placed him on the physically unable to perform list . He spent the season as a tight end coach at Saint Dominic Savio High School in East Boston , Massachusetts . He took the position after the team 's coach took a chance and wrote Bavaro a letter to ask him if he would consider coaching .

Despite being advised to retire several times by the doctor who worked on his knee , Bavaro managed to secure a contract in 1992 with the Cleveland Browns , who were coached by former Giants assistant coach Bill Belichick . He played one season for the Browns and managed to appear in all 16 games . After the season he signed with the Philadelphia Eagles . He played in all 16 games again and had 43 receptions , 481 yards , and 6 touchdowns in 1993 . After playing one more season for the Eagles he retired in 1995 at the age of 31 . Bavaro finished his nine NFL seasons with 351 receptions for 4 @,@ 733 yards and 39 touchdowns .

In 2011 , he was inducted into the New York Giants Ring of Honor .

= = Personal life = =

Bavaro married Susan Downes in 1987 . They have three children . His wife attended Seton Hall Law School for one year , but later transferred to Harvard Law School , where she achieved a degree in Law , and is currently a teacher of World History and Law at St. John 's Preparatory School . After his retirement they lived in Naples , Florida for three years . They currently reside in Boxford , Massachusetts , near Bavaro 's hometown of Danvers . After his playing career , Bavaro worked as a sales trader for an equity block @-@ trading firm , where he traded large blocks of stocks for institutions and hedge funds . He pursued a career in this field at the suggestion of his former Giants teammate Phil McConkey , who worked for the same company as Bavaro . In 2007 , Bavaro was appointed Vice President of DesignCentrix , a premiere Chicago exhibit house . Bavaro is also an avid golfer who considers the sport his favorite pastime .

Throughout his life Bavaro has displayed a humble , low @-@ key , blue collar personality . During the 1986 season , when he emerged as a Pro Bowler , The New York Times columnist Frank Litsky described him by saying , " [ h ] e is a man of few words , even with teammates . Although he

earned \$ 90 @, @ 000 plus an \$ 85 @, @ 000 signing bonus last year and will make \$ 125 @, @ 000 plus incentives this year , he lives a Spartan life . He drives a Chevrolet . His everyday wardrobe features jeans and sneakers . He is humble to a fault . " Bavaro is also a pro @-@ life activist and was one of 503 people arrested during a pro @-@ life rally in 1988 . During his NFL career and since his retirement Bavaro has done work as a member of the LifeAthletes organization which promotes abstinence ; Bavaro was vice chairman of the group during his playing career . He has also recently befriended and followed the career of Denver Broncos tight end Daniel Graham who idolized Bavaro as a child . Mark 's younger brother David also played football professionally as a linebacker for four NFL teams over the course of four seasons .

In 2008 , Bavaro published his first novel , Rough & Tumble ( ISBN 978 @-@ 0 @-@ 312 @-@ 37574 @-@ 4 ) .