

= Lu Gambino =

Lucien Anthony " Lu " Gambino ( September 21 , 1923 ? July 16 , 2003 ) was an American football running back . He played college football for Indiana University , and after military service in the Second World War , the University of Maryland . While playing for Maryland , he set the National Collegiate Athletic Association ( NCAA ) season scoring high for 1947 with 16 touchdowns and 96 points and was named the 1948 Gator Bowl most valuable player . Gambino played professional football for two years with the Baltimore Colts in the All @-@ America Football Conference ( AAFC ) , an early competitor of the National Football League ( NFL ) .

= = Early life = =

Gambino was born in Berwyn , Illinois on September 21 , 1923 . He attended J.S. Morton High School in Cicero , Illinois , where he was a football and track & field standout . Gambino enrolled at Indiana University in 1941 , and he played football for the Hoosiers on the freshman team in 1941 and on the varsity team in 1942 season . That season , head coach Bo McMillin led Indiana to a 7 ? 3 record , and the Hoosiers recorded six defensive shutouts and outscored their opponents 256 points to 79 . At Indiana , Gambino played alongside consensus All @-@ America back , and future Colts teammate , Billy Hillenbrand . Shortly thereafter , Gambino dropped out of school to join the United States Army Air Forces and serve during the Second World War .

= = College career = =

Gambino was selected in the 1945 NFL Draft by the Chicago Bears in the 26th round as the 271st overall pick . In 1946 , he was discharged from the Army and enrolled at the University of Maryland . He considered Indiana to be a far superior football program and called Maryland a " cow school , " but it was located relatively close to his mother , who was widowed and living alone in Baltimore . During the 1946 season , Gambino saw limited playing time for a mediocre Terrapins football team directed by head coach Clark Shaughnessy . The following year , head coach Jim Tatum was hired , and he engineered a reversal of the team 's fortunes . Tatum took the mentorship of Gambino as a personal project and aimed to develop him into the team 's featured back .

As a senior in 1947 , Gambino set the NCAA season scoring high with 16 touchdowns for 96 points . In the fifth meeting against rival West Virginia , Gambino scored three touchdowns to help Maryland take away its first victory of the series , 27 ? 0 . He also scored three touchdowns against Delaware and Duquesne , and two against Vanderbilt where he also passed for a third . During the season , Gambino rushed for a total of 904 yards on 125 attempts , and as of 2009 , he was Maryland 's third @-@ leading rusher in terms of single @-@ season yards per carry ( 7 @.@ 23 ) . He was also Maryland 's season kickoff return leader , and returned seven kicks for 174 yards , an average of 24 @.@ 85 yards .

Maryland finished the regular season 7 ? 2 ? 1 and secured the school 's first @-@ ever bowl game appearance . In the 1948 Gator Bowl against Georgia , he was honored as the Most Valuable Player . During the 20 ? 20 tie , Gambino rushed to score all three of the Terrapins ' touchdowns on one- , 24- , and 35 @-@ yard runs . He compiled 165 rushing yards , a school bowl rushing record that stood for 60 years until finally broken by Da 'Rel Scott in the 2008 Humanitarian Bowl . In 1992 , for his achievement as the bowl game 's " first superb running back , " Gambino was inducted into the Gator Bowl Hall of Fame .

At season 's end , he was named a first @-@ team All @-@ Southern Conference player , an All @-@ America Catholic player , and an Associated Press honorable mention All @-@ American . The Touchdown Club awarded Gambino the Arch McDonald Trophy as the best player in the Washington , D.C. area . Prior to the start of the 1948 season , the Southern Conference ruled that his college eligibility was exhausted and that he would be unable to play another year of college football . Gambino called the decision " crooked " and asserted that the standing rules did not count returning veterans ' pre @-@ war playing career against their eligibility . Geary Eppley , a Maryland

athletics official and member of the Southern Conference executive committee , filed a request for a special session to consider a rule change , but it failed to garner support from the two @-@ thirds of the member schools required to call such a meeting .

= = Professional career = =

As the issue of his college eligibility was playing out , Gambino was being courted by several professional football teams . The Chicago Bears of the NFL , which had drafted him during the war , still had a strong interest in him , as did the Baltimore Colts of the All @-@ America Football Conference ( AAFC ) . Baltimore eventually acquired Gambino , and to do so , they traded their first @-@ round 1948 draft selection to the Cleveland Browns , who held Gambino 's AAFC draft rights .

He played two seasons for the Colts from 1948 to 1949 . During his first year , he saw action in nine games including one as a starter . On 54 carries , he rushed for a total of 194 yards and a touchdown . Gambino also recorded six receptions for 28 yards and made three kickoff returns for 57 yards . The following season , he played in ten games and started in six . He made 56 carries for 208 yards and ten receptions for 67 yards and a touchdown . At the time , Gambino was one of four Colts players who were bald . The Baltimore Sun published an article that explored the unusual occurrence and concluded that it had " nothing to do with wearing a helmet . " In When the Colts Belonged to Baltimore , author William Gildea described Gambino : " In street clothes he looked like Robert Mitchum ? wide @-@ brimmed hat , long overcoat , baggy but creased trousers , a cigarette between his fingers , a craggy smile . Yesteryear 's running back . "

Baltimore released him during the summer of 1950 . In the winter , Gambino had knee surgery to correct a bone spur . He was then picked up by the New York Giants and placed on the reserve list in July 1951 . His professional playing career , however , was ultimately cut short by his knee . Gambino married Vivian née Senese and lived in North Riverside , Illinois . He died of heart disease on July 16 , 2003 at Loyola University Medical Center in Maywood , Illinois . Gambino was 79 years old .