

= Hugh Culverhouse =

Hugh Franklin Culverhouse , Sr. (February 20 , 1919 ? August 26 , 1994) was the longtime owner of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers of the National Football League (NFL) . He was a successful tax lawyer , and his real estate investments made him one of the nation 's wealthiest men . His work brought him into contact with National Football League team owners , and his failed purchase of the Los Angeles Rams placed him in line to become the owner of the fledgling Buccaneer franchise . He owned the team from its inception until his death .

Culverhouse became one of the most influential team owners in the NFL , and was credited with modernizing the league , even while his teams were rarely competitive on the field . He oversaw the league 's course of direction through two player strikes , and the modern league 's financial stability is in great part due to his leadership . He held influence for over a decade , before stepping back due to criticism of what other owners saw as his overly @-@ secretive ways .

Culverhouse was initially lauded for bringing professional football to the Tampa Bay area , but eventually came to be blamed for the team 's struggles . His refusal to pay Doug Williams at a salary level comparable to that of the league 's top quarterbacks insulted fans , and was seen as the beginning of the team 's decline during the 1980s . It further led to the belief that Culverhouse was unconcerned with fielding a winning team , as long as it was financially profitable . The Buccaneers ' NFL @-@ record streak of fourteen consecutive losing seasons cemented this perception , although Culverhouse did make several notable attempts to improve the team .

Culverhouse was diagnosed with cancer in 1992 , and died in 1994 . His apparent attempt to exclude his wife from his inheritance led to posthumous revelations of extramarital affairs . Ensuing lawsuits caused an ownership crisis that almost required the team to relocate to another city , before the Glazer family stepped forward with a purchase offer .

= = Early life = =

A native of Birmingham , Alabama , Culverhouse attended the University of Alabama , where he was a member of Delta Kappa Epsilon fraternity (Psi chapter) . On the University of Alabama boxing team , he competed together with future governor George Wallace , an experience to which he attributed his confidence in later life . He graduated in 1941 . After serving in the Army Air Corps in World War II , he earned a law degree from his alma mater in 1947 . He immediately took a job as an assistant state attorney general , serving there for two years . After serving in the Korean War , he became legal counsel for the Internal Revenue Service , where he prosecuted many of the cases resulting from the organized crime investigations of Senator Estes Kefauver . He resigned from the IRS in 1962 after a decade of service , and moved to Jacksonville , Florida , where he entered private practice , specializing in tax law . Although he was considered to be one of the nation 's top tax lawyers , one whose cases were sometimes cited by the Supreme Court of the United States , his fortune was built on real estate investments . Listed by Forbes magazine as one of the 250 wealthiest people in the United States , he eventually had investments in 37 companies and was worth over \$ 380 million at his death . He served as a personal representative of President Gerald Ford , bearing the title of U.S. Ambassador , at the 1976 Winter Olympics in Innsbruck , Austria . The University of Alabama 's Culverhouse College of Commerce and Business Administration is named for him .

Culverhouse 's investments included several banks , Provincetown @-@ Boston Airlines , the Palmer Ranch real estate development near Sarasota , Florida , and movie productions including A Chorus Line and The Emerald Forest . He was criticized over a planned extension of Interstate 75 into South Florida , as its route went directly past land owned by numerous powerful investors , including Culverhouse , Governor Bob Graham , State Attorney General Jim Smith , and the Arvida Corporation .

= = Ownership of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers = =

In 1972 , Culverhouse had a handshake deal to buy the Los Angeles Rams from owner Dan Reeves for \$ 17 million , only to learn that Reeves later sold the team to Robert Irsay for \$ 19 million . When Irsay then traded teams with Baltimore Colts owner Carroll Rosenbloom , Culverhouse sued , claiming that the others had conspired to prevent his purchase of the team . An out @-@ of @-@ court settlement guaranteed Rosenbloom 's aid in getting an expansion franchise for Culverhouse . The opportunity came two years later , when the league expanded to Seattle and Tampa . Culverhouse was offered the Seattle expansion franchise , but declined it due to his residence in Jacksonville . Philadelphia construction company owner Thomas McCloskey was originally awarded the Tampa franchise , but soon found the business arrangement to be different than what he had expected , and backed out of the deal . Culverhouse was then awarded the franchise by the Art Rooney @-@ chaired NFL Expansion Committee , ahead of Fort Lauderdale furniture chain (and future Boston Celtics) owner Harry T. Mangurian , Jr . The name " Tampa Bay Buccaneers " was chosen as a nod to the team representing not only the city of Tampa , but the entire Florida Suncoast area ; and to the pirates who once inhabited the area .

Culverhouse quickly became one of the most influential NFL owners ; he served as a member of the Player Club Relations Committee that handled player grievances , and of the NFL Congressional Committee . He was a member of the Executive Committee that handled negotiations during the 1982 NFL strike , an experience that earned him great praise from NFL negotiator Jack Donlan . Donlan praised Culverhouse 's logic , analytical , and problem @-@ solving skills , and his effectiveness " at getting his way " . Culverhouse was credited with having a big hand in the owners ' course of direction during the strike , and was responsible for recruiting Donlan as negotiator . He repeated the role during the 1987 players ' strike , after which NFLPA President Gene Upshaw described him as " formidable " , and said that " at times , the whole league seemed to flow from this one guy " . He was chairman of the NFL Finance Committee and the Management Council Executive Committee . His efforts were instrumental in bringing Super Bowl XVIII to Tampa , despite a lack of adequate hotel space in the city . Culverhouse was also a pioneer in using computers to handle team finances and scouting reports . He was a member of the four @-@ man committee that stripped ownership of the New England Patriots from the Sullivan family when their debt became too great . Patriots founder Billy Sullivan later accused Culverhouse of blocking his effort to propose a stock sale that would have eased the debt . Culverhouse distanced himself from the NFL power core in later years , stung by other owners ' criticisms of the Management Council . NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue credited Culverhouse for building much of the strength and unity of the modern NFL .

= = = General criticism = = =

Culverhouse was criticized by other team owners as the team prepared for its debut season , who said that his involvement in day @-@ to @-@ day team operations was reminiscent of the owners of the expansion Falcons and Saints , teams which had yet to qualify for the playoffs after a decade of play . Buccaneer employees were described as living in an " atmosphere of fear " , especially after the firings during the 1977 offseason of executives who had been involved with unpopular decisions that Culverhouse had supported at the time . In one case , marketing director Bill Marcum was fired due to public backlash over the team 's \$ 12 ticket prices for an exhibition in Jacksonville , even though Culverhouse had set the ticket prices , and Marcum had opposed them .

= = = Conflict of interest accusations = = =

Culverhouse was named one of the executors of Rosenbloom 's estate , and after Rosenbloom 's death , Culverhouse continued a business relationship with his widow , Georgia . Georgia 's marriage to composer Dominic Frontiere took place at Culverhouse 's home , with Culverhouse himself , a notary public , performing the ceremony . The relationship , in which Culverhouse served as an advisor to the Los Angeles Rams while maintaining ownership of the Buccaneers , was criticized as a conflict of interest . The Los Angeles Coliseum Council accused the Rams of seeking

Culverhouse 's counsel when several players held out during the 1980 preseason ; the Buccaneers won a 10 ? 9 victory over that same unprepared Rams team early that season . Culverhouse also oversaw a reorganization of the Rams ' front office ; the relationship earned him the nickname of " Godfather " of the Rams . Culverhouse and Frontiere were two of the owners named in a lawsuit brought by Al Davis , who alleged that their campaign contributions to Senator Robert Byrd of West Virginia were an attempt to buy his support in helping to prevent Davis ' planned move of the Oakland Raiders to Los Angeles .

Culverhouse 's relationships with other NFL owners were occasionally , as in his relationship with the Rams , alleged to constitute conflicts of interest . His \$ 3 million loan to help Philadelphia Eagles owner Leonard Tose with his gambling debts was one example , as it violated the NFL constitution and bylaws . On other occasions , he was criticized for his overly @-@ secretive ways as NFL Finance Committee Chairman , as other league owners found it difficult to obtain information on how league finances were being spent . In particular , owners were upset about not being informed about money given to NFL Commissioner Pete Rozelle in a 5 @-@ year extension of his contract . The extension was awarded to him by the Finance Committee as a reward for negotiation of the league television contract in 1982 , even though Rozelle had five years remaining on his current contract .

= = = Loss of popular support = = =

Culverhouse was described as late as 1982 as a rare owner who was popular with players , coaches , and fans . He was commended for allowing his staff to handle football operations without interference , and for having the patience to allow John McKay to follow through with his building plan despite the franchise 's 0 ? 26 start . This changed after events surrounding the 1982 players ' strike . A report issued by the National Football League Players Association prior to the start of negotiations revealed that the Buccaneers had the fifth @-@ highest gross income of all NFL teams , while their average salary was only the 21st @-@ highest . This directly contradicted statements made by Culverhouse in 1980 , in which he told players that they were on one of the three highest @-@ paid teams . The NFLPA figures showed that the Buccaneers were actually the third lowest @-@ paying team , based on total salaries as a percentage of gross income . Culverhouse was then accused of trying to divide the players during the strike , when some of the team 's assistant coaches contacted players to ask whether they would be willing to return to the team should training facilities be reopened .

Culverhouse was considered to have drawn a closer friendship than an owner should to his coach , having guaranteed John McKay employment for life . When the team began to lose , area fans blamed McKay , and felt that there was no hope for any change . He was , however , credited with recognizing the need for a change in leadership , as he went outside of the organization in seeking a replacement when McKay retired . He then upset fans by broadcasting advertisements thanking fans for their support , while simultaneously raising ticket prices . \

However , while Culverhouse 's relationship with Tampa had been problematic for years , the Bo Jackson 1986 draft debacle permanently ruined the owner 's reputation in his home city . Jackson , the Heisman Trophy @-@ winning running back from Auburn , was the consensus # 1 player headed into the draft . But Jackson disliked Culverhouse from their first meeting , later writing in his book " Bo Knows Bo " that the Bucs ' owner had a miserable record and also that after Jackson 's agents requested Tampa Bay not pick him , the Bucs refused all trade offers (including what Jackson described as a generous offer from Al Davis) and later told Jackson they would cut their contract offer in half if he didn 't accept a below @-@ market deal . Jackson announced he would play major league baseball instead , signing a contract with the Kansas City Royals and leaving the Bucs as the NFL 's laughingstock .

= = Doug Williams = =

Culverhouse 's treatment of quarterback Doug Williams caused resentment not only on the team , but in the entire Bay Area community . Williams led the Buccaneers to the playoffs in three of his five

years with the team , and was considered to be their single most important player . However , he was only paid \$ 120 @, @ 000 a year , which ranked 42nd among NFL quarterbacks , was less than what some teams ' third @-@ string quarterbacks made , and was lower than the salary of Terrell Middleton , a running back who had two total carries in his two years in Tampa Bay . After the 1982 season , Williams asked for a \$ 600 @, @ 000 contract that would pay him among the league 's top quarterbacks . Culverhouse refused to budge from his initial offer of \$ 400 @, @ 000 , which he said would make Williams one of the five highest @-@ paid quarterbacks in the league . Williams ' agent disputed this , saying that Culverhouse 's offer was substantially less than what several other quarterbacks made . With negotiations at a standstill , the Buccaneers traded the following season 's first @-@ round draft pick to the Cincinnati Bengals in exchange for Jack Thompson , a backup quarterback who had been unable to unseat Ken Anderson , as an insurance policy should Williams prove impossible to sign , or have trouble recovering from offseason knee surgery . Williams interpreted this as a sign that the team did not want him , and instead signed a contract with the Oklahoma Outlaws of the United States Football League .

His hard line with Williams created the perception that Culverhouse was more concerned with profits than with putting a winning team on the field . It aroused suspicions that Culverhouse 's main concern was the Buccaneers ' salary structure , and that this was related to the frequency with which the team traded away its first @-@ round draft choices . Williams ' comments that he would have been treated differently had he been white resonated with the Bay Area African American community , who saw the Buccaneers ' ensuing on @-@ field woes as retribution , boycotted Buccaneer games by the thousands , and commented that Culverhouse throws parties that cost more than what Williams was asking for . The Buccaneers missed Williams ' confidence and ability to make big plays at key times , and lost their first nine games in 1983 , when they had been expected to contend for the playoffs . They finished 2 ? 14 , the first of what would be 14 consecutive losing seasons ? the longest since the merger between the NFL and the All @-@ America Football Conference in 1950 ? and would not have another winning season in Culverhouse 's lifetime . They would lose 10 or more games in 13 of those years , including 12 in a row from 1983 to 1994 ? an NFL record . The timing of the situation coincided with the ascendance of the Tampa Bay Bandits , who led the USFL in attendance with a wide @-@ open , crowd @-@ pleasing offense led by local hero Steve Spurrier , while the Buccaneers were losing games with a conservative offense that fans found boring . Attendance having dropped sharply , Culverhouse then further alienated fans by berating them , accusing them of apathy .

= = = Attendance and television availability = = =

The long losing streak further penalized fans , as the NFL blackout policy usually prevented poorly attended Buccaneer home games from being shown on local television . No Buccaneer home games were televised on local stations for several years following November 29 , 1982 , including a game on January 1 , 1983 that sold out , but not in time to lift the blackout . In total , the Buccaneers had a streak of 32 consecutive blackouts before a November 9 , 1986 game against the then @-@ reigning Super Bowl champion Chicago Bears sold out in time to allow for local television . At one point , the CBS television network , which had the rights to NFC television broadcasts , correctly anticipated poor seasons from all of the Southern (Buccaneers , Falcons , and Saints) teams , and reorganized their viewing markets in such a way that Buccaneers games were not broadcast anywhere in the state of Florida . Culverhouse went so far as to dictate that Miami Dolphins games also be blacked out , sometimes even when Buccaneer games were sellouts . He further inflamed fans in 1989 by proposing to move some of the team 's games to Orlando , due to poor attendance . Several local radio stations responded with billboards saying " Hugh gotta go ! " , and with a picture of a screw next to Culverhouse 's name . The Tampa Chamber of Commerce countered with a billboard thanking Culverhouse for bringing Super Bowl XXV to Tampa .

= = = Profitability = = =

Although enjoyment factored into Culverhouse 's purchase of the Buccaneers , it was first and foremost a business decision which he expected to be profitable . He admitted to being known for his frugality , due to moves such as wearing outdated clothing , and having the One Buc Place walls painted white to avoid having to spend money on projection screens . This was not initially a problem for the franchise , even though the budget airplane that Culverhouse chartered for the team almost crashed after their very first game ; original coach John McKay reported in 1978 that Culverhouse had never blocked any deals , even those involving a great amount of money . Later , however , the team let go or traded away many of its players who were highly paid and / or demanded more money , including Dave Pear , Doug Williams , Ricky Reynolds , Reggie Cobb , Mark Carrier , and Jeris White . First @-@ round draft choices were frequently traded for players who were not considered to be of equal value , as when the team traded for often @-@ injured defensive end Wally Chambers without requiring that he first pass a physical examination . Frustration over being beaten by players he had pleaded with Culverhouse to sign contributed to the resignation of McKay . He also fired well @-@ regarded personnel director Ken Herock , when Herock demanded to be paid in line with his value around the league .

Despite the losing and the poor attendance , the Buccaneers were one of the NFL 's most profitable teams for most of Culverhouse 's ownership . In 1989 , only the Chicago Bears had higher profits than the 5 ? 11 Buccaneers , who profited \$ 6 @. @ 3 million with the league 's second @-@ lowest payroll , while the Super Bowl champion San Francisco 49ers lost \$ 16 @. @ 2 million . The team attributed their low salaries to the players ' youth , stating that it was the coaches who had made the decision to use younger players , who drew lower salaries than veterans . This contributed to the perception that Culverhouse was not committed to fielding a quality team , although the rookie contracts he gave to Vinny Testaverde and Paul Gruber were so high as to upset other team owners , while he made Ray Perkins one of the five highest @-@ paid NFL head coaches . He also offered Bill Parcells \$ 6 @. @ 5 million to coach the team , offered draft pick Bo Jackson a five @-@ year , \$ 7 million contract that was at the time the highest in NFL history for a rookie , paid Keith McCants an NFL @-@ record \$ 2 @. @ 5 million signing bonus , and paid Steve Young \$ 6 million in salary , plus another \$ 1 million for the buyout of his USFL contract .

= = Death and aftermath = =

Culverhouse was diagnosed with lung cancer in 1992 . After a successful operation to remove a tumor and part of his lung , he began chemotherapy a few months later , when a routine exam revealed a recurrence of the cancer . Despite his health problems , he remained a hard worker until the end , and even went hunting in Tanzania only four days after having part of his lung removed . An experimental procedure failed to stop the cancer , and he died on August 25 , 1994 , at the Medical Center of Louisiana at New Orleans . He was survived by wife Joy , daughter Gay , and son Hugh , Jr .

= = = Sale of the Buccaneers = = =

Several investors stepped forward with offers to buy the Buccaneers after Culverhouse 's death , including Baltimore Orioles owner Peter Angelos , New York Yankees owner (and Tampa resident) George Steinbrenner , and Massachusetts developer Socrates Babacas . In response to the ensuing publicity , the trust administering Culverhouse 's estate then issued a statement that the team was not for sale . They reversed their position two months later , as a poor early @-@ season record led to declining fan support and revenues . The decision to sell the franchise came on the same day that Joy filed a \$ 25 million claim against Hugh 's estate . Hugh had paid \$ 16 million for the franchise , which was now valued at \$ 142 million . With Barnett Bank filing claims for \$ 20 @. @ 8 million against the Culverhouse estate , the trustees came very close to accepting Angelos ' \$ 200 million offer , which would have involved relocating the team to Baltimore , Maryland . Fearful of losing the team , civic leaders presented a proposal guaranteeing ticket sales of at least 55 @, @ 000 for all home games for the next two years . The team was eventually sold to Palm Beach ,

Florida businessman Malcolm Glazer for \$ 192 million , at that moment the largest price ever paid for a professional sports franchise .

= = = Lawsuits over the Culverhouse estate = = =

Before Culverhouse 's death , his wife , Joy , had signed a post @-@ nuptial agreement to surrender her half of the estate . This was done on the advice of lawyer Fred F. Cone , Jr . , who would later become one of the three trustees handling the Culverhouse estate . Joy charged that the trustees were mishandling the estate , and not paying her share . She filed a malpractice suit against Cone for advising her to give up her marital rights , and a second suit asking for accounting of the estate and removal of the trustees . She said that Hugh and Cone advised her to sign the agreement for tax reasons , and falsely claimed that Culverhouse was on the brink of bankruptcy . She charged that the three trustees , Cone , Jack Donlan , and Stephen F. Story , paid themselves \$ 4 @. @ 35 million in bonuses for arranging the Buccaneers ' sale , sums far in excess of what Culverhouse himself had specified , and that they paid Story a sum that was comparable to the salary of a Fortune 500 executive for managing the estate and included a 10 @-@ year golden parachute clause . She also alleged that the value of Culverhouse 's estate had been misrepresented to her at the time that she signed the agreement . The lawsuits made the details of the Culverhouse estate public . When it was discovered that the trust had paid hush money to a mistress of Hugh 's , Joy 's lawyer alleged that Hugh had planned to divorce Joy , and that the trust was created to deprive her of her rightful assets . Court depositions revealed three extramarital affairs , including Susan Brinkley , wife of broadcaster David Brinkley . The suits were eventually settled , with each of the three trustees being paid \$ 3 million to remove themselves from the handling of his estate , and Joy being allowed to appoint her own trustees . Joy then said of Hugh , " I 'd like to pull him out of the grave and shoot him with every bullet I could get " .

= = Philanthropy = =

In contrast with his frugal ways in business , Culverhouse frequently contributed to the community . Some of his notable donations include :

A \$ 4 @. @ 6 million gift to the University of South Florida , which established the Culverhouse Chair in Education at the University of South Florida Sarasota @-@ Manatee and was the largest donation in school history ;

\$ 600 @, @ 000 to the University of Florida , for the establishment of the Hugh F. Culverhouse Eminent Scholars Chair in Federal Taxation ;

\$ 500 @, @ 000 to the Stetson University College of Law , for a visiting @-@ professor chair .

\$ 10 million to the University of Alabama , the largest gift in school history

3 acres (12 @, @ 000 m2) of vacant Tarpon Springs , Florida land to Habitat for Humanity

The first \$ 1 million pledged for the construction of the Straz Center for the Performing Arts .

Culverhouse was also a member of the board of trustees who administered the annual Florida Prize award for outstanding work in the visual or performing arts .