

## **In Louisiana Sports Ball of Fame**

### **Breaking barriers has been life's work for NLU's Joe Profit** By

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Before Anthony McFarland, before Kevin Faulk, before Shaun King and Troy Edwards, there was Joe Profit.

There were many outstanding black performers playing college football in Louisiana before 1967 but all of them played for Grambling or Southern. None played for the state's traditionally white colleges.

The man who broke the state's color barrier in college football and paved the way for modern stars like McFarland, Faulk, King and Edwards and hundreds of African American players before them was Profit, a running back and track standout at Northeast Louisiana University.

Profit will be one of seven former athletic greats inducted into the Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame on June 26. Joe Profit was born and raised at a time in American History when color defined your status in society. Today, he is best remembered as one of the best known athletes in the Southeast who played a major role in breaking the color barriers in South.

"It's a wonderful honor to go into the football Hall of Fame with great athletic figures like these guys", says Profit. "I remember when I was a kid reading about players like Y. A. Tittle, Jimmy Taylor and Billy Cannon, Heisman Trophy winners and listening to their games on the radio when I was in grade school. After all that time and at this point in my life for me to be inducted into the Sports Hall of Fame with these great athletes is a thrill for me.

Although he is best remembered today in Louisiana for being a racial pioneer, Profit has plenty of other qualifications for fame, both during and after his sports career. As an athlete, he was an all-American, the all-time leading rusher in the old Gulf States Conference, NLU's career yardage champ for over 20 years, until the 1990's. Profit was the seventh overall player selected in the 1971 National Football League draft, and was the 1<sup>st</sup> round draft choice for the Atlanta Falcons.

For some sports stars, the end of their playing career is the end of their biography, but Profit has gone on to perhaps even greater achievement as an innovative businessman who is currently the CEO of five companies. He is also a youth mentor and a member of the NFL Alumni board which is involved in charity events through out the country.

But back in 1967, the name Joe Profit meant nothing to most sports fans in his native Monroe Louisiana. The main reason was that Profit attended Richwood High School, an all-black high school on the outskirts of town, and the local newspapers and television stations rarely mentioned the area's black prep teams. Besides, Profit had missed much of his senior season with a broken arm. Still, he was considered a good prospect that was expected to follow in the footsteps of an older brother (Simon Profit) an all -State player who had gone on to play football at Southern University.

But Joe exhibited then a trait that would symbolized his adult life that he would not be a follower but a pioneer. He did not go to Southern University but to the predominately white college in his hometown of Monroe Louisiana Northeast Louisiana University. But not because the Indians recruited him but because Profit decided he wanted to go to NLU and that decision made him the racial trailblazer in Louisiana football.

The color line in Louisiana College athletics had not been broken. Nobody had crossed the line in the state's premier sport, football. Profit called up his Richwood coach, Gene Hughes, who arranged an appointment for the two of them with Dixie White, the football head coach and athletic director at what was then Northeast Louisiana State College.

It was August, only a few days before practice would start. White told him it was a "good idea" but he had no scholarships left. He arranged a regular student scholarship based on need and offered, Joe the chance to try out for the football team.

Coach Dixie White, who had guided the Indians to their best record in 10 years the Season before, told Profit that it wouldn't be easy for him and warned him "not to expect any favors." Then he asked Profit, "What do you want out of this deal?" Profit said he wanted to graduate in four years. White smiled and said, "Based on your High school transcript, you may graduate in five years, you are an average student at best. Very few of my white players graduate in four years.

Coach Dixie White smiled and said There's no way you can graduate in four years ,hell my white players don't do that, the average player is red shirt the first year and have four more years to play then they graduate. Besides you can't play football, run track and expect to graduate in four years."

"Well," said Profit, "I just want you to know what I expect of myself and what I really want, Coach White's smile quickly faded, thought for a moment, and then said, "Well son, you may just do it."

The attitude of the Northeast football players to the new "walk-on were mixed. Some . Were mixed, some indifferent, but others were hostile and for a while it seemed that Profit was in a fight every day in football practice, usually reacting to name calling. The coaches usually broke the fights up quickly but finally, one day Coach Dixie White let one of the fights continue until Profit wrestled his teammate to the ground and after several blows to the helmet by Profit, and then he let the teammate get up off the ground. White ordered the two to shake hands but both refused.

So White said, "Have it your way." you can fight everyday if you want to, from now on we are not going to stop any fights. If you start a fight you will finish it. Neither wanted to continue so they shook hands that was the last day of name calling and on the field fighting. As for the Indian few knew about Profit ever joining the football team because Coach White had ordered that no publicity be made of his making the team. Finally, one week before the first game, "running back Joe Profit of Monroe Louisiana" was listed in the Monroe News-star as one of four freshmen who had been outstanding in practice.

Profit made his first appearance in the third quarter of the season opener against Henderson State. There was not much reaction to that first carry, a two-yard gain, but a little later he made a cut and turned on his speed. The crowd gave a soft "ohh" and the

Applauded . Later he went off tackle, shook off two would-be tacklers and ran 13 yards for his first touchdown.

Looking back on his part in breaking down color barriers in sports he says, "It certainly is gratifying to see all athletes, black and white have a chance to compete together on the same field. I'm glad I was able to be a part of that change. It also gives me pleasure to see a lot of poor kids, black and white going to college through sports. For a great deal of them that is the only way they could get a college education. Its always good to see people of all races working together and building on something positive," he continued, "team sports like foot ball give kids a chance to do that."

Profit ran for only 172 yards his freshman year but: the next season he ran for 884, a school record. He set another record with 1,027 as a junior. He finished his career with 2,818 yards for school and conference records, and 23 touchdowns, another University standard. He was at the all-Gulf States Conference three years, the league's athlete of the year for 1970-71, Outstanding Back in the Senior Bowl, and Associated Press first team college division all-America as a senior.

He also starred in track under the legendary Bob Grosclose, also a Hall of Famer, and ran the 100-yard dash in 9.5 seconds That kind of speed and size, 205 pounds - big for that time - made him a coveted pro prospect and he was the seventh player selected in the 1971 NFL draft, being chosen by the Atlanta Falcons and Coach Norm Van Brocklin.

Profit got off to a good start in the NFL and he was the Falcons' leading rusher before suffering serious knee injury in the game four that ended his 1971 season. He returned in 1972 but: the speed was never the same.

After the 1972 season, he moved to the New Orleans Saints. Following the 1973 campaign, he was traded to Hank Starm's Kansas City Chief but instead signed a lucrative contract with the Birmingham franchise of the new World Football League. The WFL had other former and future NFL stars like Larry Csonka, Jim Kiick, and Paul Warfiled, but: profit helped Birmingham dominate the league as it won both championships in the circuit's two-year history. Highlights of Profit's WFL career included setting the Legion Field game rushing record, scoring the first touchdown in the World Bowl and being the leading rusher in the final WFL Championship game.

When his football career ended, Profit was ready to succeed in an even more competitive arena; business. He had taken advantage of his football scholarship by graduating in four years, as he had promised Coach White- from NLU with his degree. He had also saved much of his pro football money, using some of it to launch his first business, an International House of Pancakes franchise. The he bought and sold a McDonalds franchise before becoming the owner of several burger king restaurants.

Profit again exhibited his willingness to break new ground when his downtown Atlanta restaurant became his first: Burger King Franchise to serve breakfast. Soon, that restaurant had the highest: volume of any Burger King, and one year Profit owned both the No.1 and 2 sales leaders among the company's hundreds of franchises. Before he got out of the restaurant business, Profit owned his original International House of Pancakes, three Burger Kings, and a full-service restaurant, plus a liquor store and furniture store.

For the past three decades, Dr. Joseph Profit has enjoyed the innovation in management within the information technology industry, where he has established and succeeded in building stable and competitive information technology firms. Dr. Profit, founder of Communications International, has extensive experience in multimedia design, integration of wireless networks, streaming video distribution, advertising, marketing and sales, product branding, e-commerce, on-line provisioning, and capital funding.

The corporation he founded in 1979 was constructed in part of marketing, sales, installation and the distribution of telecommunications. Products in North America and throughout Europe. In 1992, as Communications International dismantled, Dr. Profit obtained: full ownership of International Microwave Corporation and became President and CEO of the microwave manufacturing company. Founded in 1961, The Company specialized in the manufacturing of 2 GHz to 50 GHz microwave radios and is credited for the development the first analog 15 GHz radio made available to both private and public customers. As a pioneer in the industry, Dr. Profit is contributing to the development of a niche market for Multi-Media Concepts products and services.

In addition to his contributions to the information technology world, he has served on the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), White House Small Business Advisory committee, serves on the U. S. Department of Transportation Advisory Board, the GOP Advisory Business Board, the National Alliance of Business Task Force, Chairman of the National Association of Minority Telecom Executives and Companies, (NAMTEC), and other political and philanthropic organizations.

In 1994 Dr. Profit was inducted into the Business and Professional Hall of Fame, and the Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame in 1999. Dr Profit has received numerous awards, including Americas Best and Brightest Businessman Award, the National Minority Supplier Development Council's Award, the Nevada Chamber of Commerce Businessman of the Year Award and the recipient of the "Granville T. Woods Award for Outstanding CEO"; he has also been featured in "USA Today, Money Section" the "Wall Street.

Dr. Profit was appointed by President Ronald Reagan to serve on the International Trade Commission for policy, to which he was later re-appointed by President George Bush. To commemorate the achievements of a successful entrepreneur, Dr Profit was named "Entrepreneur of the year" in 1988 by Ernest & Young and inducted into the Institute of American Entrepreneurs as a life time member of the Institute of American Entrepreneurs.™

Besides his achieves in the corporate world and sports, Joe profit has made great achievements as a family man. He is married with two sons and two daughters; Joe, 34, Cara 23, Joshua 18, and Jessica 13. His professional endeavors have not impeded his involvement in his children's lives. Joe attended Notre Dame, Cara

Attended University of Arizona, Joshua just graduated from North Gwinnett High school and Jessica attends The Hull Miller School. His children's education is of almost importance to Joe.

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