

GEORGE HALAS

team's expenses any longer. Why don't you move the boys up to Chicago? I think that football can go over well up there — and I'll give you \$5,000 to help you get started. All I ask is that you continue to call the team the Staleys for one more season.”

Halas took Staley up on the offer, and a Chicago sports institution was born. Halas and Sternaman immediately moved the team to the Windy City, and Halas quickly negotiated a deal with Chicago Cubs team president William Veeck Sr. for the Staleys to play their home games at Cubs Park — which was renamed Wrigley Field in 1926.

The Cubs took 15 percent of the gate receipts and all profits from concessions, but Halas's team had a much-needed home to hold practices and games.

Besides coaching and playing for the team, Halas, along with Sternaman, worked diligently to promote the Staleys. The two men handed out flyers across the city and took out advertising in local newspapers. Right from the start, their efforts paid off on the field and at the turnstiles. In front of an average crowd of 7,000 people, the Staleys posted a 10-1-1 record and were crowned league champions.

Halas's good fortune grew over the next few years. In 1922, he changed the name of the team to the Bears, believing that synergy with the already-established Cubs would help the football club gain recognition. That same year, Halas married Min Bushing, and the couple would have two children, Virginia and George Jr.

Midway through the decade, with the NFL still struggling and in the shadows of college football and Major League Baseball — whose popularity had boomed largely because of Ruth — Halas convinced Illinois halfback Red Grange to



Halas, congratulating quarterback Johnny Lujack after a win over the Chicago Cardinals in 1949, was the head coach for eight of the nine league championships in Bears franchise history, but his contributions to the sport go far beyond the sidelines. “One of the best lines I’ve heard about my grandfather is that he demanded that the American sporting public pay attention to pro football,” McCaskey says.