

Ditka, Mike (1939-) Encyclopedia Article

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Football player-turned-football coach "Iron" Mike Ditka is described in his Football Hall of Fame enshrinee data as a "fast, rugged, outstanding blocker [and a] great competitor." In 1960, he was a consensus All-American at the University of Pittsburgh, and became the Chicago Bears' number one draft pick the following year. From 1961 through 1972, Ditka was a hard-nosed tight end for the Bears, Philadelphia Eagles, and Dallas Cowboys. He was the NFL rookie of the year in 1961, starred on the Bears' 1963 NFL title squad, and scored the final touchdown for the Cowboys in Super Bowl VI. During his career, he caught 427 passes for 5,812 yards and 43 touchdowns. He made all-NFL four times, played in five straight Pro Bowls, was named to the NFL 75th Anniversary Team, and in 1988 became the first tight end to enter the Hall of Fame.

Despite Ditka's eminence as a player, he is best known today as an NFL head coach. He worked as an assistant under Tom Landry in Dallas from 1973 through 1981, and was hired to lead the Bears in 1982. While Ditka has willingly parodied his in-your-face, bullying, drill-instructor coaching style on television shows and particularly in TV commercials, he is all business when it comes to winning football games. During eleven seasons coaching the Bears, he led the team to six NFC Central crowns, three trips to the NFC Championship game, and a 46-10 whipping of the New England Patriots in Super Bowl XX. After retiring from the Bears in 1992 and working as an NBC sports broadcaster, he was lured back onto the field in 1997 as coach of the New Orleans Saints.

Further Reading:

Ditka, Mike, and Jim Stamborski. *Don't Get Me Wrong: Mike Ditka's Insights, Outbursts, Kudos and Comebacks*. Chicago, Chicago Review Press, 1988.

Ditka, Mike, with Don Pierson. *Ditka: An Autobiography*. Chicago, Bonus Books, 1986.

Keteyian, Armen. *Ditka: Monster of the Midway*. New York, Pocket Books, 1992.