

Jim Ray Smith

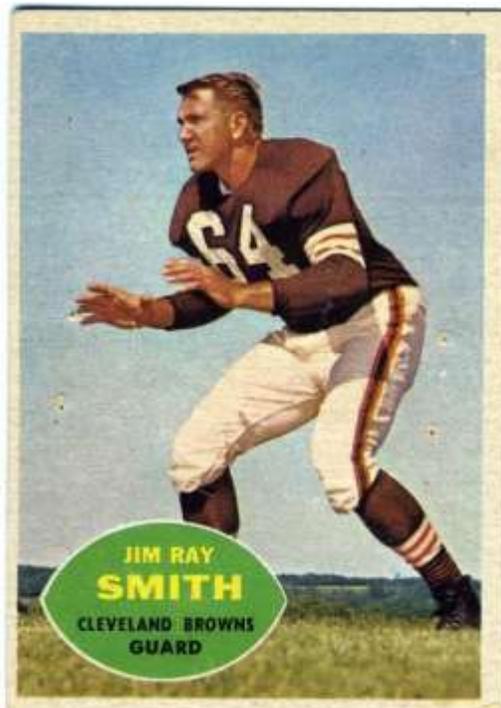
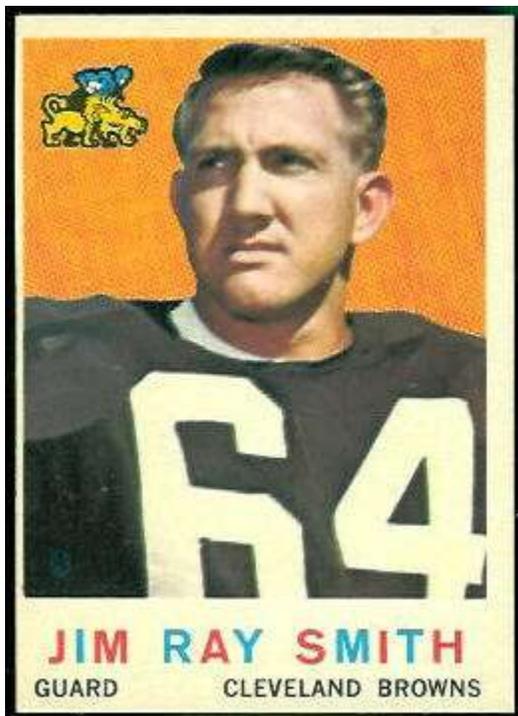
Jim Ray Smith was at Columbia High School from 1946-50. A four-sport letterman, the former Roughneck fullback played in the North-South High School All-Star Football game in his senior season.

After attending Baylor and lettering three years, Smith was drafted by the Cleveland Browns in 1955.

By the time he played for the Browns, Smith was an offensive guard and got to block for what is considered to be one of the best running backs of all time in the NFL, Jim Brown.

Smith was All-Pro four times and played in the World Championship game that eventually became known as the Super Bowl. In 1987, he was inducted into the National College Football Hall of Fame, and in 2005 into the Baylor University Sports Hall of Fame.

In September, Smith was voted into the Texas Sports Hall of Fame.



Ex-NFL star returns for Roughneck recognition

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By Joel Luna

From Griggs Field to Baylor Stadium, onward to the former Municipal Stadium in Cleveland, Jim Ray Smith left a little of himself in each place.

The former Columbia Roughneck, Baylor Bear and Cleveland Brown continues to collect honors for his superb play on the football field. His next stop will be the Texas Sports Hall of Fame and the newly formed Columbia Hall of Honor for Athletics.

“I am very much surprised because I’ve been in some of these other honors, but I figured getting into the Texas Hall of Fame was going to be a lot harder,” the 75-year-old Smith said. “There is a lot of great people in there, and really I didn’t know that I was that good to be in there.”

Already a member of the Cleveland Brown Legends (2005) and the College Football Hall of Fame (1987), Smith now will be inducted into the Texas hall along with Granbury girls basketball coach Leta Andrews, former Texas A&M and Houston Oiler defensive tackle Ray Childress, former Texas Tech football coach Spike Dykes, former North Texas State and Dallas Texans running back Abner Haynes, former Dallas Cowboys wide receiver Michael Irvin, Dallas Stars center Mike Modano and San Antonio Spurs coach Gregg Popovich. A time and date has not yet been set for the induction.

Smith was an offensive guard for the Browns and blocked for a couple of well-known tailbacks, Jim Brown and Bobby Mitchell.

“I really didn’t have much to do, just get in front of them, and if I could get a block they were going to be hard to bring down,” Smith said. “Brown was just a powerful runner, and I’d like to think that I helped them make some of those yards.”

“You know offensive linemen are only mentioned when they are called for holding or someone got by them. But I enjoyed all the games and the wins. But what I remember most are the mistakes that I made.”

The 6-foot-3, 241-pound Smith played with Cleveland from 1956-62 before retiring with the Dallas Cowboys in 1964. From 1958 through 1962, he was a consensus All-NFL selection and played in 93 NFL games.

Before arriving in Cleveland, Smith served from 1955-56 in the U.S. Army. Prior to that, he played for the Baylor Bears from 1952-54, earning All-American honors in 1953 and taking a trip to New York.

“We beat Cal 25-0 that year, and they were rated like No. 3 in the nation,” Smith said. “It was my junior year and there we are, all 11 of us in New York with a big to-do with Ed Sullivan. You

know at one point I was thinking about not going to college, and all of a sudden there you are. I thought I'd be a roughneck or dig ditches for the rest of my life."

With Columbia, Smith played fullback before being switched to the line at Baylor. He lettered in football, baseball, basketball and track at Columbia High School during his tenure.

"He was a heck of a football player and a great guy," former Columbia football coach Charlie Brand said. "I was a freshman and he was a senior, but he played in all of the sports and was just a great athlete. His coach was Flash Walker, and while he was here we called him James Ray Smith until he left, and then they started calling him Jim Ray. One couldn't ask for a better person."

Smith will be in town for the first class to be inducted in the Columbia Hall of Honor for Athletics on Friday prior to the Columbia and Needville matchup at Griggs Field. Brand also will be one of the recipients, along with Lois Knipling Peel, Dennis Gaubatz, Charlie Davis and Charlie Johnson.

After leaving the NFL, Smith started his own real estate business in the Dallas-Forth Worth area.

"I'm just not ready to retire," Smith said