

Brown Disciple Don Shula Ended Up the Winningest Coach in NFL History

Who knows where Hall of Fame football coach Don Shula would be today if not for Paul Brown? Shula considers Brown the biggest single influence on his coaching career.

Shula, whose father was a Hungarian immigrant who worked on a fishing boat in tiny Grand River, Ohio, fell in love with the Cleveland Browns.

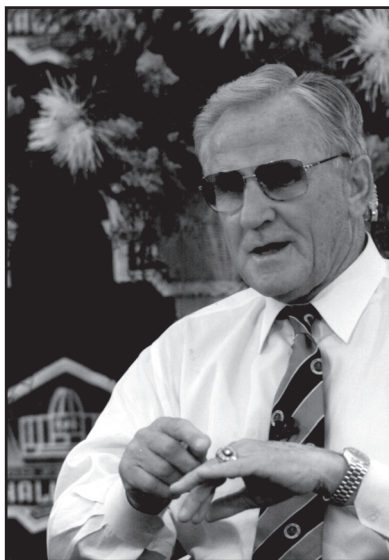
“I became a Cleveland Browns fan in 1946 when Paul Brown started the Browns,” Shula said, “I was

16 years old and in high school.”

Shula was a pretty good high school running back and ended up with the opportunity to play college football.

“I went to John Carroll University in Cleveland. We would sit in the bleachers for 50 cents with our letter sweaters on and watch the Browns

play,” Shula said. “Our coach at John Carroll, Herb Eisele, went to every Paul Brown coaching clinic.



Like Paul Brown, Don Shula was a teacher.

A CENTURY OF HEROES

“That’s the way I got started in football,” Shula said, “in Paul Brown terminology and the Paul Brown play-book.”

Shula was taught Brown’s system by Eisele as a two-way player at John Carroll. The experience proved to be valuable.

“I got drafted by the Browns in the ninth round along with my teammate from John Carroll, Carl Taseff. It was certainly an advantage knowing the terminology.”

Despite the advantage of knowing Brown’s system, Shula still had his work cut out for him trying to earn a spot with the NFL’s champions from 1950 as a low-

round draft pick. “I think the squad size was only 33 then. At that time you were just happy to be given the opportunity to make the team. I went in there wide-eyed and eager and enthusiastic. I was the only rookie to make the team that year.

Carl Taseff came in later when somebody got hurt.”

Shula was nervous when he finally met Brown af-

ter being drafted. “Maybe a month or two after we were drafted we got a call from his secretary inviting us down to his office to sign our contracts. That’s the first time my teammate and I got to meet him personally. He walked into the room and introduced himself. It was a big thrill for sure. He said,

“The biggest lesson I learned from Paul Brown was not to assume anything.”

Don Shula