

Carroll Hardy, Athlete With a Unique Distinction, Dies at 87

He was a college star in three sports and a successful N.F.L. executive. But he was better known as the only man who ever pinch-hit for Ted Williams.



By Richard Sandomir

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Carroll Hardy, a reserve outfielder for the Boston Red Sox, was on the visitors' bench in Baltimore late in the 1960 season when Ted Williams, the team's megastar, fouled a pitch off his right foot during his first at-bat against the Orioles. Hobbled, he left the field.

Hardy was told by Mike Higgins, known as Pinky, the Red Sox manager, to pinch-hit for Williams. He lofted a soft line drive to the pitcher, Skinny Brown, who threw to first base for a double play.

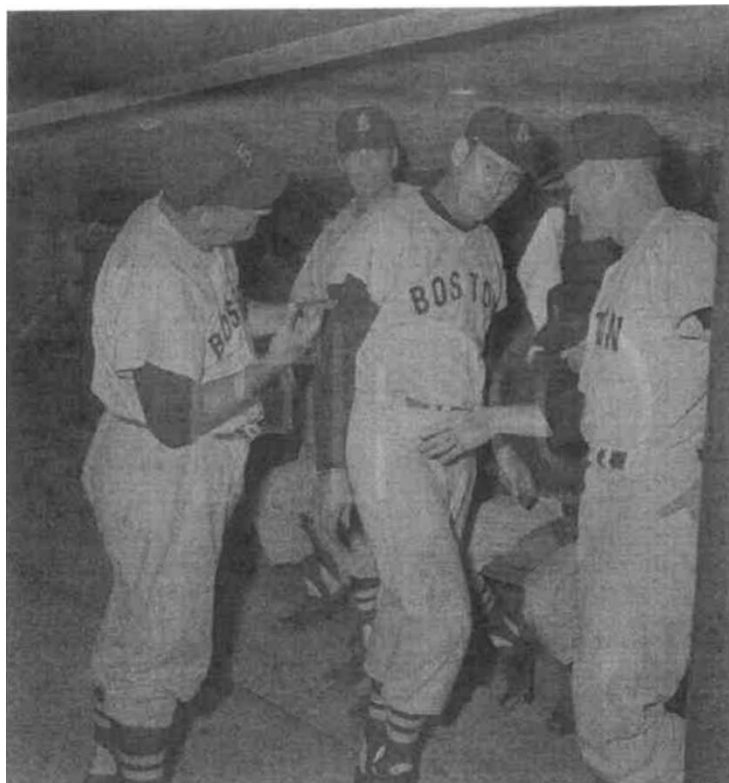
It was an ordinary play in a forgettable season for the Red Sox, except for one detail.

No one had ever — ever — pinch-hit for Teddy Ballgame.

Eight days later, when Williams hit a long home run in the last at-bat of the final game of his career — a moment memorialized by John Updike in *The New Yorker* in the article "Hub Fans Bid Kid Adieu" — Hardy showed up in another cameo: After Higgins sent Williams to left field in the top of the ninth inning to soak up the fans' cheers, he sent Hardy out to replace him.

"They booed me all the way out," Hardy told *The Los Angeles Times* in 2009, "and cheered him all the way in."

Those two episodes overshadowed Hardy's more substantial achievements as an athlete and, later, a football executive.



Hardy reached out to shake Ted Williams's hand after Williams hit a home run against the Cleveland Indians in August 1960. Also greeting Williams was the manager of the Red Sox, Pinky Higgins. via Getty Images

He was a football, baseball and track star at the University of Colorado, Boulder, then played one season in the N.F.L. for the San Francisco 49ers in 1955. After finishing his baseball career in 1968, he was part of the front-office team that built the dominant Orange Crush defense that took the Denver Broncos to Super Bowl XII in 1978.

Hardy died on Sunday at a memory care center in Highlands Ranch, Colo. He was 87.

His son-in-law, Bill Bissell, said the cause was complications of dementia.

Carroll William Hardy was born on May 18, 1933, in Sturgis, S.D. His father, Walter, was a rancher, and his mother, Hazel (Veren) Hardy, was a homemaker.

A gifted athlete with a square jaw like Dick Tracy's, Carroll rushed for 1,999 yards as a halfback for the Colorado Buffaloes; his average of 6.87 yards a carry is still a school record for players with at least 60 carries. He scored a touchdown on his first carry as a freshman in 1951 and rushed for 238 yards and three touchdowns in his final game, a 38-14 win over Kansas State in 1954.

In baseball, his .392 batting average remains Colorado's all-time best. He also excelled at the 100-yard dash and the broad jump on the school's indoor track team.

In 1955, he was chosen by the 49ers in the third round of the N.F.L. draft and also signed to play baseball with the Cleveland Indians. He joined the Indians' minor league team in Reading, Pa., and left late that season for the 49ers. Playing alongside the great quarterback Y.A. Tittle, Hardy caught 12 passes for 338 yards and scored four touchdowns.

It was a tough season physically — he sustained numerous injuries — and he returned to baseball in 1956, playing in Indianapolis for another Indian minor league team. Over the next dozen years he played for four other minor league teams and a Venezuelan winter league team, and in the big leagues for the Indians, Red Sox, Houston Colt .45s (now the Astros) and Minnesota Twins.

He hit his first major league home run with Cleveland in 1958 in yet another cameo: as a pinch-hitter for Roger Maris, who three years later would hit 61 home runs for the Yankees, breaking Babe Ruth's single-season record.



In 1965, the Denver Broncos' Tom Janik, left, had a punting contest with Hardy, who had been a football star in college but at the time was an outfielder with the minor league Denver Bears. Mac Speedie, a Broncos coach, and Cal Ermer, the Bears' manager, were the judges. Denver Post, via Getty Images

Over eight seasons in the major leagues, he had a career batting average of .225 with 17 home runs and 113 runs batted in. Near the end of his baseball career, he started scouting for the Broncos in the off-season; in 1968, he managed the St. Cloud Rox minor league baseball team to a title.

He started working full time for the Broncos in 1969, as an associate ticket manager. He was named director of scouting the next year and later held various roles in player personnel, including assistant general manager.

He helped put together the Orange Crush defense of the late 1970s and early '80s with players like Tom Jackson, Lyle Alzado, Randy Gradishar, Louis Wright and Barney Chavous. He also helped assemble the Bronco teams that played in Super Bowls XXI and XXII, although they lost both times.

After retiring from the Broncos in 1987, he worked for a decade at the Steamboat Resort in Steamboat Springs, Colo., in the ticket office and as a golf marshal.

He is survived by his wife, Janice (Mitchell) Hardy; his daughters, Jill Bissell and Lisa Wynn; his son, Jay; two grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

Hardy was good-humored about being remembered mostly for his slender connection to Ted Williams.

"I'd like to have people remember me for hitting 400 home runs and a lifetime batting average of .305," he told The Denver Post in 1993, "but I didn't do that."

OBITUARY: CARROLL HARDY

Former CU star who played in NFL, MLB and worked for Broncos dies at 87

By Ryan O'Halloran
The Denver Post

Carroll Hardy, who was a three-sport star at Colorado, played in the NFL and Major League Baseball and worked for the Broncos for nearly a quarter century, passed away Sunday morning at 87 from complications due to dementia.

Hardy was a member of the sports hall of fame in Colorado and his home state of South Dakota. He lettered 10 times at CU from 1951-55 in football (running back), baseball (center fielder) and track (broad jump) and averaged 6.9 yards per rushing attempt in football and hit .392 in baseball.

"I had the pleasure of meeting and visiting with Carroll several times — what a wonderful man and a true icon in the state," CU athletic director Rick George said in a statement. "His list of accomplishments in his lifetime and the people he touched are really second-to-none. We have lost a great Buffalo."

Hardy rushed for 1,999 yards at CU, which ranks 20th in school history. He scored on his first touch, a 12-yard run in a 1951 win over Colorado A&M, and in his final game, he rushed 10 times for 238 yards and three touchdowns in a win over Kansas State.

As a CU baseball player, his average was the all-time school record for players with at least 200 at-bats and he batted .447 as a senior.

Frank Bernardi was a baseball teammate of Hardy's at CU.

"He was obviously one heckuva an athlete and though we were always competing against each other, we became very close,



Carroll Hardy, a three-sport star at Colorado, played in both the NFL and Major League Baseball.

Provided by the University of Colorado

not only on the field but off as well," Bernardi said in a statement. "I valued his friendship. ... We always tried to out-do each other in baseball, which was good because it made us even more competitive. It made us perform our best."

Hardy was named to CU's All-Century Football Team in 1989 and inducted into the school's Athletic Hall of Fame in 2002.

After college, Hardy signed contracts with the San Francisco 49ers and Cleveland Indians.

In '55, Hardy played 10 games for the 49ers as a receiver (Y.A. Tittle was his quarterback), catching 12 passes for 338

yards and four touchdowns. He elected to concentrate on baseball, citing the possibility of a longer career, following one NFL season.

Hardy debuted for the Indians on April 15, 1958 against the Kansas City A's.

Hardy played in 433 major league games over eight years for Cleveland, Boston, Houston and Minnesota, batting .225 (11 home runs/113 runs batted in). His first home run was as a pinch-hitter for Roger Maris.

One of his claims to fame came in 1966 when he became the first and only man to pinch-hit for Ted Williams, who had fouled a ball off his foot. Hardy hit into a double play.

Hardy was back in Colorado in 1965 playing for the Triple-A Denver Bears for part of four years. During that time, he began working part-time for the Broncos as an assistant ticket manager.

During 24 years with the Broncos, he held a variety of titles. In 1977, he was promoted from director of scouting to director of player personnel by new general manager Fred Gehrke. The Broncos reached their first Super Bowl.

Hardy was later director of scouting, college scouting and combine scouting. He retired after the 1987 season to Steamboat Springs before moving to Longmont and eventually Wind Crest Senior Community in Highlands Ranch.

Hardy is survived by his wife Janice and three children. The couple would have celebrated their 64th anniversary on Saturday.

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Jan and Carroll Hardy at home in Steamboat in 1994. (Bud Wells photos)

By Bud Wells



The Denver Post at my breakfast table Monday morning told me of the death of Carroll Hardy, 87, an all-American tailback at the University of

Colorado in 1954. Hardy was a three-sport star in football, baseball and track for the Buffs from 1951-55.

In the spring of 1994, I drove a new, sleek-bodied Pontiac Trans-Am to Steamboat Springs and spent part of an afternoon visiting with Carroll and Jan Hardy at their log home 11 miles south of town. The three-hour drive from Denver produced not only a column on the Trans-Am, but also information for a feature on Colorado Rockies Connection.

Hardy, following a year in the National Football League and eight seasons in Major League Baseball, spent 24 years working as a scout for the Denver Broncos.

The Hardys enjoyed their years in Steamboat. Hardy was an avid fisherman and hunter; he and Jan liked skiing, too, and Hardy worked part-time at the Steamboat Ski Resort. They later moved to Longmont.

As for the '94 Trans-Am, it was noted for a long, sloping hood and wraparound spoiler at the rear. Its wheelbase had been reduced to only 101 inches, yet its overall length was 197 inches.