

**NEWS**



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## **“THE DUKE” RETURNS TO THE FIELD**

### **NFL RENAMES OFFICIAL WILSON GAME BALL IN HONOR OF WELLINGTON MARA**

ORLANDO -- NFL clubs today unanimously endorsed a recommendation to return the name of the official game ball to “The Duke” in honor of the late New York Giants owner **WELLINGTON MARA**, one of the most beloved and respected figures in professional sports history. Mara died last October.

Mara, who spent 81 years with the New York Giants and made numerous contributions to the NFL, was named Wellington by his father after the Duke of Wellington. He was given the nickname “The Duke” as a youngster by Giants players.

The NFL game ball was known as “The Duke” from 1941-69.

The NFL first used a ball in honor of Mara called “The Duke” in 1941 at the suggestion of Chicago Bears owner George Halas, who had helped arrange with Giants owner Tim Mara (Wellington’s father) for Wilson to become the league’s official supplier of game balls.

“The Duke” ball was used through 1969 but was discontinued prior to the 1970 season, the first to be played in the NFL-American Football League merger. The NFL and AFL continued using a Wilson football, but with a new design.

The official NFL Wilson football will continue to be manufactured in Ada, Ohio. Wilson recently extended its NFL contract through 2011, which will mark the 70<sup>th</sup> year of partnership, believed to be one of the longest agreements in sports history.

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