

## **ART MODELL (1925-2012)**

Art Modell, whose remarkable 43-year NFL career made him a regular finalist for the Pro Football Hall of Fame, died today of natural causes at Johns Hopkins Hospital at the age of 87.

Former Ravens president David Modell issued this statement:

“Sadly, I can confirm that my father died peacefully of natural causes at four this morning. My brother John Modell and I were with him when he finally rejoined the absolute love of his life, my mother Pat Modell, who passed away last October.

“‘Poppy’ was a special man who was loved by his sons, his daughter-in-law Michel, and his six grandchildren. Moreover, he was adored by the entire Baltimore community for his kindness and generosity. And, he loved Baltimore. He made an important and indelible contribution to the lives of his children, grandchildren and his entire community. We will miss him.”

As owner of both the Cleveland Browns (1961-1995) and the Baltimore Ravens (1996-2003), Modell directed teams that produced 28 winning seasons, 28 playoff games, two NFL Championships (1964 and 2000), three other appearances in NFL title contests (1965, '68 and '69), and four visits (1986, '87, '89 and 2000) to AFC Championships.

A key figure in launching Monday Night Football, Modell chaired the NFL's Television Committee for 31 years, setting the standard for rights' fees for professional sports and TV networks. He was the only elected NFL president (1967-69) and he was Chairman of the Owners' Labor Committee, which negotiated the NFL's first collective bargaining unit with the players.

From dropping out of high school (New Utrecht in Brooklyn, N.Y.) at the age of 15 to help his financially-strapped family after the death of his father, to ownership of NFL championship teams, to his generous contributions to community services, Modell, who insisted people of all ages call him Art, embodied a true American success story.

Modell lived much of the NFL's history. He didn't just know about Vince Lombardi. He worked alongside the legendary coach to complete the league's first collective bargaining agreement. He didn't just appreciate the powerful blending of the NFL and television, he negotiated, along with Pete Rozelle, the first network TV contracts. The template from those contracts serves as the base for the NFL's financial success.

Art vacationed with George Halas, stood up for a falsely-accused Ray Lewis, and used every resource he could muster to help the dying Ernie Davis (Syracuse). Hall of Famer Shannon Sharpe, who was on the Ravens' Super Bowl XXXV championship team, said: “Art talked with me every day when I played in Baltimore. He knew everything about what was going on in my life. He showed real concern. But, it wasn't just me. He knew the practice squad players' names. He treated them the same. He was out at practice when it was 100 degrees and when the December snows came. I loved playing for him.”

Modell expected the highest level of effort from his associates, but he always applied his noted sense of humor. “Art wanted to know everything we were doing, and he directed us every day. He was demanding, but he made me laugh and smile at the same time. The tougher the situation, the better his humor,” Ozzie Newsome, whom Modell named as the first minority general manager in the NFL, said.

Fellow NFL owners had great respect for Modell and surprised him with a salute at a league meeting in 1990 with this proclamation: “The league has always had its share of special people. They have been the founders, owners, officials and coaches who have stayed the course over long periods of years, and who have made special contributions to the welfare of the league and its members. Art, you are one of those special people.”

Modell, who purchased the Cleveland Browns for what was then an unprecedented price (\$4 million in 1961), brought the NFL back to Baltimore on Feb. 9, 1996. It was not an easy move to make for the proud Modell, but he did not leave the fans of Cleveland empty handed. He left the name “Browns,” the team colors and the great Browns’ history. “That didn’t happen in Baltimore with the Colts, in Brooklyn with the Dodgers, or in other cities that lost sports teams,” Modell explained at the time.

Modell was a fervent philanthropist, donating and raising millions for many civic and charitable causes after purchasing the Browns. He served on multiple civic, educational and charitable boards, but he was devoted to aiding those in need of medical care and helping institutions raise money to better good health. For 20 years, he served on the board of the famed Cleveland Clinic, serving seven (1988-1995) years as president. Recently, Art headed a \$100 million Heart Institute Fund for the equally renowned Johns Hopkins Medicine. He and his wife Pat’s devotion and generosity to the arts is noted with the Patricia and Arthur Modell Performing Arts Center in downtown Baltimore.

Art is survived by his sons John and David (Michel) and six grandchildren: Breslin, Arthur, Collier and David (from David) and Isabella and Dylan (from John).

#### **Here’s a quick overview of Art Modell’s career:**

- Left high school at age of 15 to help financially-strapped family after the death of his father
- First full-time job was as an electrician’s helper, cleaning hulls of ships in a Brooklyn shipyard
- Joined the Air Force in 1943 (He was 18.)
- Under the G.I. Bill, he enrolled in a New York City television school following World War II
- Produced one of the first regular daytime television shows in the nation (“Market Melodies”)
- Joined the advertising business in 1954 and became a partner for the L.H. Hartman Co. in New York City

## **FOOTBALL HISTORY**

- Purchased Browns on March 21, 1961
- Won two NFL Championships: the 1964 Browns beat the Baltimore Colts, 27-0, and the 2000 Ravens won Super Bowl XXXV with a 34-7 victory over the N.Y. Giants
- Three more of Modell's teams — 1965, 1968 and 1969 – played in NFL title games
- His 1986, 1987 and 1989 teams lost memorable AFC Championships to the Denver Broncos
- His 1967, 1971, 1972, 1980, 1982, 1985, 1988, 1994, 2001 and 2003 teams also made the playoffs
- In six other seasons — 1963, 1970, 1976, 1979, 1983 and 2002 — Art's teams had a chance to make the playoffs on the final day of the season, but did not qualify
- In 43 years of ownership, Art produced 28 winning seasons with an overall record of 346-305-8
- Moved franchise to Baltimore, Maryland on Feb. 9, 1996

## **CAREER HIGHLIGHTS**

- Only elected NFL president in league history, serving in that capacity in 1967-69
- Chairman of the NFL's Television Committee for 31 years (1962-93). During his tenure, NFL TV contracts set the standard and records for the highest in sports history
- Chairman of the Owners' Labor Committee (1968), which successfully negotiated NFL's first collective bargaining agreement with players
- Served on the NFL-AFL Merger Committee, breaking the impasse for realignment of the two leagues by moving the Browns to the American Football Conference
- Worked closely with Pete Rozelle to establish NFL Films and became first Chairman of Films
- In 1970, was an important negotiator with ABC to start Monday Night Football and volunteered to host the first game in Cleveland
- Conceived and staged first doubleheader in NFL history, consisting of the Browns and three other teams playing back-to-back preseason games at Cleveland Stadium. From 1962-1971, the Browns hosted annual doubleheaders each August drawing over 800,000 fans in 10 years
- Art and Tex Schramm initiated the second Thanksgiving Day Game, and agreed to play the first one