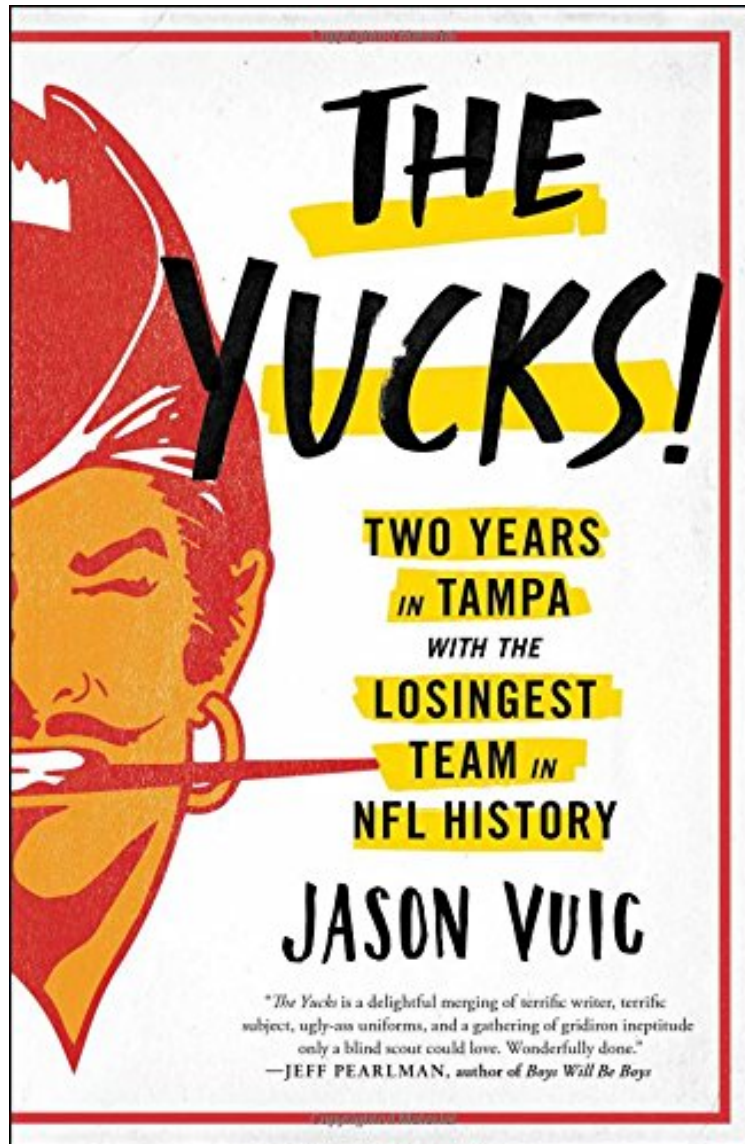


(Download ebook) The Yucks: Two Years in Tampa with the Losingest Team in NFL History

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Jason Vuic

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Jason Vuic : The Yucks: Two Years in Tampa with the Losingest Team in NFL History before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Yucks: Two Years in Tampa with the Losingest Team in NFL History:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Professional Futility ...By DACHokieAs a football fan, I often wistfully look back at the 1970s brand of NFL football I enjoyed in my youth. While today's NFL fans bathe in a sea of endless in-your-face information, merchandise and the ability to watch EVERY game played year-in and year out, they missed out on arguably the best decade of NFL football that existed (at least in my 50 years). Instead of nflshop.com available 24/7, we held our breath for the annual Sears Christmas Wish Book for all of our NFL needs, traded football cards instead of fantasy players, had the original "America's Team" to despise, Raiders who really were ruthless pirates and the "Steel Curtain". That decade of unforgettable winners also produced the NFL's most unforgettable loser ... the 0-26 Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Jason Vuic masterfully paints an image of those miserable losing seasons in hues of blazing orange with THE YUCKS!... a story is as strange, funny, ugly and memorable as the Buccaneer uniforms and "Bucco Bruce". There really is no modern professional comparison to the first two seasons of Buccaneer football ... big money pretty much ensures no NFL team will likely replicate losing 26 consecutive games. The author thoroughly examines the 1976 birth of professional football in Tampa Bay and recounts the first two seasons (1976 and 77) in a manner that is both nostalgic and hilarious. All the ingredients for a good sports story are present: a cheapskate owner, a crusty, cranky, smart-aleck head coach, a team with questionable talent (save the Selmon brothers) and the gaudy 1970s as a backdrop. What makes THE YUCKS! worth reading is that is that an NFL team losing 26 consecutive games IS sports history; the thought of it happening again is almost unfathomable. While I have no personal interest in the team, it's hard not to wonder how a professional football team could be THAT bad. Vuic certainly provides a litany of who, what, when and why information that generates logical answers. I found the story of the early Bucs quite fascinating and humorous. Whether it be the penny-pinching owner (Hugh Culverhouse) constructing a team complex that had less square footage than a current NFL team weight-room or the endless stream of one-liners from befuddled head coach, John McKay (who allegedly responded to a reporter's question about the team's execution on the field with "I'm in favor of it") ... the early years of pro football in Tampa were certainly funny. Adding to the mix were the hodge-podge of players whose Sunday performances dominate the NFL blooper archive. While many players, like the coach's son, weren't NFL-caliber material, the defense was quite good (the first player drafted by Tampa, Leroy Selmon, become a bona-fide Hall of Famer). Vuic details the perspective from inside the organization and outside (the fans and city of Tampa) and while the story centers on futility, former members of the organization contributing to the book (players and personnel) look back fondly at those frustrating years. I found THE YUCKS! to be an enjoyable and fast read; Vuic keeps things interesting from beginning to end. While the crux of the story focuses on those first two seasons, the author succinctly continues the Buccaneer history to include its eventual Super Bowl winning season in 2002 to put things in perspective. If you like the 1970s brand of hardnose NFL football, THE YUCKS! is certainly worth reading. While the decade is pretty much defined by the winning of the Pittsburgh Steelers, the story of the league's biggest losers is probably more entertaining. 7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Great Walk Down Memory Lane; Great Information for the Die-Hard Bucs, Football and Sports Fans, Young and OldBy CustomerI'm actually a bit older than the author and remember the Bucs' first season like it was yesterday--I lived in Tampa and lived the history! I remember Coach McKay, the media, the players, and even the specific games, plays, and scores. I was there in the driving rain when the Bucs beat the Chiefs 3-0 to win the division for the first time. I remember the so-called controversy around here when the Bucs drafted Doug Williams. If you remember things like I do, you'll love this book as a walk down memory lane that provides a background for why things may have happened as they did. It filled in the gaps for too many things I remember so well. If you just vaguely remember the Bucs or have heard about how bad they were, the tidbits of info will have you laughing and shaking your head. If you are in the sports industry today, whether on the business or player side of the stadium, this is good one to pick up. This book is a must-read for any die-hard Bucs fan and big time football trivia fan. It's really more of chronicle of what happened; That is, the author does little analysis or insertion of his own opinions. And that's just fine today! Took me about 12 hours to read. 5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Surprising historyBy Lady ShopalotExcellent in-depth coverage of the early history of the Bucs, and details about the NFL's mistakes when working out the kinks in expansion teams. A must-read for Bucs fans and all NFL fans. You think you know the history but there are lots of surprises!

Friday Night Lights meets The Bad News Bears in this uproarious account of the first two seasons with the worst team in NFL history: the hapless, hilarious, and hopelessly winless 1976--1977 Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Long before their first Super Bowl victory in 2003, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers did something no NFL team had ever done before and that none will ever likely do again: They lost twenty-six games in a row. It started in 1976, in their first season as an expansion team, and it lasted until the penultimate game of the 1977 season, when they defeated Archie Manning and the New Orleans Saints on the road. After the game, Saints coach Hank Stram was fired and said, "We are all very ashamed of what happened. Ashamed for our people, our fans, the organization, everybody." When the Bucs arrived back in Tampa, they were mobbed, and eight thousand people came to a victory party. It was the beginning of a new streak for a team that had come to be called "The Yucks." They won their final game at home, and the fans tore down the goalposts. This was no ordinary streak. It was an existential curse that unfolded week after week, with Johnny

Carson leading the charge on *The Tonight Show*. Along with their ridiculous mascot and uniforms, which were known as “the Creamsicles,” the Yucks were a national punch line and personnel purgatory. Owned by the miserly and bulbous-nosed Hugh Culverhouse, who charged players for sodas in the locker room, the team was the end of the line for Heisman Trophy winner and University of Florida hero Steve Spurrier, and a banishment for former Cowboy defensive end Pat Toomay after he wrote a tell-all book about his time on “America’s Team.” Many players on the Bucs had been out of football for years, and it wasn’t uncommon for them to have to introduce themselves in the huddle. They were coached by the ever-quotable college great John McKay, whose press conferences were infamous. “We can’t win at home and we can’t win on the road,” he said. “What we need is a neutral site.” But the Bucs were a part of something bigger, too. They were a gambit by promoters, journalists, and civic boosters to create a shared identity for a region that didn’t exist—Tampa Bay. Before the Yucks, “the Bay” was a body of water, and even the worst team in memory transformed Florida’s Gulf communities into a single region with a common cause. The Yucks is an unforgettable and hilarious account of athletic futility and despair. But the players worked their way into the fans’ hearts and were a team that, by losing, did more to generate attention than they ever could have otherwise.

“A funny, endearing look at how the Bucs lost their way to success, cementing a region through creamsicle unis and John McKay one-liners.” —*Sports Illustrated* “Sometimes in sports a team is so woefully bad that it’s funny. The futility, in some ways, gives the team a lovable character. That is the message that comes through in *The Yucks*. . . . Jason Vuic not only captures the hilarious moments, but also explains how the team helped secure a collective identity for Florida’s Gulf communities.” —*Christian Science Monitor* “The Yucks is a delightful merging of terrific writer, terrific subject, ugly-ass uniforms, and a gathering of gridiron ineptitude only a blind scout could love. Wonderfully done.” —Jeff Pearlman, author of *Boys Will Be Boys* “A brisk, warmhearted reminder of how professional sports can occasionally reach stunning unprofessional depths.” —*Publishers Weekly* Praise for *The Yugo*: “[A] rollicking chronicle of the rise and fall of the homely little hatchback that couldn’t . . . [Jason Vuic] weaves a tale about crazy socialist factories, just-as-crazy Western financial practices, geopolitics in the days of the Cold War and an American public yearning for affordable cars—all combined with the ‘cutting edge Serbo-Croatian technology,’ as the Yugo was referred to in the spoof movie version of ‘Dragnet’ . . . Mr. Vuic is as hard on the Western capitalism that fleetingly embraced the car as he is on the socialist system that produced it.” —Dick Teresi, *Wall Street Journal* “Jason Vuic provides a thoroughly researched and illuminating account of what turned into a spectacular disaster.” —*The Economist* “A wonderfully sunny—and thoroughly researched—study of this iconic failure.” —Stephen Lowman, *Washington Post* “Now, Jason Vuic has written an entire book about this wheezing shitbox. Entitled *The Yugo: The Rise and Fall of the Worst Car in History*, the book is an in-depth, brisk, and hilarious chronicle of the economic, mechanical, political, and cultural calamities that conspired to unleash this motorized monster on the American populace.” —Brett Berk, *Vanity Fair Daily* “As historian Jason Vuic chronicles in his captivating, unexpected new book, for a fleeting moment amid the clichéd go-go excesses of the 1980s, the \$3,995 Yugo—loosely based on a Fiat and produced by a one-time arms manufacturer called Zastava—captured the wallets, if not exactly the hearts, of Americans and introduced some oddball charm and entrepreneurial zest into the staid confines of the U.S. auto market. Vuic’s history is a fascinating read, and an instructive one for the present moment.” —Tom Vanderbilt, *Slate* “If the Yugo was a lemon, Jason Vuic’s surprising page-turner is the lemonade: even though we know how it’s going to end (watch out for the iceberg, Yugo!), we’re held rapt by Vuic’s careful reconstruction of the peculiar history of a terrible idea.” —*Flavorwire* “Vuic’s book is thoroughly researched, with hundreds of annotations. Its true genius, however, is its fine focus not on the Yugo itself, but on Bricklin the man—an outsized opportunist, a thick-skinned mega-capitalist whose modus operandi was to overpromise and underdeliver, a Mr. Magoo oblivious to the wreckage all around him, a charming marketing manipulator who realizes he has crossed the line only when the subpoenas start flying. In short, a fascinating story well told.” —John Phillips, *Car and Driver* “In his entertaining drive through the 1980s, Mr. Vuic uses the fatally well-publicized Yugo as the hook for a funny, tightly written book traversing politics, economics, marketing, communications, consumer safety (and dread)—and lots of spin.” —Carlo Wolff, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* About the Author Jason Vuic is the author of *The Yucks: Two Years in Tampa with the Losingest Team in NFL History*; *The Yugo: The Rise and Fall of the Worst Car in History*; and *The Sarajevo Olympics: A History of the 1984 Winter Games*. A lifelong Buccaneer fan with degrees from Wake Forest University, the University of Richmond, and Indiana University, he grew up in Punta Gorda, Florida, and now lives in Fort Worth, Texas. Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. *The Yucks Chapter One The Promoter(s)* People always say: “Hey! You’re the guy who brought the Bucs to Tampa!” And I say: “No. I helped bring a team to Tampa. I had nothing to do with the Bucs.” —Leonard Levy, Tampa booster Bill Marcum was a promoter—not your smooth-talking, backslapping, sell-anything-to-anyone type of promoter—but a promoter nonetheless. His product was football, professional football. The thirty-three-year-old’s plan, in early 1967, was to bring his hometown something it had never seen before: a preseason exhibition game featuring two teams from the National Football League (NFL).¹ This was before the Bucs, before Tampa even had a stadium. A 46,000-seat, two-grandstand structure had been approved by local officials and was slated to open in November 1967, with a game between the University of Tennessee

Volunteers and the University of Tampa Spartans. In the meantime, the stadium's chief administrator, a local agency known as the Tampa Sports Authority (TSA), was looking for occupants. "The TSA was trying to justify the four million dollars it had spent to build that thing," remembers Marcum, a tallish University of Florida grad and former tennis star from Fort Myers, "so it focused on college games as a way of recouping its money." The University of Tampa would play home games there, but then the TSA hoped that Florida, Florida State, Miami, and Florida AM would also play in Tampa at least once a year. The TSA had never even considered the NFL. "That was the bottom of the list," says Marcum. "That was literally the last thing in their minds when they built the stadium in the first place."² But Marcum thought, "Why not?" Tampa was football crazy, and it was common in the 1960s for NFL squads to play preseason games, called "exhibition games," in even the smallest of cities. The rival American Football League (AFL) did it, too. There were games in Princeton, Ithaca, Bridgeport, New Haven, Norfolk, Rochester, Richmond, Raleigh, Morgantown, Tulsa, Wichita, Shreveport, Mobile, Memphis, Birmingham, and San Antonio, among others. Joe Namath's first pro touchdown was a 60-yard completion to Hall of Fame receiver Don Maynard in a 1965 preseason game in Allentown, Pennsylvania.³ The games were almost always charity events, hosted by Boys Clubs or Rotary Clubs, and backed by Chambers of Commerce. Marcum belonged to the Tampa chapter of the Junior Chamber of Commerce, the "Jaycees," and in 1966 he'd organized a Jaycee national tennis tournament at Tampa's University of South Florida. He'd done it for charity, for the fun of it; but then, in 1967, it occurred to Marcum that once Tampa finished its stadium, the Jaycees could bring an exhibition game to Tampa, too. So he bought an NFL Handbook, looked up the names and numbers of the league's general managers, and started calling. His first call was to the Washington Redskins, which despite being a mediocre-to-bad team in 1966 was the most popular pro team in the South. The owner of the Redskins was George Preston Marshall, an infamous racist who created a Redskins radio and TV network that spanned Dixie and stretched as far south as Miami. In fact, in the years prior to 1966, when the Dolphins entered the AFL and Falcons the NFL, the Redskins were the only professional football team south of the Mason-Dixon Line. The price was sixty thousand dollars—thirty for Washington and thirty for the other team Marcum found, the Atlanta Falcons. Sixty thousand dollars, "big bucks then," wrote Tampa Tribune sports editor Tom McEwen, a friend of Marcum's and early expansion supporter, but "chicken feed now."⁴ To pay for the game, Marcum, who made maybe \$12,000 a year as a sales engineer with General Cable, persuaded one hundred Jaycee members to sign personal guarantees of three hundred dollars each, with the rest, he hoped, coming through ticket sales. At Marcum's urging, the Jaycees called the game the Florida Suncoast NFL Classic, instead of the Tampa Classic, in order to attract fans from the surrounding communities of St. Petersburg, Bradenton, Clearwater, Lakeland, and Sarasota. Marcum told the club that Tampa alone couldn't support a game like this, but that the entire area could. Indeed, as of 1967, the Tampa–St. Petersburg–Clearwater "metropolitan statistical area," a term used by the U.S. Census Bureau, was the thirty-first largest metropolitan statistical area in the United States. If you added Lakeland, Bradenton, and Sarasota, Tampa had a local population of more than one million people. The region, known colloquially as the "Suncoast," or simply the "Bay Area," was growing. Florida as a whole was growing as few American states or regions had ever grown before. Consider this: When Florida first entered the Union in 1822, there was no Miami. There was no Tampa, no St. Petersburg, and no Orlando, and everything south of St. Augustine was either forest or prairie land, or, of course, swamp. By 1900, in spite of a railroad boom and growth in the citrus, phosphate, timber, tobacco, fishing, and cattle industries, there were just 528,542 Floridians. Population-wise, the state was a tad bigger than Baltimore.⁵ It grew somewhat in the 1920s, but beginning in the 1950s, Florida boomed. Aided by cheap land and sunshine, a surging U.S. economy, an expanding interstate system, the GI Bill for veterans, and Social Security benefits for retirees, not to mention air-conditioning, the state's population grew 145 percent, to 6.7 million, between 1950 and 1970. It grew another 43.5 percent, to almost 10 million, by 1980. "In the half century after 1950," wrote Florida historian Gary R. Mormino, "the lure of retirement villages, beachfront condominiums, and trailer parks brought millions of new residents to the state, causing a chain reaction that resulted in new construction, landscaping, utilities, schools, highways, hospitals, and strip malls. To the question what does Florida do for a living? Modern history seemed to answer, Florida grows!"⁶ The unintended consequence was that no one was from there. By 2000, for example, more than half of Florida's residents had moved there since 1970.⁷ And, in the five years preceding 1970, Florida had gained 1.4 million new inhabitants, including 189,446 New Yorkers, 83,347 Ohioans, 70,868 New Jerseyans, 67,813 Michiganders, and 60,715 Pennsylvanians. It also gained more than 184,000 foreign immigrants and 50,000 transcontinental "immigrants" from California.⁸ Therefore, Bill Marcum was pitching his "Florida Suncoast NFL Classic" to a community, or, rather, a series of communities, in flux. First, there was Tampa. A gritty industrial center at the confluence of upper Tampa Bay and the Hillsborough River, Tampa was founded in 1824 as a military fort during the decades-long conflict between the U.S. Army and Florida's Seminole Indian tribes known as the Seminole Wars. It survived as a fishing village until the 1880s, when a surveyor discovered phosphate deposits to the east of Tampa and the South Florida Railroad chose the city as its terminus. With lines running from Tampa to New York, the city then attracted Vicente Martinez Ybor (pronounced "E-bor"), a wealthy cigar manufacturer from Key West who moved his firm to an unincorporated plot of land immediately northeast of Tampa in 1886. This was "Ybor City." Other producers followed, including, among others, a young Cuban immigrant named Arturo Fuente, and

by the early twentieth century, Tampa was the cigar capital of the world. The Great Depression and the advent of mechanized cigar-rolling devastated Ybor City, but in 1939, the U.S. military established the Southeast Air Base in Tampa (a precursor to today's MacDill Air Force Base, home of the Pentagon's Central Command, whose area of responsibility includes Afghanistan and Iraq), and the city continued to grow. By 1950, it had 124,000 inhabitants, which more than doubled to 275,000 inhabitants by 1960. Yet, like other American cities, in the early postwar period Tampa experienced "white flight," the suburbanization of its white population to unincorporated planned communities in surrounding Hillsborough County. Despite the fact that in 1953 Tampa had annexed forty-four square miles of territory and more than 92,000 people, it had 611 fewer residents in 1970 than in 1960.⁹ Across the bay, and twenty-five miles by car southwest of Tampa, is St. Petersburg. Founded in 1888 when Russian aristocrat Peter Demens brought the Orange Belt Railway south from Longwood, Florida, to a mostly uninhabited stretch of the Pinellas Peninsula, St. Petersburg was a retirement mecca. Dubbed "Wrinkle City," "God's Waiting Room," or (even worse) "the place Mom and Pop go to die," St. Petersburg was one of the first retirement communities in the United States. For years, the city's symbol was a green park bench—for seniors to sit on—and by the late 1940s it had the largest shuffleboard club in the world. In 1960, St. Petersburg had 181,298 inhabitants, whose median age was 47.1. Although in the 1960s civic leaders attempted to rejuvenate the downtown by removing green benches and redeveloping the waterfront district, by 1970 the city's 216,232 residents had actually grown older, to 48.1. In all, an astonishing 31 percent of St. Petersburg residents were sixty-five or older. Thus, with Tampa declining in population and St. Petersburg aging, the real growth was in the suburbs, in beachfront and inland communities in Pinellas County, such as Clearwater, in Bradenton and Sarasota to the south, and in unincorporated areas of north Tampa. "It was like the Wild West," says Betty Castor, a former Hillsborough County commissioner in charge of planning. "It didn't matter what it was—a house, a gas station, a condo—the thinking was, 'if you build it, they will come.'"¹⁰ And people did come, to three-bedroom, two-bath, ranch-style cinder-block-and-stucco homes in planned communities that appeared, seemingly, overnight. Typically, a developer would buy, say, fifty acres of land, a former farm or a citrus grove. Then he graded the land, gave it a made-up name such as "Seminole Hills," and divided the acreage into lots. At the edge of the property, preferably on a highway, the developer then built three model homes, with names like the "Colonial," the "Waldorf," or the "Rusticana." Then it was sell, sell, sell—often a hard sell, with television and radio spots as far away as New York, mailings, magazine ads, cold calls, "Win a Week in Florida" contests, and tours. Some developments, built by corporations, were huge. In 1967, for example, the Deltona Corporation acquired more than 21,000 acres of uninhabited land forty miles north of Tampa in Spring Hill. In the blink of an eye, the company staked out more than 33,000 lots. It then sold 28,500 lots in three years.¹¹ Needless to say, the region's planned communities are too numerous to mention, but here's a tiny list: Carrollwood, Carrollwood Village, Winston Plaza Estates, Bay Ridge Estates, Lake Magdalene Arms, Four Oaks, Town N' Country Park, River Grove Park, Paradise Park, Westgate, East Bay, New Port, Tierra Verde, and Sun City Center. Now add thousands of apartments, built at twice the rate of houses, and nearly three hundred trailer parks in Pinellas alone.¹² Although experts predicted that in fifty years, the one-hundred-mile region from Clearwater in the north to Punta Gorda in the south would be "Onecontinuouscity," the Bay Area's dozen or so communities proved stubbornly distinct.¹³ For one, Tampa and St. Petersburg were rivals. They had been since the early 1900s, when a passionate St. Petersburg Times editor named W. L. Straub led an editorial campaign to "free" Pinellas from Hillsborough. (The two officially split in 1912.) Since then, they'd fought over everything, from railroad lines, military bases, and airports to bridges, highways, water treatment systems, pollution restrictions, state university campuses, even shrimp. Tampa and St. Petersburg were so antagonistic that prior to the 1970s neither city actually embraced the term "Tampa Bay." The "Bay" was a body of water—a huge body of water—but it wasn't a locale. No one was from Tampa Bay. No one lived in Tampa Bay. And, if you asked residents if they were from there, they would have told you, invariably, "I am not fish!" "Of all the 1950s and '60s travel brochures in the Tampa Bay History Center," explains Travis Puterbaugh, the museum's former Curator of Collections and Research, "I cannot recall ever seeing any that explicitly referred to this area as Tampa Bay."¹⁴ Still, the Bay Area was a clearly identifiable region, a sprawling collection of Florida Gulf Coast communities whose capital, unofficially, was Tampa. Home to the region's only Fortune 500 company, the Jim Walter Corporation, a home builder; the Lykes Brothers meatpacking and citrus conglomerate; regional offices of GTE, Westinghouse, Honeywell, General Cable, and Metropolitan Life; Busch Gardens; the University of South Florida; the University of Tampa; and MacDill, it was Florida's busiest port. It also had a glistening new airport and, by 1968, a stadium. "When we promoted that first game," says Marcum, "the stadium had just opened. It'd been open for less than a year. The Bay Area was booming, but it never occurred to me we'd get a team in Tampa. I mean our own team. I just wanted to sell tickets."¹⁵ But, in promoting the Florida Suncoast NFL Classic, Marcum frequently stated, rather coyly, that "nothing impresses" the NFL more than "a good crowd."¹⁶ He figured that at five dollars a ticket, roughly \$34.00 in today's terms, he needed to sell nineteen thousand tickets to break even. By July, he'd sold twenty thousand tickets, and was told by the general managers of Washington and Atlanta that, as a rough estimate, he should multiply by two. If that was the case, the Florida Suncoast NFL Classic would draw 40,000 people, the largest preseason crowd at a neutral site in the NFL that year. This was big news, bigger than anything Marcum had expected, and bigger than anything

anyone in Tampa had expected, either. When the teams met on August 10, 1968, there were 41,651 fans in attendance. Wrote one journalist, the crowd “cared less about the caliber of play than about the reality that was unfolding. The NFL had anointed Tampa” and “never was such a meaningless preseason game so momentous to a community.”¹⁷ The next day, local attorney Ed Rood, a former Florida Jaycee president and Tampa power broker, called Tom McEwen at work. Rood was interested in bringing an NFL franchise to Tampa, and asked McEwen for help forming the Suncoast Pro Football Committee, a nonprofit association tasked with winning a team. McEwen, a forty-five-year-old University of Florida grad, was more than a sports editor. He was a fixer, a doer, a civic-booster-cum-journalist who used his position at the Tribune, critics be damned, to put Tampa on the map. He was, in his own words, an “advocate,” a cheerleader, a person who not only wrote about sports, but also “introduced the right people to each other.”¹⁸ In 1969, Tom McEwen introduced Ed Rood to Pete Rozelle. An amiable, forty-two-year-old public relations expert and onetime general manager of the Los Angeles Rams, Rozelle had been NFL commissioner since 1960. His singular talent—if it could be called a talent—was getting the league’s twelve disparate teams to buy into the concept of “League Think.” By “League Think,” Rozelle meant “unity of purpose,” a plan by which NFL owners would share revenues and transform what had been “a feudal organization” of twelve distinct businesses “into a modern corporate combine.”¹⁹ The key was television. In 1961, Rozelle persuaded the league’s owners to pool their television rights into a single, national package that quickly earned the NFL \$4.65 million, or \$320,000 per franchise, for the 1962 season.²⁰ By 1964, CBS was paying the NFL \$14.1 million a year, an amount, wrote one author, that was “ten times more than anyone in the league had made” under previous commissioner Bert Bell.²¹ However, Rozelle wasn’t finished. In 1966, he persuaded Congress to grant the NFL a coveted antitrust exemption, which allowed the NFL to merge with the AFL in a single, twenty-four-team league. As part of the merger, Rozelle promised two new expansion teams by 1968—the New Orleans Saints and the Cincinnati Bengals—and possibly two additional teams by 1970. The NFL had sixteen teams, the AFL ten teams, and they were slated to merge and begin playing each other in the fall of 1970. The “new” NFL would have two thirteen-team conferences: the National Football Conference, made up of old NFL teams, and the American Football Conference, made up of ten AFL teams plus three. Rozelle’s job was to persuade three NFL owners to switch. He’d been trying for months, and couldn’t negotiate the league’s new television contracts until both conferences were in place. “Bulwarked by half a century of tradition,” wrote the New York Times, and “satisfied with the status quo,” NFL owners feared that “any juggling could disrupt” traditional rivalries. “No one has dropped the ball yet,” it continued, “but Pete is getting nervous.”²² Eventually, in May 1969, the Cleveland Browns, the Pittsburgh Steelers, and the Baltimore Colts agreed to join the AFC for a one-time compensation payment of \$3 million each. As for Rozelle, the commissioner told the two Tampanans that expansion was possible, but because of “realignment issues” he would not give them a date. He did say, though, that to land a franchise, cities needed three things: 1) a market area big enough to support pro football, 2) a 50,000-seat stadium, and 3) proven interest, attendance-wise, in preseason exhibition football. Tampa had all of those things: a large population base, a stadium it could expand if it wanted to, and the fact that Marcum’s Washington-Atlanta matchup had been the league’s most-attended neutral-site exhibition game that year. What Tampa now needed was another game, or even a series of games, to show the league it was ready. Therefore, shortly after Rood and McEwen met with Rozelle in New York, Bill Marcum contacted several professional teams, including the Miami Dolphins. The Dolphins were owned by Joe Robbie, an attorney from Minneapolis who told Marcum he could bring the Vikings to Tampa, in a matchup with the Dolphins, for \$40,000 apiece. Marcum agreed, but then asked Robbie for a second, regular season, game as well. When Robbie offered a Dolphins matchup with either the Denver Broncos or the Boston Patriots, Marcum chose the Patriots, because Boston owner Billy Sullivan was unhappy with the Patriots’ stadium situation and was exploring a move to Tampa. Although already committed to \$160,000 in contracts, Marcum still hadn’t told the Jaycees. He was about to, he says, but then Washington called and offered a third game with Detroit, which he accepted. “That’s when I told the club what I’d done,” explains Marcum. “But you know what? They balked. They’d stuck their necks out in ’68,” with the Redskins-Falcons game, “but now I had three games for \$240K. For a nonprofit service organization, even a rich one, that was way too much money.” Still, the Jaycees did sponsor the Redskins-Lions matchup of August 1969, but the two other matchups were on Marcum. “It’s funny,” he says, “I’d never planned on doing it, but there I was, a professional promoter.”²³ A divorced father of two, Marcum hadn’t anticipated a career change. But, if the games sold well, he stood to make as much as \$40,000 a contest, way more than he’d ever made in a year. Luckily, Marcum found a backer in Ed Rood, who covered the teams’ appearance fees for 25 percent of the profits. Of course, the men wanted to make money, but in promoting pro football, as Jaycee members and boosters, they were helping the city grow. And with a new stadium opening in 1967 and three massive projects—including a state-of-the-art terminal at Tampa International Airport; a second, fourteen-mile span of the Sunshine Skyway Bridge connecting St. Petersburg and Bradenton; and a new deepwater port in south Tampa Bay known as Port Manatee—all slated to open in 1971, it seemed that no project was too big or too small, including professional football. Therefore, in February 1969, Rood, Marcum, and McEwen hosted AFL commissioner Milt Woodard, who played golf with Rood at Tampa’s Palma Ceia Country Club, had lunch with the mayors of Tampa and St. Petersburg, and toured Tampa Stadium. By now, Rood’s Suncoast Pro Football Committee had more than twenty members, including the Chamber of Commerce

heads of Tampa, St. Petersburg, and Clearwater, the sports editors of various radio and TV stations, and the publishers of both the Tampa Tribune and the St. Petersburg Times. In 1970, the committee vowed to underwrite, and thus guarantee the sale of, thirty-five thousand season tickets if the Patriots moved to Tampa. It also hired Woodard as a consultant, and convinced Florida governor Claude Kirk to visit Sullivan in Boston. The committee's goal was to land a pro franchise by either relocating a preexisting team to Tampa, such as the Patriots, or by winning a new team when the league voted to expand. To that end, it flirted with Boston and Buffalo in 1970, then, the following year, convinced Baltimore Colts owner Carroll Rosenbloom to hold his 1972 preseason camp in Tampa while playing three exhibition games at Tampa Stadium. At the time, Rosenbloom was in a bitter dispute with Baltimore over improvements to Memorial Stadium, a cramped, aging facility that the Colts shared with the Orioles. Rosenbloom liked Tampa, a lot, but in June 1972 managed to escape Maryland by trading the Colts for the Rams. The process was simple. The Rams' owner was Dan Reeves, a football visionary who died of cancer in 1971 but who had tasked his estate with selling the team. There were several suitors, including Jacksonville attorney Hugh Culverhouse and Illinois heating and cooling magnate Robert Irsay. In June 1972, Culverhouse bid \$17.5 million, and was close to acquiring the franchise when Rosenbloom and Irsay struck a deal.²⁴ Rosenbloom would give Irsay \$4 million if he purchased the Rams—Irsay bid \$19 million—and traded the Rams for the Colts. However, Culverhouse claimed that he and Rams general manager Bill Barnes had reached a verbal agreement, and in July 1972 he filed two different lawsuits against Rosenbloom, Rozelle, Irsay, the executors of the Reeves estate, the Rams, the Colts, and the NFL for contractual interference and violation of federal antitrust laws.²⁵ Although unknown in football circles, Culverhouse was a formidable foe. Short, thickly built, with a round, misshapen nose, the fifty-three-year-old Culverhouse was “a pudgy Jimmy Durante.”²⁶ He grew up poor in Birmingham, Alabama, during the Depression, the son of a train company engineer. In the late 1930s, Culverhouse attended the University of Alabama, where he was a member of the school's boxing team and a friend and sparring partner to future governor George Wallace. He graduated in 1941 with a business degree, served in the Army Air Corps during World War II, then returned to Alabama for a law degree in 1947.²⁷ From 1949 to 1956, Culverhouse was the assistant regional counsel for the Internal Revenue Service, Southeast Region, and was stationed in Jacksonville. His job was to research and prosecute tax evasion cases involving organized crime figures like Miami “bolita king” Howard Pinder. He was also a key investigator for the Kefauver Committee, the U.S. Senate's famed investigatory committee that targeted organized crime.²⁸ However, in 1956, Culverhouse left the IRS to set up a Jacksonville firm specializing in tax law. Soon he had a branch office in Miami, where his clients included Richard M. Nixon and Nixon's close friend and associate C. G. “Bebe” Rebozo, as well as Ed Ball, the legendary Florida power broker who headed the DuPont estate. Case by case and hour by billable hour, Culverhouse became one of the richest men in Florida. “Hugh takes a piece of everything that crosses his desk,” said one associate, “and more stuff crosses his desk than anyone I've ever seen.”²⁹ In 1970, he paid \$12 million for “Palmer Ranch,” a massive, 12,500-acre stretch of Sarasota County, Florida, which he subdivided and seeded with homes. He also owned a bank, a department store, an insurance company, a mortgage company, and various commercial properties from Florida to Ohio. His next project was the Rams, or, rather, suing the Rams (and the league) for \$11 million. He probably wouldn't have won, but due to the league's 1966 antitrust exemption, wrote Culverhouse biographer Denis Crawford, any lawsuit claiming collusion by owners would have attracted “a suspicious congressional eye.”³⁰ Thus, to placate Culverhouse, sometime in spring 1973, Rosenbloom approached the lawyer with a deal: if Culverhouse dropped the two lawsuits, he'd receive a monetary settlement, as well as one of two new franchises when the league voted to expand. Culverhouse accepted the deal, grudgingly, believing that whatever franchise he did receive would be in Tampa. But Tampa wasn't a lock. It faced stiff competition from Seattle and Memphis, while Phoenix was closing fast. In fact, in September 1972, Bill Marcum and Leonard Levy, a Tampa printer and former head of the Tampa Sports Authority, joined officials from each of the three cities in petitioning Pete Rozelle. Tired of waiting, they wanted to know when the league would expand. Reluctantly, the commissioner agreed to a meeting in New York, in secret, but when word leaked to the press, he sent NFL executive director Jim Kensil instead. Speaking for the group, Memphis representative Mike Lynn asked Kensil if expansion was going to be discussed at the next owners' meeting. Kensil replied that he didn't know. The owners had to request it. “Well then, how many have to request it?” asked Marcum. To which Kensil replied, “One.” “We had no idea,” insists Marcum. “If we'd read the damned NFL bylaws, we would have known that, but we hadn't. Any owner could bring up anything at a league meeting if he put it on the agenda maybe a week or two in advance.”³¹ Leonard Levy says this was “technically true,” but that “getting the league to tell us anything was like cat-and-mouse. Rozelle would say, ‘I don't make the agenda, the owners do.’ Then we'd go to the owners and they'd say, ‘We don't make the agenda, Rozelle does.’”³² The solution, the boosters realized, was to locate at least one pro-expansion owner, while pulling strings politically to force the commissioner's hand. Therefore, on the way home from New York, the two Tampans stopped in Washington, D.C., to visit Florida senator Ed Gurney, a member of the Senate Subcommittee on Anti-Trust and Monopoly who was pressuring the league to expand. Gurney felt that since Congress had granted the NFL an extremely valuable—and some would say legally questionable—antitrust exemption, it should have already added new teams. Therefore, Gurney wrote Rozelle a letter, reminding the commissioner that if expansion didn't happen, the league's antitrust exemption could be reexamined and possibly revoked. Soon after, Bill

Marcum visited Lamar Hunt, the Kansas City Chiefs' owner and oil tycoon, who had cofounded the AFL. Hunt was in favor of expansion. In 1958, he had tried to buy an NFL expansion franchise himself, but was rebuffed, and a year later his offer to purchase the Chicago Cardinals and move them to Dallas was turned down. The oilman understood Tampa's plight, so he invited Marcum to a meeting at Dallas's downtown Petroleum Club, where he admitted, candidly, that the league owed Marcum an answer. Hunt would see to it that a simple yes-or-no vote was on the next owners' agenda. The tactic worked, apparently, because in April 1973, at Hunt's request and Gurney's urging, league owners took up the issue and voted unanimously to expand. Under Rozelle's direction, the owners then formed a four-person "Expansion Committee" headed by Steelers vice president Dan Rooney, who in turn hired the Stanford Research Institute to produce a detailed study of twenty-four different cities that had expressed interest in landing a team.³³ The committee was to meet, examine potential sites, and name five finalist cities in February 1974. They were Memphis, Honolulu, Phoenix, Seattle, and Tampa. The official announcement came on April 24, 1974, in Suite 404 of Manhattan's Drake Hotel. At exactly 5 p.m., Rozelle walked into the room. He took a chair in the front, which he turned around backward and straddled. He then leaned forward and said: "The National Football League has voted to expand to Tampa, Florida, and to at least one other city to be chosen later this year. The teams will be ready for the 1976 season. The franchises will cost \$16 million. Are there any questions?" The room erupted. "Hallelujah," said Bill Marcum. "Hallelujah." Rozelle then shook hands with Leonard Levy and said, magnanimously, "Welcome to the NFL."³⁴