

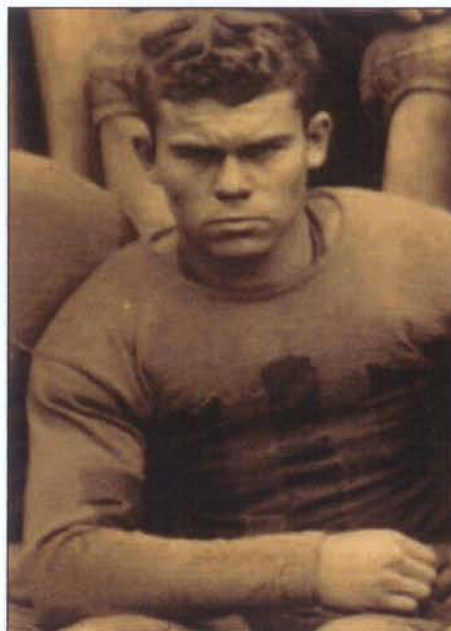
FREEMAN LEE "BULLDOG" JOHNSON

IN 1911, FREEMAN JOHNSON WAS BORN TO NORA AND FREEMAN JOHNSON IN JASPER, AL.

He grew up in the Dora community and earned the name "Bulldog" as a young kid. He later said, "Someone called me by that name and it stayed with me my entire career."

His athletic endeavors began during the depression as an 8th grader on Dora High School's first football team. In 1925, the Dora team traveled to play away teams in the back of a freight truck. The team players voted before the first football season to have blue and gold as their colors and the bulldog as a mascot. At Dora, Johnson played all sports including football, basketball, baseball and he also ran track. As a catcher, he caught future major league pitcher, Ivy Paul Andrews, and the team never lost a high school game.

Johnson was a member of the basketball team when they claimed their first Walker County Championship. In 1928, his junior year, he scored a remarkable seven touchdowns in one game. "Bulldog" served as one of the team captains during his last two years at Dora. In 1929, his senior year, he became Dora's First All-State football player as quarterback and played for legendary coach "Snitz Snider."



Johnson went on to play football and baseball for Birmingham Southern College. He played fullback and linebacker for the Panthers. He was the team captain during his senior year and was a member of the undefeated football team that won the Dixie Conference Championship. The entire 1933 Southern team was inducted into the Birmingham Southern College Sports Hall of Fame. Freeman was named All Dixie Conference Fullback in his last year at BSC.

During the scholastic summers, "Bulldog" utilized his baseball talents to play on local mining teams in Sumiton, Hull, Empire and Dora. On two different occasions, the talented catcher was offered pro baseball contracts, but declined in order to pursue his college degree.

In 1934, Johnson coached the BSC freshman squad and received his degree. Freeman went on to head football coaching positions at Cedar Bluff, Sardis, Gaylesville, and Fort Payne, where in 1943, his team was undefeated. In 1946, he went to Anniston High School as head basketball and assistant football and baseball coach. Anniston won a state championship in baseball. As the basketball coach, he led the team to a 65% winning percentage.

In 1952, Coach Johnson was one of the founding fathers of the Calhoun County High School Basketball Tournament. Freeman took pride in watching the tournament grow during his lifetime. In 1954, he served as the Alabama Coaches Association President. In 1958, he became head football coach at Anniston and remained in that capacity until 1963. After retiring from coaching, he moved to Montgomery to work for the Alabama State Department of Education. "Bulldog" officially retired in 1976 and he and his wife Helen, returned to Anniston to be near their daughter and grandchildren.

After returning to Anniston, Johnson became an avid golfer who played very well for his age. In retirement, he took pride in having a garden. On his 93rd birthday a group of 40 or more of his former players met to help him celebrate and to show their affection and appreciation for him and the contributions he had made to their lives. Johnson passed away in 2005, leaving behind his wife, Helen, their daughter, Nancy Lee Johnson Payne, grandchildren and great grandchildren.