



# Alan Ameche: The Story of "The Horse"

*Dan Manoyan*

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This is first biography of Alan “The Horse” Ameche, one of America’s great gridiron heroes. Born in 1933 to Italian immigrants, he grew up in Kenosha, Wisconsin, where he played for one of the state’s best-ever high school football teams. From there he went on to break Big Ten rushing records for the University of Wisconsin Badgers, leading them to the 1953 Rose Bowl and winning the 1954 Heisman Trophy. He earned his nickname “The Horse” for his tremendous training ethic, power, and stamina. In a professional career with the Baltimore Colts that lasted just six seasons before injury ended it, he was the 1955 NFL Rookie of the Year and went to the Pro Bowl five times.

The 1958 championship game of the National Football League that pitted Ameche’s Colts against the New York Giants has often been called the NFL’s “Greatest Game Ever Played.” It was the first national title game to be televised, and forty-five million people were watching. It was also the first-ever NFL game to go into sudden death overtime. Ameche and future Hall of Fame quarterback Johnny Unitas teamed up on several key plays in the decisive touchdown drive. Ameche’s dramatic one-yard plunge into the end zone ended the game at 8:15 of the overtime period, captured the attention of television viewers across the nation, and laid the groundwork for football to become the enormously popular and lucrative business it is today.

Author Dan Manoyan has delved into Ameche’s history, interviewing the Ameche family, Kenosha friends, Wisconsin Badger players, and several of his Baltimore Colts teammates—including NFL Hall of Fame members Lenny Moore, Gino Marchetti, Art Donovan, and Raymond Berry—to offer revealing insights about Alan Ameche the man. Manoyan gives a fuller picture of him as an Academic All-American, a devoted husband and father, a highly successful businessman after his football career, a patron of the arts, and a committed philanthropist.

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