

James Ridlon

Football, Basketball, Baseball

1951-1953

Jim Ridlon had one of the most successful athletic careers of any Nyack High School graduate. After making significant contributions to three sports at Nyack High School, Jim went on to play football and lacrosse at Syracuse University. He then had an eight-year career in the NFL, playing defensive back for the San Francisco 49ers and the Dallas Cowboys. Ridlon then became an Art professor at Syracuse University, and a renowned sports sculptor.

Ridlon was an all-around sports star during his time at Nyack. He played football, basketball, and baseball for the Indians, serving as a captain for each team during his senior year. Jim's talents in football earned him an All-County selection his senior year in 1952. The versatile Ridlon played multiple positions, including quarterback and deep back. He was also named All-County for basketball in 1953. Jim was awarded a certificate of membership in the Legion of Honor for Athletics in 1953.

After graduating from Nyack, Ridlon attended Syracuse University and played football and lacrosse at the collegiate level. He played with the legendary Jim Brown on both the football and lacrosse teams. He started his Syracuse football career as an offensive end and caught six touchdown passes his sophomore year. As a junior, he was an All-East selection as a halfback. Ridlon played exceptionally in the prestigious Cotton Bowl his senior year, punting for a record average of 46 yards as well as carrying for a five-yard average.

In the 1957 NFL Draft, Jim was selected by the San Francisco 49ers in the 4th round. He played defensive back for six years with the 49ers, recording five interceptions. Ridlon was then traded to the Dallas Cowboys in 1963, where he played for legendary coach Tom Landry. Jim had his best season in his final year in the NFL in 1964. He had four interceptions, a 74-yard interception return for a touchdown, and a 63-yard fumble return for a touchdown. As incredible as the 74-yard return was, it was made all the more special because it was against the New York Giants, with at least 100 fans from Nyack in attendance. Ridlon was named as an All-Pro safety selection for his excellent play in 1964.

After leaving the NFL, Ridlon returned to Syracuse University, where he was an Art professor for 35 years. He also did coaching and served as a color commentator on Syracuse sports radio for many years. Jim found time to create his own works of art, including trophies and sports imagery. He has pieces in the Pro Football Hall of Fame and the Smithsonian

Institution. Perhaps his most significant work, sports related, was designing the famous Outland Trophy, which is awarded annually to the outstanding college lineman in the country. Jim was inducted to the Rockland County Sports Hall of Fame in 1988.