

FLEA MARKET FIELDS

by Chris Lemay



Every 4th weekend here in Nashville is 'Flea Market Weekend' at the Tennessee State Fair Grounds. 'Flea Market Weekend' is a gathering of vendors from Tennessee and several other surrounding states, each peddling their antiques, collectibles and various other products and services.

I have been a regular to this flea market ever since moving back to the Nashville area over 12 years ago. I have one purpose and ONE PURPOSE ONLY for going to this flea market and that is to find ELECTRIC FOOTBALL STUFF!!!!

In my experience however, flea markets are not the best place to find electric football games. It is extremely rare to find a game, and nearly impossible to find one with players, bases and accessories intact and in playable condition. You can well imagine my excitement when my latest trip to the flea market proved to be the exception. I was not only able to find one game but two, and each contained figures, bases, scoreboards and a majority of the parts and accessories.

I always take an inventory and make an analysis of the games that I find, mostly to determine how they will fit into my collection of games and figures, but also to learn a little about the history of electric football. The games I found on my most recent flea market adventure were both Tudor 600 series models from the early 70's. I was able to purchase both games for only \$30.00; a very fair price for either of game boards themselves. Having figures, bases and a majority of the other accessories was an unexpected bonus.

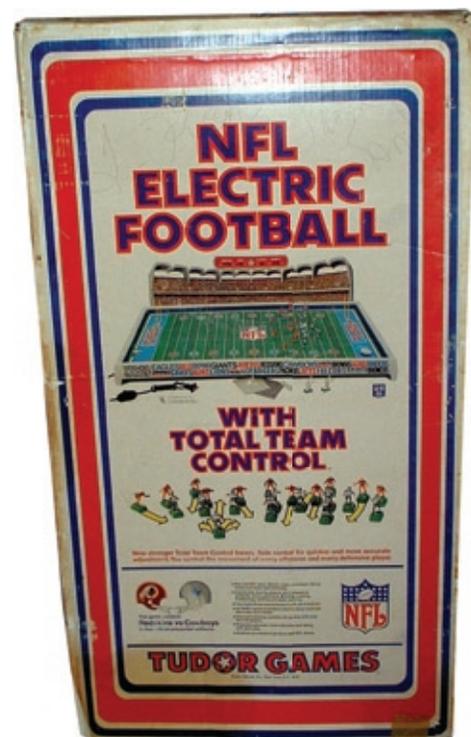
It further pleased me that both games were in their original boxes. I've found that the boxes are a very good source of

THE TWEAK...EXTRA

information about the games. The box often describes the game and its contents, and the box's graphic artwork can help to date the games.

The first of my two flea market finds is described as, 'NFL ELECTRIC FOOTBALL with Total Team Control,' and contains the Redskins and Cowboys in their 'official pre-painted uniforms.' The box pictures a game board with a grandstand score board, Redskins and Cowboys helmets with double bar face masks, the NFL logo, and the two teams on TTC bases with arrows indicating the many directions that the players can move in. It also describes the bases as, "New stronger Total Team Control bases with side control for quicker and more accurate adjustment." It says, "You control the movement of every offensive and defensive player."

This game board is marked as a model 645 on the side and as a model



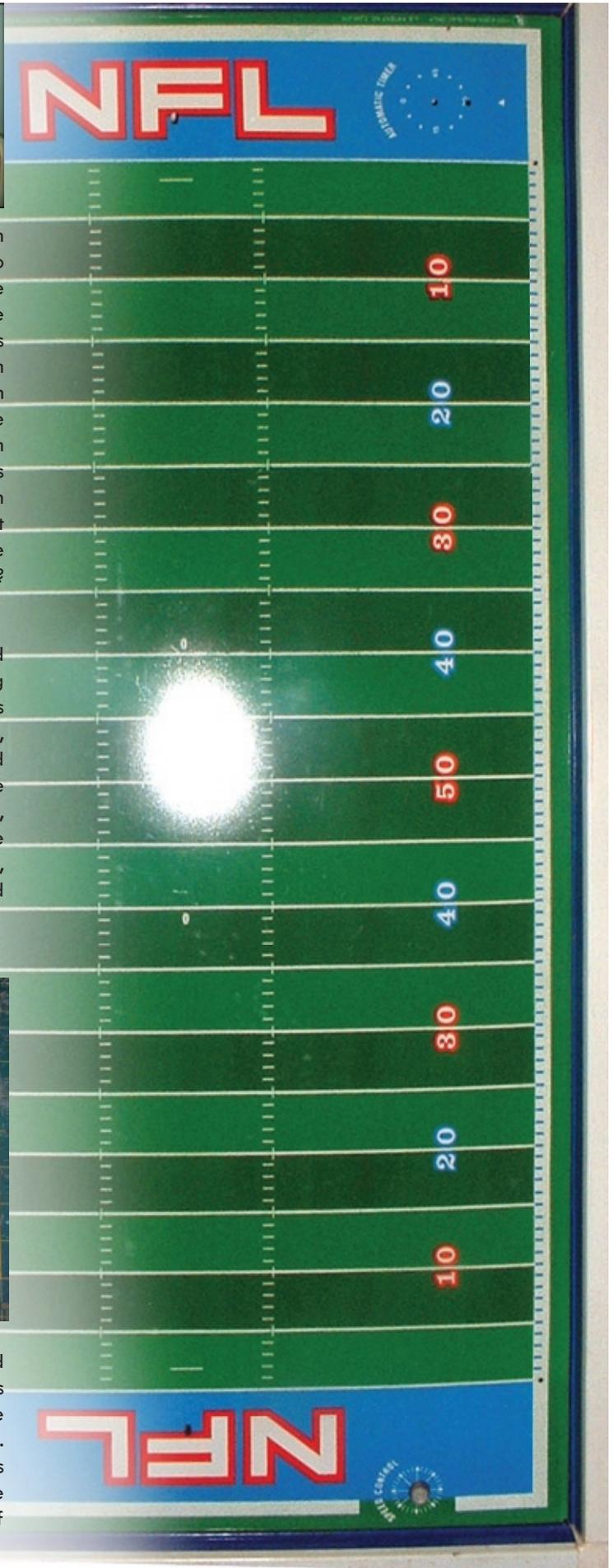


620 on the playing surface. It is in overall good condition with some dents and scratches. The names of all the NFL teams (prior to the 1976 expansion) are on the sides of the game board but the scoreboard shows only the NFL helmets of the 16 teams prior to the AFL/NFL merger, so I'm not sure this is the original scoreboard. It is not the one pictured on the box. The on/off switch is removed from the power cord but is still with the game. This is a very common problem with vintage game boards and this type of switch. The "W" shaped connector inside the switch is always breaking from the constant flipping on and off of the switch. The easiest solution is to just remove the switch and tape the wires back together, which was done on this game board. The same thing happened to my first game board. One suggestion from my experience is don't just tape the wires back together without separating them. What can I say? I was 12 at the time.

Other accessories in this game are a rule book (dated 1968/69/71/72/73), 2 yellow Y-type goalposts with 1 retaining collar, the 2 timer wheels (white plastic, minutes wheel and seconds wheel), yard marker, 10 yard chain, 3 goal line flags (white plastic, with the magnets and orange fluorescent stickers), 3 scoreboard knobs (white plastic), 4 large black scoring discs, 3 smaller blue scoring discs, 10 red team name strips (Bills, Jets, 49ers, Browns, Steelers, Dolphins, Eagles, Broncos, Colts, Bengals, Vikings). 12 blue team name inserts (Colts, Bears, Packers, Vikings, Eagles, Lions, Saints, Cardinals, Browns, Falcons, Cowboys), and one partly used sheet of white numbers (yellowed but still usable).



The teams in this game are the Redskins, in dark uniform, and Cowboys, in white uniform, which is consistent with the teams listed on the box. All players are in good shape except for one Redskins DB figure that has a broken arm, a very common injury. The Cowboys are numbered with blue numbers and the Redskins with white and blue numbers; why I don't know. All 23 bases are TTC. The 2 TTQB's are white plastic. There is also an extra team of white unpainted figures.



The second game is 'NFL SUPERBOWL ELECTRIC FOOTBALL' with 'Total Team Control' and contains two "Super Bowl Teams," According to the box it was available "Only at Sears." The box graphics depict the Raiders and another team, possibly the Bills.

The game board does not have the model number printed on it anywhere but definitely is a 600 series as it is the same size as the first one. The box does have model no 630/633 printed on it. This board is in the best condition that I have ever seen for a vintage board. It looks like it has never been played with! There are no scratches, dents or rust on the playing surface or underneath. The side graphics are of stadium lights. The score board has stadium lights at the top as well.

The accessories with this game include the 2 yellow Y-type goal posts with retaining collars, a white speed control knob, a minute wheel and a second wheel, 4 goal line flags, two 10 yard chains, 7 scoreboard knobs, 3 small, blue scoreboard point discs, and 3 team-name scoreboard inserts (Packers, Browns, Dolphins).

The players with this game are the Redskins, in dark uniforms, and the Dolphins, in white uniforms; possibly the Super Bowl 7 teams. The Dolphins are numbered with aqua numbers and the Redskins with silver numbers. I'm not sure if these are the Redskins' original numbers. The 22 bases are TTC and the QB's are white plastic.

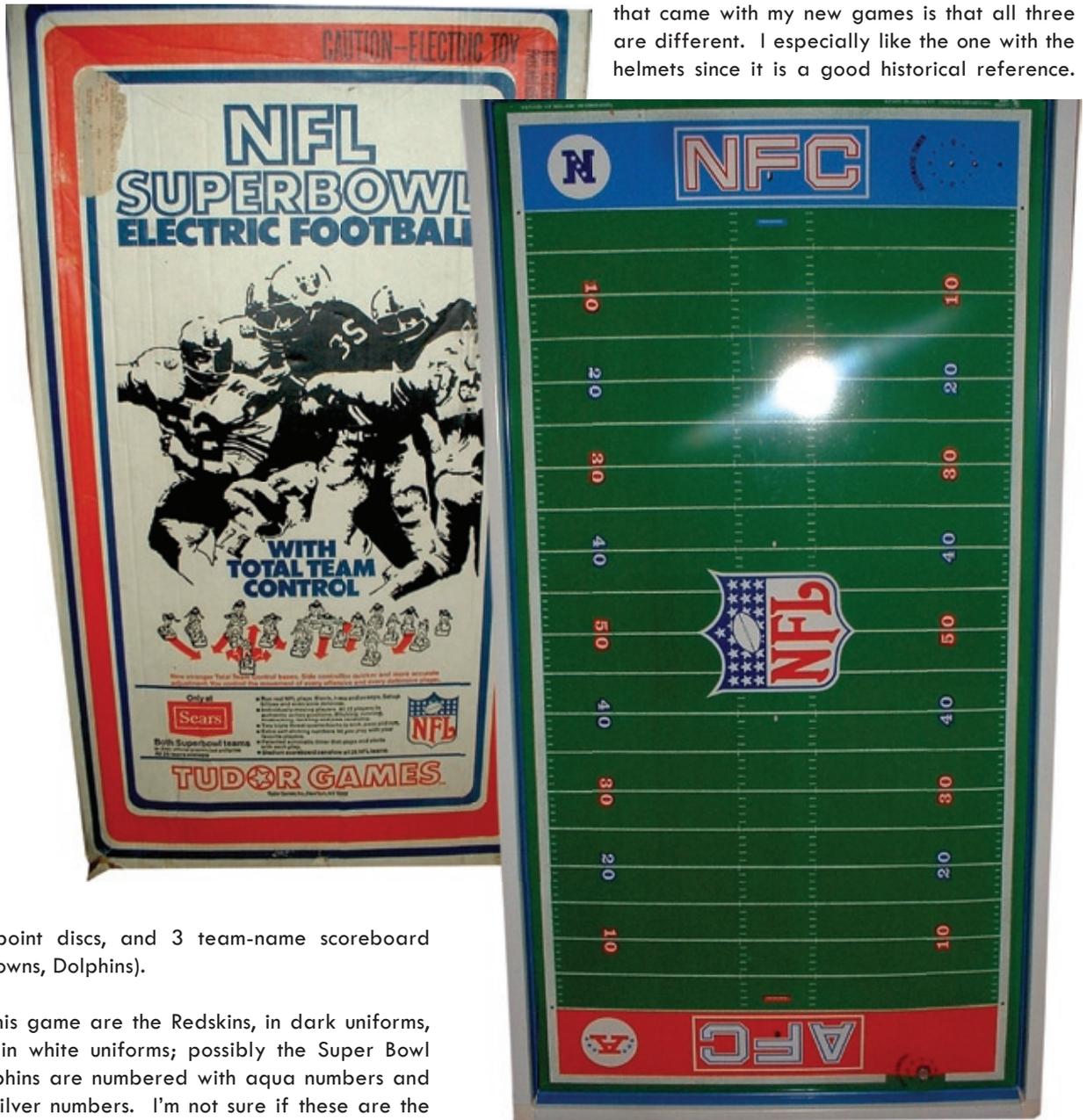
So what is the significance of all this?

To a collector, like my self, just finding games from this time period is exciting enough. Typically model 600 series game boards sell on ebay for anywhere from \$50.00 to \$200.00 depending on condition, accessories, and the teams included. To find these two games in the condition they are in, with these accessories,

with these teams, and bases for just \$30.00 is probably the best deal I have ever found in the 13 years that I have been collecting electric football games.

The model numbers used for the 600 series game boards (610, 620, 630, 645, etc..) are usually just indicators of the various graphics on the sides and playing surface as well as what NFL teams are included with the game.

The interesting thing about the scoreboards that came with my new games is that all three are different. I especially like the one with the helmets since it is a good historical reference.



The grandstand scoreboard with the Super Bowl game definitely portrays Atlanta's Fulton County Stadium. At the bottom you can see a coach talking to a Falcons' player on the sideline. Another interesting note is that the graphic is a half picture for the left side that is just flipped horizontally to complete the full grandstand effect.

The goal posts have the padding molded on the bottom. Later versions had a separate pad that slide onto the upright. Yard

markers, 10 yard chains, and goal line flags didn't always have the orange fluorescent stickers to go on them either. This feature was exclusive to the 600 series games.

It's always good to find scoring knobs, scoring discs, and especially team name inserts. In my experience, these items are often lost, discarded, or in poor condition. I will use the extras I got to complete other scoreboards that I have in my collection.

It is also good to find a game with its rule book. The rule book is perhaps the best source of information as to the date a game was manufactured since the copyright dates are published. The pictures are good references for the teams and the uniforms of that era. It is also interesting to see the other products that Tudor made which are often shown in the rule book.

Of course, the best things to find with any game are the players, bases and TTQB's. The first thing I always notice about NFL teams is their paint job. Tudor did descent enough jobs with painting the uniforms; I don't usually have too much trouble recognizing a particular team, but it is interesting to see how helmet logos and different striping schemes are depicted on these figures. They are by no means historically accurate but usually are good representations of the NFL teams.

The Redskins figures are made from amber plastic which was used for just about any team that had gold or dark yellow pants. This practice likely saved on paint. The Packers, Saints, and Steelers are some of the other teams that used amber plastic. White plastic was used for the other teams, again to save on paint, especially with the away uniforms. I was extremely excited to get the Dolphins in white uniforms because when I was a kid AFL teams were not available in white uniforms, except for the Jets. Not until after the AFL / NFL merger where AFL or AFC teams available in white away uniforms.

The bases are all TTC bases. I'm not sure if they are the much sought after wide tops though. The figures have the single hole in the base for single clip bases. I guess when Tudor came out with the TTC bases they started including them in all the 600 series games sets.

The TTQB's are the white plastic 'BIG HEAD' version, probably the best Tudor ever made. These are always a good find because they are capable of kicking BOOMING 100 yard field goals.

I always examine the boxes for any unusually markings such as price tags and shipping labels that may proved further clues about the game. The Super Bowl game has a partial shipping label with a Huntsville, AL address on it, so it's not so surprising to find it at a Tennessee flea market. The NFL Electric Football has a price tag of \$18.95 on it. It is very hard to get boxes in good condition. They are just about always torn and have some wear. I am thinking of cutting the top panels out of these and framing them to start a collection of electric football graphic art packaging.

The most surprising thing found on the NFL Electric Football game was at the top, written with an ink pen and in large letters. "To Ken from Santa," the writing said. I can just imagine, like so many of us, the excitement that a little boy named Ken felt when he found this game under the tree on Christmas morning!!!! Reminds me of when I got my first game and the excitement I felt that Christmas; at the time I certainly did not realizing the impact that electric football would have on the rest of my life.

Since I don't have a local league to play in, collecting, along with playing solitaire, is the way that I most enjoy this game and hobby. I have in my collection several games made by the other manufactures of electric football such as Gotham, Coleco, and Munro, but the Tudor games made in the 1960's and '70's are definitely the most valuable and most sought after of all. These are the games that bring back all the great childhood memories and the excitement of being able to play electric football again.

Now that's significant!

