If you were to read that a member of a United Brethren church in the Pennsylvania Conference played on a team that won the World Series, you might think it pretty impressive. If you were to read that a member of a United Brethren church in the Pennsylvania Conference not only played, but starred, on a team that won the championship of the National Football League, you might think it really impressive. If you were to read that it was the same man who did both of these things, you might think it incredible. But there was indeed such a man, and his name was Hinkey Haines.

Some readers may be familiar with Hinkey Haines. Some may even have known Hinkey or members of his family. But chances are many have never heard of this versatile and accomplished athlete. Only one person has ever played on a team that won the World Series and on a team that won the NFL championship. That person is Hinkey Haines.

Henry Luther “Hinkey” Haines was born in Red Lion on December 23, 1898, the oldest of five children of Harry and Cora Ness Haines. Hinkey’s father Harry worked in the cigar business which flourished in Red Lion at that time, starting as a helper in a factory, progressing to salesman, and eventually becoming a factory owner. Harry served as chief burgess, or mayor, of Red Lion during most of the 1920’s, and served five terms as a United States congressman from 1931 to 1939 and 1941 to 1943. On February 21, 1904, Harry and Cora joined Bethany United Brethren Church in Red Lion, on confession of faith, under Rev. Samuel N. Moyer. Harry went on to teach a men’s Sunday School class and served in various leadership positions at Bethany until his death in 1947. Cora remained a member at Bethany until her death in 1969.

The Haines family lived at 220 North Main Street in Red Lion. Hinkey grew up in Red Lion, played on the town baseball team with his father, and was one of thirteen members of the Red Lion High School graduating class of 1916. He joined Bethany United Brethren Church on confession of faith in February 1913 under Rev. Alexander N. Horn and remained a member there until 1950, when church records note he joined a church in Philadelphia.

In the fall of 1916, Hinkey entered Lebanon Valley College, where he was a very busy man. He was president of the freshman class, sang tenor in the men’s glee club, played the piano for one of the campus literary societies, and participated in football, basketball, baseball and track. Commenting on his baseball abilities, the Lebanon Valley College yearbook prophetically stated, “He is a big league player in the making, and in the near future some manager will be after his signature to a contract.”
Hinkey Haines in the Lebanon Valley College Yearbook

Freshman Hinkey Haines (seated, at the right) starting center on the 1916-17 LVC JV basketball team

HENRY HAINES
Center Field
Hinkey is a good athlete, but baseball is the one sport for which he is most fitted. There was room for only one outfielder and he qualified for the job. He was a good hitter, coming through at different times, when a hit meant the game, and he was also a fast outfielder. Hinkey’s arm was true, and no runner dared with safety advance a base on a ball hit to him. He is a Big League player in the making, and in the near future some manager will be after his signature to a contract.
– from the Lebanon Valley College Yearbook (1917 baseball season, Hinkey’s freshman year)
Hinkey spent two years at Lebanon Valley College and then entered the army during World War I. Upon his discharge as a second lieutenant, he enrolled at Penn State University in State College. He spent two years at Penn State completing his education, graduating in 1921 with a degree in commerce and finance.

During his two years at Penn State, Hinkey earned two varsity letters each in football, basketball and baseball. It was said he also could have lettered in track, as he could beat all the Penn State sprinters, but football/baseball coach Hugo Bezdek would not allow him to formally compete in the track meets. Clearly, Hinkey was an excellent athlete. He was five foot ten, a hundred and seventy pounds, and evidently he could run.

While at Penn State, Hinkey found time to keep up his piano skills. One of the student managers of the football team organized a group that was very busy playing at area social events. Although he was not a regular member of the group, Hinkey sometimes was called in as a substitute pianist when the need arose. The name of that student manager was Fred Waring, who went on to a long and distinguished career as a musician and entertainer. Hinkey meanwhile made a name for himself in athletics, especially in football and baseball, where he garnered national attention.

During his senior year, the Penn State football team was undefeated.¹ Notable games included a victory over Dartmouth, the only team to defeat Penn State the previous season, and a 109-7 win over Hinkey’s former team, Lebanon Valley College, in which Lebanon Valley actually scored first to lead 7-0 early in the game. Hinkey’s teammate Charley Way was named to Walter Camp’s All-America team, and the yearbook reported that Hinkey, playing halfback, was “mentioned quite frequently on the various teams that were selected by some of the other authorities.”

In baseball, Hinkey played in the outfield. In a 1920 game at West Point he “pulled down a fly from among the branches of a tree on the outskirts of the diamond.” Former major leaguer Hans Lobert, who coached the Army team, declared that he had “never seen a catch equal to it in any league.” Hinkey served as captain of the Penn State team his senior year. That 1921 team won its first twenty games and, coupled with the season-ending ten game winning streak from the previous year, set a new record in college baseball for consecutive victories. The Penn State yearbook reported that, after the season “three men from our team will be trying to secure berths on the New York American League team.

¹ One could try to add playing on an NCAA championship football team to Hinkey’s already unique championship team doubleton in professional sports, but the undefeated 1920 Penn State team did have two ties on their record. While consensus national collegiate champions were not determined before 1936, the University of California (10-0, including their Rose Bowl victory over Ohio State) with their superstar Brick Muller is most often touted as the 1920 “national champion.”
Killinger, Haines and Thomas will all be taken South for try-outs, and if they make good we may hear more about them later in the sporting world.”

While there are no baseball cards of Hinkey Haines, at least one posed card-type photograph exists of him in a Yankees uniform. The only known collectible sports memorabilia of Hinkey is a 1922 Kolb’s Bread pin from the Reading Aces.

This rare photograph was given by Hinkey in 1921 to his then 10 year old first cousin Helen Ness Smith. The team, likely part of Yankees farm system, is unknown.

The New York Yankees did offer Hinkey a contract (making the editors of the Lebanon Valley College yearbook look pretty smart!), and he spent the summers of 1921 and 1922 playing on the Yankees’ farm teams. Hinkey was an experienced player by now, but he still had a few things to learn. In a 1922 spring training game against Brooklyn, he entered the game as a pinch runner. Pitching for Brooklyn was left-hander Sherrod Smith, acknowledged by many veteran players to have the best pick-off move in the game. As Hinkey assumed his position on base, Yankee first base coach Charlie O’Leary stepped from the coaching box to caution him about Smith’s deceptive motion. O’Leary warned him that with any lead more than a couple of feet, Smith would nail him. Hinkey nodded in understanding, and O’Leary turned back toward the coaching box. But before he had taken two steps, he heard a roar from the crowd and turned around to find that Hinkey had been picked off. An embarrassed Hinkey returned to the Yankee dugout, where his teammates gave him a bad time – but not too bad a time, because as teammate Babe Ruth later said, “There was hardly a man in the dugout who had not learned the hard way about Sherrod Smith’s pickoff move.”

The next year he made the major league team. While 1923 was the only year Hinkey played in the major leagues, it turned out to be a memorable one for several reasons. First, one of his teammates was Babe Ruth, already established as the biggest star and personality in the game. Furthermore, the Yankees, the
team that over the years has won more World Series championships than any other team, won the World Series for the first time in 1923.

And 1923 was also special because it was the first year the Yankees played in their newly constructed ball park, Yankee Stadium. Hinkey Haines was there in uniform on opening day, April 18, 1923, when John Philip Sousa and the Seventh Regiment Band of the New York National Guard led players on both teams as they marched to center field for the first raising of the American flag at Yankee Stadium. Upon viewing Yankee Stadium for the first time, Babe Ruth had said, “I’d give a year of my life if I can hit a home run in the first game in this new park.” Babe got his wish as he hit a three-run home run to back the strong pitching of veteran Yankee starter Bob Shawkey in a 4-1 victory over the Red Sox. Hinkey didn’t play in that first game but made his major league debut two days later on April 20. He entered that game as a pinch-runner in the ninth inning with the Yankees trailing 3-2, and scored the tying run when Babe Ruth hit a two-run double to win the game.

During the season, Hinkey didn’t play a whole lot. He was a reserve outfielder and, because of his speed, was used as a pinch-runner. He appeared in 28 games and came to bat 30 times. He had 4 hits (2 doubles, 2 singles), 4 walks and 1 sacrifice for a batting average of .160. He struck out 5 times, drove in 3 runs and scored 9 runs. He stole 3 bases in 4 attempts. In the outfield (eight games in center field, four games in right field, two games in left field) he had 17 putouts and 1 assist, and made no errors.

The Yankees won the American League pennant and in the World Series were matched against the National League champion New York Giants. The Giants, led by their legendary manager John McGraw, had defeated the Yankees in the World Series the previous two years, but in 1923 the Yankees prevailed in six games.

Hinkey appeared in two of the games. The Giants won the third game 1-0 on a home run by outfielder Casey Stengel, who would achieve greater fame in the 1950’s as manager of the Yankees. Hinkey entered that game for defensive purposes in the eighth inning, replacing Babe Ruth in right field as Ruth moved to first base. Hinkey played the final two innings and grounded out to third base in his only at bat. In the sixth and final game, the Giants led 4-1 when, with one out in the eighth inning, the Yankees began the game-winning rally. Hinkey entered the game as a pinch-runner, and as the inning progressed, the Yankees scored twice and had the bases loaded, with Hinkey at third base representing the tying run. The Yankees could not have asked for a better situation, for Babe Ruth was the next batter. Babe was having a good series, having already hit three home runs including one earlier in this game. But with Hinkey at third, the bases loaded and the Yankees trailing by a run, Babe struck out for the second out. However the next batter, left fielder Bob Meusel, singled to center to score Hinkey with the

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2 Babe Ruth once said that Hinkey Haines was as fast as any man in the league.
tying run and when the ball was misplayed, two more runs scored, giving the Yankees a 6-4 lead. Hinkey stayed in the game, playing center field for the final two innings as the Yankees held on to win their first World Series championship.

Each member of the Yankee team received $6143.49 as the winners share. To Babe Ruth, whose 1923 contract called for $52,000, this was pocket change. But to Hinkey, whose contract called for $500 each month of the season, it was a considerable bonus. To put these numbers in perspective, the average working man in 1923 made just under $1400 a year. Hinkey used part of his winnings to help his parents enlarge their home in Red Lion. Incidentally, Hinkey’s original 1923 contract with the Yankees is, as of late 2006, being offered for sale by a dealer in sports autographs. The contract is signed by Hinkey Haines, Yankees’ owner Jacob Ruppert, and American League president Ban Johnson. The asking price is $2495.3

That was the end of Hinkey’s major league baseball career. However he continued playing baseball in the minor leagues until 1933, playing for teams in Louisville, Jersey City, Reading, York, Rochester and Montreal. One game worth mentioning occurred in August of 1932 when he was playing for the Scranton Miners. The New York Yankees, on their way to another World Series championship, stopped by Scranton to play an exhibition game against the Miners. Hinkey led off the Miners first inning with a double, advanced to third on a sacrifice fly, then scored on a close play after another sacrifice fly. Bob Shawkey, who had pitched the opening game at Yankee Stadium in 1923 and pitched for the Yankees for 13 years, and even managed them for one year, was now the forty-one year old player-manager for Scranton. Shawkey and the Scranton bullpen made the run stand up for a 1-0 victory over the soon-to-be world champion Yankees. Needless to say, it was the highlight of the season for the Scranton team.

Although Hinkey was spending his summers playing professional baseball, each fall he was getting paid to play football. He began playing with eastern Pennsylvania teams in 1921. These were independent teams (or members of loosely organized leagues) made up of local and former college players, and they often brought in “name” players on a game-by-game basis, depending on the opponent. Based on his gridiron accomplishments at Penn State, Hinkey was a sought-after “name” player. The level of play on these teams was as good as anything else that existed, and in exhibition games against teams from the fledgling National Football League, these teams more than held their own. Detailed records from these games are practically non-existent, but it is known

3 Other Hinkey Haines baseball items for sale include two Hillerich & Bradsbury Louisville Slugger bats made for Hinkey for the 1923 world series. One measures 34” and 38 oz, and the other 34” and 36 oz. Each has Hinkey’s autograph fixed into the bat. The only two such bats known to exist, they sold as a pair in October 2007 for $1096.
that, from 1921 to 1924, Hinkey appeared in games for the Philadelphia Quakers, Frankford Yellowjackets and a team from Shenandoah in the coal regions.

The basic elements of football have remained unchanged, but there are a few differences between today’s game and the game in the early 1920’s – and so we review some of those changes before elaborating on Hinkey’s professional football career. First, huddles were not in general use. Teams would line up on the ball, and signals indicating the play would be called by one of the four men in the offensive backfield. Hinkey often functioned as signal caller and developed a reputation as a smart player with a real feel for game situations. Secondly, the offensive backs were not as specialized as they are today. Play would begin when the ball was hiked, not to a quarterback standing immediately behind the center, but to any one of the four men in the backfield. Each of these players could run with the ball, pass the ball, or go out and receive a pass. Lastly, the forward pass, still in the developmental stages as an offensive weapon, was not nearly as prevalent as it is today. For example, one year Hinkey tied for the NFL lead in touchdown catches with a total of four. Today that would be two games worth of work for a top receiver, but then it was good enough to lead the league.

The National Football League was founded in 1920 to bring some organization and stability to the professional game, and at first it was just another league. By 1925 though, it had emerged as the pre-eminent league. The New York Giants football team was organized and admitted to the NFL in 1925. They signed Hinkey Haines to play for them in their inaugural season for $4000, making him one of their highest paid players. One of his teammates on the Giants that year was thirty-eight year old Jim Thorpe, who was nearing the end of his legendary athletic exploits. The Giants got off to a slow start, losing their first three games, and in fact not even scoring a touchdown. In their fourth game they
collected their first victory, beating Cleveland 19-0, and the newspaper reported, “Haines was the main cog in the New York attack.” The Giants scored in the first quarter, the key play in the drive identified as a twenty yard pass thrown by Haines, with the touchdown coming on a short run by Haines. They struck again in the second quarter, the key play in the drive being a thirty yard pass caught by Haines, and the touchdown coming on a twenty-eight yard pass again caught by Haines. And so the first two NFL touchdowns in the New York Giants history were scored by Hinkey Haines.

As the 1925 season progressed, Hinkey established himself as a premier player. He was also very popular with the New York fans, and newspaper ads for the games often read, “Come see Hinkey Haines and his New York Football Giants.” On November 15, Hinkey’s quick thinking preserved a win over Providence. Leading 13-10, the Giants were facing fourth down on their own five yard line with less than a minute play. Rather than risk a blocked punt, Hinkey intentionally touched the ball down in the end zone for a safety, giving Providence two points, but allowing the Giants to hang on for a 13-12 victory. Hinkey’s innovative play was given credit for the win.

After the slow start to their season, the Giants finished strong, ending with a record of eight wins and four losses, and Hinkey was selected by the New York fans as their favorite Giants player. Giants coach Bob Folwell, who coached for over twenty years at the college and professional levels, said he never saw a faster man on the football field than Hinkey Haines.

In 1926 Hinkey picked up where he left off. In a 7-6 win over Providence, he threw a fifteen yard touchdown pass to Lynn Bomar for the Giants only score. Against Kansas City, the newspaper reported, “Although others did the scoring, Haines was the big gun in the Giants attack all afternoon.” Facing the Chicago Cardinals, Hinkey caught a twenty yard first quarter touchdown pass and “in the third quarter Haines brought the fans to their feet with a great 80 yard dash for a touchdown.” In a 14-13 win over the Duluth team led by the great Ernie Nevers, it was Hinkey who scored the winning touchdown on a twenty-five yard run.

On November 12, 1926, Hinkey was involved in a publicity stunt when he caught a pass thrown from the top of the newly constructed American Radiator Building on West 40th Street. Teammate Lynn Bomar stood on the roof of the twenty-three story building approximately 324 feet above ground level and threw a football to Hinkey, who was waiting in Bryant Park across the street. The first toss hit the sidewalk and the ball burst. They were unable to connect on the second and third throws. On the fourth throw, the ball knocked Hinkey over and he couldn’t hold on. Finally, on the fifth try, they had a successful completion.⁴

⁴ The stunt was designed to lead into the Giants’ upcoming game with the Los Angeles Stars and their superstar Brick Muller. In addition to being the star of the previously noted 1920 California “national champions,” he won the silver medal in the high jump at the 1920 Olympics, and supposedly could throw a football farther than anybody. He held the record for the longest
It wasn’t all fun and games, though, for Hinkey. Later in November against Los Angeles, Hinkey was hit while attempting to pass, resulting in an interception that was returned forty yards for the game’s only touchdown in a 6-0 loss. Then in the next game, after scoring two early touchdowns against Providence, Hinkey “suffered a sprained neck and had to be helped from the field.” The following game against Brooklyn was described as “a rough game in which Haines and Bomar were both carried off the field with injuries.” But all in all, 1926 was another good year for Hinkey and the Giants.

In 1927, it all came together for the Giants as they won the NFL championship with a record of eleven wins, one loss, and one tie. Reporting an early season win over defending NFL champion Frankford, the newspaper noted, “Even though he did not score himself, Hinkey Haines played an outstanding game for New York.” In a later game against Frankford, Hinkey was involved in a rather humorous incident when he caught a pass in the end zone. This of course was a touchdown, but in the heat of the battle, Hinkey forgot that the goalposts, which normally stood on the goal line, had been moved to the back of the end zone for this game. After making the catch, therefore, Hinkey tried to advance towards the goal posts. You can imagine how foolish he felt afterwards, but maybe not as foolish as the five members of the defensive team who chased him down and tackled him in an effort to prevent him from scoring the touchdown he had already scored!

Starting in November, Hinkey caught a touchdown pass in each of three consecutive Giant victories, setting up a showdown with the Chicago Bears. There was no championship game in the NFL in those days. Rather the championship was awarded to the team with the best record, and by late November it was clear that the race for the championship was coming down to the Giants and the Bears.

The Bears came into New York and dominated play early in the game, although they did not score. Chicago drove to the one yard line, but the New York defense held and the Giants took possession of the ball. Steve Owen, tackle and captain of the Giants, later recalled, “Haines called one of the smartest plays I’ve ever seen to win for us. He stage-managed it perfectly.” With the ball on their own one yard line, the Giants lined up in punt formation. Chicago put nine men on the line to rush the punter in an effort to block the punt, and two men deep to receive the punt. Hinkey, functioning as signal caller, noticed the defensive alignment and conspicuously called to punter, cautioning him not to step on the end line, as this would result in a safety and two points for the Bears. Hinkey then asked the officials for a towel to wipe the ball, ostensibly to ensure the long hike to the punter could be handled cleanly. The Bears were completely fooled. When the ball was hiked, it went not to the punter, but to Hinkey who threw a completed pass (72 yards) and reportedly had his arm insured for $100,000. The pass that Hinkey caught off the American Radiator Building traveled 108 yards and took away Muller’s record.
short pass over the middle, in the area the Bears had left unguarded, to Giants end Chuck Corgan. Corgan ran for 58 yards before he was tackled, and although the play did not result in a touchdown, it completely changed the momentum of the game and the Giants went on to a 13-7 victory. Hinkey’s bold play from the one yard line was cited as the key to the victory. It was a rough, exhausting game and afterwards the Giants sat silently in the locker room, too battered to move, too tired to celebrate. Recalling the strangely subdued scene, Hinkey later said, “That victory just about gave us the championship, but you’d have thought we all were just given walking papers.”

The Bears were out of the way, but the Giants still had two games remaining, both against the New York Football Yankees, who were led by the biggest star in the NFL, Red Grange. As usual, a crowd turned out to see Grange, but it was Hinkey Haines who returned the opening kickoff seventy-five yards for a touchdown, setting the tone for a 14-0 Giants victory. The next week on a muddy field, the teams met again. With the Giants leading 7-0 in the fourth quarter, they had the ball on their own forty yard line. The ball was hiked to Hinkey, who fumbled – but after a scramble, Hinkey recovered the ball and turned a broken play into a sixty yard touchdown run, sealing the win and delivering the championship to the Giants.

On December 8th, 1927, Hinkey was the guest of honor at a dinner held at the Hotel Astor on Times Square in New York City. Many celebrities from the New York sports scene attended, and the program cover read “Testimonial Dinner Tendered to Hinkey Haines of the New York Football Giants by his Friends.” A program from this event was sold at auction in February 2005 for $2500. This may seem like a lot, but there was a good reason. The possessor of this program did what many people would have done at an event attended by so many celebrities, getting as many autographs as possible. This particular program was signed by Hinkey on the inside, and the front cover was signed by twenty-three of Hinkey’s friends, some of whom went on to become members of the Pro Football Hall of Fame and some of whom went on to become members of the National Baseball Hall of Fame. Probably the most recognizable autograph is that of Lou Gehrig, first baseman for the New York Yankees. Hinkey’s friendship with Gehrig actually went back several years, as they were teammates briefly in 1923 when twenty year old Gehrig played a few games for the Yankees, and then they were roommates at the Yankees’ spring training camp in New Orleans in 1924.

Hinkey thought about retiring when the 1928 season rolled around, but after missing the first few games, he returned to the Giants and showed he could

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5 The front of this program is reproduced on the back cover of *The Chronicle*.
6 There is an unverifiable account that Hinkey was the best man at Lou Gehrig’s wedding. Lou married Miss Eleanor Twitchell in a private ceremony at his home in New Rochelle NY on the morning of September 29, 1933, the day of final game of the 1933 season. There exists no official list of those present. News of the ceremony was kept secret so that the first announcement of it could be made at the game.
still play. He scored both New York touchdowns in a 13-7 win over Pottsville and returned a punt seventy yards for a touchdown against Detroit. Future Pro Football Hall of Famer Benny Friedman, an up and coming star in 1928, was described as one who “can skirt around the ends with almost the speed of a Hinkey Haines.” Whether Hinkey was the fastest man in the NFL may be debatable, but clearly he was the yardstick against whom others were measured.

In the Giants final game that year, a 7-6 loss, Hinkey scored their only touchdown on a fake kick. It was his last game as a New York Giant. He played in nine games in 1928 and had a good year, but the Giants were unable to repeat as champions.

Hinkey retired from football after the 1928 season, but in 1929 the owner of the Staten Island Stapletons, a new team in the league, convinced him to join the team late in the season. Hinkey played in four games for Staten Island in 1929 and scored two touchdowns, including one against his old team, the Giants. Hinkey was not involved in pro football in 1930, but in 1931 he was hired as head coach for the Staten Island team. After the team struggled early in the season, Coach Haines felt it advisable to put himself in the line up, even though he hadn’t played for almost two years. He was both player and coach for two games, then he resigned from the team. His record as an NFL coach was one win and three losses (although one source lists his record as one win, three losses and one tie).

Hinkey’s career as a football player was over. He spent six years in the NFL, including four stellar years with the Giants during which he was the toast of New York City, and parts of two years with Staten Island. During his NFL career he scored twenty-two touchdowns. Although his playing days were over, Hinkey stayed involved with football by working as a referee in college and NFL games from 1934 until 1954. Steve Owen, the tackle and captain of the 1927 championship team, later became coach of the Giants, and in 1952, after being affiliated with the Giants for over twenty-five years as a player and coach, he picked his all-time Giants team. He named Hinkey to that team.

Hinkey had a few more flings with major league baseball. On June 13, 1948 the Yankees honored Babe Ruth by retiring his uniform during pre-game ceremonies at Yankee Stadium. Babe had been diagnosed with cancer two years before, and by the summer of 1948 his health had deteriorated significantly. As part of the festivities, since it was the twenty-fifth anniversary of Yankee Stadium, members of the 1923 team, including Hinkey, were brought back and Babe looked on as his former teammates played a two inning exhibition game. Two months later, Babe Ruth was dead from throat cancer at the age of fifty-three.

Babe and Hinkey had been good friends, and Hinkey had invited Babe to dinner one Friday night at his parent’s home in Red Lion. Before he brought Babe to Red Lion, Hinkey warned his sister Mary to stay away from him because Babe was such a womanizer. Hinkey also cautioned his father, by then a leader at
Bethany United Brethren Church, to ignore Babe’s language, as he would likely find it coarse and offensive. Babe evidently enjoyed Mrs. Haines’ cooking and he wound up spending the weekend in Red Lion. Also, through his friendship with Hinkey, Babe developed an interest in professional football, and indicated to Hinkey that he’d like to give it a try. Hinkey arranged for Babe to get a helmet and uniform and brought him to one of the Giants’ practices. With his identity known only to Hinkey and the Giants’ coach, Babe was, as far as the other players were concerned, just a new man trying out for the team. The coach put Babe in at tackle, but Babe pulled himself out after two plays and told Hinkey that he’d thought it over and decided to stick with baseball.

Then on April 15, 1976, Hinkey appeared once again as a guest at Yankee Stadium. Having been closed for two years while undergoing renovations, Yankee Stadium was re-opened with great fanfare. Hinkey was one of six living members from the 1923 team, who had been at the original opening, to participate in the re-opening ceremonies. Bob Shawkey, who had pitched the opening game in 1923 and was still going strong at age eighty-five, threw out the first ball in the renovated stadium. Hinkey Haines died on January 9, 1979, in Sharon Hill, Pennsylvania at the age of eighty.

Many young people dream of being professional athletes, and Hinkey got to live out that dream in two sports. In major league baseball, he was in the right place at the right time. In the NFL, clearly he was a man who made things happen. Many fans today have no idea just how good he was and how highly regarded he was by his contemporaries. He has been called the New York Giants’ first superstar.7

Hinkey Haines was a man who enjoyed more than a little success as a professional athlete, and that makes him special to others from his town, his church, and his schools. But his accomplishments warrant more than just local attention. People with a connection to him should be proud of Hinkey, but sports enthusiasts around the country should be aware of Hinkey. By playing on championship teams at the highest level in both baseball and football, Hinkey did something that no one else has ever done. While multiple sport athletes at the professional level are rare today, they were not unusual in Hinkeys’s time – yet Hinkey was the only one to play on championship teams in both baseball and football. More recently, Deion Sanders almost accomplished what Hinkey did, winning two NFL championships and playing in a World Series, but his team did not win the World Series.

So it is puzzling why Hinkey is not better known today. Not because he played on a team that won the World Series – that’s noteworthy, but hundreds of players have done that. Not because he helped lead his team to the NFL championship – that’s significant, but dozens of players have done that. But

because he did both – that’s unique, only one player has done that. So if there is such a thing as a “significant” trivia question, this is it: Who’s the only player to win both a World Series and an NFL championship? Hinkey Haines, a United Brethren layman from Red Lion PA. If an athlete today were to do what Hinkey did, imagine how the media and commercial world might respond! Certainly, that person would be more than an answer to a trivia question. More people should know about Hinkey Haines and the unique place he holds in American sports.

The decade of the 1920’s is known as the Roaring Twenties, and probably no place roared louder than New York City. To live in New York during this time must have been exciting, and to be part of the celebrity scene – and Hinkey was a celebrity – must have been incredible. By all accounts, Hinkey was outgoing and personable, popular not only with fans, but also with teammates. Among his friends, he counted not only athletes like Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig, but also people from the entertainment world such as Al Jolson and Jimmy Durante. In fact, later in life Hinkey was a member of the Actors Equity Association and appeared in summer stock productions and television commercials. Considering the things he accomplished and the people he associated with, Hinkey led a truly fascinating life.

The 1920’s is also known as the Golden Age of Sports, and sportswriters had a field day covering the great events and personalities of the day. Sometimes writers expressed their thoughts in the form of poetry, and though much of what they wrote sounds corny to us today, it was the style of the times. In 1926, a New York sportswriter wrote this:

Oh Hinkey Haines, oh Hinkey Haines!
The New York Giants’ football brains.
He never loses, always gains.
Oh Hinkey Haines, oh Hinkey Haines!

editor’s postscript: While this article may seem more appropriate for a sports magazine than a church history journal, it illustrates the powerful intersections with significance that are possible for each of us as we develop our God-given talents. There is no specific evidence that Hinkey Haines gave out spoken testimony to his personal faith, but one can’t help but believe that his United Brethren heritage showed itself in many ways – and that his quiet humility and high morals were an example to everyone he encountered, whether fellow super-star or ordinary fan.

Hinkey eventually worked for the government and was called out of retirement in suburban Philadelphia to go to Harrisburg to help process relief claims following the 1972 floods of hurricane Agnes. At age 73, and despite his well-deserved celebrity status, he still exhibited his same consistent efficiency and unassuming manner.

It is our prayer that Hinkey will prove to be only one of many Central Pennsylvania United Methodist laypersons who have taken and will continue to take their faith from the pew into the world and find themselves intersecting history.