



*This is one installment in a team effort by The Cleveland Fan, highlighting the top local sports figures by jersey number. Please weigh in with your thoughts on [the Boards](#) . And as David Letterman would say, “For entertainment purposes only; please, no wagering.”*

The #14 is one of the more storied digits in Cleveland Sports history. Both the Browns and the Indians have retired the number, the only number that shares that unique distinction. Unfortunately for Indians great Larry Doby, #14 adorned the jersey of one of the all-time greatest players in NFL history, Otto Graham. Doby actually deserves his own article, so I’m not going to rehash his remarkable career highlights here. Graham actually wore #60 for much of his career, but when the NFL standardized numbers in the manner we know today, Graham gave 60 to his good friend Bill Willis and took the only number in the teens that wasn’t already spoken for, #14.

When conducting my initial research for this article, I was blown away by Graham’s numbers and accomplishments. For starters, Graham played in a championship game every season as a professional; four in the AAFC and six in the NFL. He won seven of those games, a level of success not seen before that decade nor since. He made first-team All-Pro in nine of his ten seasons, making the 2<sup>nd</sup> team in 1950. He was the NFL MVP in 1951, 1953 and 1955. He was

one of the four QB's selected to the NFL 75  
1994, and if he's not on the 100  
th

th Anniversary team in

Anniversary team in 2019 it will be a crime. He's still the NFL's career leader in yards per attempt with an even 9.0. He was the Big 10 Player of the Year in both football and basketball in the same season. His career record as the Browns QB was a mind-boggling 114-20-4. That's literally just scratching the surface of his remarkable sports resume. But these accomplishments are easily found by entering Graham's name into Wikipedia or Google. I wanted to find a way to relate Graham to a new generation of Cleveland fans. Fans that know that Graham is one of the all-time greatest players in NFL history, but don't have the same memories of watching him as our fathers and grandfathers did.

While racking my brain of how to pay homage to this legend of Cleveland sports, I came across the website OttoGraham.net. The site is run by Graham's oldest son, Duey and provides Duey's e-mail address for contact in case people have questions about Otto. I decided to take a shot and send Duey an e-mail, not really knowing if he'd have the time or inclination to respond. Less than 2 hrs later, I had a reply to my e-mail that included a contact # for Duey and a time to call and talk with him. I called Duey the next day, and we talked for about an hour and 45 min about Otto Graham's playing and coaching career, and about what it was like to have Otto Graham as a father. Here are the highlights of that interview, lightly edited:

**I asked Duey if he thinks Otto is properly appreciated by this generation of football fans:**

*We've been involved with the Madden video game; they've got a Legends Division now and they give every player a value, and Dad's got the highest value of all the QBs. People are discovering him through that alone.*

*There's always comparisons to somebody; they were comparing Dad and Flacco because they're the only guys to lead their teams to the playoffs their first five years in the league. Dad or course did it six years, so if Flacco can do it again next year they'll be talking about it again.*







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