



The John Brodie career is winding down. It has been a big one---long, distinguished, historic. No other football player ever spent 17 consecutive seasons with the team that drafted him. And in another month it will all be over. Brodie has announced his retirement as of the end of this season.

At 38 he is about to move from the pocket to the pulpit. The veteran San Francisco quarterback has determined to spend next year in graduate work in Scientology—and the degree at the end of that road is D.D. (doctor of divinity).

Brodie has no desire to preach to the world. He just wants to help. The action arm of the Church of Scientology is Narconom; and these and football are now Brodie's three interests.

Narconom is a non-profit agency specializing in drug, alcohol and criminal rehabilitation. Individual pastoral counseling is the means of approach. And according to Brodie, the focus is on the individual confusions and problems that lead to abuses in the use of stimulants.

"I know I could play several more years of football," says the 49er star, whose fast release as a passer has protected him from the physical beatings that have shortened the careers of most quarterbacks. "But everybody's life is a matter of priorities, and for

John Brodie: Passer to Preacher

BY BOB OATES

the next year or so, starting right after the season, mine are Scientology and Narconom. I want the advanced training I need to be effective in this field. In 1974 I won't have time for football, but I will after that. I would like to keep a football connection indefinitely along with these other two things."

The National Football League is financing his 1974 scholarship at the school of Scientology—in a manner of speaking. Upon retirement from the 49ers Brodie will begin collecting on the financial settlement he made in 1968 when the NFL dissuaded him from jumping to an AFL team.

This has been estimated at nearly \$1 million. In addition, it has been estimated that

Brodie's San Francisco salary all these years has aggregated about another million.

If he is the first \$2 million player in football history, confirmation is lacking. He and the club deny it. The 49ers want to pay him more. They want him back next year, although they are reconciled to his decision.

Brodie's departure ends the 49ers' greatest era. He led them to their only three divisional titles in 1970-71-72 before giving way to younger quarterbacks this season in a move the club frankly labels "experimental" based on the prospect of a future without Brodie.

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His San Francisco records may never be equaled. One of the most accurate passers football has developed, the former Stanford quarterback has completed 55% of 4,000-plus NFL passes for more than 30,000 yards and 200 touchdowns.

He has done it with a flair identifying him as perhaps the league's most graceful athlete. Brodie is easy-going, unassertive, but affable if you know him. If you don't, you couldn't pick him out of the convention crowd in a hotel lobby. He has a slightly receding hairline but with longer hair he could be a 29-year-old golf pro—a career he once considered. He has played in the U.S. Open.

"For me," he says, "golf is out for a while. I'll have less time for it next year than I've had playing football. I don't like anything to interfere with what I give first priority."

Is there any chance for a change of priorities: one more season as a quarterback?

"I think everybody who knows me well knows there isn't," says Brodie, who will be playing in the Coliseum Sunday for the last time. "I wouldn't have announced my retirement if I hadn't meant it. I'm very much looking forward to my year of advanced courses in Scientology."

What led to your interest in this particular subject?

"It began several years ago when my arm was bothering me and I couldn't throw the football. In Scientology, the starting point is often medical consultation—with treatment by MDs—and the medication helped me for a while. But the body builds up a tolerance for medication and my arm didn't stay well. I moved on to the routine of spiritual consultation and my arm got better in a hurry and stayed that way. If it could do that for my arm, I began to realize what it could do for the rest of me."

As a practical matter, what do you plan to be doing in the Narconom program?

"I'd like to work with all ages in the schools and other places—person efficiency classes, things like that."

Doing what?

"Well, broadly speaking, the object of Scientology is to help an individual regain the abilities he hasn't been using. It concen-

trates on source things—the confusions and problems that interfere with life as you'd like to live it. Narconom is similar with respect to drug abuse. It attacks the confusions that make a guy want to leave reality. He wouldn't want to leave if he didn't have these problems. Narconom doesn't get into technologies. The idea is to help the guy clear up the confusions that keep him from enjoying reality."

What other NFL players have indicated an interest in the Scientology drug program?

"There are several who have been in contact with it, but I think they should speak for themselves."

Does football have a drug problem?

"Same answer. I don't think it's my business to discuss things like that. My interest is what I am personally going to do."

And on that subject, you think you can combine careers in Scientology and football.

"Yes, football has given me everything I have in a material way. I love it. I'm a football addict."

After your playing career is over, what aspect of the game do you want to get into?

"You know what the options are. I'm not excluding anything. I couldn't coach next year, but that's the only exclusion."

Is it a different game than it was when you started 17 years ago? From your point of view,

does pro football seem to be a game with several well-defined eras?

"Not really. It's different than it was in the 1950s but it's not a lot more complicated. The defenses, of course, are more effective. They do more things now, but you would expect that. They're not really more complicated. The big difference—the real difference—is in the players. They're a hell of a lot better than they were in the 50s."

So how do you keep up with them now?

"I'm better now, too. I had to improve to survive."

Apparently you disagree with those who say the NFL has become a defensive league.

"This has always been a game of defense. Look who's won the championships over the years. I haven't been aware of a defensive trend—but I'm sure aware there are better players now. I don't mean they've improved gradually like everything else in the world. They are almost a new breed of player."

What accounts for this?

"I'm sure it's related first of all to the pay structure. Sure, it's a game and it's fun and all that, but the income is so good you

want to stay in football and keep making money year after year. So you take care of yourself the year round. This makes you last longer, and with more experience every season you get pretty good. This is a league with a lot of 10-year men now. When I came in, there weren't many. That's the kind of difference I've noticed in my time in football.

In your time, who is the best quarterback you've seen?

"I don't like to make judgments of that kind. I've been around five or six standout quarterbacks: Bart Starr, Y.A. Tittle, Sonny Jurgensen, Joe Namath, Roman Gabriel, when he had those two or three super years in Los Angeles; Fran Tarkenton has to be considered; so does John Hadl."

What do you look for in a great quarterback?

"Consistency over a period of time. The question is, who played the longest? The only other question is, how do they play for him? A great quarterback is one who makes his group work, makes them go. The only thing that counts is effectiveness."

Is there one best style for a quarterback?

"The great ones have all

had their own style. If you're a young quarterback, I'd say that unless you develop a personal style, you may never be a

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great quarterback. Of the teams you've seen or played on in the last 17 years, do you have one you'd take against any other?

"My most memorable year was 1965—and the 49ers that year were the best team I've seen. The backs were John David Crow and Ken Willard. John David is the best back I've played with. The receivers were Bernie Casey, Dave Parks and Monte Stickles. As a group there has been none better. Casey had a ton of talent. John Thomas, one of our guards that year, is the best I've seen. In fact, all five members of the offensive line that year played in the Pro Bowl."

As I recall, 1965 wasn't a good year in San Francisco. That was five years before your first title.

"We were barely over 500 in 1965, 7-6-1 I think. We scored 28 points or more in three different games that year and lost all three."

Who was the coach?

"Jack Christiansen, but I'm not casting aspersions on anybody. It happens that way in football sometimes."

The Brodie era has roughly spanned the era of John Unitas, who is also retiring this year—along with Dick Butkus, maybe, and several others. It's a coincidence that so many should be departing at this time. What do you remember from your first year?

"I also came in with some good names. In 1957, in fact, I was drafted ahead of Jim Brown—but after Jon Arnett. The class of 1957 might have been the best rookie class the NFL has had."

Who else came up with you that year?

"Del Shofner, Tommy McDonald, Jack Pardee, Abe Woodson. There were five quarterbacks: Paul Hornung, Len Dawson, Sonny Jurgensen, Milt Plum and myself. Jim Parker, considered the all-time guard. Don Shinnick, John Gordy, George Stru-