

**“THE DUKE” RETURNS TO THE GRIDIRON
IN HONOR OF PRO FOOTBALL HALL OF FAME WELLINGTON MARA**

Wilson Sporting Goods and the NFL announce release of new NFL game football

CHICAGO, IL—**March 28, 2006**—Wilson Sporting Goods and the NFL have announced the return of “The Duke,” the first re-branding of the league’s official football since 1969. Effective May 1, 2006, the “Official NFL Game Ball” will become “The Duke” in honor of football legend Wellington “Duke” Mara. Mara, who passed away last October at the age of 89, dedicated 81 years to the New York Giants as an administrator, owner and unwavering booster.

In 1940, heeding the advice of influential team owners Tim Mara of the New York Giants and George Halas of the Chicago Bears, the NFL selected Wilson as the league’s official football supplier. The following year, Wilson introduced a redesigned football and named it “The Duke” in honor of Mara’s son, Wellington. The Duke stayed in play for nearly three decades until the NFL and AFL merged in 1969.

“The Duke” is back, says Chris Considine, President of Wilson. “Reintroducing “The Duke” reminds us of the NFL and Wilson heritage, and it reaffirms our commitment to providing the NFL with world’s finest game football.”

“The Duke” is being crafted by skilled workers at the Wilson Football Factory in Ada, Ohio—the world’s only dedicated football factory. In terms of design, construction and performance, “The Duke” is identical to the previous NFL game football. Players and fans, however, will see major changes from a distance. The NFL logo has vanished, making room for the NFL shield, and “The Duke” name. The new Wilson NFL official game ball “The Duke” will hit stores this fall, just in time for football season.

Chicago-based Wilson Team Sports Company, a division of Amer Sports, is one of the world’s leading manufacturers of sports equipment. The company designs, manufactures and distributes advanced equipment that helps players improve performance. Wilson’s core categories include Football, Basketball, Baseball, Softball, Bats, Volleyball, Soccer, Youth Sports, Uniforms/Apparel, Golf, Footwear, and Racquet Sports (Tennis, Racquetball, Squash, Badminton and Platform Tennis).

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