

## **Jurgensen, Christian Adolph "Sonny"** <sup>[1]</sup>

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By Kelly Agan, N.C. Government & Heritage Library, 2015

**23 Aug. 1934 --**



Photograph of Sonny Jurdensen circa 1975. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

<sup>[2]</sup>Christian Adolph Jurgensen was born on August 23, 1934 in Wilmington, North Carolina. Known as Sonny, the colorful character and once redheaded Jurgensen is considered one of the best all time quarterback passers in professional football history.

Jurgensen got his start in sports as a multi-talented high school athlete at New Hanover High School in the 1940s and 1950s. He played baseball, basketball, football, and tennis before attending Duke University where he joined the varsity football team in 1954 as a defensive back. He became starting quarterback in 1955 and led the team to the Orange Bowl the same year.

He signed on to the Philadelphia Eagles as a 4<sup>th</sup> round draft pick in 1957 and played there for seven seasons until he was traded to the Redskins for quarterback Norm Sneed in 1964. Jurgenson spent the next 11 years with the Redskins, helping to change the team's fortunes and image beginning in the 1969 season under coach Vince Lombardi.

Nicknamed "Red Roach", Jurgensen's success as a quarterback did not come from running ability. Instead, he achieved legendary status by his arm strength and pin point accuracy in passing. He was able to throw and drop tight spirals on target and by career's end he had chalked up an astounding 57% pass completion rate. Reluctantly forced into retirement in 1975 by the Redskins at age 41, Sonny Jurgensen had logged some 32,000 yards in passing (more than 18 miles) and 255 touchdowns, securing him numerous honors and accolades. His number, "9", was retired along with him. He then began a successful and enduring career in sportscasting, beginning with CBS and then as color commentator for the Redskins Radio Network beginning in 1980.

Jurgensen was inducted into the North Carolina Sports Hall of Fame in 1971 and the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1983. And in 2004 he was added to the Wilmington Walk of Fame. The 2015 season marks Jurgensen's 35<sup>th</sup> in the radio booth calling plays for the Redskins.

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## Subjects:

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