

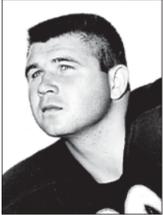
Mike Ditka played six seasons with the Bears and revolutionized the tight end position. GETTY PHOTO

## Ditka and the Bears BY BRAD BIGGS | Tribune reporter

### 1960s - 70s

**Dec. 27, 1960:** Bears selected Mike Ditka with the fifth overall pick in the draft.

**1961 season:** Had 56 receptions and scored 12 touchdowns, helping revolutionize a position that previously had been known for blocking. Earned rookie of the year honors and was selected to the Pro Bowl.



**1963 season:** Caught 59 passes for the championship team, the club's last before the 1985 season.

**1964 season:** Made 75 receptions to set a record for the position that stood until 1980.

**Dec. 18, 1966:** Played in his final game as a Bear at Wrigley Field, catching one pass for 14 yards in a 41-28 victory over the Vikings.

**April 26, 1967:** Owner-coach George Halas traded Ditka to the Eagles for quarterback Jack Concannon apparently because of a pay dispute.

**Jan. 27, 1969:** Traded to the Cowboys.

**1973:** After four seasons as a player for the Cowboys, he began his coaching career as an assistant for them.

### 1980s

**Jan. 20, 1982:** Halas hired him to coach the Bears.

**Dec. 30, 1984:** Led Bears to first playoff victory since 1963 with a 23-19 win over the Redskins.

**Jan. 2, 1985:** Michael McCaskey announced Ditka's new three-year contract in the week leading up to the NFC championship game, a loss to the 49ers. "It's the only thing I've ever wanted to do in my life," Ditka said. "... Mr. Halas made the decision, and I thank God he made it. I'm sure a lot of people doubted the decision."

**Jan. 26, 1986:** Led the Bears to a decisive romp in Super Bowl XX over the Patriots, capping one of the finest seasons in NFL history. The Bears set seven records in the game.

**Jan. 11, 1988:** Set to return with another new contract after the team won its fourth consecutive division title, Ditka said, "I don't think there's anybody better suited in America to coach the Chicago Bears than me."

**July 30, 1988:** Became the first tight end enshrined in the Pro Football Hall of Fame.



Super Bowl XX champions TRIBUNE PHOTO

### 1990s - present

**Dec. 8, 1991:** Won his 100th regular-season game as coach with a 27-13 victory over the Packers at Soldier Field.

**Dec. 27, 1992:** Bears lost 27-14 in season finale of 5-11 campaign.

It was just the third losing season under Ditka and second since his first year in the strike-shortened 1982 season.

**Jan. 5, 1993:** Fired after 11 seasons as coach. "I'll try to do this with class," Ditka said. "Scripture tells you that all things shall pass. This, too, shall pass. I was blessed. ... Players make it happen. ... The Bears will come back. Mike Ditka will survive."

**Sept. 22, 2004:** Bears unveiled a 26 1/2-foot tall bas-relief sculpture in the west concourse of Soldier Field honoring the team's tradition. Curiously absent was Ditka while Sid Luckman, Gale Sayers, Dick Butkus and others were honored.

**May 23, 2013:** The Tribune learned the Bears will honor Ditka by retiring his jersey No. 89 during a ceremony at the Dec. 9 game against the Cowboys at Soldier Field.



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