



HAMILTON CELEBRATES CENTENNIAL WITH GREY CUP

By Brian Snelgrove

The country was in the throes of a centennial celebration and the Hamilton Tiger-Cats were putting together one of the most impressive seasons in their long and storied history. The year was 1967 and Bobby Gimby had Canadians singing “Ca-na-da” from coast-to-coast. Hamilton and their fans celebrated the national bash as the Tiger-Cats won the 55th Grey Cup by a lopsided score of 24-1 over Saskatchewan.

The Tiger-Cats finished the regular season in top spot in the East with a record of 10-4. They knocked off the Ottawa Rough Riders by a combined 37-3 in the two-game total point Eastern Final to advance to the Grey Cup against the Western ‘Riders. In one of the stingiest stretches of defense in CFL history, Hamilton, incredibly, didn’t surrender a single touchdown in their final six contests. The team boasted some of the best players in Tiger-Cat history including John Barrow, Angelo Mosca, Garney Henley, Herb Paterra, Tommy Joe Coffey, Bob Krouse, Billy Ray Locklin, Smokey Stover, Willie Bethea, Hal Patterson, Joe Zuger, Dave Fleming, Dave Viti, Ellison Kelly, Ted Watkins, Ron Brewer and Tommy Grant.

“We started off the season a little slow but gained momentum as the year went on,” says Krouse who resides in Grimsby, Ontario. “Ralph (Sazio) was a different type of coach. He was very defensive-oriented. We had a lot of different defenses and it was a lot of fun.

“There weren’t as many guys on a team back then,” Krouse adds. “It was tighter and guys contributed more. It was a great team. Playing with guys like Hal Patterson and Garney Henley. It was an unbelievable season. As for the Grey Cup, Krouse says, “It was a tough game. We were in control. What they were doing wasn’t working. I know Lancaster and some of their guys were very frustrated. Once we got our offence going, Zuger got us going and we were ok.”

“I remember the field was brutal,” says 1967 Grey Cup MVP Joe Zuger. “We tried broomball shoes but when you tried to cut the rubber would peel off the shoes. We had

a lot of good guys on that team. Dave Fleming was something else. He was a real motivator. Garney Henley was a gentleman. A great football player and a great person. He and Hal Patterson were very much alike.

“It was different in those days,” adds Zuger, who has lived at the top of Hamilton mountain since 1965. “When (Jim) Trimble hired me he said ‘the more you can do, the better chance you got.’ That motivated me to play both offense and defense and kick. I took a lot of pride in that. I also remember our string of victories (six) at the end of the season.”

“We had 12 players and all worked as one unit,” says former running back Willie Bethea, who still lives in Hamilton. “The other teams couldn’t beat us. We shared the ball with the receivers and backs and used our running backs to catch a lot of passes. We all participated – Zuger, Henley, Dave Fleming, Dick Cohee, to name a few.

“Saskatchewan was a good team. They had George Reed. He did everything. Lancaster was good in the West but I think our defense was just too tough.”

“We had a heckuva team in those days,” Bethea adds. “We thought we could go undefeated.”

“It was very cold, says Dave Fleming of the ‘67 Grey Cup. “We couldn’t figure out what shoes to wear. There was solid ice just below the surface. Ed Chalupka had the best idea – he just wore regular cleats. The cold weather didn’t stop us. Saskatchewan was one of the best teams I ever played against. They didn’t make mistakes. They played the game with no cheap shots and no yapping back and forth. If you made a mistake you paid for it. I remember Ralph (Sazio) said, ‘We’ll give them one point and that’s it.’ He turned out to be right.



“The ‘67 team was the best team defensively I played for in Hamilton,” adds Fleming who spent 10 seasons with the Ticats. “Our defense was scary. Mosca and I were room-mates for nine seasons.”

“I came out of retirement that year,” says Ron Brewer. “Mosca and Tommy Joe Coffey said to Sazio, ‘If you want to win the Grey Cup, sign Ron Brewer and he did, Brewer adds with a laugh. He turned out to be right. We lost our first game. We didn’t want to lose any games. There was a good camaraderie and a mature respect on that team. Ralph was a good coach. I enjoyed him immensely.

“I’d spent ten years in the league and nothing was going to get in the way of us winning the Grey Cup,” adds Brewer who now lives in Burlington. I played middle guard and linebacker in that game. I don’t think Saskatchewan had any idea who they were playing. That ‘67 team was a perfect balance. If somebody went down there was always somebody else to step in.”

Both the 1957 and 1967 Grey Cup Champion Tiger-Cat teams will be honoured at Hamilton’s home game against the Toronto Argonauts on September 30.

Brian Snelgrove is a life-long fan of the CFL and has written extensively for the CFL, the CFL Alumni Association, the Hamilton Tiger-Cats as well as the Official Grey Cup magazine.