

UNB Football Remembered: They say big boys don't cry

Editor's Note: The opinions and comments expressed in this story are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the view of the Brunswickan or its publisher.

By RICHARD RILEY

"It was a cool crisp Sunday that November, 1969 at St. Mary's University Stadium in Halifax. It was one of those days quietly reserved for catching up on assignments or watching Patriots Football. We were a Midget football team from Moncton playing a local team for the Maritime crown. Our Al Charuk - Bob Forbes powered team squeaked out a 6-0 victory. Nevertheless, the circumstances that stuck most in my mind was up on the scoreboard: McGill 22, UNB 7."

Now, some thirteen years later, football remains silent on the UNB campus. Saturday afternoon sporting events now consist of field hockey, soccer and rugby. These events will never, in the thickest sense of the word, replace the pounding of football helmets and boisterous crowds so common over the years at College field. It was like throwing a dark cloud over a whole tradition, then when the cloud lifts, nothing remains except fond memories.

Where else can over one-half of the university community gather for a single event? Where else can alumni gather and rekindle old tales? Where else can the citizens of Fredericton gather in mass to support a UNB event? When football was axed, it severed a distinct relationship with students, alumni and all involved.



The glory days of football at UNB in the late sixties and early seventies reached dramatic heights. Two successive Atlantic Bowl appearances in 1969 and 1970 put UNB on the map as a national powerhouse. However, these aspirations fell to the wayside as McGill and Ottawa respectively dealt blows to the Red Bombers in their quest for national honors.

Then head football coach Dan Underwood lured top athletes into his highly recognized program. Names like Tony Proudfoot, Earl Johnson, Rick Kaupp, Peter Merrill and the Flynn brothers, Dick and Mike, drew capacity crowds to College Field. According to unpublished reports, upwards of ninety players would dress for home games.

Some will still recall the famous 10-10 tie against St.F.X. Both grandstands were jammed with fans and other, 5

and 6 deep, lines all away around the field. It is rather ironic that St. F.X. head coach Don Loney was assisted by a brilliant defensive specialist from Michigan named Jim Born.

In the year 1971, Jim Born succeeded Dan Underwood as football mentor. The first few years of his reign were disasters. Top recruits like John Malcolm and John Giles never panned out. It was not until 1975-76 that Born began to lure top recruits. Stewart Fraser former two-time All-Canadian now tailing with Saskatchewan Roughriders, Terry Crippotos, John Kalina and Dave Kelly among others turned Bomber hopes into conference recognitions.

In 1977, they took a 5-1 record into the final home game only to be wiped out by Acadia. More top recruits began to see UNB as a top

football school. Mike MacIntyre, now with Hamilton Tiger Cats, Chuck Proudfoot, Greg Didur, Greg Clarke and Phil Charron were lured to UNB. Add a Marty Arsenault, Mike Washburn and UNB's last season, 1980, should have been a conference championship.

Why did UNB miss the big road to Halifax in 1979 and 1980? Coach Born will tell you why - lack of money to run a top-notch program.

What is meant by a top notch program? The answer is full time assistant coaches employed 12 months of the year.

Coach Born took his plan to Mal Early, athletic director. Early and Born verbally fought it out and in the end, Born resigned as head coach. A lot of people scorned at the coach for his ploy, or was it a ploy at all. Mal Early was sick and

tired of all the accusations and decided for his own interest to cut football altogether.

In April, 1981 a press conference was held and football died on the spot. Perfect timing it was, for students, in the midst of exams, had little time to revolt and moreover, no time at all to consult alumni, sponsors and student senators. To make matters worse, this past summer, all the equipment, sweaters and jackets were sold to finally nail the football coffin shut.

Football player rowdiness or whatever, the bottom line was still money, a concept that quite cannot be bought by certain followers. Just look around campus - a new athletic field, new paved roads, and for those who consider alcohol more important than athletics a new Social Club at a cost of anywhere from \$150-\$300,000.

To further the point on ridiculous spending, the UNB student council 1981-82 under Gerard Finnan, Sue Lynch and Andy Young proposed a \$10 increase in student fees. This additional revenue would go to promote "cultural" entertainment on campus. The planned fiasco would raise SRC revenue \$50,000. Together with \$311,000 already taken in year 1981-82, this would bring the total revenue to \$361,000.

Suppose 10% of SRC revenue went into "The UNB Football Club," who held meetings and formulated a designed constitution. This amount comes to \$36,000. The university might decide to pony up a minute \$15,000. The gate receipts at 2,000 students a game, (4 games) at \$2 a head brings this total to \$16,000 concessions, pubs, alumni, sponsorships, etc. could amount to \$10,000. This brings the total to \$76,000 thus putting the game back into focus.

Questions, however, still remain at large. What do the students want to do with their \$40 SRC fee? Does the Social Club really have to spend all that money? Would Mal Early or Coach Born even look at a new proposal?

The emotional aspect is what makes the game worthwhile. In the tragic 33-32 loss to Acadia in 1979, big 6'3" 230 lb. George West was seen after the game behind the LBR with tears streaming down his face. The game itself had UNB up 32-3 at the start of the 4th quarter. Acadia rallied to win and went on to become Canadian champs. It was a tragedy right out of Shakespearean Drama. It is war that has sorrowfully been missed the last two years at College Field.

They say football will never come back to UNB. They also said Big Boys Don't Cry.

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