



By DEAN GOODMAN

It was a "struggle through the game", as Western head coach Larry Haylor put it, but the Mustangs managed to come out on top of Acadia, winning the 1986 Atlantic Bowl 29-22.

Terry Baker, the Axemen's kicker, started Acadia off on the right foot when he booted the opening kickoff into the Western end zone for a single point. A first series sack for the Axemen and the interception by Western of James Price's first pass set the tone of the defensive first quarter. An outstanding performance by Acadia punter Terry Baker was the highlight of the early going. Baker's punts and constant pressure on Mustang's punter Jeff Crews, kept Western in poor field position while dropped passes and crucial penalties stopped them from sustaining any sort of drive.

With under two minutes left in the first quarter, Western broke it open when running back Rob Stewart broke away from the Acadia defence and ran the ball 69 yards for a touchdown. With the successful convert, the Mustangs took the lead 7-1.

Acadia regained the lead early in the second quarter. After a long scramble, Acadia quarterback Mark Price found Paul Hitchcock for a twenty yard gain. Two successive Western penalties moved the ball inside the five yard line. Price then connected with Paul Masotti in the end zone for the touchdown giving Acadia the lead 8-7.

Later in the second quarter, a 46 yard run by Blake Marshall put Western deep in Axemen territory. However, a strong performance by Acadia's defence forced Western to settle for the field goal and a 10-8 lead.

A few series later, Acadia's defense came through again with a big sack. On the following play, a rush by the special teams forced a bad punt and Acadia took over in good field position. A pass to Paul Hitchcock set up a 43 yard field goal by Baker which brought the score to 11-10 Acadia.

In the waning seconds of the first half, Western came to life. After having one pass dropped by a wide open David Grace, Mustangs' quarterback Steve Samways converted on third and three and threw a strike to tight end Time Spriel; putting the ball inside the Acadia ten. With only fourteen seconds remaining,

Western assaults Acadia

David Sapunjis scampered for the touchdown. The teams went into the half with Western leading 17-11.

The Axemen came storming back in the second half when they took possession inside the Western 40 yard line. Halifax native David McDowell blocked a Mustangs punt. Unfortunately, Acadia was unable to move the ball and had to settle for a 36 yard field goal to bring the score to 17-14. A missed field goal by Western a short time later brought the score to 18-14.

After a long punt return by Sapunjis was nullified due to a clipping call, an interference call set up a touchdown run Blake Marshall. This brought the score to 25-14 and the Mustangs never looked back.

Marshall Rushes for MVP with 193 yards

One missed and one made field goal rounded out the Mustang's scoring. Acadia got one last gasp when Western failed to run out the clock, turning the ball over to Acadia at their own 2 yard-line with one second left in the game. A touchdown pass to Paul Masotti and a successful two point conversion made the final score Western 29, Acadia 22.

Blake Marshall, who rushed 24 times for 193 yards and one touchdown was named Atlantic Bowl MVP. Marshall was an imposing

force, literally running over the Acadia defense on several occasions. Late in the game however, Marshall was injured on a rush up the middle. When asked why he left Marshall in the game, coach Haylor said he felt the game was "still up for grabs" and that he had "to go with the best people". The coach believed the injury was nothing more than an aggravated charley horse but the team doctor had not reached a conclusion on what the injury was.

Acadia played a good game themselves. The defense stopped the Mustangs several times in their own territory. The special teams played a good game, blocking a punt, often trapping Western in their own end, and giving up only one long punt return. The offense played sporadically turning the ball over four times and gaining only 173 net yards.

The difference between the two teams was the ability of Western to break the big play. Long runs by Marshall and Stewart put Western in control. Acadia was unable to make the big gain which could have changed the outcome.

After the game Western was subdued. The coach explained they were "down because we're hurt". The Western Mustangs will take on the UBC Thunderbirds, who defeated the Bishop's Gaiters 32-30 in the Central Bowl, in the Vanier Cup next Saturday in Ontario.

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