

A Special Celebration on Homecoming...

A Golden Anniversary for an Unbeaten Season

By Ralph Hyman '52

In 1952, Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower was elected President of the United States, swamping Adlai Stevenson. Msgr. Fulton J. Sheen was voted TV Man of the Year. Richard Widmark and Marilyn Monroe starred in "Don't Bother to Knock". A sex operation made Mr. Jorgenson, a former GI named George, a miss called Christine.

And at the River Campus in Rochester, NY, the University of Rochester football team recorded its first of two undefeated seasons under former Purdue head coach Elmer Burnham. The other was in 1958.

Coincidentally, Burnham came to UR after an unbeaten season in 1943 at Purdue. His team won nine in a row, including six in the Big Ten and tied for first in the conference. In his only other season with the Boilermakers they won only one and dropped eight in 1942.

Burnham's explanation for leaving the big time for a quiet serious academic campus was that he didn't care much for the pressure to win nor the high-powered alumni clubs.

Did he find contentment at UR? He coached here for 17 seasons, from 1944 to 1961.

Burnham had a son, Bobby, whom he encouraged not to come to UR for fear of rumor of nepotism. So instead, Bobby enrolled at Oberlin, where he starred on the football team.

What were some of the elements in UR's 8-0 season in 1952?

"This was a group of men who really bonded with each other," said Don Bardell, a Little All-American selection at guard. "Before each game, we got together and simply said, 'Let's go do it!'"

Another key element, although he'd be the last to admit it, was Bardell himself. This was an athlete of unusual ability. He originally entered Syracuse but was injured his freshman year and decided he wanted to play ball in his hometown. And he, like the other members of the 1952 team, was a classroom star, too. After graduation, he enlisted in the Marine Corps, where he served three years. That was followed by law school at Georgetown and eventually counsel for the National Labor Relations Board.

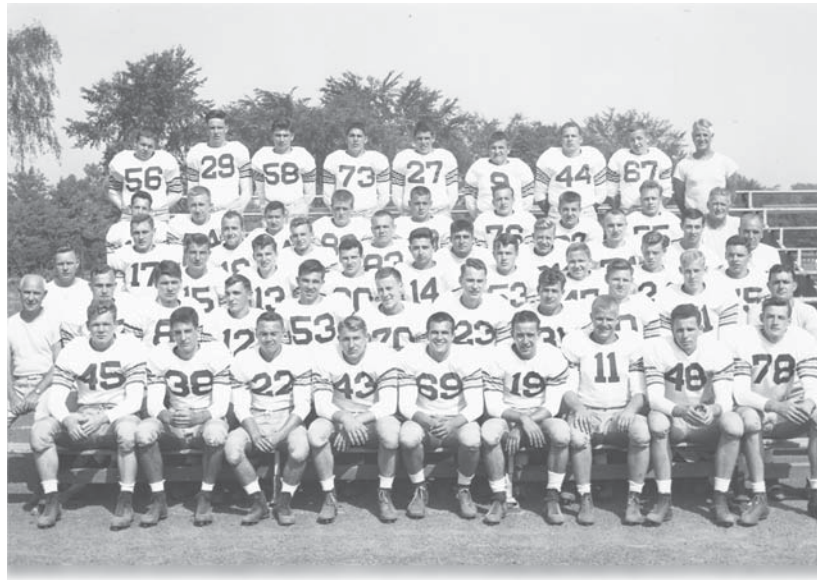
Then there was Billy Secor, Mr. Excitement from Newfane, NY. Secor weighed 150 pounds with shoes, helmet, and equipment. He was 5-foot-8 on his tippy toes. Yet Burnham was so sold on his ability, he played safety, halfback, and end.

Secor generated enough electricity to light up Rush Rhees Library. He was also a brash, tough hombre who would occasionally taunt an opponent before leaving him semi-conscious on the ground. "I figured out early it didn't make any difference how big the enemy was nor how big I was," he said. "You hit him hard and low in the ankles and they all fall down."

There was all sorts of other talent: tackle Jim Brennan, guard Bill Seeler, halfbacks Bill Sharp and Dick Devereaux, a freshman; fullback Jimmy Ging, quarterbacks Ray Hasenhauer and Jim Burkley; Tommy Gibbons and Bruce Moses; Joe Stampfli and Harry Akulian. The list goes on and on.

And, of course, an extraordinary coach, who had already proven himself in the Big Ten. "Burnham was an offensive genius," relates Bardell. "He knew our '52 team had no pass threat. So he installed a 'B formation' where all four backs would line up in a row, two backs would block and the two guards, Seeler, and I, would pull. We would open gaping holes."

The writer had a 38-year career at Gannett Rochester Newspapers, as reporter, sports editor, and copy editor. He and his wife, Norma '55, have a married son and two grandsons.



FIRST ROW: J. Brennan, R. Von der Heide, W. Secor, W. Seeler, D. Bardell, M. Gallagher, W. Sharp, D. Hyde, J. Stampfli. SECOND ROW: John Sullivan (asst. coach), W. Cook, J. Kirchner, E. Faust, J. Healy, J. Ging, R. Diefendorf, M. Petrilli, P. Curwen, J. Armstrong, Charles Bambace (asst. coach). THIRD ROW: Cliff MacLeod (trainer), T. Gibbons, R. O'Mara, R. MacDonald, J. Hilbert, R. Dennison, E. Lewis, B. Bower, E. Mehrhoff. FOURTH ROW: R. Devereaux, B. Moses, J. Burkley, C. Musgrave, D. River, R. Dewar, D. Gay, Robert Mathieu (asst. manager). FIFTH ROW: W. Jennings, B. MacPherson, H. Akulian, J. Cianciosi, C. Garnsey, R. Nagel, D. Bartlett, R. Granger, Paul Bitgood (line coach). SIXTH ROW: K. Lasher, D. Brady, R. Zappia, W. Keller, T. Keller, G. Barron, R. Friedlander, H. Skehan, Elmer Burnham (head coach).

In This Case, the Son Knew Best...

Elmer Burnham was inducted into the UR Sports Hall of Fame, posthumously, in 1992. Bob Burnham accepted the award for his dad and told a brief story.

As the Burnham family drove eastward from West Lafayette, IN to Rochester, they stopped at Oberlin College. They looked over the football field and Elmer explained that these are the kind of fields his new school would be playing on, rather than the stadiums in the Big Ten.

"I know there are a lot of you guys from the unbeaten '52 team in the audience tonight," Bob told the Hall of Fame crowd in 1992. "I enrolled at Oberlin. I got behind your defense twice but dropped two sure touchdown passes. I had as much to do with you guys being unbeaten as you did."

The crowd roared.

With Complete Domination on Both Sides of the Ball, This Truly W



With the University of Rochester footballers coming off an impressive 1951 campaign in which they had a 7-1 record Coach Elmer H. Burnham knew his team was still on the rise. That's one of the reasons he starred on his own television show "Football Highlights with Elmer Burnham" in which he talked about his team as well as their foes.

Coach had a solid squad that included 21 returning letterwinners from the stellar 1951 team.

Sept. 27:

Rochester 27

Kings Point 7

Rochester, NY - In front of 4,500 fans on "Rochester Day" the Rivermen put together a team

effort and crushed the Mariners. UR's 21 returning letterwinners and its home field advantage helped give the team a slight advantage. Credit strong line play that opened big holes for running backs Bill Secor and Dick Devereaux, fullback Jimmy Ging and gaved starting quarterback Ray Hasenhauer plenty of protection. Burnham's men also capitalized on the Mariner's first half blunders. A fumble, blocked punt and an interception helped UR on its road to victory. The interception was by right guard Bill Seeler who ran 45 yards for the TD.

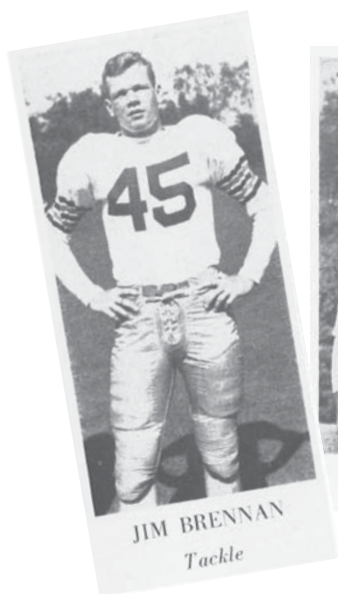
October 4:

Rochester 12,

Williams 7

Williamstown, MA - The Yellowjackets boarded a train with nothing else on their minds except upsetting one of the stronger teams on their schedule. Coach Burnham incorporated a new offense called the "spread open formation." The new offense proved effective as fullback Bill Sharp and the "little guy from Burt," NY, Bill Secor, found the back of the end zone enroute to victory. Bruce Moses and Bobby Dewar settled down the Rochester defense after an early strike from Williams and totally shut down the Williams offense in the second half.

After the victory, The Quarterback Club of Rochester named Bill Sharp "Outstanding



JIM BRENNAN
Tackle



DICK DEVEREAUX
Halfback

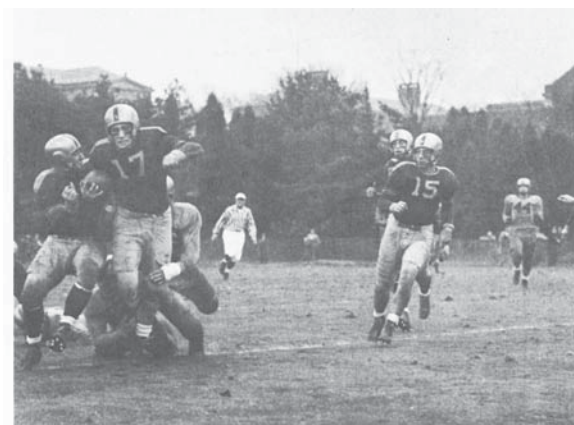


BILL SEELER
Guard

YELLOWJACKET COACHING STAFF



Left to right—Charles Bamhace, assistant coach; Elmer Burnham, head coach; Paul Bitgood, line coach; John Sullivan, freshman coach.



Freshman back Devereaux fights for extra yardage.

Was A Perfect Season

By Chris Johnston '04

Backfield Man of the Week" and Varsity Captain Don Bardell was named "Outstanding Lineman of the Week." What may have been the biggest reward for the entire team was when they arrived at New York Central Station. Hundreds of students were there waiting to congratulate them on their big victory. After the announcement, "Rochester football special now arriving on track five," the UR crowd went wild.

The team played so well that when Coach Burnham was asked to identify the outstanding player of the game he answered, "Those boys played their hearts out out there. I couldn't single out anybody..."

October 11: Rochester 27, Union 14

Rochester, NY – A packed house of 6,000 fans cheered the Rivermen on their way to a huge victory. Once again, Dick Devereaux, Bill Sharp and Bill Secor ran all over the defense including a flawless triple reverse

to highlight the victory. The Sharp to Secor to Devereaux connection got the ball down to the two yard line before Devereaux found the back of the end zone. Tommy Gibbons also had a strong game scoring two touchdowns. Fullback Harry Akulian and Bill Enyder landed in the end zone for a touchdown as well. The Rivermen totally dominated the Dutchmen by rushing for 250 yards compared to Union's 110 and getting 16 first downs compared to 9 first downs from Union.

October 18:

Rochester 12

Vermont 7

Rochester, NY – Strong line play and a strong running game have helped Rochester earn victory after victory. Vermont used an overwhelming first half to put a scare on the undefeated record of the Rivermen, but in the end the 4,500 fans that crammed Fauver Stadium saw UR squeak out another victory. For the third straight game Bill Sharp had a touchdown, but the deciding touchdown was a 47-yard run by Tommy Gibbons. The deciding TD came after Burnham abandoned his "open formation" for the standard T offense. A roughing the quarterback call also gave UR the spark they needed to overtake Vermont.

October 25:

Rochester 41

Rensselaer 14

Troy, NY – Domination was the key word for this game. Rochester

ran off to a 34-0 lead at halftime.. Six different players scored for UR including Bill Sharp who made it four straight games with a TD. Others who scored were Dick Devereaux, Bill Secor, Harry Akulian, Eddie Merhoff, and Jim Burkley. As a team, Rochester gained 322 yards on the ground compared to RPI's 84.

November 1:

Rochester 34

Oberlin College 13

Oberlin, OH – For the second straight week the Rivermen dominated their opponent. Rochester used the momentum it gained from the RPI game and carried it on through against the Yeomen. When it was all said and done Rochester had 369 yards rushing, 16 first downs, and they only needed 5 yards passing to overtake Oberlin. Up to this point in the season nobody could stop full back Bill Sharp and the Yeomen could not stop him either. He gathered two more touchdowns to add on to touchdowns by Tommy Gibbons, Jim Burkley and Dick Devereaux.

November 8:

Rochester 33

Hamilton 6

Rochester, NY – As the visions of an undefeated season started to come into mind the Rivermen did not show any let down against Hamilton. 5,000 loyal fans showed up to watch the "elusive and hard-hitting backs." The trio of Dick Devereaux, Tommy

Gibbons and Bill Secor trampled the visiting team with Gibbons scoring two touchdowns, Devereaux and Secor scoring once. Halfback Eddie Merhoff capped off the game with a touchdown in the fourth quarter. The offensive line of Joe Stampfli, Captain Don Bardell and Jim Brennan had a "ginger peachy" game, according to published reports.

November 15:

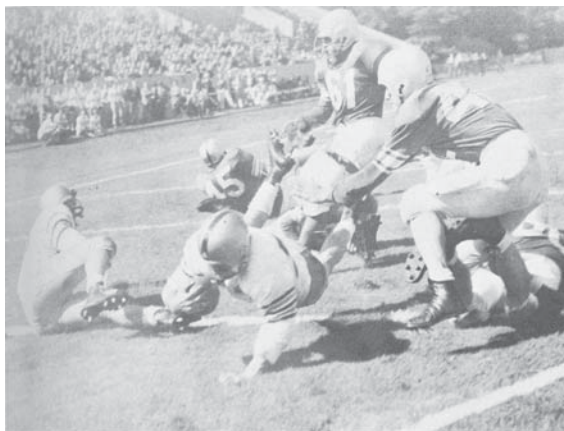
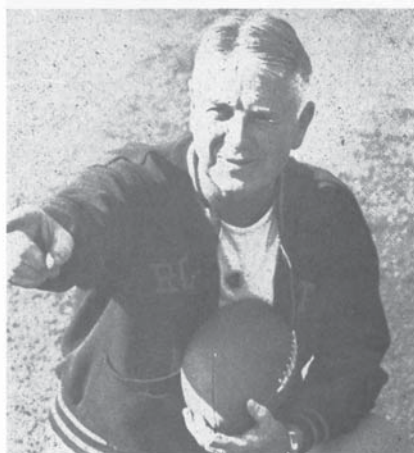
Rochester 38

Allegheny 0

Rochester, NY – All that was standing in the way of the Rivermen and an undefeated season was a football team from Erie, Pennsylvania. Fauver Stadium was pumping with excitement as 7,000 students, alumni and Rochesterians cheered on their team to the largest victory of the season. A number of names highlighted the game including Tommy Gibbons who had TD runs of 33 yards, 60 yards, and 22 yards. Dick Devereaux was not to be out done so he tacked on one touchdown run and also a touchdown pass to Bob Vander Heide. The third runner from the famous trio, Bill Secor, added an interception and a touchdown. Captain and guard Don Bardell had two fumble recoveries. The offensive line was what sealed the game, Bill Seeler, Joe Stampfli and Jim Brennan kept the Allegheny defense off the ball.

Coach Burnham was correct when he believed that his team had a lot of momentum going into this season. With the help of the Rochester community, the students, and the alumni gathered around the only college football team in the city of Rochester and definitely were not disappointed.

Yellowjackets' Coach



The first touchdown of the undefeated season.

Program Credits

This special supplement honoring the 1952 football team was produced by the University's Sports Information Office.

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Those Were Days of Flag Rush and the Charleston...

By Emily Hickey '05

The University of Rochester was on the brink of a major overhaul in 1952. President DeKiewet had only recently been named President of the University, and his tenure would see many changes on the campus and in the world at large. But 1952 was a happy, exciting time for the Yellowjackets, and prepared them for what was to come. Plans to integrate the Men's and Women's Colleges on one campus were just being finalized. The building now known as "Sue B." was still referred to by the generic term "Women's Center" as plans evolved for its construction. But in 1952, UR still had its "Princesses" and "River Rats", with women housed on the Prince Street site now occupied the Memorial Art Gallery and men living in the residence halls and fraternity houses on the River Campus.

The Class of 1954's *Interpres*, which covered this monumental year, said that, "...this is the year in which a new vigor in the University itself was accompanied by a surge of student interest and participation." Throughout that annual, photographs of girls in long skirts, bobby socks and saddle shoes are alongside photos of men in jacket and tie. The omnipresent dance photos show young men in dinner jackets with young women in strapless dresses, gloves and full skirts.

Fraternities and sororities were a major part of student life, but fraternities had no Pellegrino's Subs or Dinosaur BBQ to entice curious freshman. Cider and doughnuts were standard fare at their rush events. Sophomore women who decided to undergo the whirl of activity that led up to receiving a bid from a sorority could expect teas and "formal friendliness", according to the *Interpres*. Rushing or "going independent" was a decision every student faced. The houses on the fraternity quad were much the same in 1952 as they are today, with some differences in occupancy. Most of the facades remain unchanged.

Another significant part of the campus life was the rivalry between freshmen and sophomores. On the River Campus, it took the form of "Flag Rush". Flag Rush was an incredibly messy, hard-fought game of Capture the Flag to determine which class would reign supreme that year. The freshmen were unable to nab the sophomore flag, and so the sophomores claimed victory. The rivalry on the River Campus would culminate on

Dandelion Day, or D-Day as it was known even then, in a giant tug-of-war.

Women also had their share of good-natured initiation. For a day in October, the freshmen women of Prince Street spent the day garbed as if it was the Roaring Twenties, ready to break out into a furious Charleston at the blast of a sophomore's whistle. Once that was over, the Frosh-Soph Hunt began, taking both teams on a wild goose chase throughout the Prince Street Campus in search of the other team's flag. The sophomores came away with that year's win, and their flag was raised over that of the freshmen in Cutler Union.

There was a swirl of social activity on campus every weekend. The fraternities decorated their facades every weekend to support the football team, and Friday Night "rousers", complete with bonfires created by the freshmen, encouraged student support for the football team. The line of cars from Prince Street to the River Campus was often loud, snaking through the city to announce the Yellowjacket pride the students had. Often, students decorated their cars, adding to the festive atmosphere. Football games

were the highlight of Saturday afternoons, with vendors in the stands selling "hots" to ward off that chilly Rochester air. The winning ways of the 1952 squad certainly didn't hurt matters any. The entertainment of the Marching Band and Cheerleaders helped speed the halftime along. At homecoming the each fraternity paired up with a sorority to create a float which was paraded to welcome back alumni. Saturday nights were often filled with parties, planned and impromptu, and a host of formals sponsored by everything from fraternities and sororities to the yearbook and engineering students.

In the classroom, things were much the same they are today. Students studied in Rush Rhees, took classes in Gavett, Lattimore, Bausch and Lomb and the rest of the Eastman Quad, and majored in Optics, History, English and plenty of people were Pre-Med...the list goes on. Business Administration was a popular major. It has since become a graduate-only program. Nursing students left the classes of the Prince and River Campuses and moved on to Helen Wood Hall after the sophomore year to continue their studies. Engineering students bent over slide rules, not the now-omnipresent TI-89. The Welles-Brown room was certainly a place to escape the rush of classes and work, but also hosted a well-attended Wednesday lecture series and coffee hour.



Freshmen and the Charleston

When it came to being informed, students had two sources—the *Tower Times* of the College for Women and *The Campus*, produces by the College for Men. Popular activities included the YWCA, Hillel, Newman Club, K-Scope and Quilting Club. Quilting Club, or "Q-Club" was Rochester's answer to the Hasty Pudding Society at Harvard—a dramatic society whose all-male membership played all the roles...regardless of the gender of the character. Honor societies were also popular, and found themselves planning events for the classes under them. Junior women took charge of the women's freshman orientation—called "Frosh Camp", and sophomores wrote the Freshman Directory, which was an essential part of any student's bookshelf. Navy and Air Force ROTC cadets were a common sight as well.

Beyond the walls of the University, students could be found shopping at Sibley's, dining at Howard Johnson's, and seeing shows at The Cinema or The Auditorium. Gas was twenty cents a gallon and a loaf of bread set you back less than a dollar. The 1952 presidential election featured a Republican ticket of Dwight Eisenhower and Richard Nixon against the Democratic nominee, Adlai Stevenson, and his running mate, John Sparkman. Though the political tenor of the campus is unclear, the *Interpres* claims that the presidential election was big news on campus, with televisions in Todd and Cutler Unions tuned to the news on election night. Eisenhower won the election.

For all the differences between the campus 50 years ago and the one which sprawls from Mount Hope to the Genesee and beyond, there are some core things that remain the same. The friendships found, the difficult classes, the hours spent in Rush Rhees cramming for that exam, the Saturday afternoons spent in Fauver cheering the football team on the gridiron. 1952 helped create the foundation for the school we know today.