54 YEARS AGO

Black Quarterback In Rose Bowl

By Alvin E. White

All the hullabaloo about black quarterbacks is so much baloney. Fifty - four years ago, a black quarterback stunned California's proud team in a Rose Bowl Game.

He was Charles Pruner West who piloted the Washington and Jefferson team in the game — then called the East West Classic — just a part of the Pasadena Festival of Roses — played January 1, 1922.

The West was represented by California's "Golden Bears" and the East by the Washington and Jefferson "Presidents." On paper, it was the mismatch of the century.

The "Golden Bears" hadn't lost a game in two years. This was the second straight trip to the Tournament game, having demolished Ohio State 28-0 in 1921. Their star was "Brick" Muller an All American end-passing wizard—he had tossed aerials 50 to 60 yards.

As for the "Presidents," their star was the All American tackle Russell Stein. In the 17-year stretch between 1913 and 1930, the "Presidents" had always been ranked in the nation's top ten teams. Somehow, the Western teams took all the newspaper space— the sportswriters belittled Eastern teams—so when the "Presidents" were chosen for the Tournament game, it became a joke out West — and it was very funny to say "All we know about Washington and Jefferson is they're both dead."

The "Presidents' coach wasn't one bit worried — Earl "Greasy" Neale later a star outfielder with the Cincinnati Reds — and coach of the Philadelphia "Eagles" in the National Football League — had one comment — "They'll never score against us."

Betting favored the "Golden Bears" by at least two touchdowns."

To make matters worse, the "Presidents" regular quarterback was taken ill — he didn't make the trip West.

On the long railroad ride to Pasadena, Coach Neale solved that problem. He picked his star halfback, sophomore Charles West to quarterback the team.

The football world knew West was the one black player on the team — and in this game, he would be a marked man.

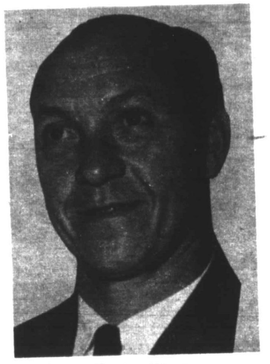
But saying and doing are two different things.

Here's how a leading Los Angeles paper reported the game:

TOURNAMENT PARK, Pasadena, Jan. 2 — Washington and Jefferson College of Washington, Pa., today pulled the biggest surprise of the year by holding the University of California to a scoreless tie . . . in the annual East-West Classic.

"The 'Presidents' outplayed the 'Golden Bears' at every angle of the game save kicking . . . the Presidents gained twice as much yardage from scrimmage and even California's 'Wonder Man' Muller failed to figure in the play."

Singling out several W and J players for praise, including Herb Kopf who became a coaching great — the writer zapped the local heroes . . . "the next few days will be laboriously devoted to producing the gentle alibi by San Francisco sporting editors . . . several of these gentry . . . did not believe any team in the country could stop the 'Golden Bears.' They have lived to learn."

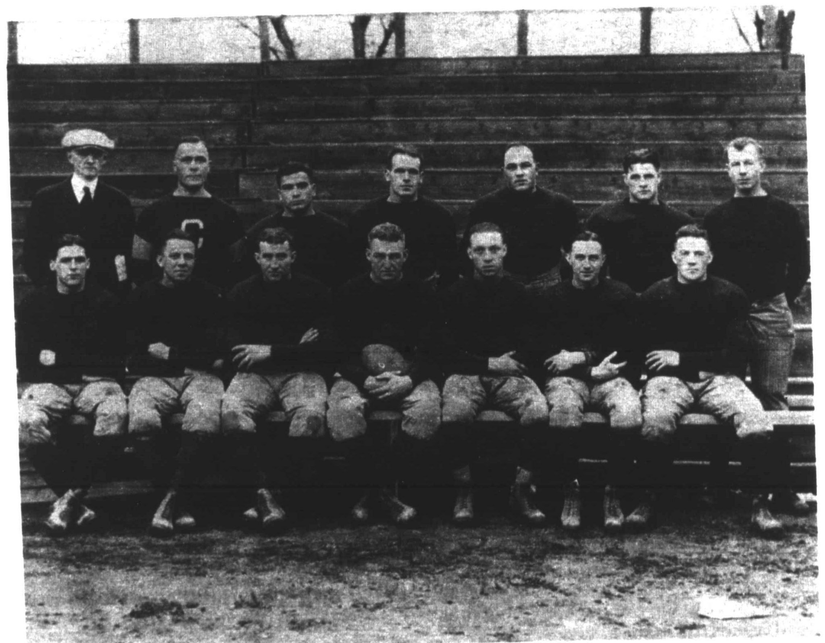


Charles West

Oddly, in the flowery account of the game- which was played on a muddy field hampering both teams — the flowery writer mentioned West only once. Then he wrote:

"W and J quarterback West fumbled" adding graciously "but recovered."

Then, a quarterback was strictly on his own once he took the field. There was no running to the sidelines to confer with the coach — there were no spotters in the stands overhead phoning down information on the opponents' weakness. Quarterbacks won or lost games. There was no mad dashing on the field of some player bringing in a "play," the huddle hadn't been invented neither had "wide receivers" or "tight ends." If an end was tight, he better not let the coach know it. Of course, these men played offense and defense.



The Washington and Jefferson "iron men" who played the Rose Bowl game of January 2, 1922, without a substitute, a record which has never been equalled. They tied the University of California, 0-0. Front row, left to right: Herb Kopf, end; Joe Basita, fullback; Ray Neal, guard; Russell Stein, tackle (captain); Charles West, quarterback; Wayne Brenkert, halfback; Hal Erickson, halfback; BACK ROW: Robert M. Murphy, athletic director; John Kellison, assistant coach; Ralph Vince, guard; Charles Crook, center; Chester Winderquist, tackle; Carl Konovolinka, end; Earle (Greasy) Neal, head coach.

The 1922 game set quite a few records;

- It was the last game played in the old Tournament Park.
- It drew the biggest crowd ever, 40,000.
- The "Presidents" did not make one substitution. Eleven men played the entire game.
- The "Golden Bears" did not complete a single forward pass.
- The "Golden Bears" made only two first downs in the entire game.
- This was the first "East-West" classic in which a black quarterback directed his team.
- There was only one touchdown — called back. It was a W and J score, called back because their star tackle was ruled outside.

For the "Presidents" this was a great moral victory.

West had two more years of football at Washington and Jefferson. Born in the small Pennsylvania town, home of the college, he attracted attention as a high school star. W and J went after him on the premise 'it was better to play with him than against him."

In his senior year, West's coach was the great Johnny Heisman for whom football's most coveted trophy is named. One happening at W and J shows a side of Heisman and why he deserved the great honor.

"The "Presidents" had scheduled a Southern team, Washington and Lee from Virginia, for a game at home. Arriving in the Pennsylvania town, the Southern coach asked that West be benched, saying they had a tradition which was not to play against "Negroes." Heisman refused saying Washington and Jefferson also had traditions and it would not play without West.

West describes what followed:

"Our team lined up for the kick-off- with 12,000 people in the stands, waiting to see our team wallop the visitors—the official blew his whistle and waited one minute for the Washington and Lee team to show up. When they didn't come out to play, he forfeited the game to us — the only time I know of such a thing happening in collegiate football."

Many unpleasant incidents happened to West during his four years at W and J, but he says "They never did affect me. . .those boys I played with were with me to a man. The opposition consisted of eleven men and there were eleven of us. The opposition had to reckon with all of us . . . and a moving target is hard to hit."

While in college, West was a crack shortstop and a track star winning the National Penthalon championship in 1923. He was on the U.S. Olympic team in 1924, the year he captained the W and J track team. Colleges in the Middle Atlantic Conference who had a thing about color - coaches received letters like "if you have a Negro on your team, we suggest you leave him at home."

Finishing W and J, West entered medicine practicing for years in Alexandria, Virginia. He is philosophical about his career — "many changes have occurred since those days. I believe I could have collected more than a few shekels had I had the opportunity boys have today. But I rejoice in their many oppor-

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