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## BIG WIN FOR COACH LITTLE

By Dick Parker

On November 27, 1943, in the first Army-Navy game played at West Point's Michie Stadium since 1892, the Midshipmen of Annapolis defeated Army's Cadets, 13-0. The shutout victory represented Navy's fifth straight win (four by shutouts) in the service teams' rivalry dating back to 1890. Navy's touchdowns were scored by Bob Jenkins (1944 All-American) and Jim Pettit. This was also Navy coach John "Billick" Whelchel's "final" game. Such an occasion would, doubtless, have been more noteworthy had the retiring coach been at the helm longer than two seasons (13 wins, five losses).

The defeat for Army was to be their last for the next three-plus seasons - going 9-0-0 in 1944 (ranked #1 at season's end), 9-0-0 in 1945 (again ranked #1) and 9-0-1 in 1946, the 0-0 tie with Notre Dame preventing them from retaining the top ranking, as that designation was awarded to Notre Dame. The Army teams of this three-year period were indeed exceptional and produced such all-time stars as fullback Felix "Doc" Blanchard (1945 Heisman Trophy winner and called "Mr Inside"), halfback Glenn "Junior" Davis (1946 Heisman winner and referred to as "Mr Outside"), quarterback Arnold Tucker, end George "Barney" Poole, end Henry "Hank" Foldberg and tackle DeWitt "Tex" Coulter.

Even with such staggering player losses to graduation, the 1947 season found Army coach Earl "Red" Blaik's team with a solid nucleus of returning talent, including backs Elwyn "Rip" Rowan, Bill Gustafson, "Bobby Jack" Stuart (injured all of 1946, but he did gain experience playing in 1945); and linemen Goble Bryant, Jim Rawers, Bill Yeoman and imminent first team All-American, Joe Steffy. With newcomer Arnold Galiffa at quarterback, hailing from baseball immortal Stan Musial's home town of Donora, Pennsylvania, the Black Knights of the Hudson opened the 1947 season with two shutout wins and a scoreless tie against the Rose Bowl winner from the previous January, Illinois. After another lopsided shutout over Virginia Poly Institute, Army's undefeated streak had reached 32 games.

Columbia was next on the, to-date, less than demanding schedule for Army, the 0-0 tie against Illinois notwithstanding. Columbia was coached by Lawrence "Lou" Little (born Luigi Piccolo in Boston on Dec 6, 1891; or 1893 - sources differ). Lou starred at tackle on the 1916 and 1919 Pennsylvania teams, and received All-America mention in 1916. His college coaching career began with the Georgetown Hoyas (1924-1929), and in 1930 Little was lured to Columbia where he remained until his retirement in 1956 (110 wins, 116 losses, 10 ties). Arguably, up until 1947, the most memorable win in his tenure had been the 1934 Rose Bowl game against heavily favored Stanford, with such solid performers as tackles Bob Reynolds and Bill Corbus, end Jim "Monk" Moscrip, and backs Bobby Grayson and Bob "Bones" Hamilton. Little had an earlier Pasadena venture on his resume, when he had played in the 1917 game for Penn, a 14-0 loss to Oregon.

In the 1934 Rose Bowl, Columbia's chances were considered to be non-existent, but the Eastern underdogs were quietly confident. With a play embracing numerous variations, and known as "KF-79", single wing tailback Cliff Montgomery executed a deceptive and extremely well rehearsed maneuver as he took the snap from center, spun and handed off to halfback Al Barabas. Montgomery continued to spin and faked to the other half, Ed Brominski, drawing attention away from Barabas, who was scooting 17 yards for the only score of the 7-0 major surprise victory. The shocking upset win brought much acclaim to Coach Little and his lightly regarded squad. In the ensuing years, the well respected coach produced such stars as 1938 All-American Sid Luckman, and Paul Governali in 1942.

October 25, 1947: The fifth game of the college season. As mentioned earlier, Army, with major personnel departures to graduation, had attained a three victory and one tie record to this point.

The next opponent, Columbia, had opened its season with two wins and two losses, and Coach Little's Lions were not expected to pose much of a problem for Coach Blaik and his Cadets. But Columbia had some fine performers in quarterback Gene Rossides (who received some expert tutoring from Sid Luckman), halfback Lou Kusserow and end Bill Swiacki.

The day of the game a crowd of 35,000 fans showed up at Columbia's Baker Field in New York City, and the action started early. Just five minutes into the game, on the ninth play of a 55-yard drive, Army quarterback Galiffa scored on a two-foot sneak. Place kicker Jack Mackmull then booted the extra point for a 7-0 Army lead

Still in the first quarter, with Army getting the ball after Bill Gustafson's pass interception, the Cadets drove to the Lions' nine yard line. Then a pass thrown by substitute back Charley Gabriel was picked off on the goal line by Columbia defender Al Kachaduruan, thus stopping the Army drive. But in the second quarter, key runs by Army's Jack ("Amos" according to the New York Times game recap)

Gillette, Gustafson and "Rip" Rowan moved the ball 61 yards to the one, and from there Rowan went in for the second Army score. Mackmull again converted for a 14-0 lead.

Columbia's ground game had trouble moving the ball before quarterback Rossides connected on three straight passes, the first to right end Bruce Gehrke and the next two to opposite flanker Swiacki (who would later join Gehrke with the New York Giants in 1948). The three catches were all of the sensational variety, and preceded Kusserow taking a handoff from Rossides and driving in from six yards out - these being the first points allowed by Army for the season. The point after was added by fullback Ventan Yablonski (who was to play four seasons with the Chicago Cardinals beginning in 1948), and the Army lead now stood at 14-7.

Later in the second period, recovery of a Galiffa fumble by George Kisiday on the Army four yard line was followed by Columbia's failure to capitalize; as Yablonski missed a field goal try to give the ball back to Army. As the end of the half approached, "Rip" Rowan of the Cadets broke loose for the day's most sensational run - 84 yards for the final score before halftime. With Mackmull failing on the conversion, it was Army 20-7. The missed kick was to prove fateful.

The third quarter was scoreless, although Gene Rossides of the Lions completed eight passes and Kusserow one. Then early in the final period, Rossides connected twice to right half Bill Olson, before throwing to Swiacki, who made an extraordinary catch in the end zone for the touchdown, cutting Army's lead to 20-14 when Yablonski kicked the point-after.

The fleet "Bobby Jack" Stuart returned the ensuing kickoff to Army's 27. With Rowan gaining 18 and Stuart seven, Galiffa then threw to end John Trent to advance the ball to Columbia's 34.

But the Lions' defense stopped the Army drive, and with eight and a half minutes to play, Columbia faced the need to cover 66 yards to reach Army's goal line. Rossides was up to the challenge. Showing a lot of poise, he in turn handed off to Yablonski for 11, carried the ball himself for 22 yards to reach Army's 33, and then gave the ball to Kusserow for four more. With the Cadets switching from a five to a six-man line, Rossides once again threw to Swiacki, who made another diving, highlight film catch on the three. Two plays later, Kusserow went in for the touchdown and Yablonski kicked the crucial go-ahead point-after. Columbia now led, 21-20!

Still with time to come back Army desperately went to the air. After a 30-yard catch by Rowan was wiped out by an off-side penalty, another completion was made to Trent. But then future NBC television sports

producer Lou Kusserow intercepted the next Army pass, and Columbia managed to kill the clock and preserve the win that stopped the Cadets' unbeaten streak.

Columbia's Bill Swiacki, who served his country as an air force navigator during WW-II, was a consensus All-America for 1947, and was inducted into college football's Hall of Fame in 1976. Army's Joe Steffy won the Outland Trophy, as he was voted 1947's best interior lineman. Sadly, Army Lt. John C. Trent tragically lost his life in 1950 during the Korean conflict.

The now-legendary 21-20 win over unbeaten Army in 1947 highlighted one of Columbia's two best football periods under Coach Lou Little, as the Lions went 21-6-0 from 1945 to 1947. The other period of prosperity for Columbia was between 1931 and 1934, when the much admired coach Little's teams went 29-4-2 and upset favored Stanford in the 1934 Rose Bowl.