

KEN STRONG
NYU VS CARNEGIE TECH
NOV. 24, 1928

New York University once played major college football, and from the ranks of one of those Violet teams came a player who is regarded as among the greatest in football history. His name was Ken Strong.

An all-around athlete with the rugged good looks of an All-American hero, Strong had enough skills to eventually play both football and baseball professionally, and he brought a wide range of talents to the gridiron for NYU in the late 1920s. Moved to tailback for the 1928 season, Strong (6'1" and 205 pounds) was a rugged inside runner, capable of punishing the opposition linemen; in addition to excelling as a blocking back. Through hard work he had also developed into an outstanding forward passer, and he was considered to be one of the top placekickers in the game.

The 1928 season produced a number of outstanding teams in the East, and most observers considered NYU and Carnegie Tech to be the top two outfits. So it shaped up to be a major showdown on Nov. 24, when the Violets of NYU traveled to Forbes Field in Pittsburgh to tangle with undefeated Carnegie. The Tartans were carrying a 7-0 record that included wins over

Pittsburgh and Notre Dame, and they were led by a standout passing quarterback in Howard Harpster. NYU was 7-1, its only loss coming to Georgetown in a game played in miserable weather conditions.

In the first quarter the two teams went right to work offensively, with Strong breaking off a run of 22 yards and a punt return of 20 in the early going. But in the waning minutes of the opening period Harpster intercepted a pass and ran it back 30 yards to the NYU 45. On the next play the Carnegie quarterback connected with a long scoring pass, and the Tartans led 7-0. NYU tried to get back in the game as Strong completed passes good for gains of 25 and 18 yards, but Carnegie Tech turned away both threats. Then with one minute left until halftime the Violets got on the scoreboard, as Strong took to the airways again and on consecutive plays he rifled pass completions good for 15, 10, and 17 yards; the last aerial connecting with Bob Barrabee for the touchdown that made it a 7-7 game.

In the third quarter NYU moved quickly to take charge. After Strong had backed up Carnegie with a 60-yard punt, the Violets got the football back near midfield. After three bruising runs by Strong paced a short march, NYU took the lead on a nine-yard TD pass off a double reverse. Carnegie was unable to move the ball on the following series, and NYU got it right back on its 35 yard line. On the first play Strong bolted outside for a gain of 20 yards to move the ball into Carnegie territory, and two plays later the star tailback swept around end for a 40-yard dash to the end zone to up NYU's lead to 21-7.

In the fourth quarter Harpster got back on track, completing 10 of 12 passes to eventually get Carnegie into the end zone again, to make it 21-13. The next time the Tartans got the ball Harpster had them moving again, but the march was finally halted by an interception deep in NYU territory. A few plays later Strong broke loose, this time rambling 43 yards to the Tech 18. Soon after, he plunged in for the touchdown to wrap up the 27-13 win for NYU.

The 1928 season put together by Ken Strong is still considered to be one of the greatest of all-time, and the Carnegie Tech game was his top performance. For the day he had rushed for 223 yards on 26 carries, including five runs of over 20 yards in the second half alone; and he had completed eight of 15 passes for 108 yards.

There have been many famous blunders by officials that are now a part of college football history, but one incident has previously remained virtually unknown. On November 14, 1925, a highly-regarded Georgia Tech team, featuring Doug Wycoff, was locked in a tremendous defensive struggle against arch-rival Georgia. Late in the first half Tech staged the game's only real march as they moved to the Georgia six yard line. Referee Gardener, failing to understand the word from the sidelines, told quarterback Ivy Williams of Tech that only 15 seconds were left until halftime and that it was fourth down. Actually, over a minute remained and it was FIRST down. Not realizing the mistake, Williams tried a 25-yard field goal and missed it, after which the officials discovered their blunder. Lucky for them Tech managed a 3-0 win.