

should not be profitable. The NCAA soon produced the necessary change that Harvard's president sought; eliminating "the main evil" of football – cheating and brutality – by banning opportunities for mucker play: the line of scrimmage was extended so that players would be further apart, penalties would now be spotted and enforced to curb cheap shots in the pileups.

Moreover, the NCAA's guiding philosophy – a high standard of personal honor, eligibility and fair play – also agreed with Roosevelt's sentiments on the subject of sports and the building of character, expressed in these words from one of his speeches at the time of the controversy: "Brutality in playing a game should waken the heartiest and most plainly shown contempt for the player guilty of it. Especially if this brutality is coupled with a low cunning in committing it without getting caught by the umpire. I hope to see both the graduate and undergraduate opinion come to scorn such a man as one guilty of base and dishonorable action."

Though Harvard did not initially join the NCAA, it eventually did, and it was part of the process to improve the rules of the game of college football rather than end it completely. Thus, we can thank President Roosevelt each fall as we watch well-played college football games and remember All-Americans of the past like Frank Burr of Harvard.

Bennie's First Wolverines

By Dick Parker

When the undefeated 1947 Big Nine champion from Michigan overwhelmed Pacific Coast Conference winner Southern Cal, 49-0, in the 1948 Rose Bowl game, the Associated Press, in an unprecedented move, conducted a post-bowl vote of the writer-pollsters and Michigan came out on top of regular season top ranked Notre Dame. It was called "Who's Number One?" and the magnitude of the Rose Bowl win had changed some of the voters' minds. However, aside from the Michigan faithful who embraced the concept, it did not change Notre Dame's recognition as the "official" number one rated team in the country for 1947.

In March of 1948, Michigan head football coach Fritz Crisler – named college football coach of the year for the 1947 season – decided to step down to give his increasingly demanding other job as athletic director his full attention. Plus the changing dynamic of the college game by the late 1940s called for a greater emphasis on recruiting, which he acknowledged was not for him. The man chosen to replace Crisler was Bennie Oosterbaan, one of the finest athletic performers in Michigan history. He had starred in baseball, basketball, and football where he was a consensus All-American end for three varsity seasons (1925-26-27).

In 1928, with his intercollegiate competitive days over, Oosterbaan declined professional baseball and football offers in order to stay on at Michigan as an assistant gridiron coach. Beginning with Elton "Tad" Wieman who had succeeded Fielding Yost in 1927, Oosterbaan went on to assist Harry Kipke for nine seasons (1929-37) and then Fritz Crisler for ten more (1938-1947). Thus with a coaching record of twenty seasons, Bennie had gained the complete confidence of his mentor Crisler, who called his replacement, "the one man who could retain our single wing and the finest football mind I know."

Player losses from the 1947 team had included All-America halfbacks Bob Chappuis and Chalmers "Bump" Elliott, along with ends Len Ford and Bob Mann as well as backfield stars Jack Weisenburger and Howard Yerges. There were numerous key returnees though: "Bump" Elliott's brother Pete; Gene Derricotte; Dick Kempthorn; Dan Dworsky; Dick Rifenburg; Walt Teninga; and 32-year-old Alvin Wistert, a Marine Corps veteran of the war and the third of three

renowned brothers who played for Michigan. Sophomore prospects included backs Chuck Ortmann, Leo Koceski, Dan Dufek, and Tom Peterson, as well as linemen Bob Wahl and the reliable place kicker Harry Allis.

The 1948 season opened at East Lansing with a fourteen game winning streak on the line for Michigan, which had started Nov. 2, 1946 with a road win against Minnesota, 21-0. Michigan State was playing host to a team which had out-pointed them 150-7 in the previous three encounters, yet under second year coach Clarence "Biggie" Munn, MSU was revitalizing and was clearly up for the Wolverines. The final score was 13-7, Michigan prevailing, but it turned out to be the season's toughest game for Coach Oosterbaan's team. Michigan, using the single wing, took the lead when fullback Tom Peterson passed to end Dick Rifenburg for a 41-yard score. Peterson then converted for a 7-0 lead at first quarter's end.

The Spartans set up the opportunity to tie in the third quarter following a Warren Huey interception of a Peterson pass. State then tallied on a pass from star halfback Lynn Chandnois to Henry Minarik, who won a disputed struggle for the ball in the end zone with Michigan's Walt Teninga. In the fourth quarter, Michigan's Chuck Ortmann connected on critical passes to Irv Wisniewski and Leo Koceski, setting up Peterson's scoring smash from five yards out. The 13-7 Michigan win didn't impress as State had outgained the visitors on the ground 158-106, but was outdone through the air 117-28.

Oregon, led by future Hall-of-Famer (both college and pro) Norm Van Brocklin, was the season's second clash for the Wolverines; this one was at Ann Arbor. While the "Dutchman, as he was called, had a good day, completing 13 passes for 194 yards, none produced a score for the Ducks. On the strength of two Michigan pass plays - Ortmann to Rifenburg for 61 yards and a score in the second quarter, along with another a quarter later from Chuck Lentz to Peterson - the Wolverines shut out Oregon 14-0 for win number 16 in the

streak. In the fourth quarter Oregon nearly averted the shutout, when Van Brocklin connected with future Southern Cal Hall of Fame coach John McKay on a 68-yard pass and run, only to have the seeming touchdown nullified when McKay was ruled to have stepped out of bounds on the Michigan 22 yard line. The defeat turned out to be Oregon's only regular season loss of 1948.

Week three had the Wolverines travelling to Purdue where they had it easy in winning a second straight shutout, 40-0. It was Purdue's Homecoming, but that didn't provide much incentive after Leo Koceski scored the first points on a two-yard first quarter burst. Boilermaker quarterback Bob De Moss, under much Michigan defensive pressure, threw wildly and was intercepted by linebacker Dan Dworsky to set up a followup two-yard smash by Peterson for six more points. With Ortmann passing to Rifenburg for tally number three in the second stanza, it was 19-0 at halftime. The third quarter produced seven more Michigan points as Chicago's Walt Teninga

pitched 47 yards to Rifenburg and then, three plays later, Peterson had another two-yard TD run. To complete the rout in the fourth quarter, Teninga covered ten yards to score following another pass interception and Chuck Lentz added the last points from six yards out. Winning number 17 in a row, Michigan's ground game, while rather modest, outdid woeful Purdue 164-36.

Northwestern, itself having a good season in 1948, was the next opponent to come calling in Ann Arbor. It wasn't much of a challenge though, as Wolverine soph star Koceski scored three times in Michigan's 28-0 victory for the third straight shutout. This outing produced a ground-gaining edge of 166-47 for the Wolverines. The new coach had to be feeling good about the likelihood of a second straight Big Nine championship coming to Michigan – and possibly more.

It was on to Minneapolis to play the Golden Gophers of Minnesota who were under Coach Bernie Bierman in his military service-interrupted career's 14th season. The Gophers scored first in the second period when All-America lineman Leo Nomellini fell on a Gene Derricotte fumbled punt which had taken a wild bounce into the Michigan end zone. The Wolverines responded in the same quarter with two scores by Tom Peterson – first on a pass from Teninga and then, following a blocked punt by Quentin Sickels, he had an easy one-foot plunge. Halfback Everett Faunce registered Minnesota's second touchdown at the culmination of a nine play 67-yard drive following the second half kickoff. Michigan then added another score when Leo Koceski took an Ortmann pass at midfield and carried it in on a play covering 64 yards, to wrap up the 27-14 win for Oosterbaan's charges.

October 30, 1948 was Michigan's Homecoming, and Illinois, having a poor season and still three years away from a return to prominence, was the foe. It was the Illini who had given the Wolverines their last defeat in 1946, 13-9. This 1948 game also turned out to be a bit of a nail biter for the home team's supporters as the Illini – led by junior quarterback Bernie Krueger, who connected on 12 of 21 throws for 216 yards – came close to producing an upset. After a scoreless first quarter, Michigan tallied first when senior end Ed McNeill took a Pete Elliott pass and went in from the five. The Illini matched this when Krueger threw a screen pass to halfback Paul Patterson, who eluded Alvin Wistert and ran in from nearly 10 yards out, and the score was 7-7 at the half.

Michigan got a scare when the Illini's Dwight "Dike" Eddleman returned the second half kickoff 94 yards for a score, only to have it nullified by an off-side penalty. Shortly thereafter Michigan went ahead 14-7 when Pete Elliott, out of the T-formation, pitched out to Peterson who then lofted a pass to Dick Rifenburg for a 14-yard TD. Still in the third period, Michigan tackle Al Wahl recovered a Patterson fumble in Illini territory, after which Teninga scored from the three with Allis adding his third conversion for a 21-7 advantage. Late in the third quarter Krueger passed to Tony Klimek for a 21-yard score to make it 21-13, and Illinois then scored one final time in the fourth quarter on a one-yard plunge by Krueger to narrow the margin to 21-20. A 39-yard touchdown pass to Allis completed the Wolverines' scoring: Michigan 28 Illinois 20.

With the win streak now at 20 Navy came visiting, and Coach Oosterbaan was again able to sit back and watch a blowout win – this one 35-0. The Midshipmen were not a serious threat and absorbed their loss number 12 in succession since mid-1947. Ortmann and Peterson each scored in the first half for a 14-0 lead, and a third score was picked up by Teninga on a one-yard pop in the third quarter; with another tacked on by Rifenburg on a pass from reserve Bob Van Summern. With the score 28-0 after three quarters, Michigan added a final touchdown when Rifenburg had to wait for Ortmann to get free to get the ball to him in the end zone. Michigan utilized 43 players in the rout but kept most of the starters in for the first three quarters.

An even more one-sided victory was to take place in the season's next-to-last game at Ann Arbor.

With another conference championship on the horizon, Michigan was to realize yet another whitewash win – their fifth in the nine game schedule – over an outmanned Indiana team, 54-0. Coach Oosterbaan pretty much saw to it that the bench was cleared in the scrimmage-like contest and the eight Wolverine touchdowns were registered by eight different players. Indiana star back George Taliaferro was the lone opponent to provide even nominal offense, still gaining but 49 yards rushing while clicking on only two of 11 passes for a net of 15 yards. Overall Michigan picked up 435 yards to 159 for the first year coach Clyde Smith’s hapless Hoosiers. The Indiana humbling took the Wolverine victory string to 22.

The season’s finale was set for Columbus, Ohio, against a Buckeye team that was concluding its second season under one of their own all-time great performers, Wes Fesler, who had been a consensus All-America end in 1928, '29, and '30 – matching Oosterbaan’s prior recognition levels. Ohio State’s 1948 season would show them finishing in fourth place in the conference with a 3-3-0 record – including a 13-3 loss to Michigan in this final game. Yet in the process of completing a second straight undefeated, untied season and reaching a victory string of 23 games, Michigan had to toil a bit harder than the preceding two Saturdays in order to subdue Fesler’s Buckeyes.

Ohio’s defensive line actually held the Wolverines to no yardage gained in the opening half, in large measure due to the play of Buckeye ends Jim Hague and Sonny Gandee. For the entire contest, Michigan was held to 54 rushing yards to 130 for Ohio State. It was a field goal by OSU’s Hague ten minutes into the first quarter that started the scoring, set up by the first of two opening quarter Michigan fumbles. Tom Peterson had attempted to lateral back to trailing Chuck Ortmann, but the ball was lobbed high and a mad scramble ensued with Ohio’s Jack Lininger recovering on the Michigan eight yard line. Three plays then lost yardage back to the Wolverines’ 16, from where Hague’s field goal got the Bucks on the scoreboard.

Michigan took the lead for good in the second quarter when Ortmann passed to Harry Allis for a score and all the points needed in the game that ended a perfect 9-0-0 season. The Michigan team was voted number one in the nation for 1948 by Associated Press, and rookie coach Bennie Oosterbaan was named college football’s “Coach of the Year,” making Michigan the first school ever to have two different coaches win that honor in successive seasons. Dick Rifenburg, Pete Elliott, and the aging Alvin Wistert were all accorded All-America recognition. A trip to the post-season Rose Bowl was not to be had though, since 1948 was the first time the conference’s “no repeat” rule was in effect for the post-season. Instead, second place Northwestern qualified for the privilege of heading to Pasadena, and there proceeded to beat California, 20-14.

If there is such a thing as a classic transition in college football coaching – or say a “remarkable succession” a phrase so ably coined by prominent sportswriter Allison Danzig – then Michigan’s Bennie Oosterbaan in 1948 certainly qualifies as text book perfection.
