



*Steve helped lead Ottawa of the Canadian Football League to the 1950 Grey Cup.*

## **Steve Hatfield:**

### ***Gifted athlete left his mark at Bellwood, Shippensburg***

**By Howard Walker**

Once in a while we hear about an individual who is endowed with exceptional ability.

One who excels in every sport from ping-pong to swimming to football to baseball to basketball . . . etc.

From the early 40's to the early 50's that person was Steve Hatfield. He was blessed with the physical dexterity that reached its peak during the 40's.

It was during that time his football, baseball, track, basketball and boxing skills became evident.

As a junior at Bellwood-Antis High School (1942-1943) one newspaper headline read: "Hatfield 15, Roaring Spring 0"; he set a

school record in basketball by scoring 56 points against Mt. Union; he set a school and state record for the pole vault at 12' 3 3/4".

Perhaps by today's standards 12' 3 3/4" does not seem significant. However, when we consider the fact that this height was achieved with a bamboo pole and that Steve weighed 190 lbs., we begin to appreciate his prowess. If the fiberglass pole had been used then as now, it is probable that Steve would have been jumping 16' or 17'. Boxing also made a brief appearance as an activity at Bellwood-Antis in the early 40's and Steve was a part of it, thrilling the spectators with his lightning left jabs, right crosses and fancy footwork.

After graduation, he played baseball for the Juniata Civics in the Altoona Baseball

League. Perhaps some of the readers can recall the games played at Cricket Field and remember Steve's spectacular catches, his flashy base running and his long fly balls and home runs.

In 1946 Steve enrolled at Shippensburg State College where he starred in football and track. (His football coach, Dr. Rambo would not permit him to play basketball).

By this time Steve had matured physically to the tune of 225 lbs. He could run 100 yards in 10 seconds dressed in his football equipment. He ran with his head low and his knees high making it almost impossible to stop him once he passed the line of scrimmage.

Since he was from a mainline town, he was named the "Big Train." In addition to his running, Steve was known for his place

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As a member of the track team, Steve was spectacular in both field and running events. He became one of the top stars in the Pennsylvania Conference. he was placed in almost any event where he could help. He placed in the shot put and javelin events. He competed in three conference championship meets and won four individual titles, finished second in two events and third in another.

He won the long jump with a leap of 22' 2 1/4" and the pole vault with a leap of 11' 6". In 1950 he won those same events again while leading the Red Raiders to a second place finish in the team standings. He won the long jump with a leap of 21' 11 1/8" and the pole vault with a jump of 12' 5 1/2". Earlier in the season he set a school record in the pole vault at the Penn Relays with a leap of 12' 8", only to be beaten by Bob Richards the Olympic Star.

Once during a dual meet with West Chester State College, it was nip and tuck going down to the last event which was at that time the 220 low hurdles.

Coaches Rambo and Dick Bartholomew knew that West Chester had an outstanding state champion low hurdler. They were aware that Shippensburg's low hurdlers were good, but not good enough to beat theirs.

Dr. Rambo said, "Steve, could you give

this a shot?" Steve said, "Well, I never ran there before, but I'll try."

His hurdling form was terrible - but his great natural ability enabled him to catch the West Chester hurdler going over the last hurdle and beat him in the last 15 or 20 yards of the race and Shippensburg won.

In 1950 Steve was drafted as a running back by the World Champion New York Giants and their famous "umbrella defense."

Personnel consisted of Tom Landry, Emlen Tunnell, Travis Tidwell and Charlie Connerly. Head coach Steve Owen was assisted by Ed Coleman, Allie Sherman and Jim Lee Howell. Although Steve Hatfield saw much action in practice, he was not given a chance in exhibition games until the Giants played the Ottawa Rough Riders on August 16, 1950.

Steve scored two touchdowns and intercepted two passes in his first professional football appearance. He played the entire game on offense and defense as the Giants defeated the Ottawa Rough Riders 27-6. Steve had the nickname of the "Flying Zebra."

When it came time to cut the squad, Steve was the last one to be released and was immediately placed on a 24-hour recall. In the meantime because of Steve's impressive showing against them, the Rough Riders contacted Dr. Rambo at Shippensburg

concerning Steve.

Rambo encouraged Steve to go to Canada to try out for the team. Not only did Steve make the team but he also became a star. He led the Ottawa Rough Riders to the Grey Cup Championship of Canada.

Steve was nick-named "Mr. Football of Canada," which is a great honor in itself, but an even greater honor for a citizen of the United States.

When the time came for Steve to sign a permit to play another year in the Canadian Football League, he decided to go to the Chicago Cardinals (now the Phoenix Cardinals) as a free agent and made the team.

Unfortunately he injured his back during the filming of the squad showing their versatility in other sports. He landed on his heel after jumping a high hurdle and was unable to play after that injury. Steve probably would have seen action with the great Charlie Trippi and Elmer Angsman.

Steve now resides in Bethlehem with his wife, children and grandchildren. His daughter is a nurse and his two sons are law enforcement officers. Steve is a foreman for Boyle Construction Company of Bethlehem.

*(Howard Walker of Altoona went to high school and college with Steve Hatfield.)*

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## ***Congratulations***

# **TROY BENSON**

# **STEVE HATFIELD**