

Sport Banner Interview: Bob Krouse
PED 201
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Bob Krouse met us at Tim Horton's for almost two hours on a Saturday morning and was more than willing to answer our questions about his life, before during and after his career with the Hamilton Tiger-Cats. Although there was little information on Bob online, we were able to learn a great deal because of Bob's willingness to assist us in our paper. The following information in this paper is taken directly from that interview. Some dates such as those of Grey Cup championships are also presented on the official CFL website and the SOSSA website. Bob and Marjorie Krouse currently reside in Grimsby, Ontario. Bob is slowly retiring from his involvement in various sport organizations in favour of spending more time with his sons and their families.

Interview with Bob Krouse in Hamilton on the morning of March 21, 2009

Early Years

Bob was born and raised in Hamilton Ontario with his parents and his five siblings (4 sisters and one brother). His early childhood did not provide many opportunities in sport as a result of his parents supporting a large family. Bob, in one of his few opportunities to compete at his father's work picnic, raced in under 14, 16, 18 and an open category of sprint races and won all four of them at the age of 14. After this Bob's father made sure that he could only enter two races the following year to provide other contestants with the chance to win.

In Bob's first year at Central High school Hamilton he joined the track team. Throughout his four years on the track team he, along with Eddy Turek, competed in many events and set many records including the mile relay. They ran this race on an indoor track with a time that is still impressive today. In grade ten the football coach approached Bob and invited him to come try out for the football team. He played a variety of positions that were mostly on the defensive teams. Between football and track Bob was able to keep active throughout the year. While at Central High School, Bob was classmates with both Pat Quinn and Paul Henderson of NHL fame and played against his friend Jim Young, from Westdale High School who later played for the B.C.

In addition to running track and playing football Bob also was an avid fan of the Hamilton Tiger-Cats and would often volunteer to bring wheelchair bound patients from the local hospital to the games. This enabled Bob to get in for free and watch his hero Garney Henley. The Hamilton Tiger-Cats hosted summer football camps for high school students which Bob began to attend and in his final year of high school Bob was asked to come out to a tryout for the Hamilton Tiger-Cats.

His Football Career

In 1963, the year Bob graduated from high school, he was offered 3100 dollars to play in the following football season with the Hamilton Tiger-Cats. The first \$1000 was to be awarded to for showing up to tryouts. Bob did not realize it at the time but between this salary and the winnings for the Grey Cup championship they won that season he earned more than his father did in a year. This would be the first of four Grey Cups that he would win as a player for the Tiger-Cats (63, 65, 67, and 72) and one more as a

member of the coaching staff (1986). Bob played with the Hamilton Tiger-Cats for 13 seasons and he was predominantly a linebacker and defensive running back. However, he was at times called upon to play various positions, occasionally including some on the offense.

There were some barriers that Bob had to overcome to play in the CFL and especially on the Hamilton Tiger-Cats. In 1966, Bob finally got to start a game and in that game he broke his arm but he continued to play the half. Because of his broken arm he was unable to play much that year and then in 1967 the Tiger-Cats were trying to trade him so they started playing him more. As soon as he began playing he went from a player the team was trying to get rid of to an all-star.

A highlight of Bob's career was in the 1972 Grey Cup championship game when he blocked a kick which turned the ball over to the Tiger-Cats and allowed them to win the game. Another highlight for Bob was having the opportunity to play his entire career with his high school hero, Garney Henley. In their final season Bob had the opportunity to deflect a ball into Garney Henley's hands which ended up being the final interception of Henley's career. In Bob's final year as a Tiger-Cat he did double duty as a player as well as the defensive coordinator. Bob was greatly respected amongst players and coaching staff for his ability to read the oppositions offensive formation and react accordingly in a short amount of time allowed between plays. Often Bob was given the privilege of lining up where he felt like during plays based on his on the spot analysis of the offensive line. Because of his ability to understand the game of football many teammates would approach him and ask him for an explanation of where they should be and what they should do in specific situations. Bob would often be the spokesperson for

the team and ask the coach questions that other players were not comfortable asking. After giving teammates an answer to their question he would usually talk to the coach afterwards to make sure what he told someone was correct and as Bob says “I was always right.” When the coach, Jerry Williams, realized what Bob was doing he decided it would just be easier to appoint him as the defensive coordinator. He distinctively remembers a game against the BC Lions. The Lions came out with an offensive formation that Hamilton could not stop so Bob designed a new defensive formation for his team in mid-game. During time outs he designed it and told their coach who let him implement it in the game and it worked; the BC offense was stopped. Throughout the years that Bob played with the Tiger-Cats they became known as one of the best defensive teams in the league. In 1967 they did not allow a touchdown in their final 6 games. After playing for 13 years, from 1963-1975, and winning 4 Grey Cup championships Bob retired in 1975 and began to focus on his other career – teaching.

While Bob was playing in the CFL he was also going to school. He started by going to Mohawk but quit soon afterwards because he was so far ahead of his class. There was a math class that Bob was taking and he was fairly good at math and soon after the class began he was basically teaching the class. After Mohawk he starting going to McMaster. Bob was the first in his family to go to university (later a sister did as well). What Bob really wanted to do was teach so while playing football he also received a bachelor degree in geography and a health and physical education degree and started his master’s degree at State University of Buffalo, which he finished just three months after retiring from the CFL. Bob did not do very well in his first semester of school; he had just gotten married and was trying to keep up with his courses and focus. But after this

first semester he found a way to focus and ended up being a B+ student. He found that during the CFL season it was more difficult to focus on his school work but he got study help and he did just fine. Bob described sitting on the back rest of a chair to keep himself awake while reading.

There have been many highlights in Bob's sports career with a few in particular that stand out. Probably the biggest and one that Bob holds as most important is when he was calling the defensive signals for the Hamilton Tiger-Cats. In 1975, his final year, Bob was not only a player but also a coach and he called many of the defensive formations for the team. Throughout his career he was also basically non-tradable because of how well he saw the field. Bob knew the game so well and was able to read offensive formations so quickly, coaches saw him as being extremely valuable and a must have for the team. Another highlight of Bob's career was that his 13 years in a Tiger-Cat jersey puts him 3rd or 4th all time amongst past and present Tiger-Cats' players for career longevity. A final memory was in the 1972 Grey Cup game, Bob blocked two punts which helped his team win the Cup that year.

Life since the Tiger-Cats

Although Bob finished playing football for the Tiger-Cats in 1975, his involvement in football and other sports has by no means ended. Even while playing football professionally Bob made room in his busy schedule to impact the lives of high school students who were interested in sports. Bob began coaching high school basketball with, a sport that he was also new to, because the basketball season would not interfere with the Tiger-Cat season schedule. His lack of knowledge of the game was

quickly overcome with the tutoring of a teammate on the Tiger-Cats who was able, with the help of Bob's sport-strategy oriented mind, to teach Bob the ins and outs of the game while on Road trips. With the conclusion of his career as a player, Bob quickly became interested in maintaining his involvement through coaching. Building on his experience as defensive coordinator during his final season, Bob began coaching at various levels. His influence ranged from junior high school coaching to positions with amateur clubs, the McMaster University team and even an opportunity to coach at the professional level which he turned down. Bob also made time to coach other sports such as track and basketball.

While teaching at Orchard Park, Saltfleet and Winona, Bob was very involved in the Physical Education programs from 1975 until 1999 and is still active in such organizations as SOSSA. During his career he held the position of Head of Physical Education for these three schools.

Bob spent his summers in positions such as director of a YMCA camp, twenty five years at Camp Olympia as a football instructor and a director at Pinecrest summer camp. Bob also founded the Peach Bud 10 kilometer run in Grimsby, Ontario. Bob is the President of McMaster Alumni, is involved in the CFL Alumni, and holds the position of Administrative Secretary/treasurer for SOSSA as well as various other committees. Bob's long list of involvement does not end there. At one time Bob was a member of ten different committees in addition to teaching, coaching and having a family. With no extensive formal education in the area of economics, Bob quickly learned how money worked and how best it could be used for the benefit of different

organizations. Using this skill, Bob can be credited for at least some of the success of such organizations as SOSSA.

Bob's impact on sport in Hamilton has by no means been the only impact that he has had on this community. Bob has become a cultural icon among the students that he taught and coached throughout his years in this community. Bob's wife Marjorie jokes that they are still stopped on a regular basis when they go out in public, by a former student, player Bob has coached or by someone that Bob once played sports with. During his career Bob had an open door policy during lunch and breaks at school that provided students who may not have been comfortably going elsewhere with a place to go to eat lunch or just hang out in a safe environment. Bob could be found most Friday nights at the gym until six o'clock, giving many students a place to play some pick up sports. Bob has become infamous among players for, "Krouse-ball", his modification of football that he used to keep players interested in practice and teach them about the game. Even after the season ended this past year, Bob was approached by players who wanted to make sure that they were still meeting to play "Krouse-ball" on their regular night. Students in Bob's gym classes over the years still compete to see who was the most often disciplined by Bob during their school days. Bob has become an icon that students still very much respect and like. Students to this day take nudge each other to let them know that "Krouse is in the house" when Bob enters the high school. Bob and Marjorie were honoured one year when the football team invited them to a party until they realized that the team intended to have the party at their home. This is the relationship that Bob has developed with his students and athletes over the years that he has been coaching and teaching.

Bob also assisted in selecting CFL athletes of the week for four years. He was asked to fill in this position by a friend who worked with the CBC network as a result of Bob's prestigious knowledge of the game of football.

Bob has also involved himself very much in the Special Education department at his schools. He still enjoys substitute teaching for this department as it gives him a chance to assist special needs students as they learn skills that they can apply to life.

During his years working at summer camps as an instructor and director Bob has learned the value of leisure activities both for himself and his family. Bob loved the opportunity that working at camps provided his children and wife with to participate in activities such as canoeing. Bob has placed a high value on this and other activities that provide a break from the busy schedule of the school year. Today Bob and his wife Marjorie spend their summers at the cottage with their children enjoy a much deserved break from the busy sport seasons and school years that they have had for so many years.

Family Life

Bob and Marjorie met in high school and married the year after they graduated. They have three children: Bob (BJ), Paul (Pit), and John (Jack) and also three grandchildren. Marjorie was and still is Bob's greatest supporter. When he talks about his wife he often refers to her as a martyr, Mother Theresa or a saint (which she agrees with). Bob is a very independent man and often has his own direction of what and where he wants to go and he will do it himself but when it comes to Marjorie things are different. Marjorie is his support system and he has been quoted to say, "I don't do anything without her permission except for breathe."

Due to his football career Bob was often gone and missed plenty of family dinners and special moments with the family. Marjorie has said that she hates the fall now because that always meant that Bob would be very busy and he would not spend much time at home. Even now she still feels this way even though Bob has retired. But now that Bob has retired both from football and teaching he is not as willing to give up his summers. He says that he has done that and that part of his life is over. He has a cottage and three grandchildren and he wants to spend time with his family

It is clear after talking with Bob and his wife Marjorie that Bob has a heart for sport and loves to see its development. This is why Bob has become involved in so many different organizations. The reasons that Bob has been so successful are numerous. Bob's own ambition has driven him in all of these aspects of his life and has made him unstoppable in any undertaking he has become involved in, whether it be as a line backer for the Hamilton Tiger-Cats, as a high school sport coach, as a member of any one of the committees that he has assisted on or ensuring that his family had the best opportunities that he could provide. Bob has placed a high value on his education for the doors that it has opened up for. He has also worked hard to reach his goals and this is why he can be satisfied with his accomplishments.

Although Bob dislikes the cliché of working hard, following your dreams and getting an education as a back up, he really does believe in this. He reminded us that only a small percentage of people can make a career out of sport and that most will have to rely on education or some form of vocational training to find a career. As Marjorie

pointed out at the end of our interview, “You can’t make football your life, unless you are Bob Krouse”.