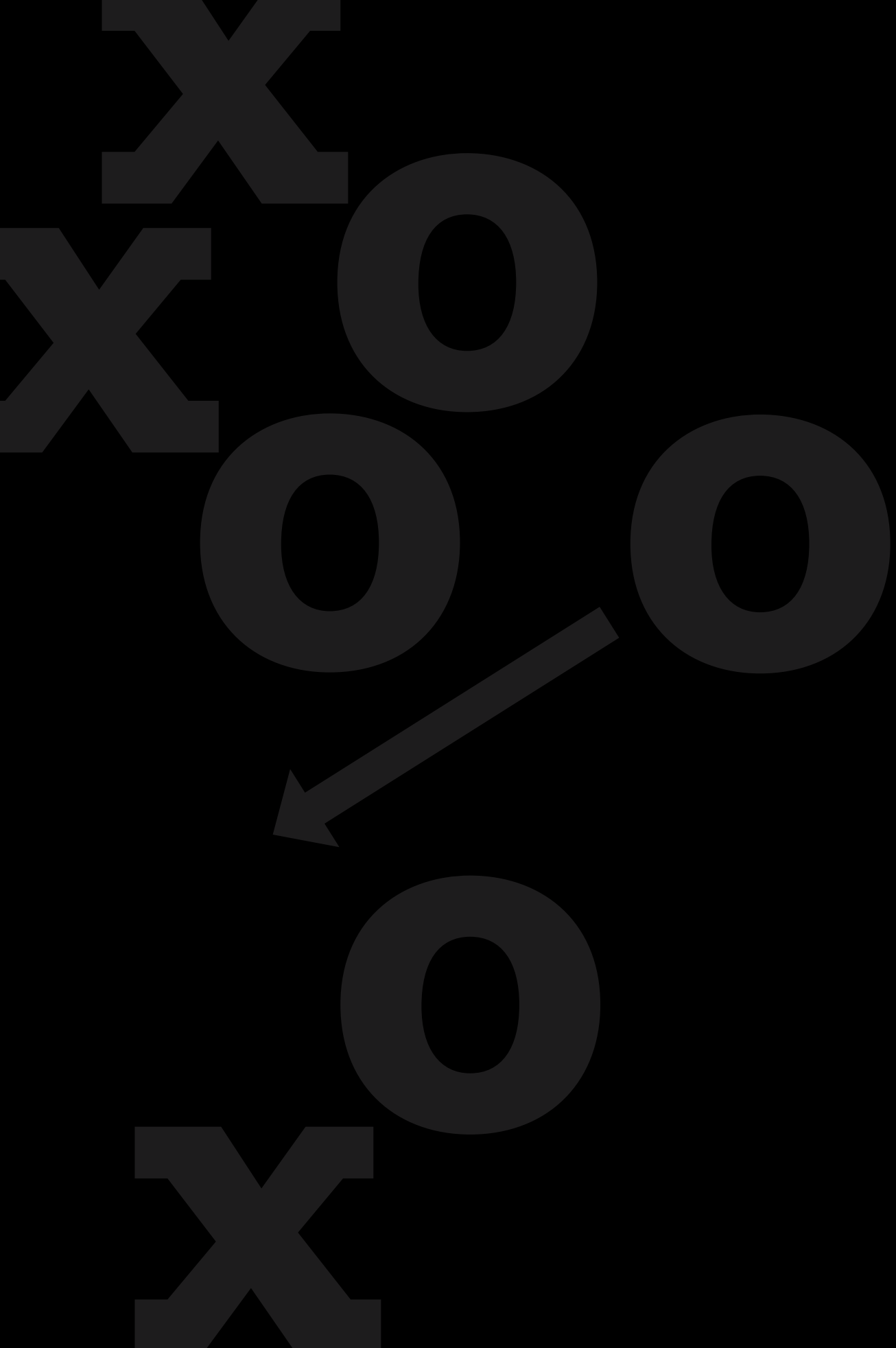




**PART TWO 1950–1972**



## CHAPTER 5

THE FIRST HEISMAN CANDIDATE

1950–1958

Rock-and-roll revved up the American music scene in the 1950s. College football also began to move to the beat of a different drummer. Fast and flashy backs like Vic Janowicz of Ohio State, Johnny Lattner of Notre Dame, and Tommy McDonald of Oklahoma astonished gridiron fans with dazzling displays of open-field running. College football was changing. Linemen became bigger and stronger. Backs became quicker and more agile. Plays were now considerably more complex.

The fan base of college football exploded. People flocked to high profile football contests. The sport began to generate vast revenues for some colleges and universities. The increased revenue made more money available for student-athletes, who in some cases became athlete-students. That was not the case at Rutgers, even though some fans and alumni campaigned for a bigger-time schedule. Rutgers' high entrance requirements turned away many potential gridiron stars who could make the cut on the field but not in the classroom. Some outstanding athletes got into Rutgers, but could not stay in and flunked out. Rutgers had to compete with schools like Harvard, Yale, and Princeton for scholar-athletes. Rutgers couldn't go big-time and it had a hard time luring good players it needed away from Ivy League schools. In football Rutgers was caught between a rock and a hard place when it came to recruiting players. Rutgers needed a little help.

Support for Rutgers' unique brand of football came from varied sources. Over the years, Rutgers football survived thanks to the devotion of many unsung heroes who never made a tackle or block, caught a pass, or scored a touchdown. Those pillars of Scarlet include people like Leonor F. Loree (president of Delaware and Hudson Railroad), Fred "Pop" Hart (unofficial statistician for more than fifty years), David "Sonny" Werblin (play producer and former president of MCA-TV), Richard Hale, Herb Goodkind, Thomas T. Barr, Jack Anderson, Peter Hendricks, Mark Hershhorn, and Peter Jennings, to name just a few. On-the-field individuals who put in long hours of support time included team physician Dr. Hyman Copleman, team dentist Joel Fertig, equipment manager John Powers, trainers Jake Besas and Mike Stang, and many tireless team managers like Charles Sweetman, Tony Oliva, Terry Beachem, and Carol Goodkind.



Left: Rutgers center Leon Root (left) stands with Scarlet head coach Harvey Harman. Root was one of Rutgers' greatest linemen and later played with the Chicago Cardinals. (Courtesy Special Collections and University Archives, Rutgers University Libraries)



Right: Jim Monahan was an all-around athlete who starred in football and baseball for Rutgers. (Courtesy Special Collections and University Archives, Rutgers University Libraries)

Eventually Rutgers would make the adjustments necessary to play a big-time schedule without compromising its academic standards. However, in 1950 Rutgers was still an all-boys school where athletes had demanding class requirements that made playing sports a difficult task. So when a player with big-time potential appeared on the banks of the old Raritan, football fans sat up and took notice.

In 1950 Rutgers captain Leon Root and teammates Bill Pellington, Bob D'Amato, Joe Scaliotta, and Jim Monahan plowed through a tough schedule with games against Penn State, Syracuse, and a Princeton team led by All-American Dick Kazmaier. Rutgers posted a record of 4 wins and 4 losses in 1950. Three-year letterman Earl Read went on to play in the North-South All-Star Game. Leon Root won All-East honors and continued his playing career in the pros with the Chicago Cardinals. Linebacker Bill Pellington won gridiron fame in the NFL as a star for the Baltimore Colts. Pellington played in the classic 1958 NFL Championship between the New York Giants and the Baltimore Colts, won by the Colts in sudden death overtime (in which the first team to score wins). Many football historians consider that contest to be the greatest pro football game ever played, and a Rutgers player was part of it.

The frequency of televised college football games increased during the 1950s.

Rutgers' schedule in 1951 did not include any televised contests, nor did it include Princeton. Once again Rutgers was 4 and 4. However, down the road in New Jersey Princeton went undefeated thanks to the efforts of Heisman Trophy-winning halfback Dick Kazmaier.

At season's end Rutgers captain Jim Monahan was named All-East. He was later named an All-American in baseball. Monahan played in the North-South All-Star football game

and continued his gridiron career as a pro for the Dallas Texans. Jim Monahan's 89-yard touchdown run against Temple in 1951 is still one of the longest scampers in Rutgers history.

Monahan wasn't the only member of the 1951 Scarlet squad to turn pro. Halfback Bob D'Amato later played for the Baltimore Colts in the NFL.

The two-platoon system in college football was voted out in 1952. Players could no longer specialize by playing just offense or defense. A team had to play both ways. There were no individual substitutes. Coaches had to substitute for the entire team. Generally teams alternated squads. One team played a full quarter, a second squad played the next quarter, and so on. Ivy League schools decided to ban spring football in 1951. They felt it put too much emphasis on sports. In those days spring drills were usually held at the end of the semester, not around or during spring break. Football players had to spend extra days at school, which posed a problem for some athletes. Rutgers decided to follow the Ivy League policy.

Rutgers had a .500 record (4-4-1) for the third straight year in 1952. The team was captained by Russ Sandblom and Howard Anderson.

In 1953, a back named Jim Brown was embarking upon a historic career at Syracuse University. Brown blasted into the end zone numerous times during the next few years. Unfortunately for Rutgers, touchdowns were tough to come by in 1953. Captain Don Duncan's squad managed only two wins that season. Scarlet center Joe Daddario had an outstanding season and was awarded Honorable Mention All-America honors for his fine gridiron work.

Rutgers got off to a disastrous start in 1954, but salvaged some respect thanks to the leadership of team captains J. Brian "By" O'Hearn and Angelo Iannucci. The team suffered a number of tough losses, including a defeat at the hands of a Penn State squad that featured future NFL stars Milt Plum at quarterback and Lenny Moore at halfback.

Left: Rutgers center Brian "By" O'Hearn was an Associated Press Honorable Mention All-American in 1954. (From the personal collection of By O'Hearn/Courtesy Rutgers Athletic Communications)

Right: Running back Angelo Iannucci (far left) and center Brian O'Hearn talk football with head coach Harvey Harman in 1954. (From the personal collection of By O'Hearn/Courtesy Rutgers Athletic Communications)

