

Jerry Pangrazzi Remembers His 1950 All-Star Experience

This information was provided by Jerry Pangrazzi- who currently lives in Iron River, MI. Jerry Pangrazzi was a member of the 1949 Stambaugh Hilltoppers, the team who was awarded the first ever "Barber Trophy" in the U.P.

Jerry Pangrazzi went on to play college football at Northern Michigan University. He also went into teaching and coaching at Marquette High and in his later years was the school's athletic director.

Pangrazzi said the U.P. All-Star Game had been going on for a few years until his time to play in it in 1950. He said it continued for 1 more year afterwards (When Buck Nystrom played). Pangrazzi said he has no newspaper articles or program of the 1950 game, but did say somewhere in his home he had a picture of all the North & South players together for one big group photo.

He said back then there was no "sponsorship" for the game. He said what happened is you got a letter in the mail and had a certain day to reply back by if you were interested in playing. He said one of his teammates from Stambaugh did decline the invitation. Then you just "reported" to Negaunee on a certain date & time frame.

As far as equipment, what Pangrazzi could remember is that he believes all you had to bring were your own football shoes & helmets. He believes all the players were issued Negaunee High's football pads (shoulder pads, thigh pads, etc).

He said the organizers did make up football jerseys for the team- but couldn't remember if you were allowed to keep them or not.

The teams practiced for about 1 week/5 days prior to the game. He said the teams stayed at the Old Negaunee St. Paul High School Gym. Pangrazzi thinks both teams ate together in a firehall- said both teams ate in this banquet room. Pangrazzi said it was here during the meals was where he got to know many of the players on both teams for the first time.

I read the team rosters to Pangrazzi and he didn't know about too much information about the North squad- except some of those who would go on to play at NMU with him.

As far as the South, Pangrazzi knew exactly where everyone of those players played football.

Here's what he was able to provide:

From the North:

Ken Jennings (Negaunee) went on to play a few years at NMU. Both Fred Wood & Jerry Wilkins, linemen from Newberry went on to play one season at NMU.

From the South:

Mel Holme (Stambaugh) made All-State in football and went on to play college football for the Minnesota Golphers. There he would play in the backfield with Paul Giel, an All American in 1953.

Ernest Pardon (Norway) did go on to play football at NMU. Eugene Taglienti (Iron Mountain) went on to play football for Michigan Tech. Frank Svoboda (Menominee) was almost 300lbs. Pangrazzi said he remembers Svoboda broke his leg- couldn't remember if it was either in practice or in the game.

The coach for the South was Vic Wajicowski.(sp?) There was a rule coaches from Michigan could not coach in the All- Star game, and Wajicowski came from out east. He did have ties to the U.P.- Pangrazzi believes Wajicowski did coach for Kingsford at one time.

One thing that was significant about the 1950 U.P. All Star game was this game was to feature "Two big guns" in the backfield- Mel Holmes from Stambaugh for the South and Roy Gustafson of Newberry for the North.

The season prior in 1949, the sportswriters (and Pangrazzi stressed "ONLY the sportswriters- NOT any broadcasters." voted to award the first ever Barber Trophy to Stambaugh over Newberry by a slim 3-2 margin.

The main criteria being Marquette & Newberry tied that season. Marquette and Kingsford played a very close game (Pangrazzi couldn't remember the exact outcome of that game). Then Stambaugh trounced Kingsford 40-7. Pangrazzi remembers there were some very hard feelings out east about the voting.

As far as the game itself, in 1950, Jerry Pangrazzi played for the South squad. He played "Defensive Half Back" for the entire game and did get one or two plays in on the offensive side of the ball (Halfback).

He said it was a very nice evening for the game, and that "The North ran all over us." Pangrazzi remembers that the North had three touchdowns called back due to penalties!

He remembers the South scored their lone TD by special teams. James Devine (lineman from Norway) blocked a punt and although he couldn't remember the individual, a South teammate recovered the blocked punt in the end zone for the score.

That play would be the difference, as the South won that game 6-0.