

LIBERTY'S ALL-STAR CANADIAN FOOTBALL TEAM

Repeaters and rising stars . . . Is your favorite performer among these winners?

BY
TED
REEVE

READING TIME • 9 MINUTES 23 SECONDS

NOT having taken enough punishment this year as coach of a team that slipped from the top to the bottom of the Intercollegiate Football League, here we are again with an All-Canadian All-Star squad. Draw up a chair. But don't throw it.

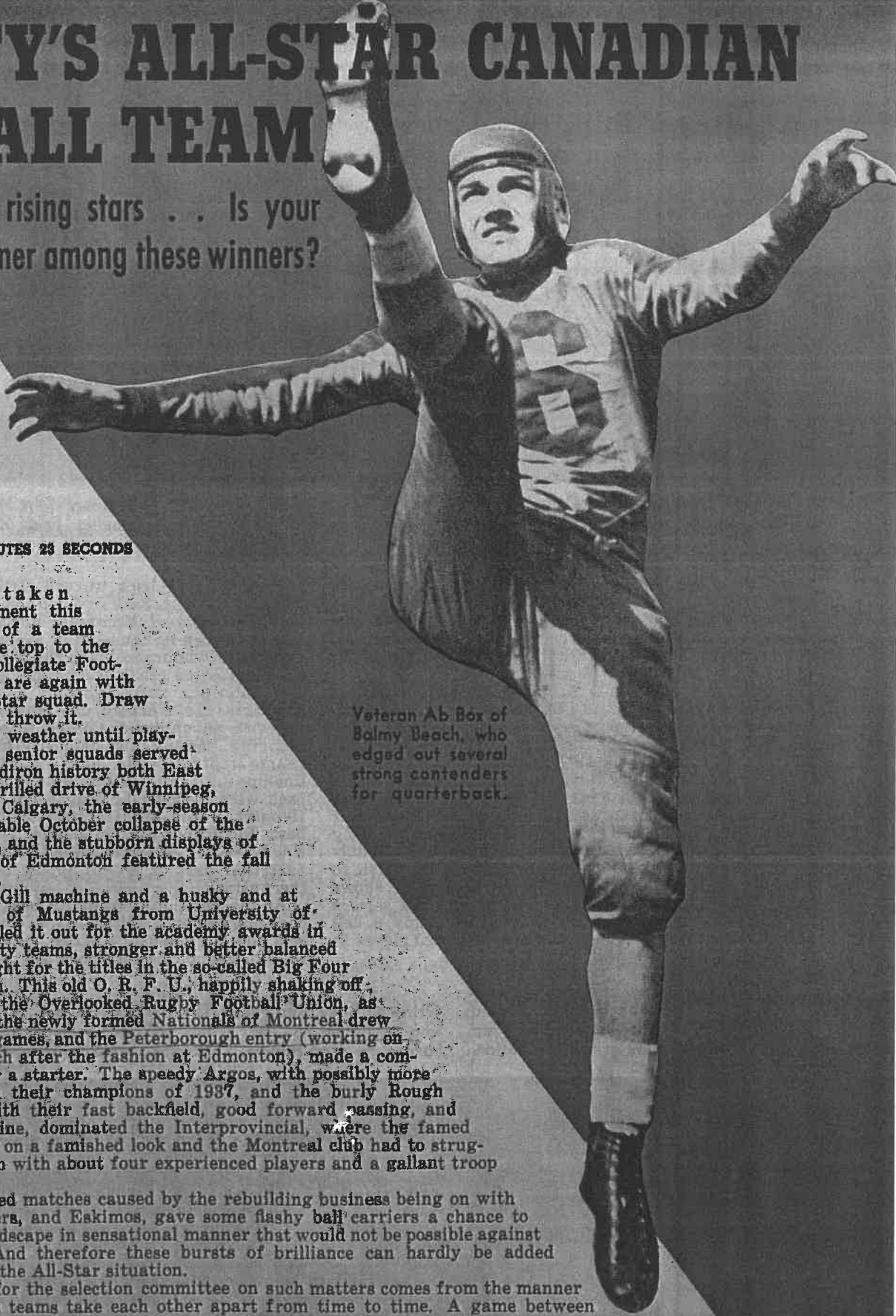
Blessed with sunny weather until play-off time at least, the senior squads served but some thrilling gridiron history both East and West. The well drilled drive of Winnipeg, the improvement at Calgary, the early-season power and unaccountable October collapse of the Regina Rough Riders, and the stubborn displays of the revived Eskimos of Edmonton featured the fall plowing on the Plains.

A steady-going McGill machine and a husky and at times brilliant band of Mustangs from University of Western Ontario battled it out for the academy awards in the East, while five city teams, stronger and better balanced than the average, fought for the titles in the so-called Big Four and the Ontario Union. This old O. R. F. U., happily shaking off the stigma of being the Overlooked Rugby Football Union, as Sarnia, Beaches, and the newly formed Nationals of Montreal drew large crowds to their games, and the Peterborough entry (working on a three-year plan much after the fashion at Edmonton), made a commendable showing for a starter. The speedy Argos, with possibly more all-round power than their champions of 1937, and the burly Rough Riders of Ottawa, with their fast backfield, good forward passing, and brontosaurian wing line, dominated the Interprovincial, where the famed Hamilton Tigers took on a famished look and the Montreal club had to struggle through the season with about four experienced players and a gallant troop of Boy Scouts.

The several one-sided matches caused by the rebuilding business being on with the Cubs, Petes, Tigers, and Eskimos, gave some flashy ball carriers a chance to scurry around the landscape in sensational manner that would not be possible against sterner opposition. And therefore these bursts of brilliance can hardly be added to the form charts on the All-Star situation.

Another headache for the selection committee on such matters comes from the manner in which the Western teams take each other apart from time to time. A game between Winnipeg and Regina, for instance, often seems to wind up with the entire scrimmage in splints. A Calgary-Regina contest apparently is sometimes an informal invitation to the infirmary. And a brush between the Broncs and Bombers is quite likely to find the substitutes in the fourth quarter being wheeled out to relieve those who are more seriously wounded.

We do not mean to imply that they play rough football in the Prairie Conference. Not one instance of cannibalism was reported this year. But the big lines, hard fields, ten-yard interference combined with the Canadian running start to the plays, all make for a certain amount of wear and tear on the gladiators. Which means that many an acknowledged star has hardly time to show his stuff between injuries, and some of the Johnny-come-latelys brought in with a promising build-up have



Veteran Ab Box of Balmy Beach, who edged out several strong contenders for quarterback.



Winnipeg's "granite cornerstone" and All-Star middle wing, Martin Gainer.

A Bombers' Fritz Hanson, voted the best running back despite early injuries.

taken the count before being able to give a full season demonstration. We trust that this preamble will supply you with a fair reason for the possible absence from this line-up of some of your favorite performers. Then, of course, there is the possibility that on a couple of the positions we might even be wrong.

Hardly any argument is expected, though, on the choice of Hughie Stirling of Sarnia as the kicking half-back. Bob Isbister, the hero of the Argos' 1937 championship march, was on the limp during most of the league season, and even Ab Box could hold his own no longer with the mighty hoofing of the One-Man Band. Two hundred and ten pounds and fast afoot, the Bummer plunged, passed, played secondary, and acted as cheer leader with all his former power, while his punting actually improved for height and distance, due possibly to his being allowed more backfield space in which to wind up on kick formations. Which once more shows that good snapping from center can be of great service to a long-distance booter. Stirling sailed many a ball ninety yards. We think he is the best all-round player in the game.

For plunging back we will settle for John Ferraro, whose great comeback supplied the drive for the remarkable Nationals of Montreal. Rorvig of Calgary hits a line as though he came out of a chute; and Danaher, the dynamiter who made his debut with Regina, can supply a level crossing crash every time he totes a ball. Biever, the Winnipeg find, Seymour, and Isbister are other smashers. But Ferraro, one-time captain and All-America with an unbeaten Cornell team, hit the top of his plunging, passing, and defensive form this season. For years Montreal clubs have floundered with big-name line-ups until this fall Fred Porter fired his newly formed pack with his own fighting spirit, and players such as Hempey, Burns, and Hutton came back to their battling best. But it took the genial giant Ferraro, playing under Hoddy Foster, who had relieved him of his coaching job (get that part of it), to supply that extra oompah to their attack.

At the position of running back the argument rages once more around Fritz Hanson, who can be a firecracker or a flop at a moment's notice, yet moves so swiftly that we still cannot give any one else the call ahead of him.

Dean Griffing, Regina star who remains head man at center position.

Ottawa's Dave Sprague, who repeated his 1937 honors as star middle.

The best of the kicking halfbacks—Hugh Stirling of Sarnia.





Wes Cutler of the Argonauts. His tackling helped win the All-Star end vote.

Ottawa's Bunny Wadsworth; 250 pounds, but fast enough to win inside honors.

Rowe and Johnny Mike Sullivan of Calgary, West of Argos, Hedgewick of Sarnia, Thomson of Beaches, Atchenson of Montreal, Shelly of Winnipeg, Loucks of Peterborough, and the much injured O'Neil of Ottawa all had their big days. Eastern critics who saw Hanson at his dazzling best one day in the mud at Hamilton (when he was against mediocre kicking) and saw him at his worst in Toronto last year (when he was trying to surround so unsuccessfully Isbister's lofters), maintain that he cannot catch good kicking. But he still scores touchdowns behind the end-sweeping Western interference. And in the East, with a good extension team to feed him, he would likewise probably skirt the lines for many a long gain.

Flying wing? Teddy Morris. The perfect team player and the real answer to the Argonauts' success of recent years. Squatly built and weighing only 170 or so, he must be put together with rivets. A deadly tackler and a knifing plunger, with uncanny football instinct, he is also one of those very, very rare birds, an end-run commender. The famed Argonaut end run depends on Morris. He tears across the rear of the line, senses the set-up is

right, then shoots the ball out to his speeding backfielders. If not—and he has only a split second to sum up the layout of opposing end, tackle, and secondary—he slices into a low driving plunge that is still likely to carry him for a long, quick gain.

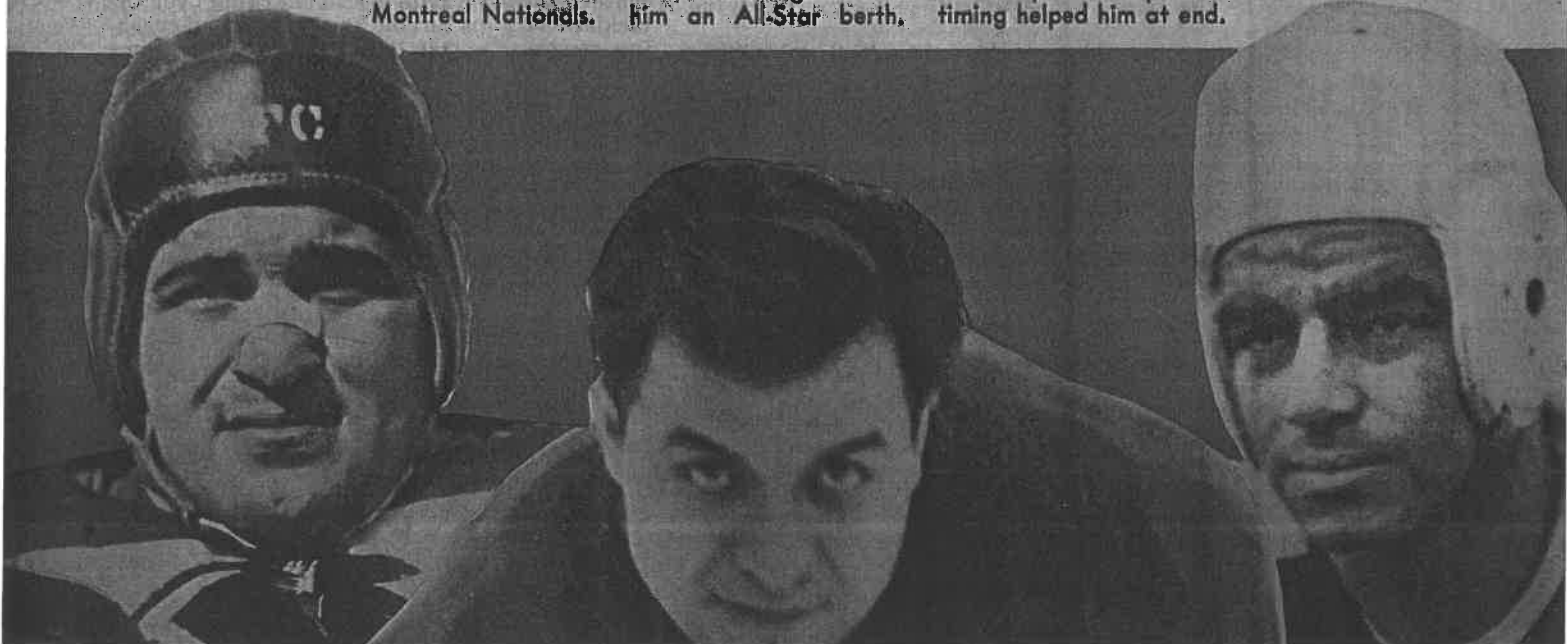
At quarterback the biggest debate of all has to take place. The woods are practically congested with good signal shouters this year. Bob Fritz, the driving leader of the Eskimos; Murray Griffin, a Canadian husky with Amerk experience whose tackling and forward passing added power to Ottawa; big Greg Kabat, the made-over kicking half of the Blue Bombers who steered Coach Threlfall's team through many a thoughtfully planned march; Ronnie Perowne, the famous crying quarterback of old McGill, with the speed and the fire; a fine all-rounder like Annis Stukas, the oldest of the Three Stukuses Three of Argonauts; Ed Barnabe, the hard-tackling dynamo with Nationals; and several others will do a fair amount of chores along with the executive work of quarterbacking.


However, we think Ab Box, the Balmy Beach veteran, has the edge on the rest. He is a wonderful kicker and

Best plunging back. John Ferraro of the Montreal Nationals.

Al Hoptowit of Calgary, whose work at guard won him an All-Star berth.

Bernie Thornton of Argonauts. Speed and perfect timing helped him at end.





Argonauts' Ted Morris,
winner of flying-wing
honors and nominated
as best team player.

the best forward passer developed in Canada to date. In fact none of the imports have been better at pitching than the slim but durable and quick-moving 175-pounder who has led one Argo team and one Beach team to Dominion titles. Furthermore, along with Morris he is the surest open-field tackler in the country.

At center, Dean Griffing of Regina, despite injuries and ailments, is still the king. Old Mr. Battle himself has experience, size, and strength to take a fair margin over the promising crop of younger snapbacks coming up from Winnipeg and points east. Griffing seems to thrive on excitement. His value as a player was emphasized this year when his injuries started the Regina slump which picked up such speed that even he could not rally his troops when he limped back into the fray.

The main wrangle about the choice of ends is caused by the different requirements of an Eastern outside wing and a Western flank man. Against the power plays from scrimmage, Prairie teams need big crashing fellows like Nicklin of Winnipeg or Hal Harrison of Calgary, or a fierce tackler, such as O'Brien of Edmonton. With the Eastern punters and their fifty-five- to seventy-yard kicks down-field, the ends hereabouts have to be deadly divers in the open; likewise quick-moving ankle snatchers to cope with the fast-breaking, lateral-passing and runs.

So for all-round work we would select the Argonaut pair, Bernie Thornton and Wes Cutler, who are tough enough for the head-on formation work and fast enough for the spring-board tactics in the wide-open spaces. Thornton, an unusually good pass receiver, has perfect timing and is a well knit 180-pound speeder. Cutler is smaller but is such a terrific tackler that he seems to spend a large part of the autumn partially stunned, while the ball carrier he hits full force invariably has to be jacked up before he can continue. Cutler is a fighting team player, and Thornton a dead shot as a placement kicker.

On three line positions we think our selections would be winners by quite a margin in a nation-wide poll. We refer to Dave Sprague and Bunny Wadsworth of Ottawa and Martin Gainer of Winnipeg. The last-mentioned middle wing is a big powerful American who as a charger or a secondary defense man is the granite cornerstone of the Bombers' defense. Wadsworth, the 250-pound beefeater, is amazingly fast on his feet, a punishing tackler, and a runaway truck as a ball carrier through the center. Dave Sprague is still charging over the tacklers with his terrific knee action and crashing speed. Yes, the Terrible Two of Ottawa are still the class of the Eastern shock troops.

Next to Gainer out West, the best reports for workmanlike line play are accorded to the big, thick-set, fast-charging guard of the Calgary Broncs, Al Hoptowit. He is that way by name and that way by nature. Coming to Calgary after taking part in the Chicago All-Star college game last September, this powerful brave immediately started to camp out for the season in the opposing backfields. He is an outstanding defensive lineman. A dozen others might be given honorable mention here, but we do not think that line could be improved upon.

That team might have its bad days or lose a game when Hanson started to field by ear or go back too far for a flying start; or they might suffer on the mileage taken away by the referees when Stirling started a debate, or Griffing, Wadsworth, and Sprague began to get playful. But it would be a mighty pack to watch in action. Except from a front view, close up.

THE END