



FORMER PA ATHLETES' QUOTES

Bruce Poynter '77

Bruins vs Raiders

"The team loaded up their gear on the bus to go to Montrose and play the Raiders. From the few times I had been to Montrose, I knew it was going to be a long trip. The bus stopped in Pine Bluff for the team to eat supper. The meal was horrible and almost made me sick. When we got back on the bus, I immediately fell asleep. The next thing I knew, we were ten miles from the Raider's school. The Montrose trip was a short one for the first time. The trip might have been short because I fell asleep, but I think it was short because this was to be the last football game to play in for Pulaski Academy.

The players got all their equipment off the bus, and we took it to the locker room where we were to dress. I took all my pads out of the duffle bag, and got my equipment ready to be put on. The next thing I did was to go to the tape table. The tape table is where you have all your nicks and bruises dressed up for the game. Both of my ankles are like light bulbs, so I tape them before every game.

It was about thirty minutes before game time. Everybody started to put on their pads. The seniors started talking about how wild and good they were going to play. You could see sadness in the Seniors eyes, knowing this was to be the last time to strap on the equipment. The other team members knew how badly we wanted to win, and to be number one. We all grew quiet the last few minutes before game time. Coach came in and took us out of the locker room to go do our exercises. Tears started forming in my eyes and I choked them back. I couldn't talk, much less chant with the rest of the team. After we finished our exercises, Coach gathered us together, and gave us a pep talk. I couldn't hold the tears back any longer. Coach told us how important this game was to him and the Bruins. We had never had the chance before to be

number one. He asked us seniors to get the team going and to keep them going through the game.

We went out onto the field fired up. The weather was incredibly bad. The wind was blowing very hard, breaking right through our clothes. The rain wasn't making anything better, along with the temperature being in the thirties. Ten minutes after we had been on the field, the Montrose Raiders came out. It was their homecoming and they looked fired up. Last year, we beat them at our homecoming, so they were out to get us. I think our team was more fired up than theirs as we wanted to be the champs.

We received the ball first and the Bruins were moving the ball! We got down to about their 40 yard line when a disaster happened. I was carrying the ball; I broke through the line and was on my way for a long gain when one of the Montrose players took the ball away from me. I couldn't believe it. This really made me angry. Montrose moved the ball pretty good, but not good enough to score. The Bruins couldn't move the ball at all. The first quarter had to go to the Raiders

The second quarter was a different story. We almost scored a touchdown twice in this quarter. If the field had not been wet, we would have scored. After they had stopped our drive, we decided to try and get a field goal. The kick was up and it went very close to the bar. We saw the referee call it good. Then the other referee said it was no good. The final decision was that the kick was no good. This made us very upset and Coach thought we had been cheated. The first half was over with a zero-zero tie. However, the Bruins had won the second quarter without a doubt. Half time was over and I really felt bad. My whole body was shaking and my hands and feet were completely numb. It was so cold. I could hardly wait for the game to be over.

The third quarter was a tough one. The Bruins kept the ball on their side of the field most of the quarter. Midway through the third quarter, Montrose started to move the ball. They got inside our ten yard line, but our defense refused to score. Now, we were in the hole and had to get out. With good execution, we brought ourselves out to the fifty yard line. The gun went off and it was the fourth quarter with still no score. Our offense was in the huddle and we all got together and said a prayer. Miraculously our team moved the ball down to the ten yard line. The hand off was to Tom McCain, my old buddy. One defender slipped off his body and he went into the end zone to score! I was so happy because I knew we had won the game. The Raiders had one chance to score before time ran out. With our Bruin luck, we intercepted the ball to stop all of their chances of winning. The clock ticked away the time as the team and P.A. fans could taste victory. When the game was over, all the players were yelling, "We are number one!" What a thrill it was to be number one in my senior year.

The bus ride home was loud and happy the first hour. The last two hours everybody was so exhausted that we all went to sleep. This night was to be one not forgotten by the players, coaches, fans and especially the seniors."

Dr. Bill Hefley '77

"I was fortunate to be on the first four Bruin football teams. Bruin football began with spring practice in 1973, my eighth grade year. There was no junior high or JV team so all of us rising freshmen played for the varsity. Our head coach was Charles "Butch" Ferriter. At 6'4" he was an imposing figure with a booming voice, a big wooden paddle, and a hilarious perfect old coaching adage at the ready for every occasion. Assistant coach was Gary Shoptaw. Headmaster Mo Shumate helped coach as well.

Each season began with the dreaded two-a-day practices. The heat was not too bad for the morning session, usually about 2 ½ hours. Between practices a bunch of us would pile in with the older guys that had cars and go to H.B's in southwest Little Rock to eat barbeque, drink a bunch of Dr. Peppers and play pinball until time to return—probably not the best recovery plan. The second session happened in the heat of the afternoon and was brutal. We wore long-sleeved, heavy, cotton jerseys and full pads. Back then it was believed that going without water made you tougher and stronger so we had no water during practice. Midway through practice the coach would bring out a big metal jug full of ice. Everybody got one piece. Coach believed in a lot of wind sprints for conditioning at the end of both practices. It was always hard to get out of bed the next morning for the first few days.

All games and practices were on the same field we use now. With daily use, by late in the season it was hard packed dirt or deep mud depending on the weather and full of holes. We occasionally played games at War Memorial Stadium on the AstroTurf which felt like indoor-outdoor carpet on concrete.

Despite our high hopes we had a record of 3-6 for that first season in 1973. By 1976, my senior year, we had our first winning season of 7-3 and were co-champions of the MANS Conference. I am forever grateful for the years I spent on the Bruin football team. Despite how tough he was on us, I had a lot of love and respect for Coach Ferriter. A great role model, he taught us character mattered and worked to develop us into the right kind of young men. The important life lessons he and the other coaches taught me helped me through my education and training and still do to today.

I graduated from PA in 1977 but returned in the 90s when my four kids began school there. I soon became a team doctor and was privileged to get to stand on the sidelines for the Coach Kevin Kelley era. I learned a lot from Coach Kelley, as well. He was not only a brilliant, trailblazing coach, but he also made Bruin football so much fun and taught great life lessons. I also coached the Bruin youth football teams for four years and got to watch my son play for the Bruins on a couple of state championship teams. Bruin football has been a big part of almost my entire life and has made a huge impact on me and my sons. I got to witness Bruin Football 1.0 and 2.0—from humble beginnings to the juggernaut it is today. I am so grateful to have been a part of this program.

Phil Pate '81

“Coach Butch Ferriter taught us the fundamentals of football and how to play the game. He turned unskilled underdogs into PA’s first two conference championship teams. Coach Ferriter changed empty stands into a crowded field and converted inexperienced players into athletes. He also cultivated passive students and parents into ardent Bruin fans. But more than anything, Coach Ferriter transformed PA’s school spirit.

Years later, Kevin Kelley came in and literally changed the game for my sons Zach and Pug which led to PA’s first two state championships. Coach Kelley took a successful program from the state level to a nationally recognized program by teaching less talented players how to win on the big stage and all the while he was building character and making the game safer for our players.

Coach Butch Ferriter and Coach Kevin Kelley were both game changers who brought PA’s program from good to great. What a privilege it has been for both my sons and me to be impacted by these two amazing coaches.”

Will Hefley '18

“I am incredibly grateful for the experience I gained as a student-athlete at PA. The team was one of the most competitive in the country, but it was still an environment that allowed us to have fun and to learn. Coach Kelley not only always made sure we were prepared for the game, but he also went out of his way to build character in the players and ensure we were the right kind of men off the field. He even left time for team-building activities like going to movies together.

With the work we put in year-round, there was always time to focus on school because we did not have to cram our football learning during the fall. I had plenty of time to make good grades while still preparing for a season that ended with a State Championship win which will always be one of the most memorable experiences of my life.

With the combination of the PA education and football competitiveness, I felt more than prepared for any challenge I faced as a University of Tulsa football player and pre-med student. Even now as a Vanderbilt medical student, I feel the lessons I learned as a PA football player help me to stay on top of my work.”