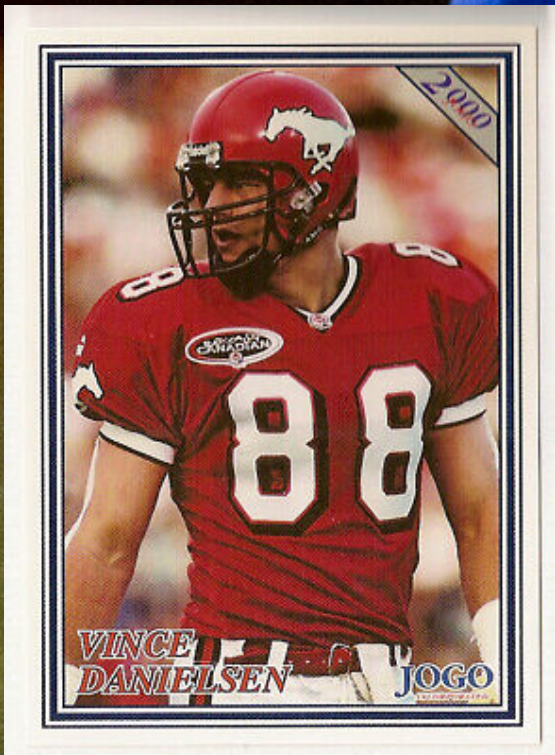


GRIDIRON GREATS

February 15, 2023

Presented by the
Thunderbird
Football
Alumni



**STAVROS
KATSANTONIS
AND
VINCE
DANIELSEN**



INQUIRIES: BLAKE.NILL@UBC.CA



STAVROS KATSANTONIS

**#18, DB/PR/P
2015–2018**

Stavros is currently playing safety with the Hamilton Tiger-Cats. He and his wife Kiley, who's studying to become a lawyer, live in Post Falls, Idaho in the offseason. Stavros graduated with a degree in Psychology.



T-Bird Legacy

Hardy Cup, Uteck Bowl and Vanier Cup Champion ('15)

Hardy Cup Finalist ('16, '17)

CW Presidents Trophy—Defensive Player of the Year ('18)

Led CW in interceptions ('15, '16, '17, '18)

Bruce Coulter Award—Vanier Cup Defensive MOP ('15)

CW All-Star ('16, '17, '18)

USports All-Canadian ('16, '17, '18)

UBC Defensive Rookie of the Year ('15)

UBC Defensive co-MOP ('16)

UBC Defensive MOP ('17)

CW Defensive Player of the Week—Oct. 19th ('15), Oct. 23rd ('17)

**Set school records for most interceptions by a rookie in a season—6 ('15)
and most pass breakups in a career—21**

Led CW with longest fumble return—61 yards vs. Alberta ('15)

Led CW with most interceptions in a game—3 vs. Manitoba ('17)

**Selected defensive captain of the Canadian National Junior Team—
International Bowl ('16)**

Invited to the USports East-West Bowl (East defensive captain) ('18)

Named to UBC's 2010's All-Decade team ('20)

**Career Stats: Interception return yards—215, solo tackles—126, assisted
tackles—94, pass-breakups—21, interceptions—20, forced fumbles—7,
fumbles recovered—7, tackles for loss—5**

**CFL: Invited to the CFL National combine ('19). Invited to the NFLPA All-
Star Bowl ('19), attended XFL free-agent combine ('20). CFL: Drafted 4th
Rd. 36th overall by the Hamilton Tiger-Cats ('20). Eastern Conference
Champions, 108th Grey Cup Finalist ('21).**



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1. Why UBC? Can you tell us about the decision to leave California to play for the Thunderbirds?

UBC was among a few different choices I had when making my decision on where I wanted to play University football. It really came down to a preferred walk-on at the University of Washington, and two offers from UBC and the University of Calgary. Coach Nill and the beautiful Point Grey campus made the decision that much easier, not to mention the academic opportunities UBC had to offer. It definitely was not sunny California at first, the Pacific Northwest weather took some time getting used to. I also wanted to attend a football program with a rich history. The UBC Thunderbirds have always been a powerhouse program in the West and have put out many notable professional athletes in the CFL and NFL.

2. It didn't take you long to learn the 3-down game, leading the conference in interceptions as a freshman. What was your first training camp like at UBC?

My first training camp at UBC was a huge adjustment period. Being new to the Canadian game came with its growing pains, along with being an 18-year-old thousands of miles away from my family. I can still



remember thinking I was going to be a star right away and that the Canadian game would be easy for me. The dog days of my first camp were tough but the surrounding support staff was exceptional, from the coaching staff to our alumni to our amazing athletic therapists. It took a few games to get settled in, but after my first start versus Alberta, I never looked back.

3. Can you tell us about the three consecutive Hardy Cup Finals (2015-17) and your championship defences?

The Hardy Cup experiences were filled with some ultimate high and low moments that I will never forget. From upsetting the best teams in the country to losing the game on a game-winning 59-yard field goal are some of the things I will always remember. It

sparked a long-awaited and renewed rivalry between the T-Birds and the Dinos.

4. What was your reaction to being named to the 2010's All-Decade team?

It was a real honour to be included in the All-Decade team with some of the greatest players to wear the Blue and Gold. It reinforces all the hard work that was put in, the success, the days where I did not necessarily feel like doing the work and everything else in between.



5. Tell us about your first CFL training camp – who were you most impressed by?

My first CFL training camp was another change of atmosphere. Even though I was accustomed to the Canadian game, this became a whole new level. You are now playing against guys that were playing football since before you could walk, the experience level and speed of the game are such big steps from the university ranks. I also was part of the COVID draft class in 2020 where there was not a season. Going into 2021, I did not know what to expect and having a year off football made me a bit nervous. Either way, I was excited to get back to football and do what I do best. On Day 2 of training camp, I dislocated my finger and feared it would put an end to my camp. Thankfully, it was put back into place promptly and I was able to splint it and still play. Because of the shortened season, we were not afforded an exhibition game. I made the active roster and was a part of the first game to kick off since the end of the 2019 season. I soaked up the whole moment of officially being a pro athlete and it was everything I expected and more in that stadium full of 30K+ Blue Bomber fans.

I was most impressed by the veteran DBs. They all seemed so poised and had such a knowledge of the game. I made it a point to study them and pick their brains and ultimately learn from them.

6. Your rookie year included a Vanier Cup Championship – what was that 2015 playoff run like?

That playoff run was something out of a storybook. It was a true Cinderella story and had the happy ending that everyone was looking for. The most important thing was that we believed in each other as teammates and we all had one another's backs. We played together and for each other and no team we faced was able to overcome the bond we had. I still remember waking up the day of the Vanier Cup and my roommate Quinn telling me he was going to kick a game-winning field goal. A few hours later and it was etched in history forever.

7. You played on some of UBC's most talented teams. What was it like to compete against Michael O'Connor, Marcus Davis, Alex Morrison, and others like them?

The talent we had from 2015-2018 prepared me so much to be a pro athlete. With veteran guys like Alex Morrison, Taylor Loffler, Boyd Richardson, Brandon Deschamps, Terrell and Marcus Davis to name a few, I was set up to succeed. We all competed every day in



practice and never took it easy on each other. With Mike, we competed in everything. It was always some sort of point system and we both always tried to have an edge. Everything counted, touchdowns, interceptions, video games, board games, park basketball, you name it. We were always pushing each other and trying to get the best out of each other.

8. Hardy Cup, East-West Bowl, International Bowl, the Vanier Cup, and the Grey Cup. What's next on your bucket list for football and for a career after football?

I think next is going to be hoisting the Grey Cup. It is the next thing on my bucket list and it is something I strive for each season. To be the best in football is bliss.

9. You completed your 4-year career with 20 interceptions, is there one game or one pick you remember the most?

The game I remember most interception-wise would have to be my pick-six at homecoming my fourth and final year



at UBC vs. Calgary. I felt like it was a great read and once I saw the opening to the endzone I turned up the speed.

10. The CFL combine and the draft are on every player's calendar. What was that experience like, and how did you learn about your selection by the Tiger-Cats?

The CFL combine was a great experience, it was a very professional setting. From having one-on-one interviews with whole front office personnel to the combine events themselves, it was a cool experience to be a part of. As for the draft, it is one of the biggest days of the year and in one's career as a Canadian. I held a

small draft party at my house with my family and got the call from the Ticats organization that they had selected me about midway through the draft. So many emotions at one time came out, and I was just so happy to be chosen by a team and given an opportunity to earn a spot on the roster.





THE TFA HUDDLE



In Conversation with Taylor Nill

1. What made you want to take on an expanded role with the TFA? And what does this new role entail?

Due to some positive changes in my personal life and professional life, it was time to step away from an on-field role. I wanted to find another way to help impact the players and the long-term success of the Thunderbirds football program. The TFA provides that opportunity.

With many years around university athletics – as a fan, player, coach & alumni – I understand the importance of a strong alumni presence in order for the players to get the most out of their university playing experience and I want to be a part of that at UBC. My role will revolve around two key areas: the growth of TFA Memberships and TFA events.



2. You played a big part in Calgary's 5th Quarter Association. What was that organization able to contribute to Calgary's program?

The Dinos' 5th Quarter Association is honestly likely the premier alumni group in USports, and plays a huge role in the success of the Dinos Football program. With several key events each year, centred around a fundraising dinner each Spring, they are able to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for the Football program. Beyond the funds raised, what the 5th Quarter did well was they created a community, one that is generations deep. Working in downtown Calgary, you would be hard-pressed not to run into a fellow alumnus on your way to lunch every day. That sense of community is felt by the players within the program and they are eager to join and make a difference once their time on the field is up.

3. What kind of impact can being involved with the TFA have on the current team? And how exactly can alumni contribute?

Football, especially university football, is such a short time in a player's life. What is important when thinking about how alumni



THE TFA HUDDLE



can help, is what can we do for a player once their football career here at UBC is over? Involvement with the TFA goes beyond a financial commitment, it is meant to build a connection with the program and the players within it. We've all built our own professional careers to this point, and have likely benefited from personal connections along the way. TFA members and Thunderbird Football alumni can be those personal connections for today's players. Whether that's guidance around what to major in, a helping hand getting a summer job to stay in Vancouver and train for the summer or helping land an interview at a dream company post-graduation, we can all play a part. By staying up on all things Thunderbird football in the off-season, attending games and supporting the team in the Fall and engaging with fellow alumni at events, we can build that community here at UBC.

4. Which upcoming event are you most excited to be involved in?

In Vancouver, we have logistical challenges that many other university cities do not, due to the sheer size of the city and the location of the campus. TFA events play a huge part in bringing the alumni and current players together! As a new member to the TFA, I know I'm most looking forward to the golf event this July – sunshine, drinks and some poor golf – count me in!

Save the Date

Following the success of last summer's revived Legacy Golf Classic, the TFA is already well into the planning process for this year's event.

Save the Date: July 6th at Tsawwassen Springs Golf Course

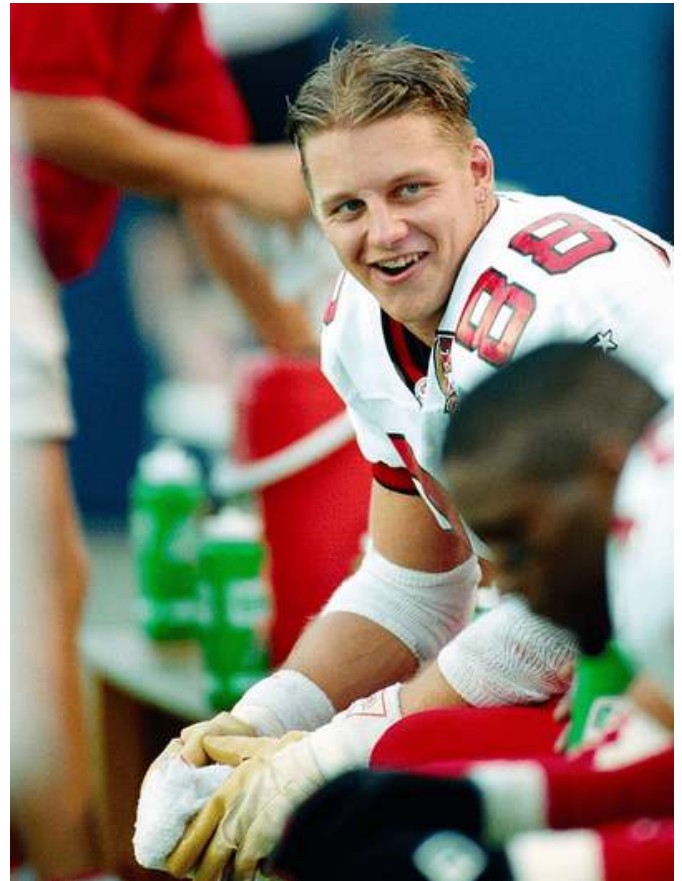
Look for a link in your inbox in the coming month to purchase your tickets before they sell out.

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VINCE DANIELSEN

**#88, REC/QB
1989–1993**

After graduating from UBC with a degree in Human Kinetics in 1994, Vince went on to have a successful career in the CFL. He's now the Senior Director of Preventative Health at Well Health Technologies. He lives in North Vancouver with his wife Colleen, and their children Cole and Mya.



T-Bird Legacy

Hardy Cup Finalist ('89, '90, '92)

Led CW in completion percentage—50.9 ('90), yards—1,644, TDs—14 ('91)

CW Offensive Player of the Week, passing for 362 yards vs. SSK ('90)

Led UBC in passing ('90, '91), receptions—44, yards—656, and yards per catch—14.3 ('93)

CW All-Star ('93)

CIAU All-Canadian ('93)

Named to UBC's Top-100 rankings ('16)

Named to UBC's 1990's All-Decade team ('20)

Career Stats: 44 touchdown passes, 5,253 passing yards, 586 rushing yards

CFL: Vince was drafted in the 1st round, 3rd overall by the Calgary Stampeders ('94), where he went on to play from 1994 to 2001. Named West Division All-Star ('97, '98), was the Grey Cup's Most Valuable Canadian ('98), and won another Grey Cup title in his last season in 2001. Named West Division Dr. Beattie Martin Trophy—Outstanding Canadian Player ('98) and the CFL's Outstanding Canadian ('98).

1. You led the Stampeders in receptions (91) and yards (1,174) in '97 and played with some greats like Allen Pitts, Doug Flutie, Jeff Garcia, Dave Sapunjis, and Travis Moore. Can you tell us about that dynamic offence?

In the 1990s, the Stampeders had teams that now have so many members of the CFL Hall of Fame and some of the greatest players to play in the CFL, with the likes of Doug Flutie and Allen Pitts to name a couple.



Great offences all start with the quarterback position, and I was blessed to catch footballs in that era from Doug Flutie and Jeff Garcia, who were both NFL Pro Bowl QBs. If you can believe it, in 1998 our three quarterbacks on the roster were Garcia, Dave Dickenson and Henry Burris. Having great players on the field is one thing, but to have that you have to find these players who were not recognized in the NFL when they came out of college, and the credit for that goes to Roy Shivers (head of scouting) and Wally Buono. Somehow Roy Shivers continued to find these QBs, and other players like Pitts, Terry Vaughan, Travis Moore—this is kept our team playing at a high level for many years.

Our offence had great pieces at every position, but it took more than that to reach the heights that we did. There was the offensive scheme from OC John Hufnagel, who was a true innovator in the CFL in the early 90's as he developed offences with five- and six-receiver formations—defences in the CFL were not built to defend this scheme. It made defences in the CFL change the types of players both size and speed they placed on the field. As well, all our receivers wanted the ball of course, as we had years where four receivers were over 1,000 yards receiving, but we all knew that to win championships at the end of the day we had to buy into team success and be selfless. Our teams that won Grey Cups sacrificed

individual accolades for this team success. Lastly, Wally Buono was able to keep the team together for a 10-year stretch, which really built amazing team chemistry on the field and consistency every year.

2. Which CanWest opponent was your biggest rival and why?

For some reason, I always thought of U of S as the team to beat back then. They had such great teams, played tough football and really were well-coached. Although the feistiest rivalry was the University of Calgary. I remember in 1993 in Calgary, the teams and coaches were in the tunnel coming down to the field at McMahon Stadium and there was an altercation between members on both sides. These events spill out on the field and really create the stories of rivalries and the tension within the game.

3. What were your recruiting trips and your early days on campus with coach Frank Smith and his staff like?

All I remember from my recruiting process was that I was trying to decide if I would accept scholarship offers from the University of Idaho State, Simon Fraser, or UBC. I went to campus and Coach Frank Smith took me for lunch after a walkthrough of Thunderbird Stadium. He grabbed his napkin, placed it fully spread out on the table, and drew all the offensive positions. He said, 'Here is the great QB Jordan Gagner,' and then wrote

my name on the napkin and said 'This is the next great QB,' and here is where he wanted me to play. I am sure he did that for



every player he recruited and I like thinking back to the “old school” coaching methods and the simplicity of communication that works between coach and player. This never should change as football is really about X’s and O’s, players and positions, and dreaming to be part of the team on the field competing.

4. What was your reaction to being named to the 1990’s All-Decade team? And if you could play with any of the other All-Decade T-Bird stars, who would they be?

To be named to an All-Decade team or any other accolade is nice, but really what matters deep down is being part of the history of a football program. To be able to see names, remember stories and moments, and to look back on your teams and the journeys in battle we went through over the course of a season is the best reward. I never think about or wish to play with other players, as it really is not about one player's skill and more about how all the teammates that you play with come together in a unique way to try to win. Skill varies across the team, players get injured, up-and-coming players succeed or fail, coaches redo the recipe of the players and schemes on a weekly basis, veterans lead in the locker room, teams have challenges on and off the field, and at the end of the day, it is this unique formula that I remember and cherish.



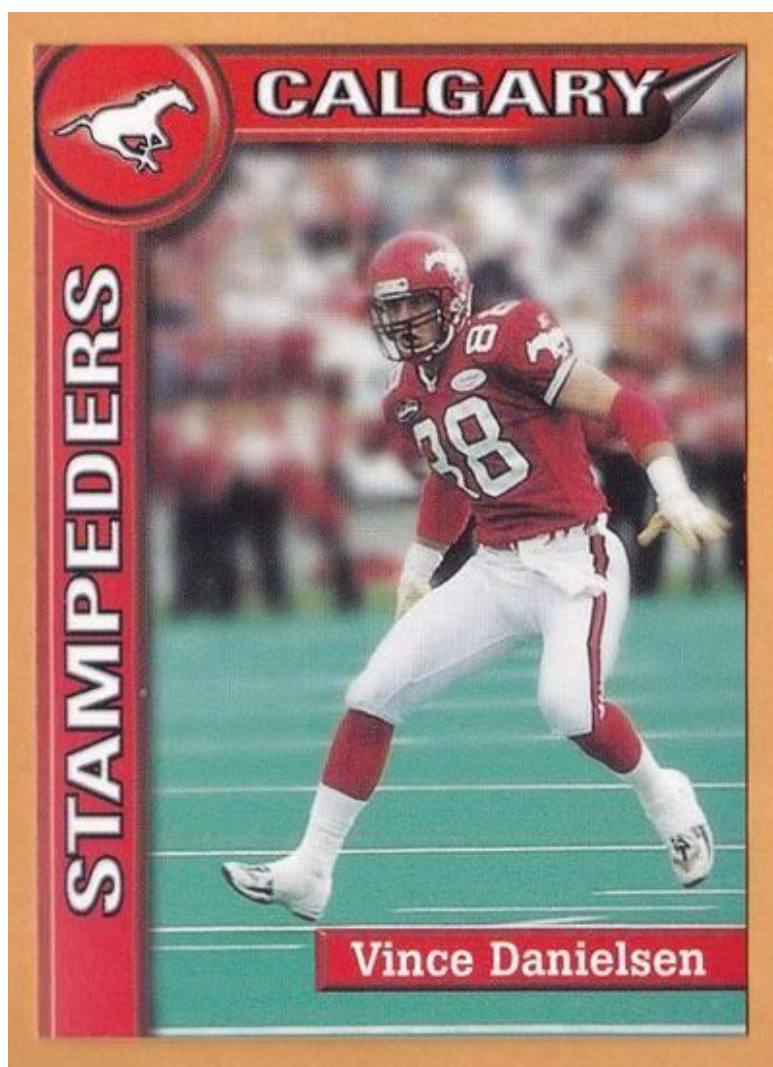
5. How did football prepare you for life after football?

Life is really about experiencing events both highs, lows, deep challenges whether mental or physical, good and challenging relationships, supporting or being supported by those that we care about, and feelings of purpose, happiness and satisfaction.

The football journey from a youngster to high school, university, and professional represent many events in my life and no matter the type, they are a deep part of who I am today. Most importantly, football has taught me the fundamentals of both dealing with challenges that come our way in life, and working together with others to achieve a shared purpose. It has also taught me the value of surrounding ourselves with people who share the same values and are aligned with a common purpose.

Sport, when done well, has this built organically into the

experience and I have taken these learnings to my family life and my work ventures.



6. What does being named to UBC's Top-100 Players mean to you?

To be named to the Top-100 player list is just a recognition and sure it always makes a person feel good, but really it is more about being part of the history of a football program. History is so important as finding out the identity of an organization is not looking forward, it is looking back through the history of coaches, administration, players, and teams that you find the stories that create the tradition and values for enduring success.

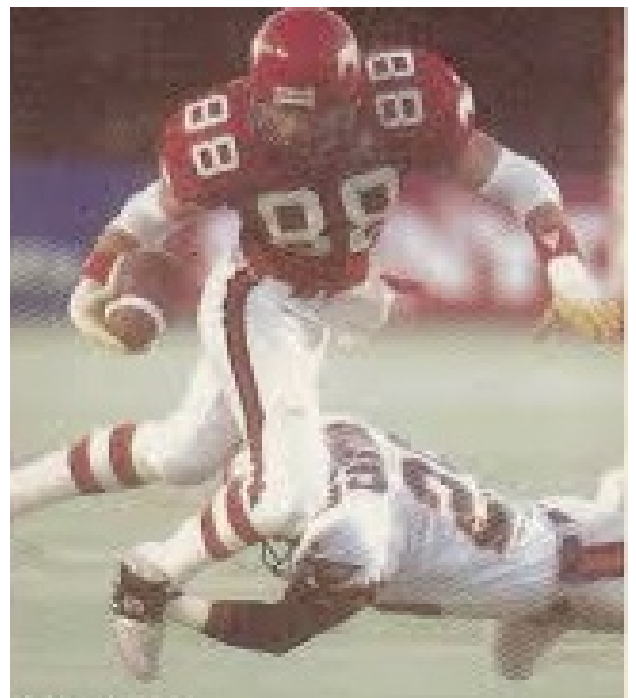
7. A three-time Hardy Cup Finalist as a Quarterback, then you switched to receiver? Can you explain the positional move that changed your path to the CFL?

To be blunt, I was not a very good quarterback. I of course worked hard, prepared, had some success, but when it came to excelling at the position for my teammates and our team success, I could not get to the level needed. The most urgency for change we find in life

when we are open to seeing the true facts and reality and not fooling ourselves. I remember the day at the end my 4th year playing when I went to my old high school, Vancouver College, and sat on a bench contemplating the demise of my football life. My dream of playing in the CFL was not going to happen as the draft was just a few weeks away and I



of course was not good enough to make it. But then despair turned into creativity on that bench, and I started to think about other options. The team had a good quarterback in Adrian Rainbow, I could read defences from my years playing QB, I always handled the football as QB so thought I could catch well, and I thought I could run well enough to make it down the field. The option of trying the receiver position came to me and that week I called the CFL offices and found out I could waive my CFL draft year until after my fifth year of playing. The last hurdle was asking Coach Smith if I could try playing receiver for my fifth year. I remember him saying, "Well Vince, you can try out in the spring camp and see how it goes." The rest is history and one year from the day I sat on that bench, I was drafted to the CFL as a receiver in the 1st round with the 3rd overall pick by the Calgary Stampeders. Life is about change and sometimes seeing options others cannot, but most importantly never giving up on your dreams.



8. You led the CW conference in passing in 1991, but was your 362-yard game vs. SSK in 1990 when you really broke out?

Every player at any level needs a break-out game to make their mark and give the coaches and their teammates the trust that they can play at a high level.

These games are the most important inflection points in an athlete's career and usually you only get a very limited opportunity to take advantage of the moment. I have seen some players do this like my friend Jeff Garcia, who in 1995, when Doug Flutie was injured, started the Labour Day Classic vs. the Edmonton Eskimos as a no-name rookie QB. He threw for seven touchdown passes that day, launching his career that included winning a Grey Cup MVP and having a long Pro Bowl-level NFL career. The game against Saskatchewan early in my university career was that type of break-out game.



9. You were part of four Shrum Bowl games vs. SFU between 1990-1993, winning the last two. Do you still reminisce with your T-Bird teammates about these games?

The Shrum Bowl game was for me the most looked-forward-to event of the football season. A game versus cross-town rivals, playing their American rules and against many players I played with or against all through my high school years. The atmosphere was fun and it was the game where we could play for a team



championship trophy and feel so good after the game with your teammates. As the T-Bird teams I played with never won a Western championship in the CIAU, these games really stand out to me as feeling that team success and I remember the fun post-game celebrations.

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THUNDERBIRD FOOTBALL



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