

# GRIDIRON

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# RE A T S

Chris Davies scores the  
winning touchdown in the  
'78 Shrum Bowl

## CHRIS DAVIES

## AND

## JACK BEETSTRA



January 30, 2022

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# JACK BEETSTRA

## #36, Linebacker 1982–1986

### T-Bird Legacy

Hardy Cup Finalist ('83)

Vanier Cup Champion ('82, '86)

Led CW in QB sacks ('83)

CW All-Star ('85, '86)

All-Canadian ('86)

Set school records for:

–Solo tackles in a season (81)

–Total tackles in a season (108)

–Total tackles per game (9)



Jack Beetstra, BPE '87, is a soon-to-be-retired Captain at Richmond Fire Rescue. He and his wife, Olga Hibjan, live in Vernon with their two children, Jake and Jenna.

### **1. You are one of very few Thunderbirds to win 2 Vanier Cups. Can you compare the two historic seasons?**

Right from the beginning of the season both teams realized we had something special. With both teams, there was a real feeling of togetherness, family, and support. We would have done anything for each other. Both teams practiced extremely hard, executing with precision and possessing a killer instinct. It seemed that the teams got stronger as we went along. In 1982 we had a very veteran team and I was a rookie. I had great mentors and role models to follow. They set an example of what it took to win as we dominated our opponents in every aspect of the game. We were extremely strong. In 1986 we were also very strong but had to really push to win the last two games. Our opponents were also very strong and the games were very close. I was now the veteran and tried to be an example to follow, one that set the bar high both on and off the field.

**2. In '83 you led CW in QB sacks, can you describe your defence and their dominance that season?**

We had a relatively young defence in 1983. We had lost half of our defence from the year before to the CFL. We were fortunate to have exceptional athletes in all positions. We were young, fast, and aggressive and everyone wanted in on the tackle.

**3. The '86 championship season was exciting. Tell us about the 32-30 semi-final bowl game victory over Bishop's.**

The '86 season was very exciting. Bishop's was a very good team and our game against them was in cold and snowy conditions. The Bishop's fans were right on the sidelines yelling at us the whole game. If I remember correctly, Terry Cochrane, on a left toss, scored a late touchdown to go ahead. Bishop's then came back and drove to our goal line where Doug Bryson came up with a big play, and we held them out of the end zone to go on to victory.

**4. The roster was very talented on both sides of the ball; who were some of the most competitive players to practice against?**

The '86 team practiced extremely hard. We were very proud and competitive, and we even wanted to "win" in practice. We had an 'O' line with guards Al Jones and Tony Kristopaitis that would run you over at any chance they got. Our full-back, Mass Geremia would then run you over again when you got back up. Offensive tackle Leo Groenewegen would steer you wherever he wanted to and then you had to catch Terry Cochrane and Matt Pearce.



(L to R) Mike Bellefontaine, Dwayne Derban, Jack Beetstra, Terry Cochrane.

## **5. Do you stay in contact with '82, '86 championship teammates, any special events?**

When you talk to any athlete they will say you always remember who your teammates were when you win. This is so very true. I can picture the lineup of both teams.

The 1982 team, my first year, was made up of veterans. I wish I saw these guys more regularly. They were my mentors and my role models. I learned how to win from these players and I love it when I run into them.

I see the 1986 teammates more often. We have a golf tournament every now and then. We laugh, reminisce and share stories. There are a few of us that stay very close. We really care for each other and will remain lifelong friends.

## **6. What CW opponent was our biggest rivalry during your career?**

I would have to say that Calgary was our biggest rival. They had great success in the '80s. They had a strong program, turned out numerous great players and were often the team to beat.

## **7. How did you balance your academics, training and football while at UBC?**

Playing a university varsity sport is extremely tough. Between classes, exams, practices, weight sessions and games it is a packed schedule. That's not to say we didn't enjoy a pint at 'the Pit' once in awhile. I had the good fortune to be living at home at the time and it made things easier. Mom always had my dinner waiting for me when I got home from practice. Needless to say, pulling all-nighters and relying on classmates for notes while we were away was a must. It takes dedication and commitment for any university athlete.

## **8. How special was it to be named back-to-back Canada West All-Star in '85, '86?**

I took great pride in representing UBC Football and UBC Athletics. To be named Canada West all-star in 1985 and 1986 was, and is, an honour. I worked extremely hard my whole career to be the best that I could be, and to be recognized for that gives me a great sense of accomplishment.

**9. If there was a way to compare or virtually play the all-decade teams against each other – what former Thunderbirds from other decades would you like to play against – (RB) Penn-70's, (RB) Nohra-90's, (QB's) Billy Greene-00's or Michael O'Connor-10's?**

It would be a treat to play against any of the all-decade teams. All of these individuals were exceptional athletes. To have them play against each other would be fun to watch as it would be very competitive football. I would love to play against O'Connor and Greene, two great quarterbacks. That would be a real challenge. A running back like Mark Nohra would be extremely tough to play against as well.

I actually did have the privilege of playing against Greene in the 2011 Alumni game after not playing for 25 years. I would like to think that I was able to hold my own.

**10. What was your reaction to being named to both the top 100 careers and the 1980's All-Decade team?**

To be included with all these great athletes was very exciting for me. In 1986 I suffered a career-ending spinal cord injury (from which I eventually recovered). I missed the last 4 games of the 1986 season including the Vanier Cup and I also missed playing in the East West Shrine Game in the U.S. to which I had been invited, as well as a chance to play pro.

Given how hard I had worked to achieve these goals that was very hard for me, and to be included with all these great football players is an extreme honour.



# CHRIS DAVIES

**#72, Wide Receiver  
1975–1979**

## T-Bird Legacy

Hardy Cup Champion ('76)  
Hardy Cup Finalist ('77)  
Hardy Cup Champion ('78)  
Western Bowl Champion ('78)  
Led CW in receptions and yards ('78)  
Set school records for:  
–Highest career receiving average (15.6)  
–Receptions in a season (69)  
–Receptions in a career (152)  
–Career receiving yards (2,542)  
CW All-Star ('78, '79)  
Selected to CAN-AM Bowl ('76, '77)  
Nestle pre-season All-Canadian ('78)  
CFL draft 2nd Rd, 36th overall ('79)  
Named to UBC's Top-100 careers ('16)  
Inducted into the Frank Gnuip Wall of Honour ('19)  
Named to 1970's All-Decade team ('20)



Chris Davies (BCom '79) worked for 30 years with Davis/Hall, a commercial real estate brokerage, and he's now self-employed. Chris and his wife Jill, a fellow commerce alum, have three children: Blake, Megan, and Alison. They still live in West Van where Chris grew up and played high school football at Sentinel for Coach Frank Smith. Chris is a member of the Thunderbird Football Alumni Advisory Committee.

**1. Which Canada West opponent was your biggest rival in your career and why?**

I don't think we had a true biggest rival until 1978 when we played SFU. That was a true rivalry game against a very talent-laden team. Calgary was always good. The goal was to win 4 home games and split on road. With 35-man road rosters, winning was doubly tough.

## **2. What do you remember about your 11 reception game vs. Puget Sound, Oct. 7th, 1978?**

UPS was a true grudge game. We played them the year before in their park in a foot of mud and got absolutely homered by refs at end of the game. In the rematch I remember making a diving catch in the endzone and landing on the point of the ball. I couldn't breath and got panicky. Rick Noonan our trainer told me sarcastically I was going to live and to relax.

## **3. How much fun was it to compete each week vs. your defensive teammates, especially the secondary?**

Al Chorney was a really talented athlete. He was a punter, punt returner and a very good DB. Kevin Konar was a year younger. He was strong, quick, and very smart. You knew from day one that he was going to be a great player. Jack Hirose was a very good DB. He didn't get in your face after he planted you. He just went about his business and was very good at it. The one defensive player who I remember the most was Tom Reimer. For his first 2 years he was a wide receiver. Went quietly about his business. In my 3rd year, they moved him to safety. He was an absolute maniac, hitting and screaming at anyone who came near him.

## **4. UBC has 4 national championship team ('82, '86, '97, '15). Which of those championship defenses would you like to play against with your 1970's All-Decade offensive teammates?**

That is such a tough question. The game has changed so much. Every one of those teams had great defenses.

I think the easiest way to answer the question is to recognize the one team I would not want to play, the 2015 Champs. The players on that team were better conditioned, stronger and faster than players from my era. We didn't have strength and conditioning coaches in the 70's. You were responsible to show up fit to camp ready to go. There was no weight room and no organized strength training. Athletically we could compete, but it would just hurt a lot more being tackled by a 200 pound safety who can bench 225 pounds 20 times.

**5. Can you comment on the caliber of coaching you received at UBC, any great pre-game speeches?**

We had a dedicated coaching staff. My position coach was Ray MacLeod. He played professional football with Frank. Ray was one of the top injury lawyers in B.C., yet from Monday to Saturday every day from Aug 15 to the end of season he was there. Frank was a taskmaster dedicated to winning. We were always well prepared for our opponents. He loved his projector. I used to wince in a game if I missed a block because I knew he wasn't going to miss it on the film

**6. You played in the 3 consecutive Hardy Cup finals, '76, '77, '78, what was that experience like?**

'76 and '78 were great. '77 in Calgary we scored a late long touchdown run to take the lead. Unfortunately, some hometown ref threw a flag on yours truly for a phantom clip. I was walking around the hotel after the game when I walked by our coaches. Frank yelled #72 and gave the clipping signal. Ouch!!!

**7. Can you tell us about the Vanier Cup game vs. Queens in '78, you had 3 receptions for 47 yards.**

The '78 Vanier Cup was a game we really didn't prepare for. SFU was the following week and our whole season was geared to that game. We...



(L to R) Kevin Konar, Danny Smith, Chris Davies.

... were putting in a new motion offense. Before then, we basically played U.S. [style] with 2 tight ends. All our practices in Toronto were for SFU. When you think about if we win the Vanier and lose to SFU, it would have really hurt recruiting. We should have beat Queen's, but injuries, dropped balls and ill-timed turnovers did us in.

**8. Do you recall the first game you played in and your offense with fellow stars Smith, Jones, and Penn?**

Gord Penn was the best player I played with or against. He was dedicated and tough as nails. It was Gord's knee injury in the '76 semifinal game at Western that turned the game .Evan Jones was a great athlete. He was more of a prototypical Tight end. I was undersized at 185 lb. With Dave Kirzinger at Tackle and Evan at End we really had the best strong side O - linemen in the country. If you looked at Danny back then you wondered how those gimpy knees could hold up that body. What you didn't see was a fierce competitor who was so smart . He never called a play without thinking about the next one . I never would have enjoyed half the success I had catching the ball if it wasn't for the opportunity I had to play with Dan Smith.

**9. You have been heavily involved in the football alumni development, how important is this for you to give back to the program?**

I took a bit of time away from the school and the game to realize how important football and the University were to me. When I had the financial ability to give back, we set up an Endowment in honour of Frank and his son Casey. The University generously matched our donations. Today, the Endowment provides scholarships so that a new generation of players can enjoy the experience of playing football and obtaining a degree from a great University.

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# THUNDERBIRD GIVING

UBC Football Giving asks supporters to commit to a 5-year plan at one of 4 giving levels.  
Funds generated go to the identified priorities of:

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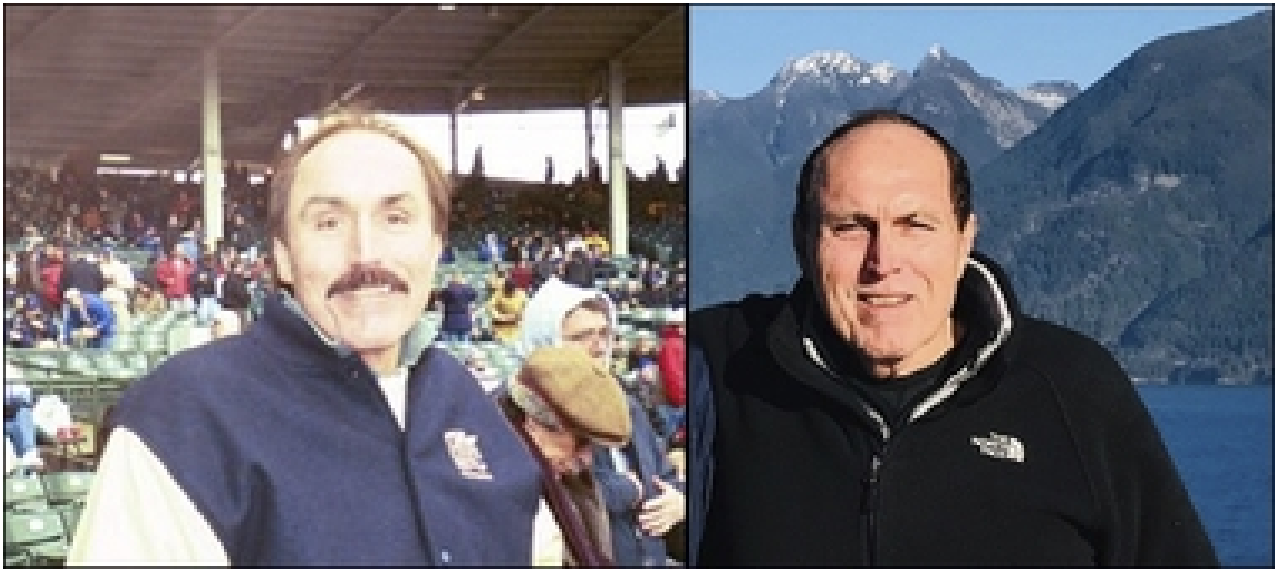
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# AL CAMERON: IN MEMORIAM



Dear T-Bird Teammate,

As you know, we lost Al Cameron earlier this year. Al was the epitome of an outstanding Thunderbird Football player on and off the field. Al was not only a great player, he was also a great teammate, friend, and generous donor to our program. To honour Al and his Legacy, Christina and I have committed the \$10,000 (\$2000/year for 5 years) needed to establish an award in his name and I hope that you will join us by contributing or matching our commitment.

For those that are willing to make a donation, we have set up a page in Al's memory here: <https://give.ubc.ca/memorial/alan-cameron/>. If you would like to match or make a multi-year commitment, please reach out to our UBC Football Development Officer Harvey Hubball at [Harvey.Hubball@ubc.ca](mailto:Harvey.Hubball@ubc.ca) or 604-803-2162 as you will need to send in some easy additional paperwork.

Additionally, if you want to contribute to a different endowment, or create a new one to memorialize another great, get in touch with Harvey.

Again to all of you, thank you. I hope you and your families are well.

Cheers,

Danny Smith

A caricature of B.C.'s 1978  
Team of the Year, the  
Vanier-finalist  
Thunderbirds



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