

TONY MARTELLO

FOOTBALL: 1929-1931

Inducted: April 26, 1969



There is nothing more exciting in college football than watching the ends make a big play. It might be a play where they go streaking down the sidelines to catch a pass for a touchdown or maybe throw a block that springs a running back to go all the way. On defense they are the players that sometimes are able to get to the quarterback without ever slowing down or sneak into the opponent's backfield and drop the ball carrier for a loss.

Tony Martello was that type of end for Southern Miss from 1929 to 1931 and in the process placed his name among the all-time greats that have played that position at the school.

Martello arrived on the campus of Southern Miss in 1929 and immediately began to see some playing time at end. His play impressed head coach W.B. Saunders because as the season moved along, Martello's playing time increased.

That 1929 team struggled that year posting a 2-6-1 record, but after losing four straight rallied to win its season finale, a 12-7 decision over Clarke Memorial College. The offense struggled quite a bit that season and only twice managed to score more than one touchdown in a game.

Martello excelled as a reserve on both sides of the ball that season and gave Southern Miss fans reason to look forward to the following season.

But the 1930 season wasn't a whole lot better as the team finished 3-5-1, but one of the highlights that season was the play of Martello at end. Although it was an era where teams ran more than they threw, when Southern did go to the air, Martello was one of the favorite targets.

But Martello was the complete package and when the team ran the football, it wasn't unusual to see him out in front throwing a key block. On defense he was one of the leaders of a squad that was good enough to record three shutouts.

Martello was a part of a third straight losing season in 1931 when he played for new coach Pooley Hubert. The team would finish 2-5, but again it was Martello who was one of the bright spots on the team that year. The offense still struggled despite Martello's efforts and the defense was still steady with him leading the charge up front.

Players and fans recall watching Martello play and they will tell you that he was fearless going over the middle to catch a pass, never worrying about a defender who might be coming from the other way. But at the same time he had the moves he needed to get open down the sidelines for a bomb.

Football meant a lot to Martello. He was a player that lived and breathed it. His dedication and desire are attributes of his that will be long remembered after statistics are forgotten.

The complete package that's what Martello was and why he earned his spot in the Southern Miss Sports Hall of Fame.

Martello played basketball from 1929 to 1932 and baseball during the 1930 season.