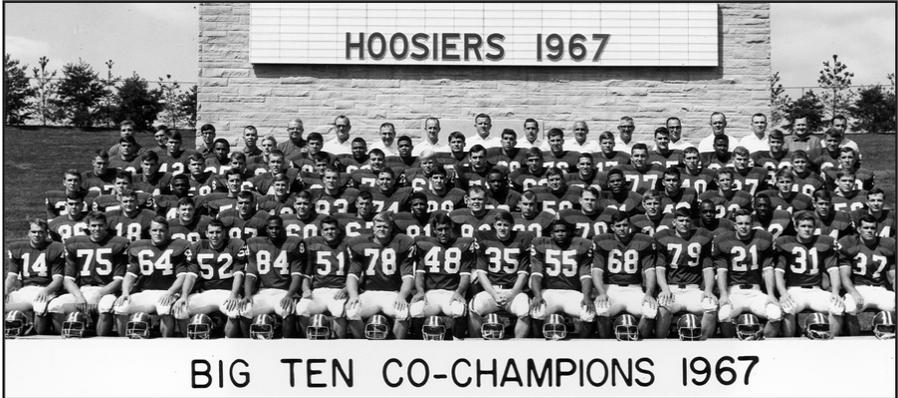


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The Cardiac Kids: A Season to Remember by Bill Murphy
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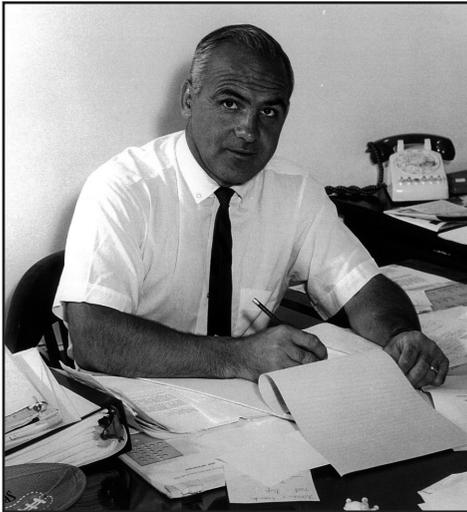
Chapter 1

The Making of the Team



Indiana University Archives

After 40 years of wins, losses, blood, sweat, and general athletic fever, there is one team in all of IU football history that holds a special place in every Hoosier's heart. This is their story.....



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(966-0225.2)*

Coach Pont speaks with pride of the team picture he still has in his den. He calls it a great photo, "It is a great photo because everyone was at attention, they had a good sharp look in their faces. No one Mickey Moused around or anything like that. I looked at the picture and said this is going to be a great football team, and it was."

Pont reminisced about where it all started, "We as a coaching staff decided that in Gonso, Isenbarger, Butcher, and Eric Stolberg, we had a group of very

quick, athletically skilled players who were not necessarily big or fast but very, very, quick. After looking at our offense following the '66 season, we made a decision to change both the offense and defense. We had practiced the I formation at Yale. We knew the I formation was new to the Big Ten, and in fact we were the first team to use it, and we were also the first team to use a 4-4 defense in the Big Ten as well.”

“The first thing we told everyone was that they were going to have to lose weight. After practice in the fall, I called John Isenbarger in first, and we told John that we were going to go with Harry at the quarterback spot and move him to tailback and he accepted it.” “We had talked to Doug Crusan in the spring, and told him that we needed his size on defense because although Jerry Grecco and Billy Wolfe were very quick, they were not big and we knew we needed more size on defense. I told him that I knew he was thinking about professional football, but we wanted him to try defense, and he said ok for the sake of the team. We then called in Terry Cole and said that we were going to go with the I formation and we wanted him to be the fullback, but that he wasn't going to carry the ball much. In fact, there would be games when he would only carry the ball 2 or 3 times a game, but that we needed his size and speed as a blocker. Terry replied very quickly saying coach in that high pitched voice of his, I don't care, I just want to win and he accepted his role quickly and with great determination. By now, a number of personnel decisions had been made on both our offense and defense.”

“The offensive line was not big, but they were extremely quick. Al Gage, who played tight-end at 195 lbs., was very quick off the ball, and with tackles, Bob Kirk, and Richard Spickard, guards, Russell, and Cassells, and Mauro at center, we were very quick along the line. We just kept telling the players, you are going to lose weight because we are going to be a quick sprint out and option team, and it just fit our personnel beautifully. Our defense was made up of older guys, Doug was our Captain. The defense, made up mostly of juniors and seniors, were very talented athletes who took an active roll of leadership, and everything just blended together perfectly. This would enable us to be the first school in the Big Ten to use the I formation and go with a sprint out attack.”

There were two things that brought this team together. The first took place after the doubles sessions had just about finished. Pont recalled, “We were eating together one night, and I called on one of the trainers, a student named Dean Kleinschmidt, a very creative student, and asked him to come up with some way to break the tensions of doubles and relax the team. Well, Dean gets everyone’s attention and says we’re going to sing a song. He started and everyone was quiet, they just didn’t know what to do. Dean gets on a chair and starts singing his version of We’ve Got the Whole World in Our Hands. He starts with we’ve got the best offense in the land, and then he went to the defense, to the coaches, then he went to each position and he kept singing we’ve got the best in the land. He went through them all and by now the entire team was standing on their chairs, tables and singing.” Pont paused, and said, “It was a moment to be captured.” This song became the theme song for the team for the entire season. Right then and there, the coaching staff knew that they had a good football team because this had brought everyone together.

The second incident that evolved in the making of this team was a result of a cookout for the team. Darrell and Eddie French were close friends of Ponts and they owned Mechanic’s Laundry in Bloomington. They did a lot of entertaining at their lake house at Geist, which Pont said was a big place, “just huge”. Pont asked Darrell if his dad would ever host the entire football team, trainers and families. Ed Sr. was asked and he said sure we can do it. “So after doubles, we took the team, girlfriends, wives, coaches, and their wives up to Geist, and I told the players you can do whatever you want to do, you can swim, play basketball, tennis, do it all, then they are going to feed you and it will be steak, it will be shrimp, the whole thing. We arrived as a team going down the stairway to the main level. As the players started down, the pep band started playing the Indiana Fight Song. The stairs and the main level were decorated in red and white, the players couldn’t believe what they were seeing. The players played, had fun, ate a huge meal and at eight o’clock that evening, the players got back on the bus to Bloomington with instructions from the coaching staff that they would see them on Sunday.” In the eyes of Coach Pont, those two events were the start of the making of the ‘67 Hoosiers and the

magical season that would transpire.

The words, chemistry, courage, sacrifice, respect, and love were all words both uttered and demonstrated by the players as they talked about what made this team so special. Gonso said, “It was a combination of the chemistry of the individuals that made up the team that made this team so special, really a combination of the older seniors who were solid, stable, great athletes with the spark of some young sophomores who did not know their own limitations. It took people by surprise. Not only was it Indiana being a new force, but a new style of offense and combined with a quick aggressive defense that people had not seen before.”

The players truly admired and respected each other as witnessed in the remarks made about the various games throughout the season. Harold Mauro recalling both the Michigan and Michigan State away games, remarked, “Thank God for John Isenbarger, he won those games for us.” Jade Butcher recalled the coaching staff, pointing out Harold Mauro blocking again and again at film sessions, and with a huge smile recalled his friend Terry Cole having a career game against Purdue. Butcher said, “I looked around on Terry’s 63 yard TD run and was going to block for him, when I realized he was already ahead of me and wide open to the end zone.” Gonso recalled Butcher as a gifted and special receiver saying, “They just don’t make players like Jade anymore.” John Isenbarger choked with emotion about Terry Cole and the contributions he made to this team. Then there was Ken Kaczmarek on a June night nearly 40 years later making sure that the night would be perfect for his teammates joining him in the Indiana Football Hall of Fame. The offensive stars talking about the defense saying they were truly the backbone of the team. Jade Butcher saying that, “After the Illinois game, we knew our defense wasn’t just good, but truly great.”

In talking with these players, it was easy to see what made this team and season so special. It wasn’t just the wins or the trip to the Rose Bowl, it was the fact that this team was indeed a family, and the season that followed would be a season to be placed in a family photo album of memories for all time, a football season for all seasons.