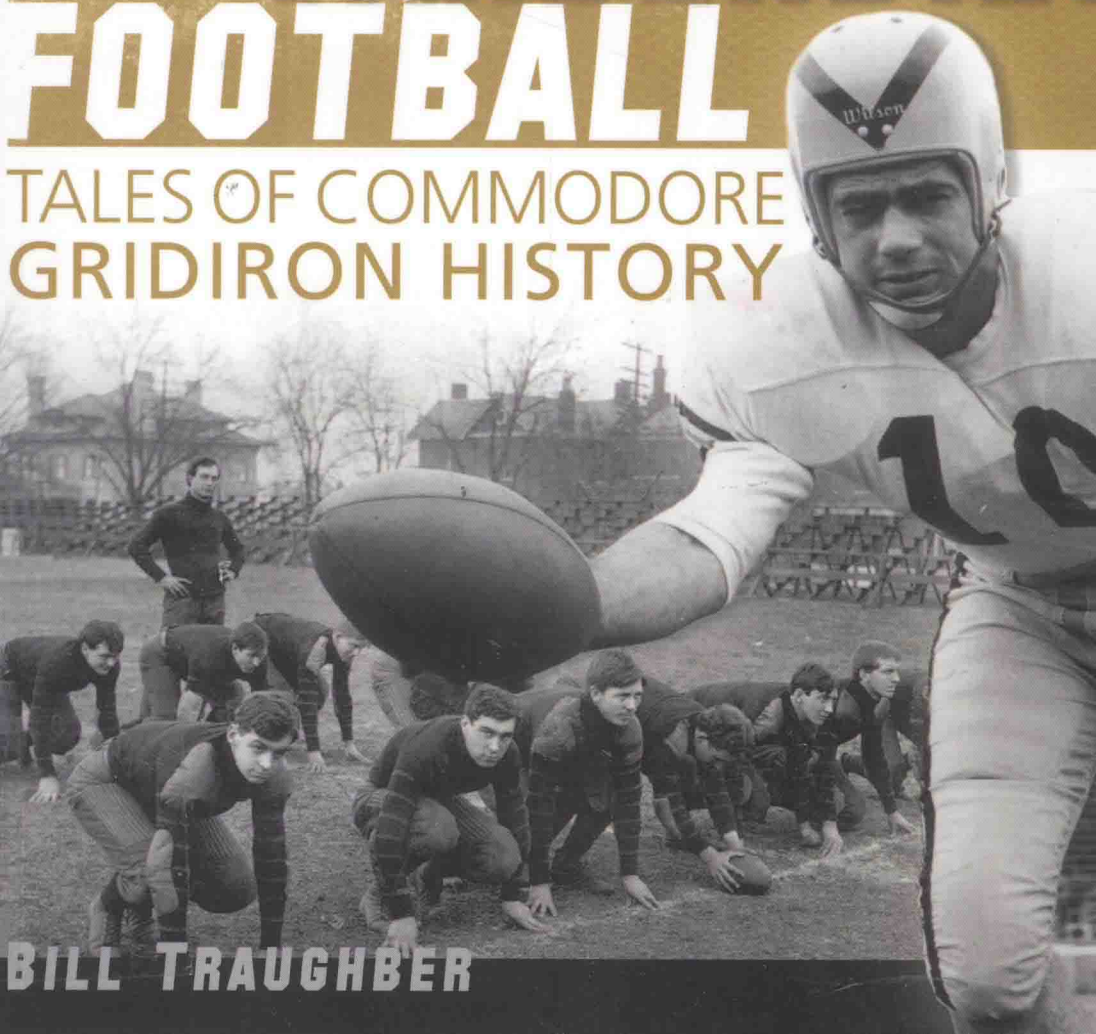


# VANDERBILT FOOTBALL

TALES OF COMMODORE  
GRIDIRON HISTORY



BILL TRAUGHBER

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GRIDIRON HISTORY



**BILL TRAUGHBER**



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# **CONTENTS**

Foreword, by Rod Williamson	9
Preface	11
Vanderbilt Football Began with a Challenge	15
Sewanee Was Vanderbilt's First Rival	22
Nashville Game Ends with 1896 Riot	27
Dan McGugin Became a Coaching Legend	31
Famous Carlisle Indians Play Vanderbilt	36
Vanderbilt Ties Powerful Yale in 1910	41
Ray Morrison, a Player and Coach	46
Ty Cobb Practices as Vanderbilt Football Player	51
Vanderbilt Smashes Bethel 105-0	55
The Commodores' 1915 Point-a-Minute Team	58
Irby "Rabbit" Curry Inspired Vanderbilt	62
The Vanderbilt and Vols Conflict of 1918	66
Josh Cody, a Tough Two-Way Player	69
Dudley Field Is Dedicated in 1922	75
Commodores Win First Northern Game in 1924	81
Lynn Bomar Was a College Hall of Famer	85
The Legend of Dixie Roberts	90

## CONTENTS

Fans End 1932 Tennessee Game	96
Commodores Visit with President Franklin D. Roosevelt	101
Greer Ricketson's Historic Touchdown	104
Carl Hinkle Was an Iron Man	109
Bill Wade Became a Quarterback Legend	114
Dudley Field's First Night Game	120
The 1955 Gator Bowl	125
Vanderbilt Upsets Alabama in 1969	130
The 1974 Peach Bowl	136
Whit Taylor's Touchdown Defeats UT in 1982	141
The 1982 Hall of Fame Bowl	147
 Appendix: All-Time Records	 153
About the Author	159

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*To my friend Carlton Flatt, the best football man I know  
and who was my coach at Brentwood Academy.*



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Fans End 1932 Tennessee Game	96
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Carl Hinkle Was an Iron Man	109
Bill Wade Became a Quarterback Legend	114
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The 1955 Gator Bowl	125
Vanderbilt Upsets Alabama in 1969	130
The 1974 Peach Bowl	136
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The 1982 Hall of Fame Bowl	147
Appendix: All-Time Records	153
About the Author	159

# FOREWORD

Would you like to take an enjoyable walk down memory lane with one of the South's premier sports historians? If that sounds like fun, you are going to relish Bill Traughber's latest work, this one a collection of Vanderbilt University football stories.

Traughber's collection of more than four hundred sports history features has been published locally in his hometown of Nashville, Tennessee, as well as for regional and national outlets. He knows athletics, and he has a special eye for the historical gem.

In his latest book, Traughber shares wonderful insights into many of the greatest Commodores players, biggest characters and memorable games. The book spans nearly one hundred years, beginning in the nineteenth century and including Vanderbilt's trips to bowl games.

Traughber's writing has been cited many times by the Tennessee Sports Writers Association. He has won Writer of the Year and Best Feature Writer awards from the organization since 2004. He has been in demand as a sports historian expert on the Tennessee mid-state speaker's circuit.

Among his many subjects are notables such as United States senators Fred Thompson and Lamar Alexander; Pat Boone, George "Goober" Lindsey and David Keith from the entertainment world; major league umpires; a Harlem Globetrotter; an Olympian; a professional wrestler; former NBA players; current and former professional baseball and football coaches and players; Tennessee Titans' players and coaches and a host of Southeastern Conference athletic icons.

## FOREWORD

One reason that Traughber has become such a noted historian is that he keeps close tabs with the current sports scene, especially in Nashville, where he is a regular in area press boxes. He has contributed articles for the Nashville Sounds baseball club, Vanderbilt University football game programs, media guides and several websites. His earlier books have included *Nashville Sports History: Stories From the Stands* (2010) and *Brentwood Academy Football: From a Cow Pasture to a Tradition, 1970–2009* (2010).

If you would like to learn or remember about the origin of Vanderbilt football beginning with a challenge, a famous United States president visiting with the Commodores, Vanderbilt's hidden ball trick play that defeated LSU, the legend of Coach Dan McGugin, the first night game at Dudley Field and many other tales of yesteryear, this is your ticket to enjoyment.

Rod Williamson  
Director of Vanderbilt Athletic Communications

# **PREFACE**

**M**y early recollection of Vanderbilt football was in August 1965, when I was eleven years old. My father took me and my twin brother to the Los Angeles Rams versus the Chicago Bears exhibition game on Dudley Field. I recall walking through an entrance into the stadium and seeing a green field with stripes and numbers. The big attraction to that game was the return of Bears' quarterback Bill Wade to Vanderbilt.

Wade was an all-American at Vanderbilt who scored two touchdowns in the 1963 NFL championship game to help the Bears defeat the Giants, 14–0. And thirty-four years after that exhibition game, when I was writing sports stories, I met Wade in his Nashville home for my research to interview him on his football career. We sat in his upstairs hallway searching through scrapbooks and photos. Wade was the first former Vanderbilt athlete I interviewed.

Vanderbilt University was founded in 1873 with a \$1 million gift from “Commodore” Cornelius Vanderbilt. Athletics would become an important part of the college experience. As the eastern sport of football gradually invaded the southern states, Vanderbilt students were gathering for unorganized games by the late 1880s. Then, in 1890, the University of Nashville (Peabody Normal College) challenged Vanderbilt to a football game on Thanksgiving Day. Vanderbilt captain and fullback Elliott H. Jones organized a team that beat the crosstown rivals 40–0 at Sulphur Springs Park (later Sulphur Dell).



## PREFACE

Jones would also serve as head coach for three years (1890–92), compiling records of 1-0, 3-1 and 4-4. With the growth of football in the South, additional college teams were gradually formed and schedules expanded. Vanderbilt became one of the stronger teams in the region. A football field was established on the Vanderbilt campus that was named for William L. Dudley, a promoter of athletics at the university. The original Dudley Field is presently the site of the Vanderbilt School of Law.

In 1904, Vanderbilt hired Dan McGugin as its new head football coach. He had played football at Michigan and was an assistant to Wolverine legend Fielding Yost. McGugin would achieve legendary status himself, remaining on the Vanderbilt campus for thirty years. His first team was 9-0-0, the only undefeated, untied team in Commodore history.

Vanderbilt football became so popular in Nashville that a new Dudley Field was constructed in 1922. It was the first football-only stadium in the South. Yost's Michigan squad was the opponent for the inaugural game, which saw the heavy underdog Commodores fight the Wolverines to a 0-0 draw. Captain Jess Neely led the way for Vanderbilt on that historic afternoon. McGugin retired from coaching in 1934 and died two years later. He is Vanderbilt's all-time winningest football coach with an amazing record of 197-55-19.

Vanderbilt produced many great players in this early era of Commodore football. Such players to gain national attention as all-Americans include Ray Morrison (1911), Josh Cody (1919), Lynn Bomar (1923), Henry Wakefield (1924), Bill Spears (1927), Pete Gracey (1932) and Carl Hinkle (1937). McGugin, Morrison, Bomar, Spears and Cody are also enshrined into the National College Football Hall of Fame.

With the retirement of McGugin after the 1934 season, Vanderbilt looked to former player Ray Morrison to continue the football success. As the decades passed, the Commodores could not find the success or dominance they once enjoyed.

Art Guepe's 1955 squad stunned no. 8 ranked Auburn, 25-13, in the 1955 Gator Bowl in Jacksonville, Florida. This was Vanderbilt's first bowl appearance as quarterback Don Orr ran for two touchdowns, and all-American fullback Charley Horton rushed for another six-pointer. The victorious Commodores concluded that historic season with an 8-3 record.

As Vanderbilt entered the 1960s, hard times would arrive on the football field. Only a few teams earned a winning record. In 1969, Vanderbilt broke the NCAA record (since broken many times) for most yardage in a game,