

GEORGIA'S GREATEST ?

By Stan Grosshandler

Hailing from Youngstown, Ohio, a hot bed of prep football, Frank Sinkwich arrived at the University of Georgia in 1939 destined to become the most publicized football player of his era.

A true triple threat star, Sinkwich passed, punted, and ran with devastating power and deception. At first he was reluctant to throw passes; however, Coach Wally Butts, aware of his strong arm, insisted he practice this phase of the game until he became one of the best. In later years Butts was to say that he never saw a man who could spot the open receiver as well as Sinkwich.

Plagued by injuries his entire career, Sinkwich broke his jaw in the second game of his junior season (1941). Equipped with a protective leather guard attached to his helmet, he still managed to lead the nation in rushing with 1103 yards. In a 27-14 loss to Alabama that season, playing with his broken jaw, Sinkwich still led the Bulldog offense despite not scoring any points in the game. He racked up 109 yards on 19 carries that day, while completing just four of 14 passes for 37 yards, as his receivers dropped numerous catchable throws, in the opinion of the gathered sportswriters.

Georgia (8-1-1) was invited to play in the 1942 Orange Bowl game against Texas Christian from the Southwest Conference. In the game he describes as his most memorable, Sinkwich almost single handedly demolished TCU 40-26. He accounted for four of the Bulldogs' six touchdowns with scoring passes of 61, 60, and 15 yards; along with his 43-yard scoring run on a draw play up the middle. Sinkwich also carried the ball 22 times for a total of 139 yards, while completing nine of 13 passes for 141 yards.

More glory was to come to Sinkwich in his senior season of 1942 at Georgia, as he became the first player to account for over 2000 yards of total offense in a single season, rushing and passing for 2187 total yards. His career total was 4602 yards, and he also scored 55 touchdowns for Georgia. During the 1942 season Georgia exacted some revenge from Alabama with a 21-10 win in a game played at Atlanta. With Georgia down 10-0 to the Crimson Tide early in the fourth quarter, Sinkwich passed the Bulldogs to their first score of the day on a 78-yard drive. The next time Georgia got the ball Sinkwich handled the pigskin on seven of the eight plays, including throwing four pass completions, while pacing the 69-yard march to put the Bulldogs in the lead.

The only loss of the season for Georgia in 1942 came at the hands of Auburn by a score of 27-13 on November 21. Sinkwich completed passes to account for 177 yards, but he was held to just 31 yards rushing and scored only one touchdown: so that there was little consolation in establishing a new season total offense record during this game. But the Bulldogs redeemed themselves the following Saturday with a resounding 34-0 win over arch-rival Georgia Tech, and then promptly voted to accept

the bid to play in the Rose Bowl. In this last regular-season game of his college career, Sinkwich gained 72 yards rushing and passed for another 107 yards, along with intercepting a pass thrown by Clint Castleberry to set-up the first score of the day, as Georgia clinched its first unofficial Southeastern Conference championship.

A unanimous All-American for the second straight year in 1942, Sinkwich was named the Associated Press athlete of the year, beating out Ted Williams of the Boston Red Sox; and also received the coveted Heisman Trophy award. But the injury jinx struck again prior to the 1943 Rose Bowl against UCLA, as Frank came down with two severely sprained ankles, yet he insisted on playing the game. "I really played very little that day", says Sinkwich "Charlie Trippi played most of the time; however I did score the only touchdown of the game on a one-yard plunge as we beat them 9-0.

Following the Rose Bowl game Sinkwich entered the Marines Corps; but received a medical discharge in time to join the Detroit Lions who had drafted him as their first choice. After his second NFL season in 1944, Sinkwich served stints in both the Merchant Marine and the Army Air Corps "I played for the Second Air Force team", recalls Sinkwich "They were really tough as we had some former pros with us. I then played two years with the New York Yanks of the All-American Conference; however, I should have never done it for I injured my knees in the service so badly I needed two operations. I was never able to play the way I thought I should. Even today I wonder how I would have done had I not been injured so often and could have played the way I was capable of."