

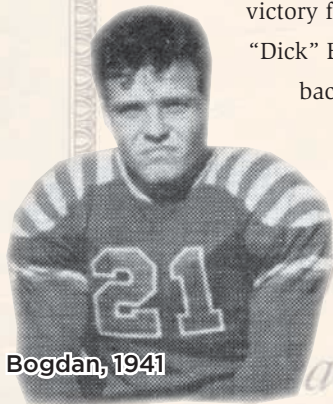
# Football Returns to Bluefield College



JUNE 4, 2010

*The year was 1941.* It was Thanksgiving Day, Thursday, November 20, and time for the traditional Homecoming season finale for the Bluefield College Ramblin' Reds football team.

The opponent: Rio Grande College. The importance: a must-need win for the Reds to avoid a losing season. The outcome: a victory for BC, led by freshman Richard "Dick" Bogdan, a highly-touted running back out of Fort Johnson, New York, who spearheaded Coach Tony Lotito's single wing offense.



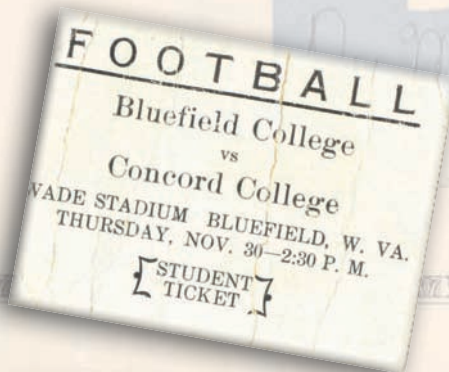
Bogdan, 1941

Bogdan scored often against Rio Grande, including the final touchdown of the game, which capped a 30-7 win for Bluefield, who ended the 1941 campaign at 4-4 overall.

"It was a play designed for me," said Bogdan about the last touchdown run. "I know, because I called it. We were down near the goal line, and I went in off the center, sort of like a quarterback sneak. It was a thrill!"

The big BC win over Rio Grande sparked a great deal of optimism for the upcoming season. After all, the Reds had won their last four out of six games in the 1941 campaign, including victories over Rio, Hiwassee and Tennessee Wesleyan, and would be returning players like Bogdan, Frank Denardo, Rufus Witt, Nelly Frazier, and Frank Lotito.

"I was looking forward to next year (1942)," said Bogdan. "Coach Lotito was talking about putting in the T-formation on offense, and we had a lot of good players coming back."



But, it was not meant to be. On December 7, 1941, less than three weeks after the Ramblin' Reds had celebrated their season finale win, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, and the United States found itself at war. Thousands of young American men were called to active duty, including many — in fact, most — of the men who attended and played football at Bluefield College.

"I was in church at the time," Bogdan recalls about the day the Japanese declared war on the U.S. "I remember

hearing a kid run down the street screaming about Pearl Harbor. It was chaotic. Everybody back on campus was talking about it."

Bogdan, like most of the BC football team, went from manning the offense to manning machine guns, from driving touchdowns to driving tanks, and from firing passes to firing rocket launchers. Little did he know that the touchdown he scored to cap the Rio Grande win would be his last, maybe even the school's last.

"I didn't realize it at the time. I had know way of knowing," said Bogdan. "Coach Lotito said we'd be back soon, that the war wouldn't last very long, but four years later we were still there."

Bogdan joined the Navy Air Corps. For four years, he served the underwater defense unit in New Guinea, the East Indies, and the Philippines. At the same time, back on the Bluefield College campus, since most of the men were off fighting a war, there were not enough players to field a football squad. Consequently, the school scrapped the program, and by the time the war ended in 1945, football at Bluefield College was a mere memory. **CONTINUED OVER...**





*That is until now.*

On June 4, 2010 in front of alumni, friends, supporters, the media, and local and state dignitaries, including former Virginia governor and U.S. senator George Allen, ending months of speculation and culminating a nearly four-year-long feasibility study, Bluefield College officials formally announced the return of football to the school, some 69



**Pocahontas High School**

years after the last touchdown.

"This is a terrific day for Bluefield College," said President David Olive. "We

envision this new program broadening campus diversity, enhancing student enrollment, and providing numerous opportunities for young men throughout our region to obtain a college education while pursuing their passion for football. Over the past few weeks as people have speculated about our starting a football program, I have sensed a great deal of excitement from not only the campus community, but from the surrounding community as well."

The plan, Dr. Olive said, is to first hire a new head coach, who will recruit and field a team of players in club competition by the fall of 2011 and in intercollegiate play by the fall of 2012.

"This is something that is right for Bluefield College at this important point in time," said BC alumnus and trustee Joseph K. Tatum. "What great times of tailgating, fun and fellowship we envision for the Greater Bluefield community at future home games. It also will be another opportunity for the college to instill Christian values into a group of student-athletes and to help prepare them for futures much brighter than they would have known otherwise."

Preliminary plans also call for the new football team to practice and train at nearby Pocahontas (VA) High School, where BC officials made the formal announcement about the return of football. Vacant since 2008 when the Tazewell County Board of Education



**Mitchell Stadium**

decided to consolidate the school, the Pocahontas facilities have been made available to Bluefield College

through the generosity

of the Tazewell County Industrial Development Authority (IDA).

"On behalf of the Tazewell County Board of Supervisors, Industrial Development Authority, and Recreational Authority, we would like to thank Bluefield College for their interest in the

Pocahontas community and congratulate them on the announcement being made today," said county administrator Jim Spencer about the return of football to a community that once boasted the smallest high school varsity football program in Virginia. "Bluefield College is a great partner to Tazewell County, and today is another example of this cooperation. We expect great things in the future for both Bluefield College and the Pocahontas community."

Games for the new football team will be played at nearby Mitchell Stadium in Bluefield, West Virginia. Home to the football teams at Graham High School in Bluefield, Virginia, and Bluefield High School in Bluefield, West Virginia, Mitchell Stadium seats 10,000 fans and was the site of games between West Virginia University and Virginia Tech in the 1950s and 1960s.

"I am excited about Saturday collegiate football for Bluefield," said Jim Justice, who played at Mitchell Stadium as captain of the 1965 Bluefield Beaver state championship team. "There is a tremendous amount of football history and heritage in this area, and I feel there are many young men who would like to play football after high school, but just do not get the opportunity. To get a great education in a Christian atmosphere and to have an opportunity to participate

in intercollegiate athletics, especially football, is a win-win for any young man. Bluefield College should be applauded for its

efforts to bring this level of excitement back to Bluefield."

As the college rolled out the details of its new football program, it also rolled out a new Ram athletic logo, unveiling the image for the first time on a BC football helmet. Guests attending the program also participated in a ceremonial tailgate on the Pocahontas football field, marked already with lines for play and the new Ram logo for branding.

In addition to Senator Allen and Spencer, among the dignitaries on hand to join in the celebration were Virginia House of Delegates members William Morefield and Annie B. Crockett-Stark; Pocahontas mayor Adam Cannoy; Bluefield, Virginia, town manager Mike Watson; and BC chair of the Board of Trustees Julie Johnson.

Unable to attend, but still wanting to be a part of the festivities, Bogdan, now 87 years old, shared his excitement and advice for the new generation of Ramblin' Reds.

"I think it (the return of football) is going to be a great thing for the college," he said. "It was a whole different world when we played, a whole different game. We loved to play just for the fun of the game, and I encourage the next generation of players to play for your school, for the sport, and for the love of the game."

