

Grey Cup Flashback: 1986

By *Brian Snelgrove*

As expected the game was a blowout. And one of the biggest upsets in Grey Cup history.

The 1986 annual classic pitted the Edmonton Eskimos, sporting a league-best 13-4-1 record, against the Hamilton Tiger-Cats, who entered the game with a rather pedestrian mark of 9-8-1.

Understandably, the Western champions were prohibitive favorites (nearly two touchdowns in most circles) over their Eastern counterparts. The first-place Eskimos had whipped the BC Lions 41-5 in the Western Final and were led by CFL legend Jackie Parker. The Tiger-Cats, under Head Coach Al Bruno, had rallied from a 14 point deficit to win the two-game total point Eastern Final over the Toronto Argonauts. Hamilton had finished the regular season in second place behind the Argos and were decided underdogs against the high-powered Eskimos.

The pundits were correct. The game was a rout – but not for the Eskimos. The Black and Gold capitalized on every opportunity

and in one of the biggest upsets in CFL championship history beat up their Western rivals 39-15.

The game was Hamilton's from the opening kick-off. On the Eskimos first offensive play quarterback Matt Dunigan fumbled and the ball was recovered by the Ti-Cats Leo Ezerins. On the next play Kerrigan hit Steve Stapler with a 35 yard TD reception and just over a minute and a half into the game Hamilton had taken a lead they would never relinquish. The Tiger-Cats recovered five fumbles and had two interceptions and a blocked punt in the opening 30 minutes. They held the Hall of Fame combination of Damon Allen and Dunigan to 4 completions in 16 attempts for 42 yards in the first half. Hamilton led 29-0 as the teams headed for their dressing rooms. The Tabbies had held the explosive Eskimos offence to a mind-boggling -1 yards of offence over the first thirty minutes. The 74th Grey Cup was virtually over by half-time.

By game's end a ferocious Tiger-Cat

defence had recorded 10 sacks, 6 fumble recoveries, a pair of interceptions and a blocked punt. Ben Zambiasi had 6 tackles, a sack and 2 fumble recoveries while teammate Grover Covington recorded 3 sacks and also picked up a fumble.

The Hamilton offence was led by first year quarterback Mike Kerrigan who threw for 304 yards as he connected on 15 of 32 passes. Kerrigan hooked up with Steve Stapler (4 receptions for 130 yards) and Ron Ingram (4 for 100 yards) for a pair of touchdown strikes. The Ti-Cat pivot duplicated the feat of Chuck Ealey who 14 years earlier had also led Hamilton to a championship in his rookie season. Dan Huclack led all rushers with 48 yards on 10 carries.

When the final whistle sounded Hamilton had cruised to their first Grey Cup championship since 1972.

It was unquestionably one of the most impressive defensive performances in the history of Earl Grey's mug.

