

In Conversation With... Dick Easterly

By Chris Durka

I recently had a great and uplifting conversation with former Hamilton Tiger Cat #20, Dick Easterly. Dick played for the Cats from 1962 to 1964, and participated the 1962 Grey Cup Fog Bowl game and the victorious 1963 Grey Cup game that will always be remembered for the infamous hit that Angelo Mosca made on BC's star running back Willie Fleming.

Dick Easterly had an outstanding collegiate career at Syracuse University. He was a multi-talented athlete who excelled in basketball, baseball and football. It was football however that landed him a university scholarship. In 1960 Dick mainly played defensive back, a position that he excelled in however he also was the back-up quarterback for the Syracuse Orangemen. That team went 11-0 and won the Cotton Bowl and the U.S. National Collegiate Football Championship. In 1961 Dick was the QB, receiver and captain of the Orangemen and MVP of both the 1961 Liberty Bowl game and the Blue Grey All Star game.

Dick was drafted by the San Francisco 49ers in the 1962 draft but was also contacted by the Denver Broncos. When he tried to report to the Broncos he was informed that he couldn't because his rights were apparently owned by the Buffalo Bills. Dick also found out that a CFL team called the Hamilton Tiger Cats had him ranked number one on their negotiation list so he decided to report to the Tiger Cats. Jake Gaudaur was the G.M. and Jim Trimble was the coach of the Cats at the time and they welcomed him with open arms.

Dick's first impression of Hamilton was extremely positive. He liked the downtown area particularly the park (Gore Park) in the centre of the city. He initially stayed at the Royal Connaught Hotel but later moved into an apartment with his wife on the hill as he put it.

Dick's roommate during the out of town road trips was Angelo Mosca who had just returned to the Ti-Cats after a year with Ottawa and a short stint with Montreal. He and Mosca developed a strong relationship that has lasted to this day.

Although he was recruited by the Cats as a QB/DB, Dick's first taste of Canadian Professional Football found him in a flanker's position (known today as a slot back) where he caught 2 long touchdown passes from Joe



Zuger. As special as that game seemed to be another even greater event occurred that same evening with the birth of his first daughter.

In 1962 Dick played for Jim Trimble who he described as a very firm no nonsense type of coach, but at least you knew where you stood with him. In 1963 there was a coaching change and Ralph Sazio was in charge and, although he was somewhat similar to Trimble, he was more demanding to play for, according to Dick.

On the positive side Dick mentioned a list of great team mates that he had the distinct pleasure of playing with such as Angelo Mosca, Garney Henley, Joe Zuger, Gene Cepetelli, Don Sutherin, Ralph Goldston, Willy Bethea, Art Baker, Joe Cannavino and Dave Viti. He also mentioned how talented and good the Canadians were that he played with like Tommy Grant, Bob Krouse, Pete Neumann, Zeno Karcz, Bobby Kuntz and Frank Cosentino. He then mentioned Hal Patterson and stated that Patterson had to be one of the greatest players that ever played the game.

He remembered a game in Edmonton when both he and Patterson were lined up on the

same side of the field for a pass. On the snap of the ball Patterson was levelled at the line of scrimmage and when he looked back he was sucker punched so there they both were spread eagle on the field and the QB had no one to throw to. This added some comic relief for the players and coaches when they were gathered together to review the post-game films and clearly see the both of them laid out flat on the field during that play.

There were memorable games that Dick said he remembered such as the victorious 1963 Grey Cup game in Vancouver and the 1962 Grey Cup fog bowl in Toronto where the visibility was so poor in the last quarter of the game it had to be stopped and finished the following day. Another game that stood out for him was a game in Regina in 1962 where the downpour of rain was so intense and constant it was virtually impossible to see the opposing player in front of you during most of the game. As a result of the extreme poor weather conditions the final score of that game was more like a hockey score than a football score. The game ended something like 3-2 or 5-3 in favour of Regina.



Similar to previously interviewed Tiger Cat Legends, Dick stated that he enjoyed his playing days in Hamilton and a main contributing factor were the fans. The fan support as he put it was terrific. He said that he got to meet countless number of great Tiger Cat fans personally and made many friends. He labelled Hamilton football fans as hard working, down-to-earth people.

Dick made a special tribute to Bernie Custis, who he remembered as a great football player at Syracuse and in Hamilton. He called Custis a true gentleman and a real fine person. He also mentions Tony Gabriel as another Syracuse alumnus that did well in the CFL.

Dick Easterly was recognized for his athletic accomplishments and was inducted into the Greater Syracuse Sports Hall of Fame in 2012. He and wife Mary now live in Florida where he is still very active in his Financial Planning Business which he states " keeps him out of trouble at home".

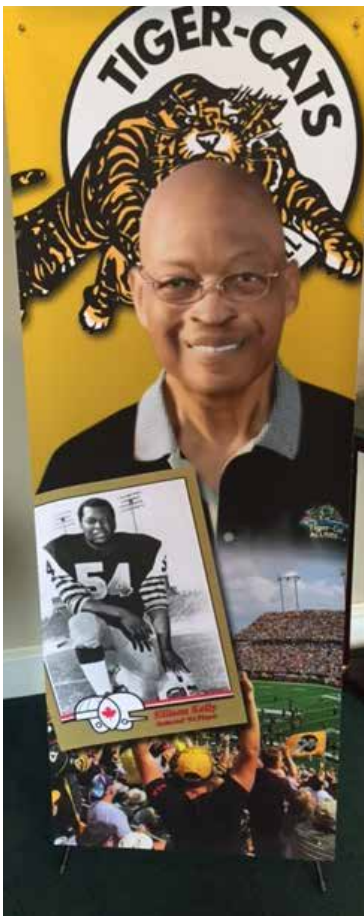
Dick Easterly is part of a long line of great former Tiger-Cats that have been responsible for the outstanding football tradition that has been created here in Hamilton. His enthusiasm, candidness and humour made the conversation with him both enjoyable and very interesting.

CHRIS DURKA

Chris is a long-time Tiger-Cat fan, season ticket holder, historian and collector of Tiger-Cat memorabilia and autographs. Over the years, Chris has had the honour to speak with many Tiger-Cat players whom he now recalls in conversation.

IN MEMORIAM

Ellison Kelly



Ellison passed away on February 11th at the age of 80.

Ellison played for the Tiger-Cats from 1960–1970 and was an 8-time Eastern All-Star, 4-time CFL All-Star as well as an inductee into the Canadian Football Hall of Fame and Wall of Honour.

Ellison lived in Hamilton and was a regular at Tiger-Cat events. He was very popular with fans and Alumni and will be fondly remembered.

ELLY'S PRAYER

Dear God,

**In the battle that goes on through life,
I ask for a field that is fair;**

**A chance that is equal with all in strife,
And the courage to strive and to dare;**

**And if I should win, let it be by the code,
With my faith and my honour held high;**

**And if I should lose, let me stand by the road,
And cheer as the winners go by.**

Arlene Kovacs

Arlene spent 12 years (82–94) with the Tiger-Cats in many administrative positions. She was an administrative assistant to GM Joe Zuger, a scouting coordinator working with Bob Krouse and the coach's secretary.

She passed away on February 11th at the age of 75.