

In Conversation With... "Billy Ray Locklin"

By Chris Durka



In 1965 Hamilton Tiger Cat General Manager Jake Gaudaur made one of his blockbuster trades that involved the acquisition of a defensive end named Billy Ray Locklin.

By the end of Billy Ray's career he played on three Grey Cup teams with the Cats, was voted an Easter All Star five times and CFL All Star three times.

This past spring I had the pleasure of speaking to Billy Ray from his home in Rockdale, Texas where he lives with wife Laura. Rockdale is located a little more than an hour's drive north of Houston. When I mentioned that my son and I were in Houston for a football tournament Billy Ray said that we should have

contacted him because he would have driven down to personally meet us.

Billy Ray asked about the current Ti-Cat team and how they did this past year. I told him that they made it to the Grey Cup but lost unfortunately to Saskatchewan. He then asked about some of his former team mates and how were they doing, particularly Angelo Mosca, John Barrow and Dave Viti. This group of great players along with Bill Ray formulated the fearsome front four that spread havoc throughout the CFL during the mid and late 1960s. When I mentioned that Angelo walks with the use of a cane these days Billy Ray chuckled and told me to tell Angelo that he is not in traction but that he is on his tractor. Billy Ray is 78 years old now but still works on his farm each and every day.

Billy Ray still remembers his playing days in the CFL particularly with Hamilton where he participated in four Grey Cup games winning three of them. The one that seems to have a special place in his heart is the 1967 Grey Cup game where he scooped up a fumble in the fourth quarter and returned it for a touchdown

to seal the victory for the Cats. He quickly gave credit to Bob Krouse for causing the fumble but kidded that he still had the hard part in picking up the ball and running half the length of the football field with it.

Billy Ray mentioned that he misses Hamilton, his team mates and the fans and wished he could make the trip up to Hamilton one day to see some of his friends again and take in a game or a local football event. The only thing that prevents him from doing this is his wife's poor health; it would be quite difficult for her to travel.

He ended our conversation by simply asking me to pass on his regards to his friends in Hamilton and said laughingly "Oskee Wee Wee".

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.

