



Name: Ben Zambiasi

Birthday: Aug. 19, 1956

School: Mount de Sales Catholic High School & University of Georgia

Position(s): Linebacker

Years with Tiger-Cats: 1978 – 1987

CAREER

1. Tell us about how you got started in football and your amateur career.

My dad was in the U.S Air Force and I moved around quite a bit as a child. I lived in Germany in grade 3 and my dad played for the Wiesbaden Flyers at the Air force base and I started to play in a rep league at that time. My dad went to Vietnam and then I returned to live at Warner Robbins Air Force base in Georgia where I played for the base team.

In grade 9 and 10 & 12 I played for the Mount de Sales Academy where I won a three State Championship losing only 1 game. In grade 11 I returned to Germany and played on the military base high school team, the Wiesbaden Warriors.

After that I played in the High School CanAm bowl and was recruited by a number of Universities. I choose Georgia despite a personal call from Bear Bryant offering me a scholarship to play for him at Alabama.

2. How did you get started in the CFL?

I was drafted by the Chicago Bears in the 10th round of the 1978 draft. I was a little too small at the time for Buddy Ryan and received a call

from GM Bob Shaw of the Tiger-Cats asking me to come up and work out for them. He offered me a contract that I was not too impressed with, but President Ralph Sazio came in to talk me and we worked out a deal.

3. Do or did you hold any records?

I hold the all-time record for tackles at the University of Georgia and I believe I hold the record for the longest fumble return in a CFL playoff game.

4. Do or did you have a nickname?

Nothing in particular but our defense was nicknamed "the junk yard dogs" at Georgia.

5. Tell us about some of your fondest memories with the Tiger-Cats or in the CFL.

I played in four Grey Cups in the 80's and winning the 86 game was special. We went to tree in a row which was quite an accomplishment considering we did it with three different QB's.

I will always cherish my relationship with team owner Harold Ballard and King Clancy; we really seemed to get along well.

6. Who were some of the team-mates and opponents you admired the most and why?

I always admired the entire Edmonton franchise for winning 5 Grey Cups in a row and in particular coach Hugh Campbell and Dan Kepley as a great fellow linebacker.

I also admired all my teammates from the 1986 Grey Cup team for their great work ethic and team mentality. Also teammate and workout partner Ralph Scholz who trained hard, worked hard and played hard.

7. Which coach did you respect or enjoy playing for the most and why?

Al Bruno led us to 3 Grey Cups and was a veteran player's coach that I really respected. John Payne was one of my first coaches and he really stressed team mentality.

8. Tell us about some of your favourite Grey Cup memories.

Obviously the '86 Championship team where we came in as underdogs and won was special. I really feel we could have won the previous two as well but there is always a play or two that you look back on the changed the game. Lui Passaglia made a great play running for a first down off a muffed punt in the '85 game in Montreal and Less Browne had 3 tipped passes

that could have gone our way and changed the outcome of the game. In 1984 I think Winnipeg had an advantage knowing the weather and had better footwear whereas we used broomball shoes that were not as good.

POST CFL CAREER

9. Tell us about your life and career after playing/working with the Tiger-Cats or CFL?

I've been involved in a few business and different jobs after the Tiger-Cats I was a guest coach in 1990. I ran a cookie business and juice bar for a while as well as sold life insurance, fitness equipment and was a produce manager. I have worked for the City of Hamilton for the past 10 years.

10. Tell us about your interests, hobbies, your passion or anything else you would like to. Share about yourself.

I am a militant of a health and nutrition nut and have been a vegetarian for the last 28 years. I love to help people live a healthy lifestyle. I like to promote the importance of making our environment green and protecting our greenspace in Hamilton and the golden horseshoe.

11. Share with us some of the places you've been or things you have experienced.

I love to travel; I lived in Germany for 6 years as a child, traveled to several countries in Europe and visited both coasts of Canada which are beautiful. I love vegetarian food of all nationalities.

THE GAME

12. What aspects of the Canadian game do you like the most?

The 3 downs and the wide field make for a more exciting brand of football plus I like the 1 yard off the line of scrimmage.

13. Is there any aspect of the game you would change if you could?

I think the league and the teams could do more to sponsor the grass roots and development of high school kids to stay in the country to get proper training. I think that if each team could sponsor two local kids to stay in school locally and then retain their territorial rights, it would help young Canadian players, the team and the game as a whole. We need to give full ride athletic scholarships in this country; I think it would make a big difference in developing Canadian talent.

