

1919 Buffalo Prospects

By Ken Crippen

The Buffalo Prospects were a semi-pro team led by player-coach Welsey Abbott and player-manager Barney Lepper. The first game of the Prospects season was to be played September 16th against the West Buffalo team. Former All-Buffalo player Johnny Gregory would lead his West Buffalo team consisting of former All-Buffalo end Russ Sherman, quarterback and team captain Gene Dooley, and tackle Ted Scatcherd into Baseball Park, but unfortunately due to rain the game was postponed to September 28th.

The weather was better on the 28th, as it was a warm afternoon when the West Buffalos upset the Buffalo Prospects 7-0. In the second quarter, Bob Langdon fumbled and Chick Harding picked up the ball and ran in it for the touchdown. Yeates kicked the point after touchdown for the only score of the game.

Three days after the upset loss, the Prospects signed former All-Western quarterback from Michigan and star of last years All-Buffalo team Tommy Hughitt. The next day, the Prospects added Austen Lake from Lafayette. The bolstered Prospect team beat the Niagaras 23-2 on a slippery Baseball Park field. The Niagaras scored first on a safety. It was all Prospects after that when, in the second period, Ray Mahaney and Roger Kooops scored touchdowns and newly signed Austen Lake drop kicked from the 20 to give the home team a 17-2 lead. The Prospects scored again in the third period on a Hughitt touchdown.

Two days after the Prospects first win of the season, they were not finished with the roster moves, adding former Tonawanda star Pooch Ames. It was not much of a contest as the Buffalo Prospects rolled over the Grove-Eldridge team of North Tonawanda 40-0. Bob Langdon, Bill Gehring, former Tonawanda star Bill Kibler, Wesley Abbott and Torchy Sullivan all scored touchdowns with Hughitt and Hymie Bleich each kicking one extra point and Lake kicking two. Buffalo moved the ball with ease, scoring two touchdowns in each of the final three periods, one being set up by a Gehring interception in the third period.

A few days after the Prospect's win over Grove-Eldridge, Russ Monkhouse was released and picked up by All-Lancaster, Buffalo's next opponent. During the Prospects weekly practices, all signals were changed and they planned new formations. This obviously helped, since the Prospects had no trouble with manager Joe English's All-Lancaster team the following Sunday at Baseball Park, scoring in all four periods. Touchdowns by Bleich, Lake, Sullivan, Yeates, Hughitt, Braun, Kibler, and Gehring along with 7 goals from touchdowns by Hughitt accounted for all of the scoring. Bleich also registered a 55 yard run in the 55-0 win by the Prospects.

Buffalo's next opponent, West Buffalo, was coming off of a disputed 7-6 loss to All-Tonawanda the week before. Several times, the West Buffalo-Tonawanda game threatened to end in dispute. Russ Sherman scored in the second for West Buffalo, but unfortunately Harding missed the goal giving West Buffalo a 6-0 lead. In the final period, West Buffalo claimed a touchback instead of a touchdown by Kuhrt, but was overruled by the referee. Tam Rose kicked the goal, giving Tonawanda a 7-6 win. The game was finished under protest by West Buffalo manager Baxter Smith and a rematch was scheduled for November 9th in Tonawanda.

The Prospects were originally to play the Rochester Scalpers on October 26th, but scheduled a game against West Buffalo instead. West Buffalo must have still been thinking of the Tonawanda game when they entered a wet and muddy Baseball Park the following Sunday. The addition of Tony Schasre and Vince Donovan to the West Buffalo roster did not help, as the Prospects looked much faster and lighter than their counterparts, with West Buffalo adding to their woes by fumbling often. The closest West Buffalo came to scoring was on a drive to the Prospects 2-yard line when the whistle blew, ending the first half of play. Approximately 3,000 fans saw the Prospects win 19-0 on touchdowns by Yeates, Ames, and Bleich to continue the Prospect shutout streak.

The Buffalo Prospects had an easy time passing against their next opponent, LeRoy (Genessee County) in their 74-0 victory at a "heavy and squashy like a soaked sponge" Baseball Park. Touchdowns were scored by Yeates, Ray Mahaney, Barney Lepper, Kibler, Langdon, and Sullivan. This game was

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scheduled after All-Syracuse cancelled their game with LeRoy after LeRoy beat East Rochester 37-0; following defeats by LeRoy of the Rochester Scalpers, Bausch&Lomb, Geneva, and Oswego.

About 3,000 fans saw Buffalo Prospects shutout their opponents yet again, this time it was All-Syracuse and the score was 23-0. The All-Syracuse squad, consisting of Parker Knapp from Syracuse, Jim Hemlock from Carlisle, Art Smith from Penn, and Jake Hoffman never put the local goal in serious danger. On the first offensive series, the Prospects were able to drive the field, using a few runs around the ends, a forward pass, and a 5-yard penalty to bring them to the All-Syracuse 1-yard line. Lake then scored the touchdown, with Bleich kicking the goal.

In the second period, a pass from Hughitt to Bleich for 20 yards gave the Prospects the ball on the All-Syracuse 7-yard line. Bleich then scored, but the kick was wide. Later in the second period, Lake kicked a field goal from the 20-yard line. In the fourth quarter, Kibler scored a touchdown with Hughitt kicking the goal.

Unfortunately for the Prospects, Hughitt injured his shoulder in the final minutes of the game, and would be out for the remainder of the season. Charles Erckert of Lafayette will take his place. Erckert was at Syracuse under coach Buck O'Neill. The previous Sunday, All-Syracuse defeated Watertown for the Central New York Championship, giving All-Syracuse the Central and Northern championships.

The Prospects next opponent was to be Watertown, but after their loss in the Central New York Championship game with All-Syracuse, Watertown cancelled. Buffalo now needed to find another opponent, with the Cleveland Panthers, Columbus Panhandles, or Rochester Jeffersons as possible candidates.

The Prospects could not get the Jeffersons to play, but were able to get the Cleveland Panthers instead. The Panthers had players like Gil Ward, Joe Mattern, Jack Seeley, Ed Hanley, Bob Butler, and Picknal; all except Hanley played with Tommy Hughitt in Youngstown the previous year. Buffalo had an easy time with the Panthers, winning 25-0. There was no scoring in the first period, however Bleich came close when he intercepted a pass and returned it to the 15-yard line, but Cleveland held for downs. It was not until the second period, when Watkins intercepted a pass from Handley and returned it for a touchdown, that either team got on the scoreboard. Later in the period, Kibler fumbled with Gowdy picking up the ball and running it to the Buffalo 38-yard line. With the Prospect defense holding, Schuele tried a drop kick, but it fell in to Kibler's hands on the 10-yard line. On Buffalo's second offensive series of the second half, Kibler passed to Lake for a 10 yard gain. The drive finished with Watkins breaking through the line for a 30 yard gain and a touchdown. Buffalo would score again in the third period as Lake kicked a field goal from the 18-yard line. The scoring would not end there, as the Prospects continued to put points on the board in the fourth period. After Buffalo lost the ball on downs on the Cleveland 1-yard line, Schuele attempted a punt but was tackled by Yeates for a safety. On Cleveland's next offensive series, Kibler intercepted a pass and ran it 50 yards for the final score of the game.

In Tonawanda, the All-Tonawanda Lumberjacks defeated Mount Pleasant's Hydraulics 59-0. Local papers were calling for the unbeaten Lumberjacks to play the Prospects. Tonawanda won the Western NY championship in 1917 from the Rochester Jeffersons, and were looking to win it again; this time from the Prospects. In a meeting between Tonawanda coach Walter "Tam" Rose and Buffalo manager Barney Lepper, Art Powell (coach of the University of Buffalo team and who officiated all of the Prospects games this season) insisted on being excused for personal reasons. Earl Templeton of Colgate, H. Ver Wiebe of Harvard, Russ Carrick of Syracuse, and Bollinger of Cornell were names mentioned as possible substitutions. The decision was made to go with Earl Templeton as referee, H. Ver Wiebe as umpire, and LeGrand Simpson of Cornell as head linesman. The game was pitted as the "College Pros" vs "Regular Pros." The Prospects were former college players who have entered the pro game, while All-Tonawanda were pure pros with only 2 college players on the team. Manager W.H. Chase's Tonawanda team included Tam Rose, who was twice Walter Camp's selection as All-American halfback, captain of the Syracuse team for 3 years, and leading point scorer for Syracuse. Tonawanda also included Frech at center, Slip Regnett at guard, Bill Misner (2 years at Syracuse, 1 at the University of Buffalo) at tackle, Elmer "Spin" Roy and Bill Dischinger as ends, and Curley Jedeles as QB.

The All-Tonawanda Lumberjacks out-rushed the Buffalo Prospects in the first period. While on the Buffalo 5-yard line, the Prospects held for three downs, but on fourth down, Kellar of the Lumberjacks scored the touchdown with Tam Rose kicking the goal. The Prospects held in the second period, but still did not

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score. Buffalo's offense started to pick up, as the Prospects outplayed Tonawanda in the third period. Starting at their own 20 yard line, the Prospects were able to move to the Lumberjacks 12-yard line, thanks to penalties by Tonawanda. Lake faked a kick and passed to Gehring, who was standing on the 1-yard line, for the touchdown. Bleich missed the goal. Later, Lake kicked an easy field goal for a 9-7 Buffalo lead. In the fourth period, Buffalo was able to get to the Tonawanda 6-yard line, but was not able to cross the goal line. Lake kicked another field goal for the final score and a 12-7 win for the Prospects.

Trash-talking started early for the first of two meetings between the Rochester Jeffersons and the Prospects. Rochester player Don Gray says that the Jeffersons will win the Thanksgiving meeting, "Quigley was the best quarterback he had ever seen and that [Bob] Argus was a better line smasher than any of the Prospect backs." Rochester manager Leo Lyons chanced nothing, as he negotiated with three Detroit Heralds in hopes of beefing up his squad. As it turned out, only former Jefferson Steamer Hornung agreed to play. The Prospects outplayed coach Jack Forsyth's Jeffersons in front of 4,000 fans on a snowy Thanksgiving Day. The game became a punting duel, with Hornung winning the battle. The bitter cold made it almost impossible to pass the ball, as the players' fingers were so numb that they could not catch it. The ground game did not fair much better. Several inches of snow on the ground slowed the backs and ends, as gains of more than five yards were rare. Watkins did not play for Buffalo, and Lake sat out the game with injuries sustained in the game against Tonawanda (attacked by one of the Tonawanda players). A rematch was scheduled for Sunday in Buffalo, which would determine the New York Pro Championship.

After the Thanksgiving Day tie, Hornung returned to Detroit leaving the Jeffersons without their star player for the rematch. Hornung's absence was felt as the Jeffersons failed to stop the Prospects. In the first period, Buffalo got on the board with a forward pass from Lake to Schwartzer for 20 yards and a touchdown. Segal missed the goal. The Prospect's offense continued later in the first, but the period ended with the Prospects on the Rochester 1-yard line. On the second play of the second period, Buffalo's Watkins scored with Bleich kicking the goal. Both teams punted the rest of the period. There was no scoring in the third period, but the Prospects got another touchdown in the fourth when Smith's punt was blocked near the Rochester 20-yard line. Three plays later, Gehring scored the touchdown with Woodman kicking the goal. The Prospects won the game 20-0 on this cold and blustery day. The local papers described the weather as, "icy blast" and "howling gale" with some snow flurries. It was a dangerous day to play football, with players slipping and skidding in the field. Provensha, Kibler, Sullivan and Quigley sprained their ankles in the contest. This would be the final game of the Prospects season.

Date	AT	Opponent	SCOR	ATT
9/16	H	West Buffalo	postponed	
9/28	H	West Buffalo	0- 7	"small"
10/ 5	H	Niagaras	23- 2	n/a
10/12	H	Grove-Eldridge	40- 0	n/a
10/19	H	All-Lancaster	55- 0	n/a
10/26	H	West Buffalo	19- 0	3,000
11/ 2	H	LeRoy	74- 0	n/a
11/ 9	H	All-Syracuse	23- 0	3,000
11/16	H	Cleveland Panthers	25- 0	n/a
11/23	H	All-Tonawanda	12- 7	"overflow"
11/27	A	Rochester Jeffersons	0- 0	4,000
11/30	H	Rochester Jefferson	20- 0	2,800

Buffalo Prospects Roster

Coach: Wesley Abbott Manager: Barney Lepper
 Owner: Doc Savage Record: 9-1-1

Name	Position	G/S	TD	FG	XP
Wesley Abbott	C-LHB	5/2	1	-	-
"Pooch" Ames	RT-RHB	8/7	1	-	1
Barton	RG	4/4	-	-	-
Jack Bilger	RHB	1/0	-	-	-
Herman "Hymie" Bleich	QB-HB-FB	12/10	3	-	9/11
Arthur H. "Bull" Braman	RT-RG	2/0	-	-	-
Braun	FB	1/1	1	-	-
Chuck Cummers	C	6/6	-	-	-

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Jack Dempsey	LE-RE	6/3	-	-	-
Charles Erckert	QB-FB	2/2	-	-	-
William "Bill" Gehring	LHB-FB	9/6	5	-	1
Ernest "Tommy" Hughitt	QB	6/4	2	-	11
William "Bill" Kibler	LHB-RHB	7/4	7	-	-
Roger Koops	LT-HB-FB	11/11	1	-	-
Austen Lake	QB-HB	9/8	2	5	4
Robert "Bob" Langdon	LE-RE	7/4	2	-	-
Bernard "Barney" Lepper	RT-QB-LHB	5/2	1	-	-
Ray Mahaney	LE-RG-RE-QB-FB	9/2	3	-	-
Harold McDermott	RG	1/0	-	-	-
Russ Monkhouse	C	2/1	-	-	-
Walter Newman	LT-RG-RT	4/2	-	-	-
Aaron Poodry	RG	3/3	-	-	-
Ray Provensha	LT-RT	6/1	-	-	-
John Rupp	LG	11/10	-	-	-
Schwartz	RE	1/1	1	-	-
Segal	RT	1/1	-	-	0/1
Phil Stephan	LT-RG-RT	10/6	-	-	-
John "Torchy" Sullivan	LE-RE	10/7	3	-	-
Timline	RHB	1/0	-	-	-
Watkins	HB-FB	3/3	3	-	-
Leo Webster	LHB	1/0	-	-	-
Woodman	C	3/2	-	-	1
Yeates	LE-LT-RE	8/5	5	-	-