

HISTORY & FOLKLORE



From Illustrated Press of Liberty County, Thursday, March 14, 1963 –

The Twilighters are a successful young combo from Dayton High School, consisting of (left to right) Dennis Blanton, Jimmy Sterling (hidden, with trombone), Larry Crider, Gary Nottingham and John Stevens.

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Daisetta's Gene Walker Shakes Them Up at Rice

Area football fans who followed the play of Hull-Daisetta's young quarterback, Gene Walker, during his three winning years at the helm of the Bobcats have been watching with even greater interest for his progress at Rice University this year.

The Houston Post's sport columnist, Jack Gallagher, has also taken notice, and some of his columnar comments are excerpted below. H-D fans may have two teams to root for next fall: the black and red and the blue and grey.

make Rice an improved football team over the one which won two games and played in ties as dashing as Countess Mara.

Paul Piper and Russell Wayt approach their junior year as seasoned fullbacks. Gene Walker is Rice's best sophomore running back in years, but Neely wishes he blocked like he ran. "Gene hits real hard, but isn't inclined to follow through. He hits and then goes to the ground. In blocking you've got to stay on your feet."

When he carries the ball, however, Walker keeps both feet planted on the ground while tacklers bounce off him. "It's like," teammate Joe Froh describes the experience, "trying to tackle a brick wall on roller skates."

Bo Hagan likens the field Walker leaves in his wake to a calf scramble at a rodeo. "Everybody's scattered out, they're all taking cracks at him and nobody's catching him."

The 202-pound Walker and fullbacks Paul Piper, 200, and Russell Wayt, 218, give Rice blockbuster running backs among the ordinary-size wingbacks, Wayne McClelland, 179, Billy Hale, 180, and David Feguson, 171.

After watching Gene Walker make 90 percent of the tackles in Hull-Daisetta's game against Huntsville, Cecil Grigg advised Jess Neely, "Take him even if he has a broken right arm (Walker was then a quarterback). He can still play defense."

*Cecil Grigg was backfield coach, 27 seasons
Jess Neely was head football coach, 1940-1966
Red Bale, student-athlete, assistant football coach for 27 years and athletic director, 1971-75*



GENE WALKER

BALES COMPARES SOPH SENSATION GENE WALKER WITH BILL WALLACE

Cecil Grigg has been around Rice since Franklin Delano Roosevelt's sophomore year as President. So Cecil has seen quite a few football players, as well as Presidents, come and go.

"But in all my years here I never saw the coaches get as excited over a player as this Gene Walker," vows Grigg.

Red Bale and Nick Lanza admit that the sophomore from Hull-Daisetta excites them. In fact, they raved about Walker's performance in Thursday's scrimmage.

"One time," recounts Bale, "a half-dozen people had a crack at him on a punt runback and missed. There were some players clustered on the sidelines watching and he got mixed up among them and was brought down. Then he apologized. Said he didn't know, in that clutter of jerseys, who was on his side and who was against him."

On another punt return Bale swears Walker stood in one place and dodged all 11 tacklers.

"He has great balance," Bale describes his halfback's running style. "He wiggles and fights and uses his right arm to fight off tacklers."

Adds Lanza, "He can go up and down at the same time and work his feet. He doesn't ever stop his feet from moving."

"Walker and Bill Wallace were different type runners," Bale continues, "but he reminds me of Wallace because of his inherent ability. Like Wallace, he does things well the first time he tries them."

Grigg, who has seen them all back to Jim Thorpe, agrees, but adds, "There'll never be another Bill Wallace at Rice."

Meanwhile, Cecil is unable to resist a sly dig at his fellow coaches every time they mention the running feats of Walker, who was voted 1962's Outstanding Freshman Back in Southwest Conference football.

"He's making you fellows look bad," reminds Grigg, a twinkle in his blue eyes. "People will begin to think you aren't teaching tackling."

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