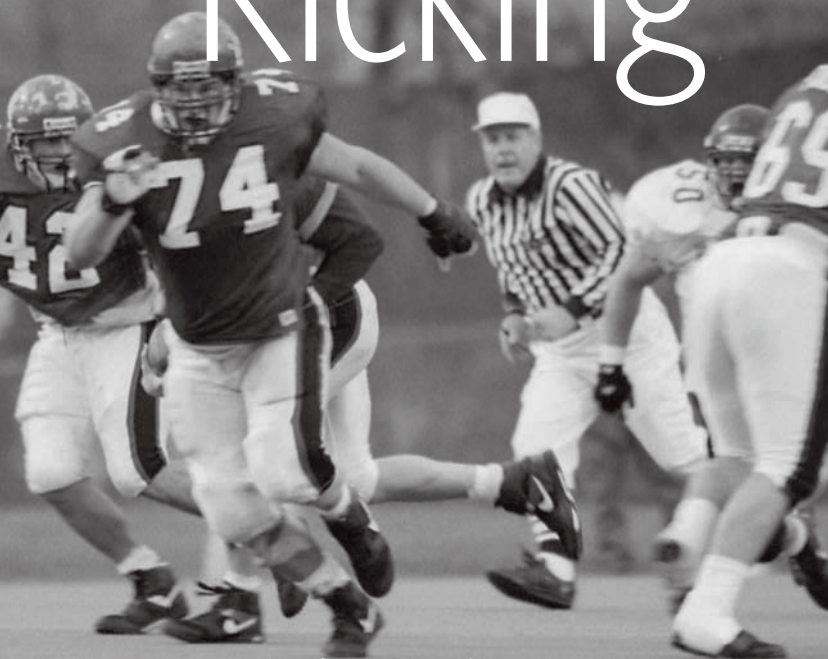


Still Kicking



BTUFF takes its pulse after another Boston football program calls it quits

JULIE CHEN-MERRITT

WHEN JASON GOLDBERG heard last November that Northeastern University had dumped its seventy-four-year-old football program, he couldn't help but think that his alma mater had helped lay the paving stones.

"If BU hadn't had the audacity, Northeastern would never have had the audacity," says the former Terrier offensive lineman.

It's been twelve years since football was dissolved at Boston University. And for just as many years the alumni group Boston Terriers United for Football (BTUFF) has been fighting to reinstate it, their hopes waxing and waning with each new administration.

Goldberg (SMG'92, GSM'94) feels for the Husky players, who had to decide whether to transfer or give up competitive ball.

"You feel it in your stomach," he says. "You can't just get rid of institutions."

While a number of Terriers were drafted to the NFL, few vestiges of BU's football legacy remain on campus. The most visible is in front of Agganis Arena: the bronze statue of athletic demigod Harry Agganis (SED'54) in his old-school football duds, about to launch the pigskin. For a while, students wore shirts that read "BU Football, Undeclared Since 1997."

That year, the Board of Trustees voted to cancel BU's program after ninety-one seasons. Pointing to a \$3 million-

a-year drain, Title IX, a poor record, and thin attendance, the University redirected the money to help build the Fitness and Recreation Center and to fund more scholarships for female athletes. The '97 team learned its fate moments after losing its Homecoming game, ironically, to local rival Northeastern.

Ever since, several generations of former Terrier footballers say, they have felt adrift, with little to connect some of their most cherished BU memories to except other exiles. Once a year, BTUFF members gather for a game of touch football on the old

gridiron at Nickerson Field.

While BTUFF has lost steam in recent years, the dream hasn't been snuffed out. Core members have met with President Robert A. Brown to plead their case, but they realize theirs remains an uphill battle.

"He's not against football," says Goldberg. "But

MEMBERS OF BTUFF on their old stomping ground: (below, standing, from left) George "Butch" Byrd (SED'63), Jason Goldberg (SMG'92, GSM'94) (wearing #74, at left), and Allen Drucker (ENG'66); (seated, from left) Al Rich (SED'74), Connell Tarr (SMG'73), and Howard Marget (SMG'82).

it's not on his radar."

Nationally, universities have been ditching programs at a steady clip. As of 2008, almost 30 nationally prominent colleges have abandoned football, and since 1950, 239 NCAA members and nonmembers have dropped their teams.

So is BTUFF tilting at windmills? They don't think so. In the last forty years, 101 NCAA member colleges have added or brought back teams.

"It's not just about football," says Terry Clarke (COM'63,'89), former president of the BU Alumni Association and the lone dissenting voice on the Board of Trustees in 1997. "It's about alumni. There are many people who'd love to come back with their families and be part of their alma mater."

"Aside from Commencement, the Homecoming game was the second largest marketing event. The argument has been that we'll have to buy a new stadium. I don't know that's necessarily true. Look at what's been done with Fenway Park."

"If someone gave us the green light and said this is how much it's going to cost," says Goldberg, president and owner of an information technology company, "they'd get a pretty big check from me. A really big check. They'd get a lot of checks. We're still alive and kicking."

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