

The Time Machine
Article 31
Coach Conzemius' #1 QB

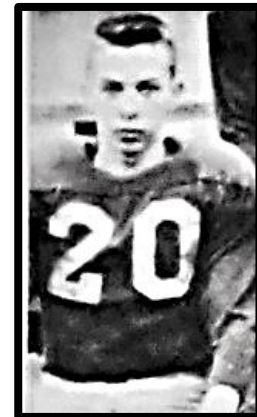


I just read the front-page August 1, 2024, WPJ article by Nicole Stracek, on the late Harry Harrison. A wonderful and illuminating article indeed. I knew of Mr. Harrison for as long as I can remember. He lived right across the alley from my good friend Tommy Merickel. I did not know Harry Harrison. That was obvious after reading Nicole's piece. I had met him but once, recently.

At the Wadena State Bank, I had just taken a seat on the other side of Jeff Browne's desk. I was there to show him a couple of my recent "WHS Football Scrapbooks." I believe it was the scrapbooks for the 1950's and for the 1960's. Suddenly, in the middle of our conversation, Mr. Browne looks over my shoulder and is waving somebody to enter his office. I turn to see whom. Enter Harry Harrison. After an introduction and some small talk, the discussion turned back to the WHS scrapbooks. Having graduated in 1952 Harry was interested in the 1950's copy. While paging through the book and after checking out his teams' coverage in the book he proudly proclaimed, "I was John Conzemius' number one quarterback!" My immediate reaction was that there were two people in the bank (Jeff and brother Kip) that might disagree. And Paul Schmidt, 1970 WHS alum, went on to lead D3 national powerhouse St. John's University for two years as their QB. Others also came to mind, Randy Stofer (earned 12 letters total in three sports), and Dave Campbell. I could go on Mr. Harrison, listed on the roster at 135 pounds! I kept my mouth shut. John Conzemius was the WHS head football coach for over 30 years covering four decades. He had a lot of great quarterbacks.

This is where Nicole's article comes in. Roland Gilbert, HR manager at Mason Brothers, states, "He was a man with many stories about hunting, fishing and golfing and enjoyed placing multiple bets on all these events, and loved the line 'Wanna bet you made a bad bet?'"

Had Harry been able to read my mind, or even just sensed the skepticism oozing from my pores he would have challenged me with a bet. I would have made that bet, number one QB, my eye! Two bets were likely since I was confident that the mythical first bet would not have been a bad bet. As it turned out, Harry soon explained the facts behind his claim. I would have lost both bets. Harry Harrison was indisputably 100 percent correct. He was not claiming to be the best quarterback coach Conzemius ever had, he was claiming to be the first quarterback coach had at WHS. He was correct. The fall of 1951 started Harry's senior year. He was the starting quarterback. That fall was the start of coach Conzemius' 31-year tenure as head coach, ending after the 1981 season.



**Harold Harrison Has
Big Night -- Snares
3 of Visitors Passes**

Here is one last thing I am sure of, in one game Harrison snared three interceptions. The 135-pounder must have been a pretty good football player.