

Position switch changed a life

Hall of Fame inductee Czub found glory on field, career off

By MICHaEl KELly Gazette Sportswriter



PHOTO PROVIDED

A switch from the backfield in the 1950s changed Bob Czub's Nott Terrace career — and the trajectory of his life.

CLIFTON PARK — Bob Czub was a below-average running back. Mostly, that was because he was slow.

Everyone knew that, including him.

“I’d joke that other guys could spot me five yards,” Czub said, “and they’d be by me in 10.”

That’s why when his football coach approached him with a question during his junior year at Nott Terrace High School — this is 65 years ago, by the way — about whether Czub would switch positions, his reaction came quicker than he could run.

“I didn’t have to consider it,” Czub, now 81 years old, remembered this week. “I didn’t want to sit out. I wanted to play.”

So, at coach Pete Shulha’s request, Czub moved from a position of glory to the team’s offensive line. The subpar running back became a guard.

As Czub sees it, that decision changed everything for him.

“That was a turning point in my athletic career,” Czub said, “but really my whole life.”

Tonight, Czub enters the Capital Region Football Hall of Fame along with 19 other inductees during a ceremony at the Radisson Turf Inn in Albany. Long before his latest hall of fame induction — he’s already a member of the Schenectady City School District Athletic Hall of Fame, and the undefeated 1953 team he co-captained was also honored last year — he’d already reaped the rewards of his decision as a teenager to listen to his coach.

Rather than getting a couple carries here or there, Czub became an All-American guard in addition to his role as a linebacker. The coach, impressed both with Czub’s willingness to try something new and ability,



took extra interest in him and started asking about his college plans.

College? Czub had never considered going to one of those. His grades were fine, but his family had little money.

Shulha made him consider it. The coach promised to help Czub find the right high school courses for a college-bound athlete.

“Well,” Czub thought, “if he thinks I’m capable, I’m going to try.”

Two years after making that position switch, Czub was enrolled at

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Bob Czub, a 1954 Nott Terrace graduate who enters the area’s football hall of fame tonight, is shown earlier this week at his Clifton Park home. On the table in front of him are scrapbooks of clippings from his football career.

Cornell and playing on the university’s freshman football team. He graduated with a degree in agriculture and later had a long career at General Electric as its manager of transportation and maintenance.

“It changed my life,” Czub said. “I would have been a factory worker — and there’s nothing wrong with that — but I got a better life out of it, and I say that in all honesty. It got me going in a direction that was scary for me to begin with, but it worked out and I was able to provide a good level of living for my family.”

Czub, a 1954 Nott Terrace graduate, started that family during his time at Cornell. Before he graduated, he’d married his high school sweetheart Beverly and had two of his five children. The couple, married for 60-plus years, continues to live in the Clifton Park farmhouse in which it raised its children.

While Shulha started Czub on the path toward getting a college education, Beverly provided the motivation.

“My father always told him that if he didn’t go to college, he couldn’t marry his daughter,” said Beverly, the captain of Nott Terrace’s cheerleading team during the couple’s senior year.

At Nott Terrace and Cornell, Czub earned a number of individual honors for his play. Above everything, though, the memory of his playing career that sticks out most is his senior year of high school. The 1953 Nott Terrace team went 7-0 and outscored its opponents 277-6.

“That team was truly a good team,” Czub said. “We paid attention and we worked hard.”

Personally, Czub worked hard — but he was also lucky. As he enters his latest hall of fame, the impact a decision made decades ago on the rest of his life still sticks with him.

“There’s different things you remember. There’s the good, the tough and the people who helped you along the way,” Czub said. “I owe a lot to a lot of people.”

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