Bill Albrecht led the Lewis High School charge in ‘49

He just put everything he had into every minute that he was on the football field.
He wasn’t the flashiest runner, but you didn’t have much flash when you’re running the single wing.

By JOHN GORALSKI
SPORTS WRITER

Bill Albrecht can still remember sitting across the desk from Southington High School’s principal, and begging for a second chance. It was the late 1940s. Albrecht had just been kicked out of a trade school in Meriden, and he had developed a reputation for playing hooky and being difficult.
Principal Martin Phelan stared at the young man from behind his desk but finally relented.
“He told me I wouldn’t make it anyway, but I set out to prove him wrong,” said Albrecht. “From there, I had to tow the line, and I did.”
The best thing that every happened to me was, when I was studying, gym class came up to me and shook my hand. He congratulated me for graduating, and that made my day.”

Bill Albrecht on a Pacific trading card during his college career with the Washington Huskies.

Albrecht was a hot-shot kid, but he was determined to set things right. He showed up, but he changed, and eventually earned his principal’s trust. Finally, he earned a chance to try out for the football team, and everything else was history.
“I always wanted to play football. When I was growing up, at Christmas time my aunts would ask me what I wanted for Christmas, and it was the shoulder pads or the helmet,” he said. “I always had football on my mind right then.”

“I probably made up my mind right then.”

But the 1949 team ran the single wing.
Behind a wall of blockers. Albrecht plunged through the defense wearing a pair of size 12 shoes? He might run better. One day, a car wound its way up the drive and a strange man knocked on the door. He introduced himself as a recruiter from the University of Washington, one of the biggest programs in the country, and asked Albrecht if he wanted to play.

“I didn’t even know where that was, but he mentioned Howie Odell,” said Albrecht. “When I was growing up, Howie Odell used to coach at Yale, and I thought it would be great to play for him. I probably made up my mind right then.”

That wasn’t his only choice because, by the time he was a senior, Albrecht had turned himself around. He was a three-year starter on the football team, and the Chicago Cubs offered a contract. He was offered football scholarships at a couple of other schools and had a Presidential appointment to the naval academy, but Albrecht packed for Seattle.

“I was a guy from Southington, CT out here with all these all-Americans? I never thought I’d ever come in contact with those kinds of people,” he remembers.
“They were so down to earth.”

Despite his offensive resume, Washington moved Albrecht to defensive halfback. In his first year, the Huskies went 6-2 and finished second in the Pacific Coast Conference. They topped out at No. 10 twice and finished the season at No. 11.

Two years later, Albrecht anchored the defense with 12 interceptions in 1951 to set a new school record that stood for a decade. He played alongside two all-Americans and a pair of teammates from his 1941 state championship team — Michanczyk and Stan Kuscinskas.

“I had a chance to play with him during his senior year,” said Michanczyk. “He was such a good defensive player there. He was used more defensively, but he was an all-around player. He put a lot into what he did on the football field.”

For his storied high school career and its continuation into the college spotlight, Albrecht was chosen as one of 15 athletes to represent the town in the first class of the Southington Sports Hall of Fame. On Wednesday, Nov. 10, he will be honored in an induction ceremony at the Aqua Turf in Plantsville.

“I really can’t take the credit,” he said. “Our line was great. My coaches were great. Everything just clicked.”

To comment on this story or to contact sports writer John Gornalski, email him at jgoralski@ southingtonobserver.com.

Athlete

Albrecht was the head running back. He was the guy that everybody thought was going to be difficult, but he was determined.

Ray Michanczyk, Football player

FOOTBALL

ran for 1,307 yards and 25 Tds (1949)
All State (1949)
Captain of the all-state team (1949)
Attended the University of Washington (50-53)
-held single season interception record (12)

at the University of Washington (1951)

BASEBALL

Three years starter, shortstop
Batted over .400 as a senior
Offered contract by the Chicago Cubs