

Bill Blackwell

From: Landry, John <jlandry@investdavenport.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 20, 2023 5:00 PM
To: Bill Blackwell
Cc: Greg Frascogna
Subject: Coach Bill Raphael Hall of Fame

Gentlemen I like to give my endorsement for Bill Raphael induction into the Mississippi Hall of Fame. My name is John Landry and I am a product of Bill's High School Program at St Joe as was my older brother. I played for St Joe in the seasons of 65-68, during the middle of his career and at the very beginning of St Joe moving to its new location away from downtown. It was in those years the program starting to enjoy great success. My sophomore year was the first winning season in quite a while, my junior year even better and our Senior year we were undefeated in the regular season. I like to think I was an integral part of that I was starter my sophomore year as a defensive back and junior and senior year I played both ways continuing as DB and playing Quarterback on offense. Bill introduced the Option Read Offense to our team which was a novelty at the time and we ran it with great perfection. He also allowed me to call my own plays and gave me the freedom to call audible at the line which also was not common . It gave me some personal success with a record setting Junior Year and All City honors. My Senior Year I was Honorable Mention All State and other teammates received recognition as well which we can all attribute to some degree to the coaching and guidance that Bill gave us. After St Joe I continued my Football Career at VMI [Virginia Military Institute]. In those days we were playing major College Football in the Southern Conference against the likes of West Virginia, Virginia, Maryland, Va. Tech, North Carolina etc. I made the starting line up my sophomore year as a corner back and held that throughout my time there. I had some success too, being recognized as Virginia Player of the Week my Junior Year for the Villanova Game where I held Consensus All American Mike Siani to 2 receptions [he was the sixth overall pick in the draft that year] . Senior year I had 6 interceptions which put me somewhere in the top 10 in the country and maybe more importantly 3 came against our hated rival the University of Virginia. I say all that because my Fundamental Skills to play defensive back at that level were never in doubt and was all instilled in me by Coach Raphael. Our St Joe teams were almost always playing against bigger teams with far larger enrollments and resources but we were always the harder playing more disciplined, better coached team. I might add I have great admiration for him that he had courage to brake the Color barrier as we had black teammates our Sophomore year long before anyone else and not because they were superstars. They just wanted to be part of the team. It created some tense moments as I have memories of being instructed to get on the Bus immediately after some away games in uniform without showering fearing there could be an incident with opposing team fans. In my College years I had the privilege of playing for many great coaches. Many of those have received different accolades including State and National Recognition . I would put Bill right up there with them, the best proof might be in the men that he produced. To this day I have great friendships and memories with my teammates, a group that has been highly successful in every walk of life. Many of whom have stayed in the Jackson area and are leaders in the community. I sincerely hope Bill makes it. It would be a fitting tribute to a man that dedicated his life to Football and one team, St. Joe. If this happens, please let me know the date of the Induction I will come down for the celebration. Keep honoring the game. Best regards John Landry

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