

EPH LEGEND – MIKE MCADAM '99

by Dick Quinn, Director Sports Information



COMING OUT OF TORREY PINES

High School in San Diego, Mike McAdam was projected to be the Ephs' starting fullback for four years. But McAdam didn't make it through his first full day of pre-season practice in 1995.

After the morning session of drills the Ephs showered and went to lunch. Most hoped to grab a few moments' rest before the afternoon session commenced.

McAdam didn't return to the practice field after the morning session. He couldn't. His heart just wasn't in it. "I was homesick and burnt out from participating in sports year-round for a majority of my life," he recalled. "I was in a new setting, and was second guessing what I really wanted to be doing with my life.

"It was truly a spontaneous decision that I will regret for the rest of my life," continued McAdam. "Until my arrival in Williamstown, I had never thought of quitting any team that I had ever been on, no matter the sport. I put a lot of weight on my shoulders and buckled under the pressure. I became very introverted and tried to keep everything to myself, which was a mistake."

McAdam was still looking forward to indoor and outdoor track and field, but he just couldn't shake the guilt and shame of having quit football. "It probably took about a month for me to realize my mistake," McAdam remembered. "I was so ashamed with myself because I had let down so many of my potential teammates. That was definitely a low point in my life."

"A Freshman Mistake Remains His Inspiration Today"

One night after the end of the 1995 football season, McAdam climbed the stairs to head coach Dick Farley's office to ask if he could return to the team in his sophomore year. "I felt extremely embarrassed, scared, and upset with myself for wasting coach Farley's time," said McAdam.

McAdam was prepared to "just keep begging until coach Farley got sick of hearing from me," he said. "I knew he wouldn't be welcoming me back with open arms, but I couldn't walk away and live with the guilt for the rest of my life."

Farley was surprised by the knock on his door. It was after midnight, much too late for a visitor.

"Coach, can I talk to you?"

"Sure."

"I think I made a mistake. I really do miss football and I want to come back and play."

Farley's pause seemed long to McAdam.

"You're way behind."

"I know, but coach I really want to play. I have to play."

Another pause.

"Ok, you can come back next fall."

"Coach, thanks. This means the world to me. Thank you."

Before McAdam could leave, Farley stopped him with a few more pointed statements.

"You will be last on the depth chart when camp opens."

"Yes."

"You know that even if you work your tail off you will be lower than whale ****. You are dead last on the roster."

"Yes, sir."

"OK."

Leaving Farley's office, McAdam "was ecstatic from the standpoint that I might be able to start earning back a small amount of respect from my teammates," he remembered. "I was still an outcast at that point and

could tell that the guys were still treating me differently. I deserved it."

There's a world of difference between making it back and playing, especially when playing for the almost-impossible-to-please Farley. McAdam knew he was in for a long, hard slog, but he had a purpose now. Anyone would have bet against McAdam getting on the field his sophomore year, but astonishingly he worked his way up from the very bottom of the depth chart to start the first game of the 1996 season at fullback.

Now all McAdam had to do was earn Farley's respect every week for the next eight weeks and the rest of his football career.

In the 1996 season finale the Ephs trailed Amherst 13-12 with less than 40 seconds to play at Amherst. Amherst was on the verge of a perfect season and their first win over Williams since 1986. Williams could either try to go two yards for a touchdown against the number one defense in NCAA Division III or attempt a field goal.

The play sent in from the sideline on third down called for McAdam to go off left tackle behind senior Eric Kelley. Amherst had no idea how much ground McAdam had already covered in coming back from the mistake he'd made that first day of practice with the Ephs. There was no stopping him.

McAdam's two-yard TD proved to be the difference in the Ephs' stunning 19-13 upset of Amherst.

"College went by so quickly," said McAdam. "I really wish I could do it all over again. I took it for granted."

"I'm not going to let the same thing happen in my professional career," said McAdam, chief financial officer for Union Bank's Global Treasury Management Group in San Diego, where he lives with his wife Dr. Kelly Shinn '99 and their two sons. "I continue to use my freshman year as motivation for everything that I do. Whether I am preparing for a big presentation or raising my kids on the playground, I try and dedicate myself 100 percent." 