

EPH LEGEND – KEN DILANIAN '91

by Dick Quinn, Director Sports Information



Freddie Saves the Day, the Season, and Makes History

It took Williams 108 years to record its first unbeaten, untied perfect season (8-0-0). Although the 7-0-0 Ephs were heavily favored to down archrival Amherst on Nov. 11, 1989, the Lord Jeffs certainly made a game of it.

Surprisingly, Amherst led the Ephs 14-0 after just five minutes, courtesy of two Eph fumbles deep in their own territory.

Assistant football coach Renzie Lamb had dubbed Ken Dilanian "Freddie," because he played opposite standout defensive end Ted ("Teddy") Rogers.

Rogers fashioned one of the most remarkable football careers at Williams in the modern era and was feared by every offense the Ephs faced. Dilanian was the "other" end, but head coach Dick Farley will tell you Dilanian was far better than he ever gave himself credit for.

"Our approach was to put Ted Rogers on the wide side of the field and force the other team to go into the short side of the field, but that approach doesn't work if the other defensive end is a stiff," noted Farley. "Ken Dilanian was a solid football player who always gave us his best. Rogers and Dilanian were the best pair of defensive ends we had in my time."

Though the 7-0-0 Ephs trailed Amherst early, they were a determined bunch who believed they had a date with perfection, and they fought back to make it a 14-7 game at the half.

The second half was almost all Williams as the Ephs scored on their first possession of the third quarter and tied the game at 14 with a point after touchdown by substitute kicker Brian Taptich '92.

Later in the third quarter after a Williams punt, Eph defensive lineman Cliff Wright '91 recovered a fumble on the Amherst 9-yard line on the Lord Jeffs' first play from scrimmage.

The Ephs were unable to score a touchdown and had to settle for a field goal by Taptich, but they now led 17-14 with a little more than a quarter left to go.

In the fourth quarter, Amherst had advanced to the Ephs' 12-yard line with just over a minute to play, where they tried a pass into the deep right corner of the end zone on first down. The ball was not caught but yellow flags littered the field. Williams was initially called for pass interference; however, after conferring the referees waved off the call saying the ball was uncatchable, because the pass landed well beyond the end zone.

Amherst still had life with a second down and 12 yards to go for a TD, or if need be, a game-tying field goal from short distance. This being Williams versus Amherst, everyone fully expected Amherst to go for the win as college football at this time did not include an overtime format for deciding games.

In the huddle before the second down play, Dilanian remembers thinking it was time to make something happen.

"It was a feeling of utter desperation, but coupled with the confidence that we could pull something out, that we couldn't lose," Dilanian said.

On second down the Amherst quarterback dropped back again to pass and through a double-team block Rogers was able to reach out his right hand and knock the ball out of the quarterback's hand.

Dilanian pounced on the ball on the 12-yard line with 57 seconds remaining. "I don't think I saw Teddy strip the ball," said Dilanian. "I just saw the football bounce on the ground and lay there for a split second, untouched. I will remember that moment for the rest of my life. Every cell in my body wanted to dive on that ball. And when I covered it up, it was like every weight I ever lifted, every sprint I ever ran was worth it."

Pandemonium swept the Eph bench and the crowd of more than 13,000, as the Ephs knew now that Amherst was about to be defeated and the first perfect season was going to be theirs.

Dilanian leaped to his feet "and then I proceeded to execute the most nonathletic and awkward spike in the history of football," he recalled. "When I reached the sideline assistant coach Joe Doyle tackled me right into a TV camera and the telecast temporarily went black."

Today, Dilanian lives in Washington, D.C., with his wife Catherine and sons Ken and Max. A writer covering the CIA and other agencies for the Associated Press, he has worked for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *USA Today* and the *Los Angeles Times*. At Williams majored in political science and history, and he lettered all four years in football. 🐾