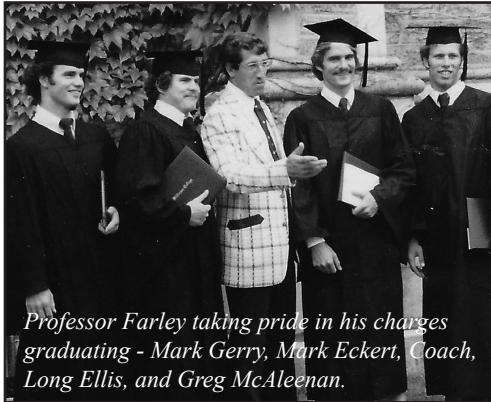


EPH LEGEND – GREG MCALEENAN '79

by Kristian Dufour, Associate Director of Communications for Sports Information



Professor Farley taking pride in his charges graduating - Mark Gerry, Mark Eckert, Coach, Long Ellis, and Greg McAleenan.

“ONCE THE BALL WAS IN THE AIR, I felt it was mine.”

It's that mindset that allowed Greg McAleenan '79 to intercept 17 passes in his four-year career at Williams. He still holds the Eph records for interceptions in one season (8), interceptions in a career (17) and most interceptions in a single game (3). The latter he did twice in his four years — only one other Eph in the last 43 years accomplished it once.

In the early 70s McAleenan was a standout running back/quarterback and defensive back for East Grand Rapids High School in Michigan. The Pioneers were no slouches on the gridiron, constructing a 30-game unbeaten streak from late 1971 to November of 1974 while finishing 32-3-1 over McAleenan's four years.

When it came time to look at higher education, the then 170-pounder from the No. 2-ranked team in the state took a look at the University of Notre Dame, Princeton, Dartmouth, Amherst and Williams.

While Notre Dame was appealing, he knew early on it wasn't a fit. “The trainer there was bigger than me, so I knew I should look elsewhere,” McAleenan quipped.

Williams was appealing and also unattractive for one reason — the Ephs were a family affair in the McAleenan household. Greg's father George '52 played football and ran with a crowd that included George Steinbrenner and John Hyde. However, Greg's older brother Gary was already matriculating at Williams and Greg was unsure he wanted to attend the same school as his brother, especially on a smaller campus.

Ultimately, the man to help him make that decision, would also later change McAleenan's life.

“I received a phone call from Dick Farley,”

Ballhawk McAleenan Flourished under Farley's Tutelege

McAleenan recalled. “He said, ‘listen, am I wasting the college's nickel or are we still on your radar?’ I was immediately enamored with him. I went to Williamstown, and while on the campus tour, I noticed people would look you in the eye and smile. I just felt so at home at Williams.”

Wanting to head back to his football roots, McAleenan started on the Williams freshman football team as a running back and cornerback. But when an injury to a varsity quarterback left a spot at QB open on the freshman team, McAleenan stepped in.

It would be Farley who once again determined McAleenan's final role however.

“I was walking across the frosh quad one day in the winter,” McAleenan recalled. “Out of nowhere I hear this voice bellow, ‘McAleenan, we just had a meeting. You're a defensive back now — and track practice starts in a week.’”

McAleenan, who had planned on giving up track once he got to Williams, was stunned.

“But it was the best thing that ever happened to me.”

The fall of his sophomore year came quickly, but when the 1976 season kicked off, McAleenan was not on the field. A preseason injury had put him behind and Farley elected to start a healthier four in the defensive backfield in the home opener against Hamilton.

Fate was not done with Greg McAleenan. A first half injury to a teammate at his cornerback position forced him to be on the field when the second half began. In the final 30 minutes of his first collegiate varsity game, McAleenan picked off three Continental passes.

He never looked back. McAleenan would wind up playing two straight years with classmates Mark Gerry, Long Ellis, Mark Eckert and Andy Krakauer, who was a year behind that foursome.

There were more highlights to come for the Michigan native. His junior year stood out, especially wins over Trinity and Amherst. Against the Bantams, McAleenan had a second three-interceptions game. Only two people have picked off three passes in a game for the Ephs since 1971, and McAleenan is the only one to do it twice.

The win over Amherst that year provided McAleenan his only opportunity to take “The Walk” as it is now known. Williams defeated Amherst 21-13 that day and as is the custom, the entire team walked up Spring Street from Weston Field to celebrate the Homecoming victory.

He would finish his career with 17 interceptions, but attributed a lot of that success to Farley and his teammates in the defensive backfield.

“We had a great secondary, so there was no safe place to throw,” he said. “And every game I played against the top receiver a lot - that didn't hurt. I remember (Coach) Farley telling me, ‘I'm all for you going for the interceptions, but if you go for it, don't miss.’”

After graduating from Williams, McAleenan took a year to determine what he wanted to do with his life and found he missed football. A call to Farley eventually resulted in a workout for a few NFL teams and a spot with the New England Patriots for the preseason.

After three weeks, Patriots head coach Ron Meyer called in McAleenan and gently let him go. Not ready to let the NFL dream die just yet, the former Eph hooked on with the Washington Redskins.

When his professional football career did not pan out, McAleenan went to law school and later became a sports agent. He's also had a role in sports marketing, which eventually led him to advancement and development offices of two different colleges.

Most recently, McAleenan has started the ball rolling on his own business venture, the Locker Room, a new social media website designed and built to help schools raise funds for their sports and other co-curricular programs. And yes, he's already pitched the idea to administrators at Williams.

The lessons learned here in the purple valley helped form the core of what he has become.

“Williams had an amazing faculty,” McAleenan said. “Lee Austin was one of the most memorable to me, but Dick Farley was THE professor to me. I learned so much from that guy, and I had so much respect for him. He taught me that nothing was really impossible.

“Next to my dad, Dick Farley is the most influential male in my life. No doubt about it.”