

AUGUSTANA TODAY

45th anniversary of title run

AUGUSTANA'S 1959 FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP ONE OF A KIND

It was not a promising start for a team with high expectations. Augustana's 1959 football team sputtered, stumbled, and staggered to a 1-2-1 record in its first four games. Injuries were mounting. Hopes of improving on the 1958 season's 5-3 record and climbing in the North Central Conference standings were fading.

But these Vikings never considered surrender. Instead, they mounted an offensive that resulted in five straight wins and the only outright NCC championship in school history. Augie's 1942 team earned a share of the title with a 4-0 record.

"If there ever was a great team effort, this was it," said Augie head coach Bob Burns. "Very few times will teams survive so many injuries to key players. At the end of four games we had won only one game and were injury-riddled. I didn't think we would win another game."

Augustana had 36 players on its 1959 roster. Most of the starters played both defense and offense. But it was quality not



Forty-five years ago, Augustana's Jim Luce, left, and John Simko formed one of the best college passing combinations in the nation.



Simko, left, and Luce continue to team up on the golf course.

quantity that made the difference.

"Resilient, rebellious, talented, and full of huge hearts," responded John Simko when asked to characterize the 1959 squad.

Burns built the team around Jim Luce, a standout quarterback he

had coached at Sioux Falls Washington High School. Luce was not big, wasn't flashy, and didn't have the strongest arm. But he was a smooth ball handler and a pinpoint passer who knew how to move a football team.

The Vikings had excellent ball carriers in fullback Denny Peterson and halfbacks LeRoy Anderberg and Ronnie Wyatt. Anderberg, the workhorse, did not play football in high school because he was too small.

"Anderberg could carry the ball six or eight times in a row," Luce said. "Wyatt was a great running back because he was so hard to tackle."

Simko, a versatile athlete who also played for Burns at Washington High School, combined with Luce to form one of the best aerial partnerships in college football. Simko played right end, left end, and halfback at different times during the season. He was also a key player in Augie's defensive line and secondary.

"John has great hands and an uncanny knack of getting into the open," wrote *Argus Leader* sports editor Craig Stolze. "When he got there he usually found one of Luce's deadly accurate tosses hitting him."

Immense was not the word to describe Augie's linemen, but intense was a perfect choice. Dale Johansson, Ron Charlson, Don Jorgenson, Duane Amdahl, Bob Vikander, Glenn Sellevold, Jim McAtee, Curt Wait, and Don Quinn were skilled at opening holes on offense and closing them on defense.

Another characteristic of the title team was its interchangeable parts.

Because of injuries, Jerry Schlieman, a lineman, was inserted at fullback against Iowa Teachers. He scored on a one-yard run with a little more than seven minutes to play, Luce kicked the extra point, and

Augie won 7-6. It was the Vikings' first win ever at Cedar Falls.

"That was a key game because we had so many guys hurt," Luce said. "Anderberg went out early in the game and Denny Peterson didn't play at all. Schlieman played fullback and Dale Peterson (an end) played defense, too."

After a tie with North Dakota and a loss to South Dakota, Augie began its title run with a 13-0 win at South Dakota State. Luce and Simko hooked up for a nine-yard touchdown pass and Gene Narragon scored on an 18-yard run.

The dramatic win at Cedar Falls was followed by a 47-34 nonconference decision against St. Norbert College in East De Pere, Wis. Augie had 409 yards of offense while posting its biggest post-war score, topping the 40 points rolled up against Northern in 1951.

Morningside helped us win the conference."

Anderberg led the NCC in rushing, Simko was the top receiver, and Luce was first in total offense. The Vikings were first in rushing and total defense.

"The offense was geared to the running game," Luce said. "The run was so successful that we didn't have to throw much, but when we did pass we were successful."

Wesley Pippert, a United Press International staff writer, described "Luce to Simko" as one of the best passing combinations in the nation.

"If the ball is right there, you can't miss it," Simko said.

"If a guy's open, it's not hard to hit him," said Luce.

The Luce-Simko-Burns era ended in 1960 as the Vikings tied for runner-up honors in the NCC.

"Playing for Burns was a great experience," Luce said. "We were well

Augustana's 1959 North Central Conference championship football team will be recognized during Viking Days 2004. Members of the team will be guests of honor at the Hall of Fame banquet, which begins at 6:00 p.m. Friday, October 8, at the Holiday Inn City Centre Starlite Room.

Anderberg scored all four touchdowns as Augie downed Morningside, 27-21, before a Viking Days crowd of 5,000. The Vikings hadn't beaten the Maroons since 1948, and rallied from a 14-0 deficit to stay in contention for the conference championship.

It was a team effort that propelled Augustana to the title. Battling to hold a 21-14 lead against North Dakota State, Viking defenders threw back Bison star Gary Ahlgren three times from the one-yard line in the third period. Luce completed 11 of 14 passes, Anderberg rushed for 113 yards and three touchdowns, and Wyatt carried for 95 yards and two scores as Augie won 34-14.

With the win, Augustana sewed up a share of the conference title. South Dakota could tie the Vikings by beating Morningside one week later on Dakota Day in Vermillion.

"I went down to see that game," Simko recalled. "Morningside was trailing late in the game but marched almost the length of the field to score and win the game (9-8).

coached and well prepared, but there was never a dull moment. He had a knack for hyping games. It was a lot of fun."

"It was an exhilarating and entertaining experience," said Simko. "What made him so good was not his knowledge of football, but his knowledge of kids. He knew how each player responded to praise and criticism."

After graduating from Augustana, Luce began teaching at Axtell Park. After four years at Axtell Park he went to Washington High School where he coached and taught until he retired. He taught biology and physical education. He coached basketball, football, and golf and was the Warriors' head football coach for seven seasons. He is retired and living in Sioux Falls.

Simko had a tryout with the Pittsburgh Steelers before he returned to Augustana as an admission representative and assistant football coach. After short stints in coaching, teaching, and business, he entered law school. Today he is a US magistrate judge living in Sioux Falls.

ROSTER

Backs

No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Class	Hometown
11	Jim Luce	5-11	160	Jr	Sioux Falls, SD
12	Larry Converse	6-0	185	Sr	Pipestone, MN
15	Doug Hokenstad	6-3	175	Jr	Crete, NE
22	Ron Wyatt	6-0	175	Jr	Spirit Lake, IA
24	Jerome Gossel	5-10	180	So	Spencer, SD
26	Denny Brook	5-9	170	Sr	Flandreau, SD
28	Bruce Foster	6-1	180	Jr	Brandon, SD
32	Ron Bloem	5-10	160	Jr	Pipestone, MN
34	Eugene Narragon	6-1	175	Jr	Raymond, MN
36	Dave Evans	5-10	180	So	Sioux City, IA
38	Bruce Williams	6-0	180	So	Watertown, SD
40	Bob Vikander	6-1	195	Sr	Aberdeen, SD
42	LeRoy Anderberg	5-11	185	Jr	Sioux Falls, SD
44	Denny Peterson	6-0	190	Sr	Cottonwood, MN
48	Bob McKay	5-10	180	So	Canistota, SD
50	Arvin Soma	5-11	175	So	Baltic, SD

Centers

54	Don Quinn	5-9	195	Jr	Minneapolis, MN
55	Don Scott	5-11	195	Jr	Estelline, SD
66	Max Rittgers	6-0	190	Sr	Boys Town, NE

Guards

62	Jerry Knutson	6-0	180	So	Windom, MN
64	Glenn Sellevold	6-2	195	Sr	Clark, SD
67	Duane Amdahl	6-4	200	Jr	Pipestone, MN

Tackles

71	Duane Skie	6-4	205	So	Lennox, SD
72	Curtis Wait	6-4	215	So	Chamberlain, SD
74	Jerry Schlieman	6-1	195	Jr	Morgan, MN
76	Cliff Boese	6-2	215	So	Lake Wilson, MN
77	Ron Charlson	6-1	205	Jr	Le Mars, IA
78	Dale Johansson	6-2	245	Jr	Pipestone, MN
79	Dick Buehler	6-4	230	Jr	Madison, SD

Ends

80	Don Jorgenson	6-2	180	Jr	Sioux City, IA
81	Dave Hanson	6-0	185	So	Sioux Rapids, IA
82	John Simko	6-1	185	Jr	Sioux Falls, SD
85	Dale Peterson	6-1	190	Sr	Sioux Falls, SD
87	Glen Rames	6-3	205	So	Madison, SD
88	Jim McAtee	6-2	185	Sr	Flandreau, SD
89	Jim Redman	5-10	185	So	Flandreau, SD