

High School athletic teams are fueled by the optimism of players, coaches and fans. Every football team is undefeated in August when training camps open. Every basketball player envisions a trip to the state tournament when they begin pre-season workouts. And it was no different for the 1966-67 athletic teams at Puyallup (Washington) High School.

When the Vikings concluded their pre-season drills, second year Head Coach Jerry Redmond tabbed a 17-year old senior with one year of starting varsity experience under his belt to quarterback the 1966 squad

His name was Dave Graham.

The Vikings got off to a fast start, winning their first five games and achieving a #3 AP ranking for AA schools (the largest HS enrollment classification in the State of Washington). In that span, Graham tallied three rushing touchdowns, passed for two more and returned a punt 65 yards for another.

As the weather turned colder and wetter, the schedule got tougher. After trailing 13-0 to Clover Park, the Vikings scored 33 unanswered points en route to a 33-20 "muddy" victory, their sixth in a row.

The Southern Division title was on the line when #3 Puyallup hosted #4 Franklin Pierce in front of a overflow crowd of more than 6,000 fans. Graham accounted for both Viking touchdowns, scoring on a 15 run around end and finding Gary Picha in the end zone with a 29 yard pass on the final play of the first half. Defense ruled after intermission and sealed Puyallup's 13-7 victory. Franklin Pierce would get inside the Viking 15 yard line four times in the second half but did not score.

The Franklin Pierce win would clinch a spot in the Puget Sound League (PSL) championship game for Puyallup against the Highline Pirates, the Northern Division representative. After a hard fought 7-0 win, the Vikings dream season was complete, becoming the first team in school history to win ten games without a loss or tie, the school's first undefeated season since 1945. And Dave Graham would be named the 1st team all-league quarterback.

The term "point guard" was not yet part of the language of basketball but Graham was a point guard for the Puyallup basketball team in 1966-67, an "assist-first" kind of player who would take a charge and dive for a loose ball. He would lead the Vikings to a 19-2 record and a #1 regular season ranking. Puyallup's season would end

prematurely with a loss to Seattle Garfield in the first round of the state tournament.

Despite his successes on the gridiron and basketball court, Graham was not a highly recruited athlete. In an interview he would later give to Jack Rickard, the sports editor of the *Corvallis Gazette-Times*, during the week of the 1970 OSU-Stanford game: “‘Washington didn’t want me...they said I wasn’t big enough,’ Graham remembers. ‘The same was true for Washington State.’” It was Oregon State University assistant coach, Bud Riley, in town to recruit Graham’s Puyallup teammate, Frank Veitenheimer, who had noticed a #12 making play after play on defense and running the Vikings offense as their option quarterback. Suitably impressed, Riley offered a scholarship to the undersized (5-11 155 lbs.) Graham. The Beavers were considered one of the up and coming teams on the West Coast, having recently represented the conference in the 1965 Rose Bowl. “‘I was on cloud nine,’ Graham said. He had made plan to attend the University of Puget Sound, but quickly switched to Corvallis and OSU.”

Upon his arrival on campus, Graham did not make an immediate impact on the football field - far from it. He would play on the rook team in 1967 (freshmen would not be eligible for varsity competition until 1972), redshirt in 1968 and see action on special teams and as a reserve defensive halfback in 1969. As a freshman, Graham gave up any plans of becoming a college quarterback “within three days,” asking Beaver coaches if he could concentrate on defense.

By the end of the 1970 pre-season camp, Graham had moved into the starting lineup at left defensive halfback. Midway through the season, Graham would be the subject of another Rickard column. “At 5-11 and 172 pounds, Oregon State’s Dave Graham doesn’t appear to have the physical tools to combat many of the aerial games the Beavers have faced or will face this season,” Rickard wrote. “As the old cliché says, Graham may be small but he’s slow.”

And Bud Riley, the recruiter, and now his position coach, raved about Graham. “The kid goes 100 per cent,” Riley told Rickard. “He’s not blessed with the physical ability of some other kids - he doesn’t have great speed or quickness - but he’s a smart football player.” Graham would play a major portion of the 1970 season on what would later be diagnosed as a fractured toe.

Oregon State would finish the 1970 season with a 6-5 record (3-4 in the Pac-8). During the five years that Graham was a part of the program, the Beavers compiled a 12-3 record against the three other northwest schools in the conference. And, as Graham points out, “we never lost to the Ducks.”

On September 8, 2006, the 1966 Puyallup Vikings were honored by the Tacoma Athletic Commission as one of 15 teams from Tacoma-Pierce County who won league championships, had undefeated seasons or claimed state championships during the decade of the 1960's.

On September 4, 2015, Oregon State opened their season with a home game against Weber State. And Graham is still listed in the OSU Football record book with seven interceptions in a season, good for fifth place all time. His list of quarterback victims included Sonny Sixkiller (UW) (three interceptions), Ty Paine (WSU) (two) and Dan Fouts (Oregon) and Roy Bash (Iowa), one each.

Not bad for a "too small, too slow" kind of guy.