

# FRITZ HANSON: THE GOLDEN GHOST

By Robert Sproule

Nineteen thirty-five was an historic year for Canadian football. It was the last time the college boys played city teams for the right to be in the Dominion Final (Grey Cup game), as they were so soundly trounced that they retired forever from competition in the Canadian Rugby Union (later known as the Canadian Football League). It was also in 1935 that the Big Four teams (Hamilton, Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto) expanded their schedules from six to nine games for bigger gate receipts. And, perhaps most importantly, it was the first time in history that a Western team won the Grey Cup.

The Winnipeg Rugby Club, now known as the Blue Bombers, defeated the Winnipeg Victorias in three straight games, 29-3, 29-0, and 39-1, to earn the right to represent Manitoba in the Western playoffs. There the Regina Roughriders, a dominant force in the West since 1911, were defeated 13-6 and the Calgary Bronks, who had just shut out Vancouver Meralomas 14-0, were in turn shut out by the 'Pegs 7-0. As such, Winnipeg had earned the title, "The Best from the West."

Hamilton Tigers, on the other hand, almost missed the Grey Cup all together. After a slow start they trailed the high-flying Toronto Argonauts in the standings, but the Tigers won their last three games while the Argos were losing their final three, and this was enough to assure the Jungle Kings first place in the Interprovincial Rugby Football Union (Big Four). In the Eastern playoffs, Queens University challenged as an independent team and were blasted 44-4 by the Tabbies. Sarnia Imperials of the Ontario Rugby Football Union were outplayed 22-3, and Hamilton had earned a berth in the Grey Cup. The final was played on Hamilton's home field Saturday, Dec. 7, 1935.

As a result of their surprising finish and defeats of the other Eastern teams, the Tigers were considered a strong team. Even after Winnipeg defeated Assumption College in a mid-week exhibition game 17-0, bookmakers placed the Tabbies five-to-one favorites in the final.

Eastern fans played their usual roles as they waited until the day of the game to decide whether to watch their team win or read about it in the Monday papers. And to add more disinterest to the event, the weather was a factor. On the morning of the game it rained, producing a very muddy field. Only 6,405 fans showed up to witness history in the making.

Winnipeg kicked off to start the '35 Classic, and just as the Tiger player was tackled the 'Pegs snatched the ball and gained possession at the Hamilton 15-yard line. The Tigers held the Westerners to 10 yards in three runs but no first down. When Hamilton took over, their great punter Huck Welch skied the ball to Winnipeg's 145-pound halfback from North Dakota, Fritz Hanson. Hanson made a great return to the Tiger 23 and on second down Russ Rebholz, the American import from Wisconsin, forward passed to Bud Marquardt for the first score of the game. Greg Kabat missed the convert, but Winnipeg was ahead 5-0 and Marquardt's TD reception had equalled a Cup record.

Hamilton kicked off, as per the rules, and held the Manitobans, but a quick kick for 50 yards caught the Tigers off guard and when Welch was tackled hard he had to leave the field injured. For the next several minutes the teams traded kicks, and it wasn't until a roughing penalty against Winnipeg that Hamilton was able to move into 'Peg territory for the first time. The Tigers were forced to kick and Hanson caught the leather on his goal line but managed to dance 10 yards upfield. However, Winnipeg was penalized for interference and kicked to the Tiger 47. Another punting duel between Kabat and Frank Turville of Hamilton continued until the Tigers were at the West's 20-yard line. From here Turville kicked a field goal to narrow the gap to 5-3.

Shortly thereafter Turville came back for another kick and Hanson fielded the oval and sped down the sidelines for 45 yards, bringing the crowd to its feet. This equalled the longest return in Cup history. The 'Pegs could not gain and Kabat's kick off the side of his foot went for a few yards, where Hamilton recovered. Turv immediately punted to Hanson, who returned to his 52. Hanson then plunged for seven yards and Bob Fritz added another eight. Another pass to Joe Perpich got Winnipeg to the Hamilton five just as the quarter ended.

Two runs failed and a wide field goal attempt went into the arms of Turville, who kicked out to Hanson, who in turn ran back to the Tiger 33. On the next play, Russ Rebholz forward passed to Kabat, who

rambled over for the score. With the convert, Winnipeg led 11-3 and Rebholz's two touchdown passes equalled another Cup record.

After the kickoff, Turville and Kabat traded kicks as both teams were unable to move the ball. Finally, Turv tried another field goal, but it was wide and Rebholz returned to his 15. Kabat kicked to Turv and the lawyer return kicked over the line for a single point to make the score 11-4 for the West.

The clubs again traded kicks and when Hanson received one of Turville's boots on his 10 he danced his way 52 yards upfield to set a Cup record for the longest return. Tigers held and Winnipeg in turn forced Hamilton to punt, giving Hanson another return for 20 yards. That made it a total of 144 yards and a new record.

Kabat and Fritz made a first down, but when Hanson ran for 10 he was tackled hard and the Tigers were penalized for roughing. Fritz moved the ball in front of the posts, but another field goal attempt was also wide and the ball rolled over the dead line for another point: 12-4, Winnipeg.

Both teams traded interceptions but neither was able to gain from the turnovers. Just as the second quarter came to an end, Rebholz punted out of bounds.

Winnipeg fumbled the Hamilton kickoff to start the third frame, and suddenly it was the Tigers near the 'Peg goal line. Two runs gained but eight yards and a personal penalty to Bert Oja of W nnipeg placed the ball on the six. From here Wilf Patterson scored through the space vacated by Oja. The kick was wide but Winnipeg's lead had been narrowed to 12 to 9.

Tigers were successful in blocking and recovering one of Rebholz's punts, but they no sooner had the ball then Patterson fumbled and the 'Pegs recovered. Another punt was blocked and Hamilton regained the pigskin on the West's 28-yard line. Johnny Ferraro tried a field goal but it struck the crossbars. Winnipeg's ball on their own five, but they failed to gain and punted to their 40. Hamilton also failed to move and their punt was blocked, but they managed to recover the loose ball. Brian Timmis was dropped for a three-yard loss and Turv skied to Hanson, who returned through the outstretched arms of the Hamilton ends for 17 yards. When Tigers regained the oval, Turville punted 40 yards for a single to place the East only two points behind: 12-10.

Fritz was limited to four yards on a plunge and Kabat kicked to Turville, who let the ball roll to his 45. From here Hamilton wasted no time and punted back to the West, hoping they would fumble and Tigers recover close to the goal line. Hanson caught the ball and threaded his way down the centre of the field for 78 yards and a touchdown without a hand being laid on him, as his marvelous change of pace had the Tigers bewildered. Rebholz's convert made the score 18-10 for the 'Pegs, and they were back in control of the game.

Then the unexpected occurred, as Hamilton tried a short kickoff and Bus Reed recovered his team's kick on the Winnipeg 40, taking the West completely by surprise. However a Tiger pass was intercepted by Hanson and the drive was stopped. Just as the quarter came to an end, Eddie "Dynamite" James, the great Western plunger, managed to gain a yard.

Kabat booted from his 10 to the Tiger 40 to start the final 15 minutes. On first down Welch, who had returned to the field, kicked away from Hanson, but the Golden Ghost ran under the ball and returned it 35 yards, leaving three Hamilton players clawing in the mud. As neither team could mount a good drive, they resorted to punting. When Hamilton failed to complete two consecutive passes, they were penalized, forcing Welch to ski another towering punt towards Hanson. Hamilton outside wings (ends) Jimmy Simpson and Seymour Wilson cornered the North Dakotan, but he left them standing as he scampered back for 33 yards. Cliff Rosenborough replaced the injured Eddie James and ran for gains of five and three yards before Kabat kicked to Welch. Lou Mogul tackled the Tiger so hard that Winnipeg was penalized 15 yards for rough play. The Jungle Kings failed to gain against a stiffened defence and Hanson returned the third-down punt for 10 yards.

This time Hamilton held and the West punted back to the Tigers, after which the desperate Hamiltons forward passed right into the arms of Hanson. The Tabbies got a break when the pass was ruled complete due to interference. Turville punted to the Winnipeg 10 and Fritz ran for a short gain on first down, fumbled, but recovered the ball. Then a snap to Kabat was low and he fell back over the line, giving the Tigers a safety and their final two points of the game: Winnipeg 18, Hamilton 12.

From their 25, Kabat punted upfield. A pass was knocked down but an extension run gained 13 yards and the Tigers were now at the 'Peg 30-yard line. Ferraro found Patterson alone and he accepted the pass down to the five-yard line as the minute flag went up.

An end run was stopped cold and Patterson's onside kick was blocked, but he managed to recover it back to the 15. There was time for just one more play and Hamilton knew that it would take a converted touchdown to tie the match and force it into overtime. Hamilton faked a plunge and passed the ball to Patterson, who tried another onside kick. Hanson, who was in the end zone, raced to the ball and returned it two yards out as the gun sounded to end the contest.

The Great Hamilton Running Machine which had brought Grey Cup victories in 1928, 1929 and 1932 was finally brought to a halt, as the Jungle Kings were held to just 47 yards rushing. Brian Timmis, the great Tiger plunger who held the C.R.U. record with 37 career touchdowns, was held to one yard in six carries, but it was enough to place him second in Grey Cup rushing records with 307 yards. Eddie James, another great plunger, was held to minus one yard, but his Winnipeg teammates Fritz, Kabat and Hanson gained 57, 30 and 41 yards respectively. The 'Pegs rushed for a total of 138 yards. Hamilton completed two of 15 passes for 46 yards while Rebholz finished with three of five for 92 yards and two touchdowns. In punting Hamilton had the edge, kicking 28 times for 1,093 yards and two singles. Winnipeg punted 24 times for 693 yards and one single.

But the big story of the game was little Fritz Hanson. Time and time again he had returned long, high Tiger punts for gains that gave his team excellent field position. In all, he set a Cup record [and also an all-time U.S./Canadian major-league record--Ed.] by returning punts for 339 yards (15 returns) , with one 78-yarder for a touchdown, the first ever in the history of the Grey Cup. And as a result, the 'Pegs had won the Dominion championship for the first time, signaling the arrival of Western football. Western football benefited from this victory, as the whole of the Western provinces adopted the Winnipeg team and identified with the winners.

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Lineups. Winnipeg Rugby Club: Bob Fritz, Fritz Hanson, Greg Kabat, Russ Rebholz, Eddie James, Lou Adelman, Bert Oja, Eddie Kushner, Herb Peschel, Lou Mogul, Bud Marquardt, Joe Perpich, Cliff Roseborough, Jeff Nicklin, Arni Coulter, Slush Harris, Tubber Kobrinsky, Bill Ceretti, Dave Harding, Dick Lane, Eric Law, Herb Mobberley, Nick Pagonos, John Patrick.

Hamilton Tigers: Brian Timmis, Johnny Ferraro, Huck Welch, Frank Turville, Bernie Thornton, Eddie Wright, Don Summerhayes, Bill Friday, Pony Stull, Wilf Patterson, John Craig, George Mountain, Jimmy Dunn, Rus Blum, John Agnew, Jerry Brock, Jim Smiley, Norm Mountain, Boily Jeffries, Bus Reed, Seymour Wilson, Jimmy Simpson.

Winnipeg	5	7	6	0 -- 18
Hamilton	3	1	6	2 -- 12

Winnipeg--Marquardt 23 pass from Rebholz (kick failed)

Hamilton--FG Turville 27

Winnipeg--Kabat 33 pass from Rebholz (Rebholz kick)

Hamilton--Single Turville 42

Winnipeg--Single Kabat 18 FG attempt

Hamilton--Patterson 6 run (kick failed)

Hamilton--Single Turville 40

Winnipeg--Hanson 78 punt return (Rebholz kick)

Hamilton--Safety

Attendance--6,405

Wind--S 8 mph. Temperature--39 F. Field--muddy. Sky--cloudy, light rain.

Rushing. Hamilton: Patterson 3-9, 6L. Smiley 7-15, 8L. Timmis, 6-1, 2L. Ferraro 4-12, 6L. Turville 2-8, 13L. Wright 1-1. Craig 1-1. Winnipeg: Fritz 17-57, 8L. Kabat 5-30, 10L. Hanson 7-41, 10L. James 4-minus 1, 2L. Rebholz 3-3, 1L. Roseborough 2-8, 5L.

Receiving. Hamilton: Patterson 2-46, 26L. Winnipeg: Marquardt 1-23. Kabat 1-33. Perpich 1-36.

Passing. Hamilton: Ferraro 2/14, 46 yds, 2 int. Welch 0/1. Winnipeg: Rebholz 3/5, 92 yds, 1 int, 2 TDs.

Punting. Hamilton: Welch 9 for 355, 39.4 avg, 55L. Turville 16 for 660, 41.3 avg, 57L, 1 FG att for 25. Winnipeg: Perpich 2 for 93, 46.5 avg, 50L. Kabat 13 for 365, 28.1 avg, 45L, 2 FG att for 53, 36L. Rebholz 7 for 182, 26.0 avg, 40L.

Punt Returns. Hamilton: Welch 1-0. Turville 8-32, 10L. Ferraro 1-3. Patterson 5-38, 11L. Smiley 1-20. Winnipeg: Hanson 15-339, 78L, 1 TD. Rebholz 3-26, 20L.

Kickoff Returns. Hamilton: Ferraro 1-0. Smiley 1-0. Turville 1-2. Reed 1-0 (own). Winnipeg: Fritz 2-30, 30L. Rebholz 1-10. Hanson 0-5 (lateral).

Interceptions. Hamilton: Wright 1-0. Winnipeg: Oja 1-10. Hanson 1-4.

#### Team Statistics

	Wpg	Ham
First Downs—Run	4	2
--Pass	3	2
--Penalty	3	3
Rushes—Yards	38-138	24-47
Passes—Complete	5-3	15-2
Passing Yards	92	46
Yards Lost	22	32
Total Yards	208	61
Punts—Yards	24-693	28-1093
Punt Returns—Yards	18-365	16-93
Kickoff Returns—Yards	3-45	4-2
Interceptions—Yards	2-14	1-0
Fumbles—Lost	3-3	3-2
Penalties—Yards	9-90	7-65