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Frozen in time: A glimpse at Furman football, circa 1928

Tobe Todd played football at Furman for a single season, in 1928. He was part of the offensive and defensive backfields for the “rat,” or freshman, football team that finished 4-0-1.

As with many men of his generation, however, Todd’s college days were short-lived. He left Furman after his first semester and went to New York to help support his family.

Nothing in the Furman archives suggests that Todd was a remarkable player. But his remarkably preserved uniform (and other personal memorabilia) was on display this fall in the Hall of Fame Room at Paladin Stadium, standing in sharp contrast beside a current Furman uniform.

Sometime after his death in 1996, Todd’s children had found the uniform, a team photo and related items while sorting through his belongings at his Simpsonville home. In January they brought their discoveries to the Paladin Club office.

Ken Pettus, director of athletic development, could not believe what had dropped in his lap. “It’s amazing,” he says. “Sometimes you get bits and pieces [of a uniform]. But this was the entire thing, the helmet, cleats and even the socks. They were all perfectly preserved.”



Constructed before the era of manufactured plastics, the uniform is a model of homespun ingenuity and appears as if it could have come straight out of the movie “Leatherheads.”

Wooden studs are secured with tiny nails to the soles of the bulky leather football boots, and the shoulder pads are fashioned from cowhide and rib-bones from a pig for extra protection. Considering that most players of the time were less than six feet tall and weighed less than 200 pounds, it was a tight squeeze to fit the uniform onto one of today’s mannequins.

Barbara Fitzgerald, Todd’s daughter, says her father “cared an awful lot for Furman. If he had had the money he would have gone [to school] longer than he did. He enjoyed it while he was there, but the Depression was coming on and he had to go to work for the family.”

Todd’s brother, Edwin Poteat Todd, also attended Furman and played football for four years before graduating in 1931. He eventually became a school principal in Spartanburg, where E.P. Todd Elementary is named in his honor.

Compiled from reports by Will Jordan '10 and John Roberts. Photos by Jeremy Fleming.

