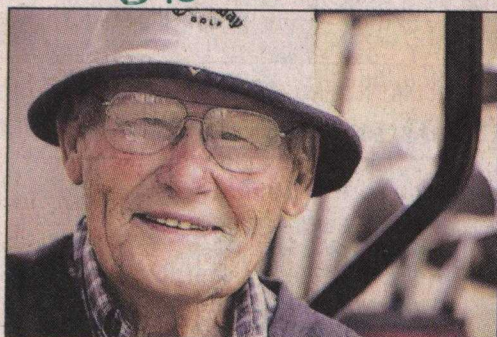


LARRY SIEMERING: 1910-2009

First Cabrillo football coach dies



BILL LOVEJOY/SENTINEL FILE

Former Santa Cruz High football coach Larry Siemering believed offense was all any football team needed. He died Monday at the age of 98.

UOP great led Santa Cruz High to undefeated season in 1958

By JIM SEIMAS

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Santa Cruz County lost a football coaching legend Monday, when offensive-minded pioneer Larry Siemering died at Watsonville Community Hospital after suffering from a fall earlier that day at his Watsonville home. He was 98.

"He was just an outstanding man in every respect," said friend Joe Marvin, who coached with Siemering at Cabrillo College. "And highly respected by his players."

Siemering was born in San Francisco in

1910 and raised in Lodi. He played baseball and football for the University of San Francisco and two seasons as center with the NFL's Boston Redskins [1935-36], now the Washington Redskins.

At 98, he was the oldest surviving pro football player.

Siemering made a name for himself everywhere he stepped foot.

He was practically royalty in Stockton, leading University of Pacific to an unbeaten 11-0 season in 1949. Siemering's .875 winning

SEE SIEMERING ON B8

SIEMERING

Continued from B7

percentage is the highest in Pacific's 75-year football history. In his three-year tenure at UOP, he went 35-5-3 overall. The school stopped playing the sport in 1995.

Locally, Siemering served as head coach at Santa Cruz from 1956-58 and at Cabrillo from 1959-65. He coached Cabrillo's inaugural team in '59. He also coached the Seahawks golf team for a stint, stepping aside in 1976.

"He was a piece of work," said end Fred McPherson, who played for Siemering on the unbeaten 9-0 Santa Cruz football team in 1958 and on Cabrillo's first team. "He could really get into your head. He used a lot of psychology. He could get the

players to work as a team together by knowing who to pick on. He would get the team to rally behind it."

After his NFL career, Siemering got into coaching, leading two San Joaquin Valley high schools. He began his coaching career at Manteca High. After that, he served as an assistant for the legendary Amos Alonzo Stagg at Pacific.

Marvin said Siemering worked double duty in 1943. While an assistant at UOP, he took up the head coaching position at Stockton High after the former head coach departed to serve in World War II. Siemering, Marvin said, coached Stockton's team during lunch hour and led them to the Valley Championship.

In 1946, after a third straight losing season, Stagg retired, opening the door for Siemering to take

his place.

Siemering, a disciplinarian who loved offense, devised and implemented a complex offense at UOP. It was run-heavy and full of tricky options that set up a pass attack. His first UOP team went 10-1 in 1947.

He applied the same ideals at Santa Cruz.

"It was offense, offense and more offense," McPherson recalled of his days at Santa Cruz. "His belief was if you score all the time, you don't need defense. We never practiced defense."

Marvin, a football historian, marvels at the 575 points — an average of 57.5 a game — that Siemering's UOP team produced in 1949 with 5-foot-7, 165-pound quarterback Eddie LeBaron.

"That was unheard of at that time," Marvin said. "They were ranked 10th in the nation and they didn't

go to a bowl game. No one wanted to fool around with little ol' College of the Pacific. LeBaron was a magician. It was dynamite.

"Siemering was tough. He was a hard-nosed coach — the old school. He knew the game very well. He was a fundamental coach. He loved offense — his team's showed that."

Siemering also coached at Arizona State University and was an assistant for the Washington Redskins and the Canadian Football League's Calgary Stampeders.

Said former Cabrillo football coach Steve Cox: "With him, it really wasn't an issue of what the other team did. It was what you did. The only thing you could control was who you were and how hard you worked."