

history of michigan quarterbacks

History of Michigan Quarterbacks has been a rich tapestry woven into the fabric of college football. The University of Michigan, with its storied athletic program, has produced a plethora of talented quarterbacks who have not only excelled on the field but have also made significant impacts in the NFL and beyond. This article will take an in-depth look at the evolution of Michigan quarterbacks, highlighting key players, their accomplishments, and the overall influence they have had on the game.

Early Years of Michigan Quarterbacks

The position of quarterback at the University of Michigan has evolved significantly since the inception of the football program in 1879. Early players often played multiple positions, and the role of the quarterback was not as specialized as it is today.

The Formation of the Position

- 1900s-1920s: The early 20th century saw the emergence of the quarterback as a distinct position. Players like Chick Harley, who played from 1916 to 1919, were pivotal in establishing the importance of the quarterback. Harley was known for his strong arm and leadership skills, which would become hallmarks of successful quarterbacks.
- Field General: The quarterback in these early years often served as the team's field general, orchestrating plays and making real-time decisions. This was the era when passing was less emphasized compared to the ground game.

Notable Early Quarterbacks

- Bennie Oosterbaan (1926-1928): A standout athlete who later became a legendary coach, Oosterbaan was known for his versatility and ability to read defenses. His contributions to the game set the stage for future Michigan quarterbacks.
- Bob Chappuis (1940-1942): Chappuis led Michigan to the 1943 Rose Bowl and was known for his exceptional passing ability. He was a consensus All-American and finished third in the Heisman Trophy voting in 1943.

The Golden Age of Michigan Quarterbacks

As the game evolved, so too did the role of the quarterback. The mid-20th century marked a golden age for Michigan quarterbacks, with several players emerging as national stars.

The 1960s and 1970s Boom

- Dennis Franklin (1970-1972): Franklin was the first African American quarterback to lead Michigan to a Rose Bowl victory. His leadership and passing prowess were instrumental in the team's success during his tenure.
- Rick Leach (1975-1978): Known for his dual-threat capability, Leach was the first quarterback in NCAA history to pass for over 4,000 yards and rush for over 2,000 yards in a career. He became a fan favorite and set several school records.

Impactful Coaches and Systems

- Bo Schembechler Era: Under legendary coach Bo Schembechler, who took the helm in 1969, Michigan's quarterback position became a focal point of the team's offensive strategy. Schembechler emphasized a strong running game but recognized the importance of a capable quarterback.
- Pro-Style Offense: The pro-style offense implemented by Schembechler allowed quarterbacks to develop their skills in a system that prepared them for the NFL.

Modern Era Quarterbacks

The late 1990s and 2000s ushered in a new era of Michigan quarterbacks, with players showcasing a blend of athleticism and passing ability that had not been seen before.

Key Quarterbacks of the 1990s and 2000s

- Brian Griese (1995-1997): Griese led Michigan to a national championship in 1997 and was named the MVP of the Rose Bowl. His leadership and accuracy helped solidify his legacy as one of the top quarterbacks in Michigan history.
- Tom Brady (1996-1999): Perhaps the most famous Michigan quarterback, Brady was not a starter until his senior year but has since become an NFL legend. His success with the New England Patriots, where he won six Super Bowl titles, has made him synonymous with excellence in football.
- Chad Henne (2004-2007): Henne set several passing records during his time at Michigan and was known for his strong arm and competitiveness. He became a second-round draft pick in the 2008 NFL Draft.

Quarterback Training and Development

- Quarterback Academies: The rise of specialized quarterback training programs significantly influenced the skill set of Michigan quarterbacks. Many players attended camps that emphasized both mechanics and mental preparation.
- Strength and Conditioning: Advances in strength training and conditioning have allowed modern quarterbacks to develop physically, enhancing their durability and performance on the field.

Recent Developments

In the past decade, Michigan has continued to produce talented quarterbacks, adapting to the changing landscape of college football.

Recent Stars

- Devin Gardner (2010-2014): Gardner showcased incredible athleticism and was known for his dual-threat capabilities. He holds several Michigan records, including those for total offense.
- Shea Patterson (2018-2019): Patterson transferred from Ole Miss and was instrumental in bringing a more dynamic passing attack to Michigan. His experience and skills helped bridge the gap between traditional and modern quarterbacking styles.

The Influence of New Coaching Staffs

- Jim Harbaugh's Arrival: In 2015, Jim Harbaugh returned to Michigan as head coach and revitalized the program. His emphasis on quarterback development has attracted top recruits and improved the overall performance of the position.
- Innovative Offenses: Harbaugh's coaching staff has incorporated elements of spread offenses, allowing for more versatility in the quarterback position while maintaining the traditional Michigan identity.

The Legacy of Michigan Quarterbacks

The history of Michigan quarterbacks is a testament to the evolution of the position itself. From early pioneers to modern stars, these athletes have shaped not only the Michigan football program but also the game of football as a whole.

Hall of Fame Recognition

Numerous Michigan quarterbacks have been inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame and the Pro Football Hall of Fame, showcasing their contributions to the sport. Players like Tom Brady and Brian Griese have left an indelible mark, influencing future generations of quarterbacks.

Impact on the NFL

- NFL Success: Michigan quarterbacks have had a significant impact in the NFL, with many achieving great success. Notable alumni include:
 1. Tom Brady - 7-time Super Bowl champion.
 2. Jim Harbaugh - A successful NFL quarterback and now a prominent college coach.
 3. Chad Henne - Known for his role in various NFL teams, including the Kansas

City Chiefs.

- Rising Stars: Recent Michigan quarterbacks continue to make noise in the NFL, showcasing the program's ability to adapt and produce top talent.

Conclusion

The history of Michigan quarterbacks is a rich and evolving narrative that reflects both the university's football tradition and the evolution of the game itself. From the early days of multi-positional players to the modern era of specialized athletes, Michigan has maintained its status as a powerhouse of quarterback development. As the program looks to the future, the legacy of its quarterbacks will undoubtedly continue to inspire and influence the next generation of players.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who was the first starting quarterback for the University of Michigan football team?

The first starting quarterback for the University of Michigan football team was Albert Benbrook, who played in 1879.

Which Michigan quarterback won the Heisman Trophy and when?

Desmond Howard won the Heisman Trophy in 1991, becoming the first wide receiver to win the award while playing at Michigan.

What notable achievement did Tom Brady accomplish during his time at Michigan?

Tom Brady led the Michigan Wolverines to a share of the Big Ten title in 1997 and played in the Orange Bowl that year, where they defeated Alabama.

Which Michigan quarterback is known for his record-breaking performances in the 2000s?

Chad Henne is known for his record-breaking performances, becoming the all-time leader in passing yards and touchdowns at Michigan during his tenure from 2004 to 2007.

How did Jim Harbaugh contribute to Michigan's quarterback legacy?

Jim Harbaugh, who played for Michigan from 1983 to 1986, had a successful career that included leading the Wolverines to a Big Ten championship and later became a notable NFL quarterback.

Who succeeded Tom Brady as Michigan's starting quarterback?

After Tom Brady, the starting quarterback for Michigan was John Navarre, who played from 2001 to 2003 and set several school passing records.

[History Of Michigan Quarterbacks](#)

History Of Michigan Quarterbacks

Related Articles

- [history of the bustle](#)
- [horned toad prince story](#)
- [horngren management accounting chapter 11](#)

[Back to Home](#)