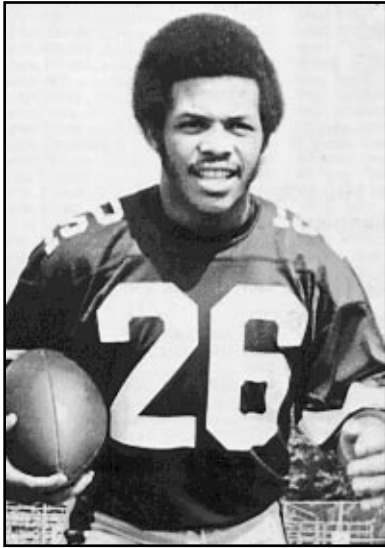


WABASH VALLEY

PROFILES

A series of tributes to hometown people and events that have shaped our history.

Vincent Allen



“I blocked for several great running backs in my career and Vincent Allen was one of the best,” Allen’s Indiana State University football teammate Tunch Ilkin said. A former Pittsburgh Steeler offensive lineman and now a Pittsburgh television and radio sports personality, Ilkin went on, “Archie Griffin of Ohio State won the Heisman Award twice during my college days and I think Vincent was a better running back than Griffin.”

Ilkin’s testimonial outlines why Allen was inducted into the ISU Athletic Hall of Fame in 1998. Statistics tell the rest of the story.

For four seasons — interrupted by a serious knee injury requiring surgery in 1976 — Allen racked up more than 1,000 yards rushing, only the fourth player in the history of college football to accomplish the feat. His career rushing total of 4,335 yards remains a school record, and he scored 33 touchdowns. Allen’s most productive season was 1974 when he ran for 1,221 total yards from scrimmage and returned punts and kickoffs for another 397 yards. In 1975 he averaged 6.35 yards a carry. He was selected an NCAA Division I-AA All-America running back in 1977, joining Walter Payton who became a National Football League great with the Chicago Bears.

The son of James (a career Marine) and Catherine Allen, Vincent began high school in North Carolina, but moved to Richmond, Ind., in 1972 (his senior year) to play for Indiana Football Hall of Fame Coach Hub Etchison. Despite his questionable size at 5-feet-8, he earned attention from a few college scouts. ISU Coach Tom Harp took a chance and offered Allen a scholarship; he was not sorry.

In the first game of Allen’s freshman season in 1973, starting tailback Rip Warren suffered a minor neck injury. Allen replaced Warren and refused to yield the number one position. Allen credits Bobby Turner, ISU running back coach currently on the coaching staff of the world champion Denver Broncos, for cultivating his skills.

Though the knee injury may have affected Allen’s mobility, Vincent signed with the Canadian Football League. He played two years and spent a year on the Chicago Bears’ taxi squad before retiring. Now residing in Richmond, he operates a carryout restaurant called King Catfish, among other interests.

Allen’s cousin, Vagas Ferguson, was an All-America running back for Notre Dame. Allen was the junior high school football coach for Ferguson’s son Jason Potter, who played football for ISU from 1993 to 1996.

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