

Where Are They Now?

Jack Crabtree

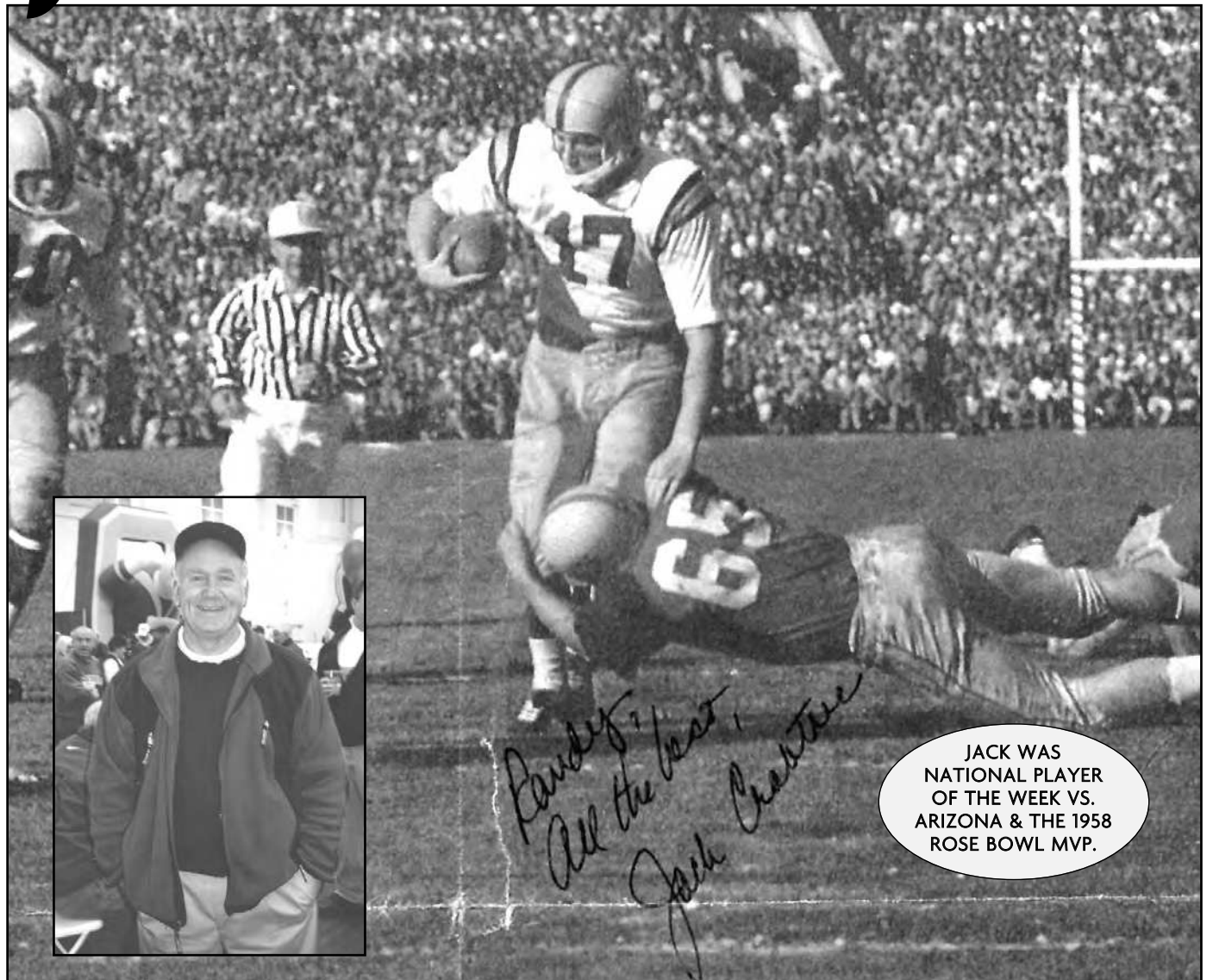
by Jerry Thompson

Duck QB Great knew a lot about Rotating Signal Callers

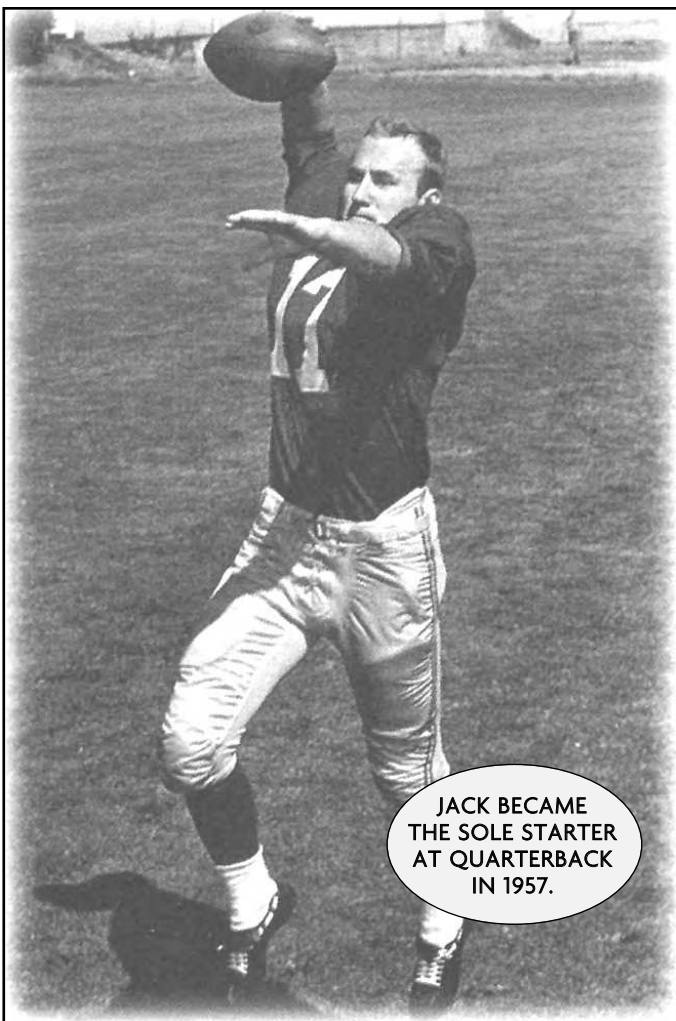
Rotating two quarterbacks in and out of a game, which was done with Akili Smith and Jason Maas in 1997 and now with Jason Fife and Kellen Clemens, can result in some confusion on the field and for fans, but imagine how it was in 1955 and 1956 when both quarterbacks who rotated had the same last name!

In every game from 1955 through 1957 Crabtree started every game at quarterback for the Ducks. However, 1957 was the only year that Jack Crabtree started every game at quarterback for the Ducks. What? It isn't a misprint, it's true. The answer to this little riddle is also strange but true. Jack Crabtree was recruited in 1954 by John McKay, then the offensive coordinator at Oregon. He was an outstanding passer from San Bernadino Valley College and played at Oregon from 1955 through 1957. However, there was another quarterback at Oregon named Crabtree. Tom Crabtree was a junior in 1955 and he and Jack split time calling the signals. Amazingly, they are the only Crabtrees to ever play for the Ducks, yet they were not related!

It is not surprising that some people got them mixed up. Jack said that in Oregon's big 46 to 27 win over Arizona in 1955 he (Jack) quarterbacked the game and was honored as the national player of the week for that game. However because of the confusion with their names, it was Tom who actually received the credit! The Crabtrees split the quarterback duties during 1955 and 1956,



Jack Crabtree autograph courtesy: Randy Morrow Private Collection



but after Tom graduated the job was Jack's in '57. The Ducks were picked to finish near the bottom of the Pacific Coast Conference and like Oregon's 1994 Rose Bowl season, it didn't start well for Crabtree or the Ducks. They squeaked by Idaho 9-6 in their first game and then in the second game the Ducks led Pittsburgh 3-0 late in the game. But Jack got beat on a pass (players had to play both ways most of the game) and Oregon lost 6-3. Who would have thought after that game that the Ducks would go to the Rose Bowl and that Crabtree would be the MVP?

The Ducks ran off 5 in a row

against UCLA, San Jose State, Washington State, Cal, and Stanford. Jack said the Stanford game was the highlight of the season as both teams traded touchdowns the whole game and Oregon prevailed 27-26 at Palo Alto. "I called audibles on every play the entire game," said Crabtree. In the '50s plays could not be sent in or signalled from the sidelines. Jack said that he and coach McKay knew each other and the offense so well that they were "one mind" and Crabtree knew exactly what play to call. Crabtree described McKay as a "very intense" coach. "He'd see me on campus and say 'Hi, Jackie' and then an hour later not even recognize me he would be so deep in thought," said Jack.

Oregon beat all four California schools (the only time they have in school history) but tied OSU for the Pacific Coast title. OSU had gone to the Rose Bowl the year before so the '57 Ducks got the berth and met #1 Ohio State coached by Woody Hayes. Sportswriters labeled it an enormous mismatch with the Buckeyes favored by 3 touchdowns. "The writers did us a favor in some ways in that we were determined to make them look bad," said Crabtree. Crabtree and the Ducks did just that as they outgained Ohio State 351 yards to 304 with Jack completing 10 of 17 passes for 135

yards, a new Rose Bowl record. The game came down to field goal tries from the same spot at the 34-yard-line. Oregon barely missed but the Buckeyes made theirs and Oregon lost a thriller 10-7. Oregon's Ron Stover set a Rose Bowl record with 10 receptions and Crabtree won the MVP award. In 1998 he was inducted into the Rose Bowl Hall of Fame along with UCLA's Rick Neuheisel.

Crabtree said one of the greatest things about the '57 team is that all 45 players on the team graduated and received their degree. Times were different as everyone had short haircuts. Joe Schaffeld (guard on the team) cut his teammates' hair. "Cas would just look at a player, not say a word, and you'd go to Joe," said Crabtree. After football Jack and his wife Diane lived in Eugene for 30 years. Jack worked for Champion Athletic for 13 years as the Oregon and Northern California representative, and for 10 years as regional manager. He met Diane in Eugene while she was in nurse's training at Sacred Heart. They have four grown children, and they are now retired and live in Black Butte. Jack attends a lot of Duck games and he admits he is envious of the way the game is now played. He just wishes that when he was quarterback they had thrown the ball 30 or 40 times a game! **O**