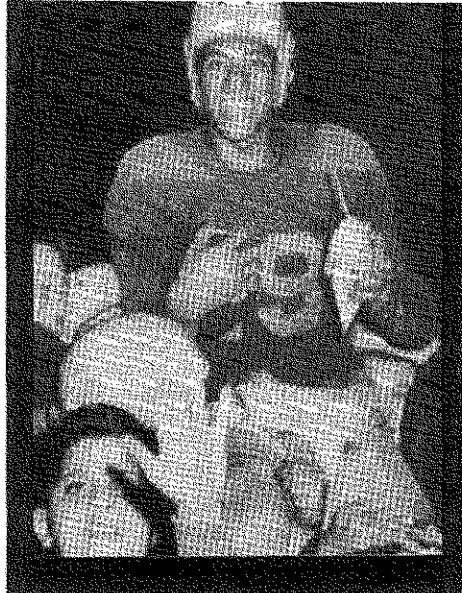


Despite all that, I enjoyed sports, and football had the strongest appeal of them all. Perhaps this was because it was the game taken most seriously by the general population. But there was more. I'd grown to love the locker room, with the joking and horseplay; the click of hard cleats on concrete floors; the smell of Red Hot and the clouds of steam from hot showers after practice; the secure feeling of pads and a fresh clean uniform and taped ankles on game days; the satisfaction of a good hard block or tackle, a well-caught pass, a game won.

We won only one of our j.v. games my ninth grade year, largely because we played teams made up primarily of sophomores and juniors. In tenth grade we lost only two of nine games, despite the fact that two of our best players, Gilbert Ane and Bobby Dick, played for a varsity team that ended up in second place in the Interscholastic League, also with two losses.

Then came the season of 1953. From the very beginning there was talk around school and around town that we had a team to be reckoned with. It had been 29 years since Punahou had won an Interscholastic League championship, but several local sportswriters admitted, with some reluctance it seemed to me, that we actually had a chance. Along with the acknowledgement that Punahou would field a fine team came certain rumors that were discussed and debated widely across the town—namely, that the school had given “athletic scholarships” to several of



*Team captain Al Harrington is carried off the gridiron by jubilant teammates.*

its best players. If similar accusations were ever made against any of the other private schools, I never heard them. I do know that most Punahou players had been enrolled since elementary school.

In any case, none of this had any effect on the team. We practiced with enthusiasm, and confidence too. Our coach, John Godfrey, let us know that he expected us to work hard, and that, if we did, he expected we'd win.

Our first league game was against Farrington, and the outcome eliminated any doubts concerning Punahou's potential. We won 67-0, with substitutes going most of the way. Playing behind

Eki Espinda, I caught my first touchdown pass as a varsity end. None of our next four games was close. We beat McKinley, 38-12; Kaimuki, 45-13; 'Iolani, 46-6, and Roosevelt, 40-20. By this time everyone in town who cared about high school football—and that really did seem to be nearly everyone in town—knew that the championship would be decided when we met St. Louis, also undefeated, on Saturday afternoon, November 14, at the Stadium.

All week before the game the sports pages were full of stories, interviews, editorials and predictions. At school, the beach, Kau Kau Korner, anywhere I went in town, people talked or argued about the game.

Understandably, the team seemed tight all week at practice. Captain Al Harrington, our left halfback, best runner and hardest worker, worked harder than he ever had before. Harry Pacarro, our quarterback, usually easygoing and full of jokes and banter, was more serious than I'd ever seen him. John Godfrey and his assistant coaches, Bill Monahan and Buddy Soares, tried their best to make it seem that nothing was coming up on Saturday afternoon except another game. But, of course, no one believed that.

Toward the end of the week a good friend of mine, Chuck Mulin, a junior fullback, told me how he felt about it: “I just want to get it over with,” he said. Most of us had to feel that way.

On game day the short ride from  
*Continued on page 165*

*The Punahou rooters jump in wild joy as Espinda's TD releases the tension built up during the game. After Punahou stopped the Saints cold in the remaining six minutes, tears were evident as the crowd boisterously sang “Oahu.”*

