

Hamilton vs Ottawa - in Philadelphia

September 14 1958

While the ill-fated CFL expansion into the US undertaken in the 1990s is generally regarded as the first time a CFL game was played on foreign soil, that would be an erroneous assumption. In September 1958, an official league game between defending Grey Cup champion Hamilton Tiger Cats and the Ottawa Rough Riders took place in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on Sunday September 14, 1958. Held in the cavernous (102,000 seats) Municipal Stadium, the game was an official Big Four regular season game. Beyond a chance to showcase the Canadian brand of the sport, it was intended as a fundraiser for the Children's Hospital and the Rehabilitation Center in Philadelphia.

Coached by Jim Trimble (formerly a Philadelphia Eagles coach) and Frank Clair (a player at Ohio State and with the Washington Redskins), the game tried to market the American stars on the teams. In particular much was made of Bernie Faloney quarterbacking the TiCats (he had been an All American at Maryland in 1953) and Hal Ledyard (a star at Chattanooga).

Tickets were \$3, \$5 and \$10, and the organizers aimed to sell 40,000 tickets and thereby set a CFL record. An estimated 17,000 would need to be sold to break even. The teams were to pay their own expenses and receive a guarantee in return for their participation. To add to the festivities, a half-time show involving the RCMP and Black Watch Regiment was added. The mayor of Philadelphia declared it to be Canadian-American Day in the City of Brotherly Love. The CBC telecast the game to the Big Four cities, but no US television or radio network could be interested in the event, and local media barely took notice.

Despite a statement claiming 20,000 in advance ticket sales only 15,000 fans attended the game, including 3,000 who bussed in from Canada. The Americans attending the game were described as "bewildered" (*Eugene Register-Guard*) by the rules. Spectators had to deal with a the 12th player and rules involving motion and three downs. The field dimensions caused consternation for both players and fans. Stadium limits meant that the field length was 100 yards (vs the normal 110) but the field would be widened and the end zone lengthened. However a running rack circling the field led to rounded end zones that dimensions, leaving a 24 yard depth in the middle, but only 8 yards at the corners. Further confusing the crowd were the 31 punts that illustrated the lack lustre offensive elements of the match won by Hamilton 24-18.

The game was the idea of native Philadelphian Ambrose "Bud" Dudley, an innovative football promoter. Bud Dudley never considered a second Canadian game after the 1958 installment. In 1959 he started the Liberty Bowl in his home town before eventually moving it to Memphis in search of a better climate for late season games. He had played football for Notre Dame in 1940 and 1941, and gone on to be athletic

director at Villanova University from 1953-57 before turning his hand to promoting. He died in 2008 at the age of 88.

