

# Before Sutherland there was Peck, Thake, and Osborne

Jack Nikko

[jnikko1@uwsuper.edu](mailto:jnikko1@uwsuper.edu)

As we all know, football no longer exists at the UWS. It was suspended in 1992 after the team was plagued with injuries and ineligible players, which forced the administration to suspend the school's athletic activities.

The program however, had a great history of excellence and a tradition of producing well rounded student athletes who for nearly 100 years made UWS a highly respected school for gridiron glory.

Many know of Doug Sutherland who graduated in 1970. He was an incredibly talented athlete who competed in both football and track at UWS before playing 13 years of professional football, including ten years as a Minnesota Viking.

Before the time of Sutherland's dominance in the NFL however, there were others who were gaining fame as stars on the collegiate gridiron.

Bob Peck, Mel Thake, and Jim Osborne were the faces of athletic excellence for a five year period at Superior. They were dominant in football and were also competitive in basketball and track.



1967 All-American Mel Thake

Mel Thake came to Superior in 1964. During his early years, Thake played basketball, football, and ran track. He eventually settled into football and was a small but furious corner back during his days at Wisconsin State University. He was an All-American defensive back in 1967 who played on both sides of the ball during his junior and senior year, and helped a mostly inexperienced team to 3 victories in the 1967 season.

Jim Osborne was also a freshman in 1964 alongside Thake as both a member of the football and basketball squads. Osborne was a bright spot on the offensive side of the ball and during his time quarterbacking the young teams of the late 1960's broke nearly every passing record at Superior. His primary target was Bob Peck.

Peck was a year younger than Thake and Osborne but was a proven athlete while at Superior East High School. He had the ability to play baseball, basketball, and football at the division one level but elected to attend Superior. At Superior, Peck participated in basketball while still excelling on the field as a wide receiver and set many records.



Jim Osborne (above far left) throws a pass to Mel Thake (above right) during the 1967 season.

Although Peck, Thake, and Osborne played on teams with a combined record of 7-40-1, these three players always found themselves in the box score and carried their team's stat lines for years.

Although much of his fame was brought on by his play on defense, Thake ended his career with over 2,600 all-purpose yards and 15 touchdowns as a running back and return specialist.

He was named player of the week on a number of occasions and was awarded Outstanding Senior Athlete at Superior during his final semester in 1968. Thake signed a professional contract with the Minnesota Vikings in 1968 but never saw any live action.

Osborne was a 4 year starter under coach Mortorelli and finished his career with the most total yards and completions in school history. During his career he completed 299 passes in 615 attempts, 26 going for touchdowns. In 12 games he passed for more than 200 yards, and five times scored three touchdowns in a game.

During his senior year, Osborne he was named to the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics All-District Team. His passing yardage set an all-time Wisconsin State University Conference record at 4,056. His skill earned him a professional contract with the Winnipeg Blue Bombers of the Canadian Football League which only lasted a short while.

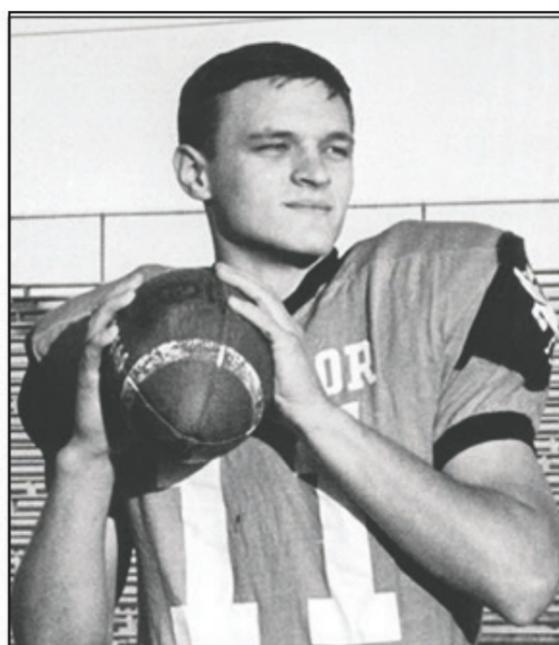
Much of Osborne's accolades can be accredited by wide receiver Bob Peck. Peck led the WSUC in receiving in 1966 with 59 receptions as a sophomore. During his junior year he caught 56 passes and was 2nd in the WSUC in receiving yards during that year.

Peck was a three time first team All-WSUC selection and during his senior year was awarded Outstanding Senior Athlete at Superior, and also was a Milwaukee Journal football award recipient. He was voted team MVP alongside Rick Jurcsak for the 1967 season.

The accolades that these athletes gained at Superior have been etched into immortality at UWS as their names can be found on the walls of the UWS athletic hall of fame at UWS.

Thake graduated with a degree in Physical Education and taught English overseas for 5 years before settling down for a 29 year career as a teacher and coach at Metcalf Lab School in Normal, Illinois. In 1988 he was inducted into the UWS Athletic Hall of Fame.

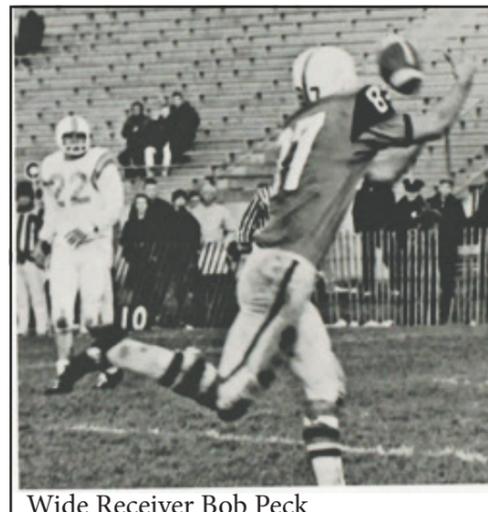
Osborne earned a Bachelor of Science degree in 1968, with a major in physical education and taught and coached football for 10 years before beginning a business career in insurance and becoming a regional manager for Catholic Knights Insurance. He was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2001.



Quarterback Jim Osborne

Bob Peck graduated with a degree in Mathematics in 1968 and was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1984. Peck taught and coached for many years after graduating from Superior.

The names and plaques of Mel Thake, Jim Osborne, and Bob Peck can be seen at the UWS Athletic Hall of Fame at the south end of Mertz Mortorelli Gymnasium on the University of Wisconsin Superior campus.



Wide Receiver Bob Peck

## UW-Superior More is than a Sport, for some, it's a Commitment

Elle Kolquist

[ekolquis@uwsuper.edu](mailto:ekolquis@uwsuper.edu)

Continued from page 10

Athleticism is in Paczynski's blood as she became an athlete to more than just hockey. Volleyball became her true passion and was also a great way to relieve stress. She stated, "Sports are so unique because it pushes you to be better and can turn anyone into a competitor."

Paczynski loves attending local college hockey games because the fast pace competition is what draws her in and keeps the game exciting. "The momentum can change when you least expect it and underdogs can always rise up."

Although Paczynski has lost the drive for playing the sport herself, she enjoys getting out on the ice and rink raving with her friends. The atmosphere in a hockey arena and the fans cheering makes the experience that much more enjoyable, and she loves to be a part of that atmosphere.