

Chico High's 1963 Football Team

Charlie wasn't a sprinter, not out of the blocks. Running backs come with different talents, different running styles. Charlie had sufficient speed, and good dodging skills, but he was exceptional at bouncing off tackles and when wrapped up, churning on, often carrying a defender a few yards. Modest-sized Charlie didn't have blazing speed, but great agility in running the ball, and was extremely tough. His overall athleticism was truly remarkable.

—Tim O'Neill, Chico High teammate of Charlie Crabtree, who was a year junior to him and also a running back.¹

Charlie was one quiet tough cookie. An exceptional football player who along with Gary Houser was recruited by Tommy Prothro to play for the Oregon State Beavers. He returned after sophomore year to marry his high school sweetheart and did not return to Corvallis. Under [Chico High track coach] Mel Jone's watchful eye Charlie and I trained together during afterschool workouts. Mel added a morning workout; Charlie would pick me up 6:00 and drive to Bidwell golf course and run "tee to green" jingle jog to next tee box and build up to green. When we finished a stop for milk and donuts...shower at school. Oh, so many wonderful memories and I could never beat him.

—Sam Simmons, Chico High teammate of Charlie Crabtree on the the football and track teams. Simmons was the quarterback and played safety on defense. He ran the half mile and was on the mile relay team in track. During winter sports, Simmons lettered in basketball and Crabtree in wrestling.²

“Rock” McClellan and “Blackie” Gilbert coached Chico High’s 1963 football team as they had in previous years and ensuing ones. (1963-64 School Year team, which played in autumn 1963.) Chico High male coaches during this era were pretty much from the same mold. Outstanding high school athletes from Chico or nearby towns, who served in the military in World War II or in the Korean War—some saw combat action.

Joseph “Rock” McClellan graduated from Red Bluff High School in 1939, attended college, then enlisted in the Navy in 1941. He served with the “Seabees” (Naval construction battalion) at Guadalcanal and Espiritu Santo in the Solomon Islands. Clifford “Blackie” Gilbert was the 1939 Chico High School Student Body President and then began Chico State that fall. He joined the U.S. Marine Corps in 1941, and was attached to the Joint Assault Signal Corps in the South Pacific. Following the atomic bombing of Nagasaki, Blackie and eleven other Marines were the first US troops taken into the highly radiated area to serve as reconnaissance drivers.³

Following their discharge, McClellan, Gilbert and others of their ilk, attended Chico State on the GI Bill, participated in sports and were All-Conference athletes. Upon finishing their education, they accepted teaching/coaching positions at Chico High School.

The demeanor and presence of these type men demanded respect and they got it. Young men in their classrooms or on their athletic fields knew without being told, to listen when they were talking, and to apply themselves to the task at hand. If someone was doing something they shouldn’t, they received “direct feedback.” Teachers and coaches were not required to receive sensitivity training back them.

The same atmosphere existed in shop classes taught by veterans. Clarence A. Pentico (a Chico State Hall of Fame football player), was the woodshop teacher at Chico Junior High. On the first day of class, he would pick up a 3-inch 10-penny nail and a piece of pine and drive it through the board by repeatedly striking the head of the small metal spike with the callused heel of his hand. This non-verbal demonstration sent a clear message to freshman boys regarding who was in charge.

1963 FOOTBALL SEASON

Like a political rally, a locker room emits the mood of the team, cool with anticipation of thumping a weak opponent or fearful and tense against a peer competitor. Individually, every player is aware he will be tested and justifiably anxious. My coaches were all business. They dampened outbursts, raised moods, huddled with key players. After the game, in the bus or locker room, emotions were just as tense but in a celebratory or depressed way depending on the outcome. Before a game, there was so much testosterone boiling you could smell it. On the turf you quivered with anticipation, muscles tense, eyes scanning the field, the stands, the coach and the game -- all melting into the roar of the crowd, and if it was you that made that touchdown, it was all the more exhilarating.

—Tim O'Neill describing team atmosphere immediately prior to and following a football game, and exhilaration during it.⁴

Chico High's 1963 football team achieved modest success, finishing with a 4-4-1 season record. On that team were two stars, Fullback and End Gary Houser and Half Back Charlie Crabtree. Among the finest players to ever lace up football cleats at Chico High, they also excelled at other sports. In the previous school year, Houser had been recipient of the Maddy Madsen award for football, and was chosen as a member of the All-Northern Athletic League basketball team.

This year, Crabtree was All-Northern California, All-North, All League (Northern) and Player of the Year. Over the football season, he netted 573 yards on 131 carries for a 4.4 average; scored 13 touchdowns and two conversions; and caught 30 passes. (Additional information about Charles' laurels is provided in a press release in the following section.) Charlie also received local Maddy Madsen and Max Lee Awards, and was the North Section half-mile champion in track.

In the intervening winter sports season, Houser once again played varsity basketball, while Crabtree competed at the 154-pound weight class for the wrestling team.

NORTH-SOUTH SHRINE GAME



The North-South Shrine Game was a prestigious annual postseason high school football all-star game that took place from 1948 to 1973, with a final appearance in 1976. The game was sponsored by Shriners International, with proceeds used to support the Shriners Hospitals for Crippled Children. The event featured top high school seniors from Northern California playing against the top seniors from Southern California, often in the Los Angeles Coliseum. Starting players in these games included future NFL stars and college football legends, making the Shrine Game a significant event in high school football history.

In 1964 North-South Shrine Game was played on Thursday, July 30th, which is interesting as High School Class of 1964 players had already graduated. It appears that the scheduling of the game was meant to allow great preps "one more day in the sun," and to fuel excitement among football fans prior to the impending fall season.

The North's 25-man team roster is shown below, followed by that of the South Team. Both are from the Press Book for the game.

North Team Roster

<u>Player</u>	<u>Address</u>
Abascal, Manuel	700 Maud Ave., San Leandro
Abono, Cecil	237 Calistoga Dr., Pittsburg
Becknell, John	1915 N. Funston Ave., Stockton
Bittner, Bob	15 N. Orange, Lodi
Brill, Marty	1870 University Ave., Palo Alto
Calcagno, Ray	617 Brunswick, San Francisco
Chaney, Jim	248 Nancy Lane, Pleasant Hill
Crabtree, Chuck	Rt. 3, Box 261 River Rd., Chico
Deschler, John	361 Texas, San Francisco
Flores, Dan	1621 E. Eighth St., Stockton
Grissom, Lowell	Lathrop Rd., Lathrop
Hackler, John	12878 E. Kings Canyon, Sanger
Hildreth, Omri	37 Stringtown, Weed
Reames, Vern	288 N. Oak View, Farmersville
Rossovich, Tim	2310 California St., Mountain View
Schomaker, Mike	2800 Westgate, Concord
Shea, Terry	1017 Westwood Dr., San Jose
Sherman, Jim	3929 Dry Creek Rd., Sacramento
Simmons, Cliff	581 Ridgeway, Yuba City
Stahl, John	1153 "R" St., Fresno
Staley, Bill	2617 Cherry Lane, Walnut Creek
Stanley, Steve	326 Channing Way, Exeter
Swanson, Dave	835 W. Iris, Visalia
Van Lengen, Jerry	7073 21st St., Sacramento
Winstead, Greg	555 Oak St., Mountain View

South Team Roster

<u>Player</u>	<u>Address</u>
Adamo, Marv	7031 Texhoma Ave., Van Nuys
Allen, Ralph	899 N. Madison, Pasadena
Bassler, Rich	1833 Seventh St., Apt. 6, Santa Monica
Curtis, Mike	1934 Chariton St., Los Angeles
Drake, Ron	9606 Lochinvar, Pico Rivera
Erquiaga, John	3774 Armstrong, San Diego
Heckman, Bob	1356 Quincy, Long Beach
Hokanson, Vic	7792 13th St., Westminster
Kelley, Carlton	1166 W. 38th Pl., Los Angeles
Key, Randy	2544 13th Ave., Los Angeles
Kraus, Steve	389 Lexington Ave., Goleta
Lowe, Obia	1710 Victoria Ave., Los Angeles
McCullough, Earl	1915 Lewis Ave., Long Beach
Mercado, Hank	1331 Stillman Ave., Redlands
Motley, Marv	2108 Orange, Long Beach
O'Malley, Jack	1742 Neptune Ave., Wilmington
Page, Toby	10112 Cowan Heights Dr., Santa Ana
Parks, Ted	519 E. 20th St., Santa Ana
Pritchett, Ron	1944 Elsereno Ave., Pasadena
Rios, Dennis	12203 Sunnybrook Lane, Whittier
Scarpace, Mike	7231 Amestoy, Van Nuys
Smith, Art	516 S. 45th St., San Diego
Swanson, Steve	6773 Citronell Ave., Pico Rivera
Swartz, Don	8049 Dunfield Ave., Los Angeles
Young, Adrian	15142 Badlona Dr., La Mirada

Included in the Press Book was the height and weight of each player and the record of their high school team the previous season. The book also offered press members the average weight of each team's line, backs, and overall team.

Chuck Crabtree H 6-0 170 Chico, 4-4-1

North	South Team
Team	
Line average: 217 lbs.	Line average: 211 lbs.
Back average: 192 lbs.	Back average: 183 lbs.
Team average: 207 lbs.	Team average: 200 lbs.

On the whole, North players were a little larger than those of the South, but Crabtree was one of the lighter running backs.

SOUTH “BLOWOUT” OF THE NORTH

The South crushed the North that day, scoring at will and winning the game 41-0. The Press Book, provided to correspondents after the game, summarized the lopsided action:

A defense which set up the most explosive offense in Shrine game history—five touchdowns and a safety—was hailed as the main reason behind the South’s 41-0 thrashing of the North, before a crowd of 45,527 on July 30, 1964.

The Southerners, individually and collectively, broke 10 game records and tied three others in scoring the most one-sided victory in the 13 years of the series....

In totaling 20 of 29 passes the South was able to total 407 yards on offense.

Among the players on the powerful South Team were quarterback Toby Page and halfback Earl McCullouch. Three years later, Page would quarterback the USC Trojans’ 1967 national championship team. He played a key role in its 21-20 victory over UCLA by calling the famous “23-Blast” audible which set up O.J. Simpson’s game-breaking 64-yard touchdown run in the fourth quarter.

Earl McCullouch also played college football for the USC Trojans and was selected by the Detroit Lions of the National Football League in the first round of the 1968 NFL draft. McCullouch played seven seasons for the Lions and Saints. He had 124 catches for 2,319 yards and scored 19 touchdowns. McCullouch was the world record holder for the 110 meters high hurdles July 1967 to July 1969. He ran the start leg on USC’s 4×110-yard relay team that set the world record in 1967.

Each of the North’s players were high school football stars at their schools, in their leagues, and larger areas of the north state. They had the misfortune in that game of being matched up against future Division I University stars—one with world-class speed. In winning the game 41-0, the South team’s offense gained a total of 271 yards passing and 136 yards rushing. In comparison, the North produced a miniscule 56 net yards passing and negative 30 yards rushing.

Charlie Crabtree had the second highest production among seven North players who carried the ball over the course of the game. He touched the ball four times, gaining a total of 14 yards, an average of 3.5 yards per carry. Cliff Simmons (Yuba City High School) was the top running back for the North, gaining 19 yards, 2.7 per carry.

The player sketch devoted to Crabtree in the Press Book informed correspondents of his offensive output during the 1963 football season, and of other interests, hunting and fishing, and playing the guitar.

CHARLES (CHUCK) SCOTT CRABTREE, Chico, 6-0, 170: All-Northern California, All-North, All-League (Northern) and Player of the Year ... Voted team's Most Valuable Player ... Netted 573 yards on 131 carries for a 4.4 average ... Scored 13 touchdowns and two conversions ... Caught 30 passes ... Halfback on defense ... Team captain ... Above average student ... Preparing for engineering career ... Likes to hunt and fish ... Plays guitar ... Also participates in track (880 and 440) and wrestling ... Probably will enroll at Oregon State ... Born in Chico, Calif., Aug. 9, 1946.

GREATNESS CREATES A BECKONING LIGHT

College coaches scout high school talent, assessing future potential of outstanding prep athletes for success in their programs. Tommy Prothro (James Thompson Prothro Jr.), head coach at Oregon State University from 1955 to 1964, recruited Gary Houser and Charlie Crabtree to play football for the Beavers. Houser and Crabtree followed Doug Parker to OSU, who Prothro had enrolled on a football scholarship in 1962. (Prothro moved to the professional ranks of the National Football League in 1971 as head coach of the Los Angeles Rams for two seasons, then the San Diego Chargers from 1974 to 1978.)

Gary Houser's great success at Oregon State is taken up in a later chapter, titled "A Change of Traditional Rivals." Chuck Crabtree was a running back for the OSU varsity team in 1965.

1965 Oregon State University Running Back Production

Name	Attempts	Total Yards	Average
Pete Pifer	234	1095	4.7
Bob Grim	87	398	4.6
Fred Schweer	41	138	3.4
Chuck Crabtree	13	80	6.2
Charlie Shaw	14	59	4.2
Cliff Watkins	9	46	5.1
Clayton Calhoun ⁵	3	3	1.0

Pete Pifer, the team's workhorse and leading running back, rushed for 1,095 yards and six touchdowns, an Oregon State single-season record. Not surprisingly, Crabtree didn't play much, but did average 6.2 yards per carry when he had the opportunity to run the ball. Pifer was drafted by the New York Giants in the 11th round of the 1967 NFL Draft. He played that season for the Westchester Bulls, a minor

league American football team based in Mount Vernon, New York, and part of the Atlantic Coast Football League.⁶

1964 NORTH SECTION HALF-MILE CHAMPION

Returning to the subject of Crabtree's unique athleticism while at Chico High School, he was the 1964 North Section champion in the half-mile, winning the race with a time of 1:56.0. Being a middle-distance runner, and not a sprinter as running backs usually are, evidences his reliability on agility and elusiveness on the gridiron. Not possessing great pure speed and being of modest size—he wrestled at 154 pounds (slimmed down from his football playing weight)—Charlie being a running back in the PAC-8 warrants admiration. Universities California-Berkeley, Stanford, USC, UCLA, Washington, Washington State, Oregon, and Oregon State then comprised the now defunct Pacific-8 Conference.

Crabtree and two Chico High track teammates qualified for, but did not have opportunity to compete in the State Championships. As reported in the *Enterprise Record*:

Chico Panther thinclads Mike Borzage, Charlie Crabtree and Don Hall earned the right to participate in the California Interscholastic Federation Track and Field Championships with victories in the hurdles [120HH: 15.2, 180LH: 21.1], 880-yard run [1:56.0] and broad jump [22' 3.25"], respectively, in the North Section finale Friday night. They won't be competing in Los Angeles during the coming weekend. As has happened in the past, Chico High officials are of the opinion that the clockings and marks recorded by the aforementioned trio are not up to the standards of the state meet, thus the cost of sending the young down south is not warranted.

Following his college football, Charles Crabtree later served in the Army. After a brief carrier in banking, he moved home to Chico to start his own business, Charles Crabtree Painting Inc. Charlie, known for his generosity, kind heart, and loving spirit, passed on December 2, 2017.

