



Wittenberg Football 2000 Season in Review

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SETTING THE SCENE: The Wittenberg University football team had another great season in 2000, winning at least a share of the North Coast Athletic Conference for a fourth straight year and qualifying for the NCAA Division III tournament for a third consecutive year. Building on the famed Tiger gridiron tradition, Wittenberg extended its regular season winning streak to 31 by going 10-0 in 2000 and advanced to the regional championship game for the second time in the last three years.

The Tigers fell a little short of their ultimate goal, dropping a hard-fought 32-15 decision at Mount Union on Dec. 2 in Alliance, Ohio. Wittenberg had won 12 straight games, including two in the playoffs, before bowing to the Purple Raiders, who went on to capture their fifth national title since 1993. Wittenberg's all-time playoff record is now 14-7, while the Tigers extended their record overall win total to 615 since 1892.

But the loss to the Raiders hardly puts a damper on Wittenberg's great season. The Tigers romped through the regular season schedule, beating all challengers by at least 14 points. The two closest contests were at Allegheny, a game that was tied going into the fourth quarter before Wittenberg pulled away for a 35-21 victory, and at home against Wooster, another game that was tied heading into the final frame before the Tigers reeled off 16 straight points to secure the win.

A variety of records and individual and team accomplishments occurred throughout the 2000 season. As many as possible are documented in this release.

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THE SENIOR CLASS: The Wittenberg football program now must go about the daunting task of replacing 17 graduating players from the most successful senior class in school history, at least in terms of wins. The Class of 2001 members finished their careers with a 39-1 regular season mark and a 28-1 mark in the NCAC.

The seniors also became the first class to qualify for the playoffs three straight years since the inception of the Amos Alonzo Stagg Bowl in 1973.

The 17 seniors on the roster were punter **Matt Gallatin** (*Johnson City, Tenn./Science Hill*), placekickers **Ryan Walker** (*Newark, Ohio/Newark*) and **Matthew Johnson** (*Galloway, Ohio/Westland*), linebackers **Trevor Yost** (*Wooster, Ohio/Wooster*) and **Tim Shannahan** (*Berea, Ohio/Midpark*), defensive lineman **Kevin Mirlisena** (*Morrow, Ohio/Little Miami*), offensive linemen **Mark Sunderman** (*Cincinnati, Ohio/Roger Bacon*), **Ben Elias** (*Lexington, Ky./Dunbar*) and **Nick Long** (*West Liberty, Ohio/Salem*), wide receivers **Andrew Smock** (*Glendale, Ariz./Ironwood*) and **Labon Storts** (*Columbus, Ohio/Westland*), tailback **Casey Donaldson** (*South Charleston, Ohio/Southeastern*), fullback **Gary Henson** (*Columbus, Ohio/Marion-Franklin*), defensive back **Rob Harris** (*Cincinnati, Ohio/Withrow*) and **Joe Jackson** (*Burbank, Calif./Burbank*) and quarterbacks **Anthony Crane** (*Indianapolis, Ind./Ben Davis*) and **Chris Damico** (*Delaware, Ohio/Hayes*).

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ALL-NCAC: To the victors, go the spoils. Head Coach **Joe Fincham** was named NCAC Coach of the Year for a third straight year, and **Casey**

Donaldson took home the Mike Gregory Offensive Player of the Year award for an unprecedented third straight season.

Also on the first team were junior wide receiver **Mike Aljancic** (*Louisville, Ohio/Louisville*), junior offensive lineman **Matt Leisure** (*Canton, Ohio/McKinley*), senior offensive lineman **Mark Sunderman** (*Cincinnati, Ohio/Roger Bacon*), junior defensive tackle **Juan Howard** (*Wooster, Ohio/Wooster*), sophomore outside linebacker **Andy Pope** (*Hamilton, Ohio/Lakota East*), junior inside linebacker **Dustin Goldsbury** (*Columbus, Ohio/Bishop Ready*), junior safety **John Hauser** (*Columbus, Ohio/Bishop Hartley*), sophomore cornerback **Elio Harmon** (*Columbus, Ohio/Walnut Ridge*), senior placekicker **Ryan Walker** (*Newark, Ohio/Newark*), senior punter **Matt Gallatin** (*Johnson City, Tenn./Science Hill*) and junior kick returner **Jay Jackson** (*Columbus, Ohio/South*).

Second team selections were senior quarterback **Anthony Crane** (*Indianapolis, Ind./Ben Davis*) and junior defensive lineman **Tim Daoust** (*Toledo, Ohio/Central Catholic*). Honorable mention went to senior fullback **Gary Henson** (*Columbus, Ohio/Marion-Franklin*), senior wide receiver **Labon Storts** (*Columbus, Ohio/Westland*), junior defensive lineman **Michael Houck** (*Cincinnati, Ohio/Colerain*) and senior defensive back **Rob Harris** (*Cincinnati, Ohio/Withrow*).

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RECORD-SETTERS: The incomparable **Casey Donaldson** piled up 5,112 yards in his four-year career, more than 1,300 yards better than anyone in school history and nearly 1,000 yards better than anyone in NCAC history. The team's offensive MVP also is the record-holder for touchdowns (68) and scoring (408) in both conference and Wittenberg history, and he also stands second in school annals with 5,255 yards of total offense, just 320 yards short of Charlie Green's school record of 5,575 compiled from 1961-64.

Donaldson also ranks among the NCAA Division III Top 25 all-time in several categories, including rushing yards, touchdowns and scoring.

But Donaldson may have been at his best during the playoffs the last three years. In seven playoff games, his rushing totals were 141, 132, 152, 139, 178, 258 and 93, adding up to 1,093 playoff rushing yards. In addition, he exploded for nine touchdowns in the 2000 playoffs to run his career total to 11. He struck paydirt at least once in five of the seven playoff games he started, including the five-TD performance he turned in against Hanover this year.

Donaldson was hardly the only one establishing new standards in 2000. Among the others (regular season statistics only):

- Senior placekicker **Ryan Walker** (*Newark, Ohio/Newark*) broke the school record for points by kicking in a career as he added 81 points in 2000 to finish with 247 for his career. That total was just five short of the NCAC record of 252. In addition, Walker tied a school record with 12 field goals in 2000, increasing his career total to 29, third-best in Wittenberg history. His career field goal percentage wound up at .690 (29-of-42), best in school history. Finally, Walker's season total of 45 extra points

placed him second in school history, while his career extra point total of 160 is 54 more than anyone else in Wittenberg history.

- Senior quarterback **Anthony Crane** (*Indianapolis, Ind./Ben Davis*) moved all the way up to No. 2 in school history in passing yardage with 4,267. His best season as a collegian improved his other career totals to 277 completions in 483 attempts, 38 touchdown passes and just 13 interceptions. The touchdown-interception ratio is one of the best in school history. In addition, his career total offense yardage adds up to 4,100, No. 4 all-time in Wittenberg history.

- Junior defensive end **Tim Daoust** (*Toledo, Ohio/Central Catholic*) finished 2000 with nine sacks for 47 yards lost. That was the fourth-best season total in school history, and it improved his career total to 18, also No. 4 on the Wittenberg list.

- Senior wide receiver **Labon Storts** (*Columbus, Ohio/Westland*) and junior wide receiver **Michael Aljancic** (*Louisville, Ohio/Louisville*) both made their marks this season by moving into the school record books in receiving. Storts finished his career with his best season as a Tiger, hauling in 31 passes for 497 yards and six touchdowns. That gave him 96 career receptions (third-best all-time at Wittenberg), 1,612 yards and 14 TDs.

Aljancic topped the Tigers with 39 receptions, the second straight year he has led them in receiving. His career reception total is 93 (fifth-best in school history), adding up to 1,459 career yards and 17 receiving TDs.

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THE COACH: **Joe Fincham** ends his fifth year guiding the Tigers with a 52-5 overall record, good for a winning percentage of .912, putting him at the top of the Wittenberg and NCAA Division III coaching lists in terms of winning percentage, surpassing the numbers posted by Hall of Fame coach Ernie Godfrey, Bill Edwards and Dave Maurer.

Fincham became the first coach of the six in Tiger gridiron history to reach 50 wins in less than 60 games with a 37-14 victory over Earlham in the regular season finale. The three Hall of Famers, T.W. Stobbs and Fincham's predecessor Doug Neibuhr also topped 50 wins during their careers.

Tentative 2001 Wittenberg Football Schedule

Sept. 1	Urbana	7 p.m.
Sept. 8	Heidelberg	7 p.m.
Sept. 15	@ Alma	1 p.m.
Sept. 22	Wabash	1 p.m.
Sept. 29	Allegheny	1 p.m.
Oct. 6	@ Denison	1 p.m.
Oct. 13	@ Wooster	1 p.m.
Oct. 20	Ohio Wesleyan	1 p.m.
Oct. 27	@ Hiram	1 p.m.
Nov. 3	@ Earlham	1 p.m.
Nov. 17	NCAA Division III first round	
Nov. 24	NCAA Division III second round	
Dec. 1	NCAA Division III Quarterfinals	
Dec. 8	NCAA Division III Semifinals	
Dec. 15	NCAA Division III Finals	