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“REMEMBERING A FALL CLASSIC”

The following story was inspired in part from information provided to me by Bernadette Miller Hamera, Peter Martosella, Fred Ragno, Domenic Ragno, Raymond Bello and Rocky Giannini.

There were many gloomy fall Sundays that were brightened by an afternoon North Philadelphia Angel's football game. I was one of the lucky nine-year-old boys who were able to get to the game, because my brother Anthony Rossi was a center on the team and he would always take me along. Unlike today with 500 television channels to view, it was a rare occasion in 1953 to view even one Sunday football game on one of the three channels available and that is- if you owned a TV.

Sunday, Nov. 27th 1953. The excitement is felt with each team member who shows up at Cat's Club. Billy McConnell is so pumped up that he barely gets the words out of his mouth to greet the girls who are lined up forming an aisle to the entrance of the club. This was the home of the *Angels* and who after many losing seasons are finally playing for the Pop Warner League Championship against the Germantown Ramblers at Chelton & Anderson Streets.

After a short time the Angels come down the stairs of the club repeatedly shouting, “Crush the Ramblers.” We all pile into a multitude of cars and travel to Lonnie Young Field.

The already cloudy, bone-chilling fall day has become even colder as the offensive line takes the

field. Ray Bello, Peter Pirolli, Joe Liccio, Gabby “Hayes” DeBrigida, and Sam Navarra, get into formation. The center Anthony Rossi responds to a quick chant and snaps the ball to quarterback Peter Martosella and the handoff to halfback Jack Larue is thwarted by a Germantown lineman, so the broken play lateral goes to Mickey “Crow” Parrillo as Rocky Giannini throws a great block for Crow who finds open ground and travels sixty yards to the end zone for a touchdown.

The excitement is overwhelming as Colletta Parrillo and Eda Nanni jump up and down with their pom-poms followed by Bernie Miller and shout, “North Philly Angels we are for you. We are the girls who wear gold and blue. While we're here lets give a cheer. North Philly Angels we're for you.” Young Bucky Lardani who stops them with news that Jack Larue is down on the field interrupts the cheer. Coach Dominic Ragno comes off the field and informs the rest of the team and the spectators that Jack Larue has a very serious broken leg. The game is in delay for over forty minutes before the ambulance finally carries Jack Larue off to the hospital.

Coach Ragno begins to rally the team to get the fight back into their spirit, but on the ensuing kickoff the Ramblers ran it eighty yards into the end zone and tied the game. On the next offensive series Peter Martosella hurt his shoulder and had to leave the game. At half-time we could hear coach Ragno talking tough to the

guys as Art “Cat” Giargiari is showing his disappointment at the team's performance with his mean eye- piercing stare and his usual intimidating demeanor.

Despite the excellent quarterbacking by Bobby Lucarini and Chet Laurenzi, the goal line defense of the Ramblers became even more invincible.

Billy McConnell, Rocky Giannini, and Bobby Falco made many scrambling runs, but always came up short of the end zone.

The Angels defensive line is even more incredible than they have been for the eight, one and one season. Tony Siatta, Camilio Massara, Gene DeMarco, Richie Vermont, Steve “Ice” Charlie, Frank “Nigua” Lauria, Peter Pirolli and Fred Ragno have held the Ramblers to four downs on every one of the regulation time series. It is still tied at seven-seven with only a few seconds to go in the sudden death period. In spite of the total domination of time on offense, the clock ticks away and the whistle blows as darkness falls to sound the end of the game. The Angels appear dejected as they walk off the field. Coach Ragno is called over to meet with an Official from the Pop Warner League and the Referees and after a short pow-wow the Coach comes running and shouting, “They have awarded us the Championship on the fact that we made more first downs than Germantown and the championship has to be decided today, because of league rules. Within seconds the news sinks in and the downheartedness turns to celebration.”