

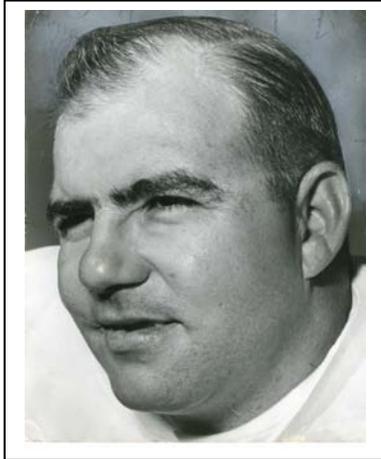
M-CLUB ALUMNI ASSOCIATION SPORTS HALL OF FAME

P.W. (BEAR) UNDERWOOD

CHARTER MEMBER

FOOTBALL: 1954-56

Inducted: February 20, 1965



P.W. (Bear) Underwood made as large an impact on the football tradition of Southern Miss as anyone in history and he has done it in three distinct roles. First as a talented and respected tackle and guard for the school in the mid fifties, later as an assistant coach and architect of some of the greatest defenses in school history and later as head coach of the school as it made its biggest push to move into the upper echelon of college football.

Underwood's high school was an outstanding one in Cordova, Ala., but before he could move on to begin his college career he joined the United States Army where he spent a couple of years serving with the military police, but also playing football. He played on the strong Fort Jackson Golden Arrow team during his military stint, a team that included numerous ex-college all-stars and Underwood distinguished himself as a defensive giant and a powerful blocker.

Underwood wound up at Mississippi State after his service commitment was up but stayed only one season in Starkville. But based on his play in the Army, Underwood was selected by the Chicago Bears in the 1954 NFL draft.

He began his career at Southern Miss in 1954 and saw considerable playing time on a team that finished 6-4. Underwood played well enough on that team to earn several starting assignments even as a sophomore.

Underwood was solidly entrenched in the starting lineup at guard during the 1955 team and was one of the leaders on a squad that went 9-1, by winning its final seven games of the season. He had begun to develop a reputation as one of the hardest hitting and physical players in the country. No one loved the contact more than Underwood.

Underwood moved to tackle in 1956 to team with fellow Hall of Famer Don Owens, giving the Southerners one of the biggest and best tackle combos in the history of the school. The 1956 team went 7-2-1 and Underwood helped led the team to a berth against West Texas State in the Tangerine Bowl.

After his stardom with Southern Miss, Underwood went on to play two seasons with the Hamilton Tiger Cats of the Canadian Football League. Even though injuries limited his CFL career to just two seasons, he was named to the league's Fabulous 1950's team.

He spent the 1963 through 1966 seasons as an assistant coach at his alma mater. As line coach for Coach Pie Vann, Southern ranked No. 1 in the country in total defense three of his four seasons and allowed just 131.2 yards per game during the 1963 campaign.

After a short stint as an assistant at Tennessee he returned to become head coach at Southern Miss in 1969. During his six seasons he posted a 31-32-2 record and engineered one of the biggest wins in school history, a 30-14 win over fourth ranked Ole Miss in 1970.

Underwood playing and coaching contributions to Southern Miss place him on a plateau rarely equaled in school history.

