

ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF GRIDIRON GREAT

Fletcher

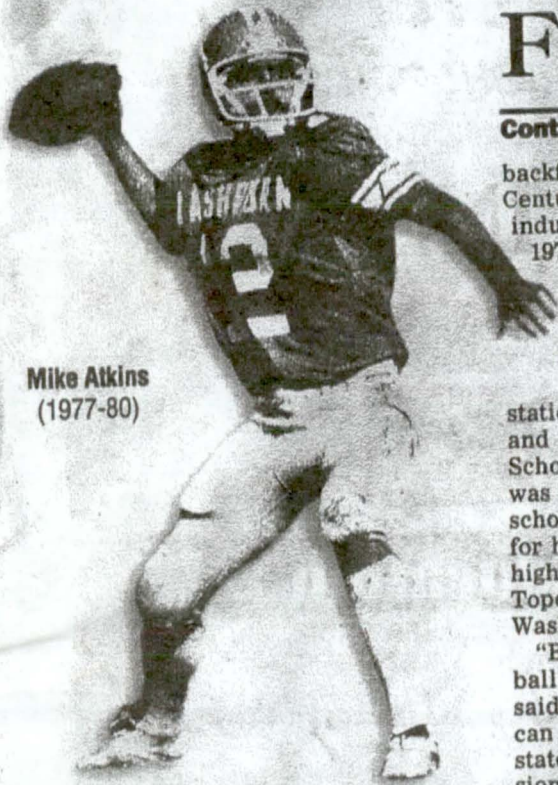
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backfield with another member of the All-Century team, Leroy Harmon. The two were inducted in WU's Hall of Fame together in 1972.

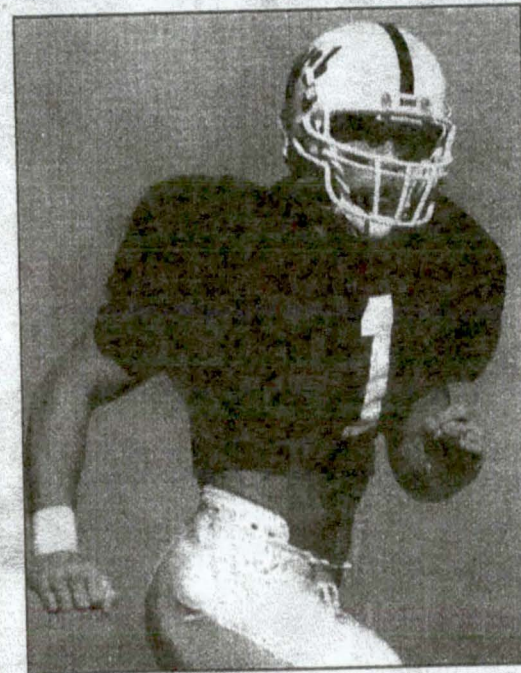
"Harmon was a whale of a fullback and could throw the ball with the best of them," Fletcher said. "They never knew what we were going to do."

Fletcher, the son of a Buffalo Soldier stationed at Fort Riley, was born in Phoenix and graduated from Junction City High School. After a tour of duty in the Army, he was set to play football at Indiana, but the school didn't have living accommodations for his pregnant wife and two children. His high school coach, Bob Briggs, was then at Topeka High and steered Fletcher toward Washburn.

"Bob told me I'd do more than play football at Washburn, that I'd get an education," said Fletcher, who in 1968 was the Republican candidate for lieutenant governor in the state of Washington. "It was the best decision I ever made in my life. The education I



Mike Atkins
(1977-80)



Michael Drittlein (1992-95)

got at Washburn was a jewel that has served

me to this very day."

Fletcher and Harmon, who ranks rushing in WU history, are joined by other running backs on the 11th-Century team: career rushing leader DeLisa (2,794 yards), the only back to rush for 1,000 yards in one season, and "Curley" Edwinson, who played on the 1930 squad and was a charter member in the WU Hall of Fame.

The quarterbacks chosen were Logan, who had a 25-15-1 record in 1968 as a starter with two appearances in the Boot Hill Bowl, and Mike Atkins, a Hall of Fame member who fit the mold of classic dropback passer.

Two first-team All-America wide receivers, MIAA record-holder Michael Drittlein (3,103 yards) and Travis (107 for 2,428), are included, along with Hall of Fame offensive lineman Darrin Lesser and two NAIA All-America linemen, Hall of Famer Bob Nix and Charlie Braden.

The specialist is place-kicker Nick, a second-team NAIA All-American who holds the school record for 101 of 34 career and 17 in a season.

Dawson

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'A leader'

By KEN CORBITT
The Capital-Journal

His name still dots the Washburn record section. Maybe not at the top of the lists, but still prominently.

Fifty years after the conclusion of his playing career, Art Fletcher still is spoken of with reverence. At 6-foot-4, 235 pounds, he was a big man in his day. The fact he played halfback, combining rare speed and power, puts Fletcher at the top of one list: Washburn's all-century team.

"As a runner, he was strong and fast, a real powerful guy," said Gene McKinney, a Topeka attorney who played with Fletcher. "He could catch passes and block. He could do it all.

"His best trait was his character," McKinney added. "Art was a leader."

Fletcher played at Washburn from 1946-49 and rushed for 1,698 yards, a figure that ranks No. 5 in school history. He has the No. 2 single-season rushing total of 979 yards, an average of 5.4 yards per carry during his junior season.

"I didn't look like I could run that fast, but I was 6-4 and had a long stride," Fletcher, 74, said in a telephone interview from his home in Washington, D.C., where he is chairman of the National Black Chamber of Commerce. "I had a stop-and-go move where I could cut back to my left without stumbling. They never knew if I was going to cut left or right."

Fletcher listed a 27-19 victory over Pittsburg State his senior season in 1949 as the most memorable game of his career.

"They came in highly regarded and were supposed to run us out of the place," he said. "We produced three fumbles in the first quarter and, if my memory serves me, we scored on all three. After that it was a ball control game. I was pleased with not only my performance, but the whole team. We were full of juice and ready to keep playing when the game was over."

Others recall in awe Fletcher's five-touchdown game in a 53-0 blowout of Benedictine in 1948. The five TDs is a school record — and they came in the first half.

"Almost every time I touched the ball I got a touchdown, and as I recall they were all 40 to 45 yards," Fletcher said. "I had learned that week that I was among the nation's top ground gainers for small colleges. I was hyped up and made up my mind to be No. 1. And I would have been, but (coach Dick) Godlove took me out the second half or we could have really poured it on."

Fletcher was paired in the single-wing



WU'S ALL-CENTURY TOP 11

Player	Pos.	Career
Mike Atkins	QB	1977-80
Charlie Braden	DL	1983-86
Dino DeLisa	RB	1983-85
Michael Dritein	WR	1992-95
"Curley" Edwinson	RB	1929-32
Art Fletcher	RB	1946-49
Mike Grogan	QB	1974-77
Leroy Harmon	RB	1945-49
"Dode" Lesser	OL	1965-66
Bob Noblitt	DL	1960-64
Troy Slusser	WR	1985-88

Player of the century — Art Fletcher

Specialist — Nick Kresick, PK, 1983-86



—File

Washburn's Art Fletcher, who was 6-foot-4, stood head and shoulder above most of his 1940s foes, literally and figuratively.

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