

= Gordon Bell (American football) =

Gordon Granville Bell (born December 25 , 1953) is a former American football running back , kickoff returner and punt returner who played for the University of Michigan Wolverines from 1973 ? 1975 , and professionally for the New York Giants (1976 @-@ 1977) and St. Louis Cardinals (1978) of the National Football League (NFL) .

Bell was a two @-@ time All @-@ Ohio running back in high school and led Ohio 's Troy High School to undefeated seasons in 1970 and 1971 . As a 16 @-@ year @-@ old junior , he rushed for 324 yards in a single game ; for the year he had 1 @,@ 593 yards rushing and scored 146 points . As a senior in 1971 , he lost the Ohio AAA high school back of the year award to Archie Griffin .

Bell played tailback for Michigan teams that had a combined record of 28 @-@ 3 @-@ 3 from 1973 ? 1975 . As a junior in 1974 , Bell was a part @-@ time player who started only three of Michigan 's eleven games , but he still managed to become only the third player in school history to rush for 1 @,@ 000 yards in a season . In 1975 , he set several single @-@ season school records , including most all @-@ purpose yards (1 @,@ 714 yards) , most 100 @-@ yard rushing games (eight) , and most rushing attempts (273) . At the time of his graduation from Michigan , Bell also ranked second in school history in career rushing yards and third in all @-@ purpose yards . Though Bell 's records have been surpassed in more recent years , he remains one of the all @-@ time rushing leaders in Michigan history . Despite his accomplishments , Bell played in the shadow of Big Ten Conference rival , Archie Griffin , who won back @-@ to @-@ back Heisman Trophies . In some respects , Bell exceeded even Griffin 's accomplishments , as Bell won the 1975 Big Ten rushing championship .

Bell played three years of professional football , but never made it into the starting lineup for an NFL team . In three NFL seasons , he had 1 @,@ 444 all @-@ purpose yards . His best NFL season was 1976 , when he had 784 all @-@ purpose yards .

= = Youth = =

A native of Troy , Ohio , Bell had attended Ohio State Buckeyes games with his father from the age of six . In high school , he was one of the top football prospects in Ohio . As a junior at Troy High School in 1970 , Bell gained over 1 @,@ 593 yards , scored 146 points , led Troy High to its first unbeaten season (10 @-@ 0) since 1957 , and was named to the Associated Press 1970 All @-@ Ohio Class AAA high school first team . In the 1970 season opener , 16 @-@ year @-@ old Bell rushed for 324 yards and scored four touchdowns in a 54 ? 6 win over Piqua High School . Afterward , Bell said , " All I can say is that my line was tremendous . " Piqua 's coach said , " Our kids were on Bell from the start , but they just couldn 't bring him down . " In October 1970 , Bell put on " one of the greatest one @-@ man shows ever seen at Beaver Creek , " scoring three touchdowns and rushing for 233 yards in 30 carries . The Beaver Creek coach said afterward that the game 's turning point came the moment Bell walked onto the field .

As a senior in 1971 , Bell led Troy High to a 10 ? 0 record . In the season opener , Bell broke off tackle and rushed 70 yards for a touchdown the first time he got the ball . He scored touchdowns in three of his first four carries , though one was nullified by a penalty . Bell rushed for 190 yards and three touchdowns in the season opener . The opposing coach said , " It was the same old story . We knew we had to stop Bell and yet we still couldn 't do it . That boy is a great football player . " Bell again won first @-@ team All @-@ Ohio honors , but he lost the Associated Press 1971 Ohio AAA high school back of the year award . The award instead went to a high school senior from Columbus , Archie Griffin . Bell and Griffin would continue their rivalry in college .

In 1971 , Bell also won the Piqua YMCA high school weight @-@ lifting contest in the 165 @-@ pound class .

= = University of Michigan = =

=== Overview ===

Bell was recruited to the University of Michigan by assistant coach Gary Moeller . He was a relatively small player , standing 5 feet 9 inches (1 @. @ 75 m) tall , and weighing 178 pounds (81 kg ; 12 @. @ 7 st) . He was sometimes referred to as Michigan 's " mighty mite tailback . " In addition to his speed , what set him apart from other backs was his ability to cut and find the smallest of holes . Bo Schembechler called Bell " the greatest cutback runner I 've ever coached . " In 1975 , the Associated Press noted : " Bell is noted for his ability to cut on a dime , spurt through miniscule [sic] holes and hurdle tacklers . He 's got fine speed and he 's durable . Bell seems to get -- pardon the expression -- his bell rung on many tackles , only to bounce up as if nothing happened . " Noted Michigan radio broadcaster Bob Ufer often referred to Bell as " little Gordie Bell . " Ufer once humorously said , referring to Bell 's ability to shift directions quickly , that Bell " could run fifteen minutes in a phone booth and never touch the sides . "

In his career at Michigan , Bell gained 2 @, @ 902 rushing yards in 535 carries , and scored 28 rushing touchdowns . In addition to running from scrimmage , Bell ran back 12 kickoffs for an average of 26 @. @ 4 yards .

=== 1973 season ===

As a sophomore in 1973 , Bell saw his first action against Iowa . He was given five carries and gained 50 yards (including a 24 @- @ yard gain) for a ten @- @ yard per carry average . Bell did not start any games in 1973 , but his playing time increased later in the season , including 19 carries against Minnesota for 73 yards and 15 carries against Indiana for 89 yards . For the season , Bell rushed for 464 yards in 88 carries . The 1973 team finished with a record of 10 ? 0 ? 1 , with the only imperfection coming at the end of the season with a 10 ? 10 tie with Ohio State . Despite tying for the Big Ten Conference championship , Big Ten athletic directors decided to send Ohio State to the Rose Bowl , and conference rules did not permit Michigan to play in another bowl game . Michigan ended up ranked number 6 in the final Associated Press poll .

=== 1974 season ===

For the 1974 season , Bell rushed for 1048 yards which was , at that time , the third highest single @- @ season total in school history . He joined Ron Johnson and Billy Taylor as the only players in Michigan history to rush for 1 @, @ 000 yards in a season . Bell accomplished the feat despite being a part @- @ time player , sharing the starting tailback job with sophomore Rob Lytle . In the 1974 campaign , Lytle started eight games to Bell 's three , although Bell outrushed Lytle 1048 yards to 802 . Bell had lost about 10 pounds (4 @. @ 5 kg ; 0 @. @ 71 st) in the summer before the 1974 season , dropping to 175 pounds (79 kg ; 12 @. @ 5 st) . He said , " I did it on my own to help me run , to make me quicker . "

Asked in 1974 about his alternating Lytle and Bell at the tailback position , Bo Schembechler said : " They 're both good . They have equal ability and they both deserve to play . " , Bell said at the time that he did not mind sharing playing time with Lytle because " we 're both pretty fair backs . It 's only fair that we share it . " In an October 1974 win over Minnesota (by a score of 49 ? 0) , Bell and Lytle combined for 292 rushing yards ? 158 for Lytle and 134 for Bell .

In Michigan 's 51 ? 0 victory over Purdue in November 1974 , Bell rushed for 166 yards in 22 carries for a 7 @. @ 2 yards per carry average . He also set up a field goal and another touchdown with runs of 32 and 39 yards . Bell was named the UPI 's Midwest offensive player of the week for the effort . When a reporter asked Bell for a comment , he said , " Coach doesn 't want us to say anything this week . We 've got to get ready for Ohio State . "

After Bell and Lytle combined for 1 @, @ 850 rushing yards in 1974 , Schembechler said : " Bell and Lytle are the greatest combination in the country . Bell is the best cut runner I 've ever had . Lytle is a great power runner . The tailback position is healthy to say the least . "

== 1975 season ==

In both 1975 , Bell again shared the Michigan backfield duties with Rob Lytle . Bell was a senior in 1975 on a Michigan team that went 8 ? 2 ? 2 and finished the season ranked # 8 in the final Associated Press poll . Bell rushed for 1 @, @ 390 yards , added 314 yards on kickoff returns , and was voted the team 's Most Valuable Player .

Michigan started the 1975 season ranked # 3 in the country , and moved into the # 2 spot with a 23 ? 6 win over Wisconsin in the season opener . Despite being hampered by a muscle pull , Bell still rushed for 210 yards in 28 carries against Wisconsin . After the game , Bell noted that he " couldn 't cut as well as (he) would have liked , " but he played through the injury realizing that , as a senior , " the coaches expect us to show the way . " On being named the UPI 's Midwest Back of the Week , Bell noted , " It 's really an honor to be recognized like that , but you have to have a lot of help out there . I thought Rick Leach was just super in the game . He sure didn 't look like a freshman . And our offensive line did the job despite having so many sophomores in there . " Bell 's 210 @-@ yard performance against Wisconsin stood as the school record in a season opener for 28 years until Chris Perry rushed for 232 yards in the 2003 season opener against Central Michigan .

After the opener against Wisconsin , Bell and the Wolverines tied games against Stanford (19 ? 19) and Baylor (14 ? 14) . Despite being favored by 18 points over Baylor , the Wolverines nearly lost and fell out of the top 10 in national ranking for the first time since September 1972 . After the Baylor game , Schembechler said the team lacked leadership . Bell may have been the one player to whom Bo 's criticism did not apply , as he had a career @-@ long 64 @-@ yard kickoff return against Baylor , scored both of Michigan 's touchdowns , and rushed for 89 yards in 26 carries . Bell 's second touchdown against Baylor came with 6 : 50 remaining in the fourth quarter and saved the Wolverines from a defeat .

The Wolverines rebounded into the top 10 with a 31 ? 7 victory over Missouri in the fourth game of the season and strung together seven straight wins before facing Ohio State . Bell rushed for 119 yards against Missouri and had 150 all @-@ purpose yards . In a 16 ? 6 win over Michigan State in week five , Bell scored Michigan 's only touchdown on a 19 @-@ yard run in the fourth quarter . The Wolverines beat Northwestern Wildcats , 69 ? 0 , in week six . For the first time in Michigan history , the Wolverines had three backs who each rushed for at least 100 yards . As the starting back , Bell rushed for 100 yards and scored two touchdowns in the first quarter alone . With the game turning into a blowout , Schembechler pulled Bell after the first quarter , and Rob Lytle gained another 105 yards , before being replaced by Harlan Huckleby who gained 157 yards . Michigan tied the modern Big Ten record of 573 rushing yards in the game .

In a 28 ? 21 win against Minnesota , Bell rushed for 174 yards on 31 carries for his fifth consecutive 100 @-@ yard game . He also scored two touchdowns , including a 23 @-@ yard run midway through the fourth quarter . The UPI noted : " Bell 's clinching run came with 8 : 04 gone in the final quarter and saved Michigan from the embarrassment of a tie . " Bell 's performance in the Minnesota game gave him 2 @, @ 488 career rushing yards , second in school history to Billy Taylor 's record of 3 @, @ 072 yards . In a close 21 ? 15 win over Illinois , Bell scored two first @-@ quarter touchdowns and carried the ball a career @-@ high 35 times . Going into the Ohio State game , Bell was in a three @-@ person contest for the Big Ten Conference rushing championship . Bell led with an average of 134 @. @ 1 yards per conference game to 125 @. @ 1 for Billy Marek of Wisconsin , and 123 @. @ 7 for Archie Griffin .

Michigan ended the season with a 21 ? 14 loss to Ohio State . Despite the loss , Bell won the battle of the backs , rushing for 124 yards on 21 carries and throwing for a touchdown pass , while Griffin was limited to 46 yards on 19 carries . Bell had 166 all @-@ purpose yards against the Buckeyes , his last regular season game for Michigan . In his only bowl game appearance , Bell played in a 14 ? 6 loss to the Oklahoma Sooners in Orange Bowl after the 1975 season . He gained 53 yards rushing and 90 all @-@ purpose yards .

== Comparisons to Archie Griffin ==

Bell was Michigan 's starting running back in the same years in which Archie Griffin won consecutive Heisman Trophies for Ohio State . In head @-@ to @-@ head meetings in 1974 and 1975 , Bell played as well or better than Griffin . In 1974 , each carried the ball 25 times , and Bell ended up with 108 yards compared with 111 yards for Griffin although Ohio State won the game 12 ? 10 . In 1975 , Bell outgained Griffin 124 yards to 46 yards . Bell averaged 132 @.@ 9 yards per game in 1975 to lead Griffin and the Big Ten Conference in conference game rushing . Even so , Griffin won the Heisman Trophy , and Bell finished eighth in the 1975 Heisman Trophy voting .

During the 1975 season , Bell was asked how he felt about all the publicity being received by Griffin . He replied : " All of the publicity in the world doesn 't help you win . I don 't feel slighted because Archie is in our conference . I feel I 'm just as good as he is . " Bell later recalled : " Those two games against Ohio State were my biggest , and I consider the second game a personal victory . I outrushed Archie , but he had a great public relations guy in Woody Hayes He wasn 't the best player in the conference so how can he be the best player in the country ? "

Lee Larkins , who played for Purdue and was one of the top defensive backs in the Big Ten , said in 1976 that Bell was the best running back he ever played against . As a senior , Larkins played against Gordon Bell , Archie Griffin , and Ricky Bell of USC . Larkins said : " Gordon Bell was the best of the three . He was a super tough runner and a tough guy to make a solid tackle on . Gordon has a lot more speed and more moves than Archie does , and I thought he was a better all around player . "

= = = Relationship with Bo Schembechler = = =

During Bell 's years at Michigan , he played for the Wolverines ' legendary coach , Bo Schembechler . Near the end of Bell 's freshman year , Bell told Schembechler he was taking an incomplete in a course . Schembechler talked to Bell 's father , Trenton Bell , about the incomplete . Schembechler recalled , " Trenton told me (Gordon) 'd be back to finish that course . And he was . " Schembechler added , " Gordie listens to Trenton . What he says gets done . "

Schembechler described Gordon Bell as " a very , very durable guy . " Bo noted : " He isn 't exactly frail . He 's put together well . He 's a confident guy . Exciting and good as he is , he 's also one of the nicest guys you 'll ever meet . "

As Archie Griffin garnered the lion 's share of the media attention in 1975 , Schembechler spoke out for Bell : " I think Bell 's as good as any back there is anywhere . I haven 't seen any who looks better He is certainly the most underpublicized great back in the country . "

= = = Records and honors = = =

Bell finished the 1975 season as the Big Ten 's leading rusher , was selected to the Associated Press All @-@ Big Ten team , was chosen as Michigan 's Most Valuable Player , and finished eighth in the Heisman Trophy voting . In a year with an abundance of strong running backs , Bell and Earl Campbell were relegated to the AP 's third @-@ team All @-@ American , as Archie Griffin and Ricky Bell took first @-@ team honors , and Tony Dorsett and Jimmy DuBose took second @-@ team honors .

Bell 's career at Michigan was among the best in school history to that point . His school records included :

Bell set the single @-@ season all @-@ purpose yards record in 1975 with 1 @,@ 714 yards . Bell 's record stood until 1987 when it was broken by Jamie Morris . Bell 's total ranked eighth on Michigan 's all @-@ time list at the end of 2006 .

Bell 's 273 carries in 1975 broke Ron Johnson 's record of 255 carries set in 1968 . Bell 's total remained the school record until 1987 when Jamie Morris carried the ball 282 times . Bell 's 1975 performance now ranks eighth on the all @-@ time Michigan list .

In 1975 , Bell set the Michigan record with eight 100 @-@ yard rushing games . That record stood for 12 years until Jamie Morris compiled ten in 1987 .

Bell 's 1 @,@ 390 yards rushing in 1975 was the second best single @-@ season total in school

history , just one yard short of the record set by Ron Johnson in 1967 . Bell 's 1975 total now ranks 11th best in school history .

At the end of the 1975 season , Bell had rushed for a career total of 2 @, @ 902 yards , second best in school history behind Billy Taylor 's record of 3 @, @ 072 yards . Bell 's career total still ranks ninth best in school history .

Bell 's 210 @-@ yard rushing game in the season opener against Wisconsin was the fourth best in school history at the time , behind Ron Johnson 's 347 @-@ yard game against the Badgers in 1968 . Bell is one of twelve backs in Michigan history to rush for 200 yards in a game .

Bell 's 13 rushing touchdowns in 1975 was the second best in school history , behind Ron Johnson 's 19 touchdowns in 1968 . His total is now tied for 11th best in school history .

Bell 's 28 career rushing touchdowns ranked third in school history , behind Billy Taylor and Tom Harmon .

Bell finished his career at Michigan ranked second behind Bob Nussbaumer in career yards per carry and now ranks ninth .

Bell 's 35 carries against Illinois in 1975 was the second most in school history at the time , behind Ron Johnson 's 42 @-@ carry performance in 1967 . He is now tied for twelfth in school history .

Bell 's 535 career carries was second to Billy Taylor at the time of Bell 's graduation . It now ranks tenth .

Bell ranked third in career all @-@ purpose yards (behind Ron Johnson and Billy Taylor) .

= = Professional career = =

= = = New York Giants = = =

Bell was drafted by the New York Giants in the fourth round of the 1976 NFL Draft . Bell did not get much playing time early in the 1976 season with the Giants . In late November , columnist David Bushnell wrote an article , " Are Giants missing the boat on Gordon Bell ? , " questioning the team 's lack of utilization of Bell . Bushnell noted that Bell had " spent most of the season standing on the sideline waiting to be inserted into the lineup for a few plays . " The Giants ' starting running back in 1976 was Doug Kotar , though Bushnell opined that Bell was the superior back : " Bell is quick , with speed to break any play for a long gain , and he can catch the ball If the Giants are trying to break Bell in gradually , they might just miss the boat totally , breaking Bell instead . " Bell noted at the time that the lack of playing time held him back : " It takes me about a quarter or so to get going , break a sweat and get the legs loosened up . I really don 't like being shuffled in and out so much , but as a rookie I can 't do much about it . " Bell also added , " Sure it 's been hard for me to be a spot player , especially because my body isn 't ideal for that type job . I think it 's better for me to play a lot , but then again I 'm not the coach . "

The 1976 Giants , who started 0 ? 7 under Bill Arnsparger before going 3 ? 4 under John McVay , had a diversified offense in which Bell was second on the team with 25 receptions for 198 yards . When Kotar was injured , Bell got his first start of the 1976 season on November 27 , 1976 . Bell rushed for two touchdowns in a 28 @-@ 16 victory over the Seattle Seahawks . He posted the best day of his professional career , with touchdown runs of two and 21 yards , gaining 56 yards on the ground and 41 more on pass receptions . After the game , Bell said , " I needed a game like that . " The backfield was led by Doug Kotar and Larry Csonka with Bell being the third leading rusher .

Having seen little playing time as a rookie in 1976 , Bell played even less in 1977 , as the Giants worked Bob Hammond and Willie Spencer into the rushing rotation . Bell rushed for 63 yards in 16 carries for the entire 1977 season . His main contribution to the 1977 Giants was as a kickoff returner , as he returned 12 kickoffs for 235 yards , second best on the Giants after Hammond .

= = = St. Louis Cardinals = = =

During 1978 , he was briefly on the Green Bay Packers roster during training camp , and he signed

with the St. Louis Cardinals in November . In 1978 , Bell had more kickoff returns (eight) than rushes (seven) with St. Louis .

= = Later years = =

After retiring from football , Bell ran a barbecue restaurant in Dayton , Ohio . He later sold radio advertising in Detroit , Michigan and Chicago , Illinois .

= = Career statistics = =