

= John Maulbetsch =

John F. " Johnny " Maulbetsch (June 20 , 1890 ? September 14 , 1950) was an All @-@ American football halfback at Adrian College in 1911 and for the University of Michigan Wolverines from 1914 to 1916 . He is also a member of the College Football Hall of Fame .

After playing with an independent football team in Ann Arbor and at Adrian College , Maulbetsch became one of the most famous American football players in 1914 while playing for the University of Michigan . Maulbetsch became known as the " Human Bullet " because of his unusual low , line @-@ plunging style of play , and was also known as the " Featherweight Fullback " because of his light weight and small size . After his performance against Harvard in 1914 , in which some reports indicated he gained more than 300 yards , eastern writers , including Damon Runyan , wrote articles touting Maulbetsch . Maulbetsch was also selected by Walter Camp to his All @-@ American team .

In 1915 , Maulbetsch underwent surgery for appendicitis and did not perform to the same level as he had in 1914 . He made a comeback as a senior in 1916 and was again one of the leading players in college football .

Between 1917 and 1920 , Maulbetsch was the head football coach at Phillips University . With Maulbetsch 's name recognition , he was able to recruit big name talent to Phillips , including future Pro Football Hall of Famer Steve Owen , and future United States Olympic Committee President Doug Roby . Maulbetsch quickly turned Phillips into one of the top programs in the southwest , as his teams beat Oklahoma and Texas and lost only one game in the 1918 and 1919 seasons . Maulbetsch was later the football coach at Oklahoma A & M (later known as Oklahoma State) and Marshall College in the 1920s . He has been inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame , and the University of Michigan awards the John F. Maulbetsch Award each year to a freshman football player based on desire , character , and capacity for leadership and future success both on and off the football field .

= = Ann Arbor High School and the Independents = =

Maulbetsch was born and grew up in Ann Arbor , Michigan . He attended Ann Arbor High School where he led the football team to consecutive state championships in 1908 and 1909 . One account of the 1908 playoffs noted : " Ann Arbor 's smashing play in the first half was wholly due to Maulbetsch , Ann Arbor 's fullback , and his terrific line bucking . He clearly outshone his team mates . "

After graduating from high school , Maulbetsch joined the Ann Arbor Independents , a football team made up of Michigan " varsity eligibles " and " townies . " Maulbetsch was once reportedly called upon to drive across the goal line for the Independents in a game in which a large crowd , including a farmer with his plow @-@ horse , gathered in the end zone . " Head down and legs working like piston rods , Maulbetsch plowed ahead until head struck the plow horse amidsthips . Down went the horse Mauly on top of him . "

= = College football player = =

= = = Transfer from Adrian College = = =

Maulbetsch started his college football career at age 21 , leading Adrian College to an 8 ? 0 record in 1911 , including a 15 ? 0 win over the University of Michigan freshman team . Maulbetsch 's performance drew the attention of Michigan Coach Fielding H. Yost . After watching Maulbetsch dominate Michigan 's freshman team , Yost concluded : " If I could get that kid into Michigan and keep him up in his studies I ? d make an All @-@ American place for him his first year . " Yost persuaded Maulbetsch to transfer , and he played with " the scrubs " in 1912 . Yost told the press at the time he had " another (Willie) Heston " in Maulbetsch .

== 1914 season ==

Maulbetsch did not play for the varsity team until the fall of 1914 when he was 24 years old . Before the season began , Maulbetsch was " touted as one of the fastest halfbacks who ever donned moleskins . He weighs 155 pounds , is built low , has a powerful pair of shoulders and his dashes are characterized by lightning speed . " Another pre @-@ season account said he was " a wonder as a line plunger and a wizard in the open field . " From the outset , considerable attention was paid to his unusual running style . Observers noted " the peculiar manner in which he runs He has a corkscrew style of dashing , and even when tackled squarely has such a sturdy pair of legs that his assailant is usually carried back several yards . "

Michigan opened the season with a 58 ? 0 win over DePauw , followed by a 69 ? 0 victory over Case Institute of Technology . Maulbetsch was the offensive star against Case , as he twice " carried several would @-@ be tackles across the goal . " Playing Vanderbilt the following week , Maulbetsch had runs of 25 and 35 yards , scored two touchdowns , " was worked overtime and probably advanced the pigskin more than any two other players . " After starting the season 5 ? 0 , Michigan lost three of four games against top eastern schools : Syracuse , Harvard , Penn , and Cornell .

== 1914 Harvard game ==

Maulbetsch 's breakthrough came on October 31 , 1914 , in front of 30 @, @ 000 fans at Harvard . The game was one of the most anticipated matches of the year . A special train brought Michigan fans to Cambridge , Massachusetts , and hundreds of Michigan alumni from the East were on hand as " reinforcements . " Though Harvard prevailed , 7 ? 0 , Maulbetsch was the big story in papers across the country . Writers from Ring Lardner to Damon Runyon told the story of Maulbetsch 's performance . Lardner said : " If anyone tells you the East plays the best brand of football , Maulbetsch shot that theory full of holes . " According to Runyon , the Wolverines used " the mighty Maulbetsch as their battering ram " , and he " gained enough ground against Harvard to bury a German army corps . " Football writer Frank G. Menke said : " No westerner ever created half the stir in the east as did this Michigander . . . His peculiar , baffling style of attack , backed by phenomenal strength almost always earned for him gains of 5 to 20 yards every time he was called upon to carry the ball . " Another writer noted Maulbetsch 's skill as a " line breaker " as he " carried the ball repeatedly through the Harvard line and into the secondary defense with bullet @-@ like rushes that upset tackler after tackler . " Maulbetsch was responsible for four @-@ fifths of Michigan 's ground gains , and on several occasions his dives reportedly " had so much power that he dove right through a double line of crimson players and went sprawling on the ground twelve to twenty feet clear of the double line . "

While every report indicates that Maulbetsch had a big day , the accounts vary dramatically as to exactly how many yards he gained . Frank Menke reported after the game that Maulbetsch gained 300 yards . A 1938 newspaper account said he " gained 350 yards from scrimmage . " Yet , his 1951 obituary indicated he gained 133 yards in 30 attempts .

Despite Maulbetsch 's efforts , Michigan was never able to punch the ball across the goal line . Many blamed Michigan 's quarterback who switched to another back every time after Maulbetsch " took the ball to the shadow of the Crimson goal posts . " In answer to the question why Michigan was unable to score , Frank Menke said : " Ask the fellow who quarterbacked for Michigan that day . His actions were too mystifying for the spectators to figure out . "

When Harvard reneged on an agreement to play a game in Ann Arbor in 1915 , sports writers concluded it was to avoid facing Maulbetsch again . Said one reporter : " When faih Hahvahd [sic] saw what Maulbetsch did in the first clash , it decided it cared to see no more of him . He was too rough . "

== " Human Bullet " ==

Much of the attention on Maulbetsch focused on his diminutive size and unique running style . At 5 ft 7 in (1 @. @ 70 m) , and 155 lb (70 kg) , Maulbetsch was a small back , even by the standards of his day . And his running style saw him bend his torso and propel himself like a projectile into the opposing line . Indeed , he won several nicknames based on his size , running style , and fighting spirit , including the " Human Bullet " , " Mauly " , the " Human Shrapnel " , the " Featherweight Fullback " , the " Michigan Cannon Ball " , and the " German bullet . " Comparisons of Maulbetsch to military armaments were common . In addition to the " bullet " , " shrapnel " , and " cannonball " nicknames , the Syracuse Herald observed : " Standing up in front of a Krupp gun has its dangers , but it is not to be compared with the dangers of standing in front of Maulbetsch when he is going full speed ahead . "

Maulbetsch 's style was described as " line @-@ plunging . " A New York newspaper noted : " When the ball is snapped to him he almost doubles himself up , and , with his head aimed at the knees of the opposing line , he dives head first . Those who have seen Maulbetsch in action marvel at the great momentum he can get up in two or three steps . " Noted football writer Walter Eckersall said : " Mauly is a little fellow , being built close to the ground . They say that when he plunges at the line his head is almost on a level with his shoe tops ? that he hits so low that it 's well nigh impossible to stop him . " An Iowa newspaper wondered how it was possible " for a man to smash into a line of human bodies with the force that Maulbetsch does and come out of the game without a broken neck . "

Maulbetsch was said to run " so low that he could dash under an ordinary table without losing his feet . " At a coaching conference in the 1920s , a coach doubted the table @-@ ducking story and challenged Maulbetsch . The doubter later recalled : " I began ribbing him about this table @-@ ducking stuff and finally offered to bet him he couldn ' t do it . Well , we got a table up in a room , Johnny tucked a water pitcher under his arm and backed against the wall . Darned if he didn ' t do it , the only thing , that water pitcher broke in a million pieces . " Asked about the incident , Maulbetsch said it was true , except one part . Maulbetsch insisted there wasn ' t a nick on the pitcher .

= = = Maulbetsch makes All @-@ American = = =

After the loss to Harvard in 1914 , Michigan rebounded with a 34 ? 3 win over Penn . Walter Eckersall reported that the Wolverines were " led by the redoubtable Johnny Maulbetsch . " Despite being " a marked man " by the Penn defense , he was not thrown for a loss in the entire game , and he scored three touchdowns . Before Michigan lost to Cornell in the final game of the season , a scandal arose when it was revealed that the owner of an Ann Arbor pool room , Joe Reinger , had written a letter intimating that he could buy Maulbetsch and Michigan 's quarterback to throw the Cornell game , and win US \$ 50 @, @ 000 from students willing to bet on Michigan . The letter was turned in to the Michigan athletic officials , and Reinger went to the athletic office " to try to hush the matter up . " Reinger became abusive and was thrown out of the office by Coach Yost . The incident caused " the biggest stir of the season on the campus , " as students demolished Reinger 's pool room , and police had to guard Reinger 's residence against threatening demonstrations that continued to " a late hour . " Although Michigan did lose to Cornell , Maulbetsch was said to be " practically the only successful ground gainer for Michigan . " Over the course of the 1914 season , Maulbetsch was said to have scored about half of Michigan 's 252 points . A Wisconsin newspaper noted that , " when it comes time to write a resume of the 1914 football season " , Maulbetsch 's play " will live in the minds of men . . . for years to come . " As a reward for his efforts , Maulbetsch was named a first @-@ team All @-@ American at the end of the 1914 season .

= = = Pie and coffee diet = = =

As public attention focused on Maulbetsch as " the greatest line @-@ plunger of a decade , " the press could not get enough of Maulbetsch , even interviewing his family . His sister revealed that Maulbetsch had a fondness for home cooking and received permission from the team trainer to eat

at his family 's Ann Arbor home . " Now , Johnny 's sister explains that each day his mother baked two pies for the athlete 's supper , and that in addition he had everything else his appetite craved , including coffee . " Confronted by reporters about the revelation , Maulbetsch replied : " The story was slightly exaggerated . I rarely ate more than one and one half pies for dinner . " Joking references to Maulbetsch 's diet continued when it was reported in 1915 that he was suffering from " acute indigestion . " One reporter quipped , " Those much advertised pies of his maw 's evidently aren ' t as great training dope as they were cracked up to be . " It turned out that the indigestion was appendicitis , and Maulbetsch was hospitalized at St. Joseph 's Sanitarium in Ann Arbor in April 1915 , where he underwent an operation .

= = = 1915 season = = =

As the 1915 season was set to get underway , Coach Yost reported , " Johnny told me he was feeling fine when I saw him recently , although he doesn ' t weigh as much as he used to . " Despite Yost 's hopes , Maulbetsch fell far short of the prior year 's performance in 1915 . He was several pounds lighter after the illness and surgery , and it was noted that " a few pounds means much to a man of Maulbetsch 's weight . " In the opening game against Lawrence , Maulbetsch scored three touchdowns , but he was " woefully weak on interference . " Playing against Mount Union , Maulbetsch made several big gains , including a 50 @-@ yard touchdown run in the third quarter . His difficulties returned in the season 's third game against Marietta , as " Maulbetsch was powerless to stop the Marietta forward pass , all of the successful ones being directed toward his side of the line . "

After The Michigan Daily criticized his performance following the Marietta game , Maulbetsch " threatened to desert the Michigan squad and give up football for good . " It reportedly took Yost several hours to coax Maulbetsch to report for practice again , and in the next game against Case , Maulbetsch did not play until the third quarter . In the season 's first big game , Michigan was soundly beaten by Michigan Agricultural College , 24 ? 0 , and most of Maulbetsch 's runs " didn ' t even get as far as his own line . " In the final four games of the season , matters got worse for Michigan and Maulbetsch , as the team went 0 ? 3 ? 1 , scoring only 14 points in four games .

In Maulbetsch 's defense , some writers noted the weakness of the Michigan line , often allowing rushers into the backfield before Maulbetsch even had the ball . But some of those same observers noted that " Mauly " was not carrying the ball " at his usual pace . " Sports writer Frank Menke described Maulbetsch 's 1915 performance this way : " [The] Wolverine halfback skidded from the heights of greatness to the level of mediocre The lines that he had crumpled like eggshells a year before stood up under his charges , often dumping him back for losses . The once ' unstoppable ' Maulbetsch not only was stopped but forced to retract . " Despite the subpar performance in 1915 , Michigan 's varsity letter @-@ winners elected him captain of the team for 1916 .

= = = 1916 comeback = = =

Maulbetsch made a strong comeback in 1916 . Instead of spending the summer recovering from appendicitis , he spent the summer working as an assistant barkeeper on a steamship plying between Chicago and St. Joseph , Michigan . Maulbetsch spent his afternoons swimming and running sprints up and down the beach . On one trip , a giant coal passer claimed to be the strongest man in the world , and Maulbetsch agreed to a wrestling match on the boat . " The coal passer rushed the stripling , who ducked , caught his opponent about the waist and crushed him to the deck . When the giant woke , he wanted to know if the boat hit a rock . " As the season started , The New York Times wrote : " Michigan 's come @-@ back football team , headed by Bullet Maulbetsch , is going to be an eleven to be reckoned with on the gridiron this Fall . " Maulbetsch returned to his prior form , and one of the writers who had criticized him in 1915 said " the great Michigander using the same method of attack , has repeatedly broken in fragments this year the lines that he couldn ' t dent in 1915 . "

= = Professional football = =

After the 1916 football season ended , Maulbetsch considered his options . There was a report that he had been engaged as a high school football coach (and math instructor) in Toledo , Ohio . Even more prevalent were reports that he had signed to play for a professional football team . Professional football was still in its infancy in 1917 , and landing a well @-@ known star would have been a boost to any of the budding franchises . In January 1917 newspapers reported that Maulbetsch had signed a contract to play professional football for Detroit Tigers owner , Frank Navin . Navin was supporting efforts to organize a professional football league in all the important Midwestern cities , including a Detroit franchise to play at Navin Field . As late as November 1917 , newspapers reported Maulbetsch had played professional football after graduating and was offered " a handsome fee " to play with the Akron Burkhardts in November 1917 . Although professional football records prior to 1920 are scarce , it appears unlikely that Maulbetsch played professional football , as press accounts show he was working as a college football coach starting in 1917 .

= = Head football coach = =

= = Building Phillips University into a football power (1917 ? 1920) = = =

In June 1917 , Maulbetsch announced that he had accepted a position as the football coach (and professor of chemistry) at Phillips University in Enid , Oklahoma . Phillips was a small , private school without a well @-@ known athletic program . In the fall , Enid residents were " leaving their work every afternoon to watch [Maulbetsch] and his husky young Oklahoma youths work out on campus . " Within a year , Maulbetsch turned Phillips into one of the strongest teams in the southwest .

Maulbetsch landed his first big recruit before leaving Ann Arbor . While playing at Michigan , Maulbetsch became friends with Doug Roby , a football player at the Michigan Military Academy , and one of the state 's top recruits . Roby followed Maulbetsch to Phillips and later went on to become a member of the International Olympic Committee in the 1950s and 1960s and president of the United States Olympic Committee from 1965 to 1968 . Maulbetsch 's next find was future Pro Football Hall of Famer Steve Owen , who later spent 23 years with the New York Giants . Maulbetsch saw Owen watching football practice from under a tree and told him : " A fellow your size ought to be out for the squad . " Owen showed up the next day and , when Maulbetsch used him to illustrate blocking fundamentals , Owen threw a block into Maulbetsch that threw him five yards through the air . Maulbetsch was satisfied , and Owen had a spot on the team . Because Phillips was not part of a conference , it was not subject to any eligibility limitations , an advantage Maulbetsch was accused of exploiting . A third key player recruited by Maulbetsch was an Native American halfback named Levi , and dubbed " Big Chief " by Phillips fans .

Having recruited top talent to Enid , Maulbetsch 's teams lost only one game in 1918 and 1919 , including a 10 ? 0 ? 1 record in 1919 . In 1917 and 1918 , Phillips came into the limelight when they beat the Oklahoma Sooners and the Henry Kendricks College team that had swept the west without allowing another team to score . Maulbetsch arranged a game against the Texas Longhorns in 1919 , the first meeting between the schools . When the game was announced The San Antonio Light reported : " Phillips University has one of the strongest teams in the Southwest . The only team to beat them in the past two years is Oklahoma and last year Phillips beat the Sooners 13 ? 7 . " The report credited Maulbetsch for securing success at an institution little known in athletics before he arrived . The University of Texas had not lost a game since 1917 when the Phillips " Haymakers " arrived in Austin , Texas on October 11 , 1919 . Maulbetsch 's team shocked the Longhorns , holding them scoreless and winning the contest , 10 ? 0 . One Texas newspaper reported that Phillips had " whitewashed the Longhorns in their own corral . "

Others in Texas concluded that Phillips ? success was the result of lax or non @-@ existent

eligibility policies . The lack of eligibility rules almost certainly did play a part in Phillips ' success . When Phillips joined the Southwest Conference in 1920 , it became bound by the conference 's eligibility rules , and the team was outscored 97 ? 0 in conference play against Texas A & M (47 ? 0) , Texas (27 ? 0) , Arkansas (20 ? 0) , and Texas Christian (3 ? 0) . The Galveston Daily News noted that Maulbetsch 's 1920 team could not " compare with the strong team " he surprised Texas with in 1919 . At the end of the 1920 season , Phillips withdrew from the Southwest Conference , and Maulbetsch accepted a new position at Oklahoma A & M.

= = = Head coach at Oklahoma A & M (1921 ? 1928) = = =

In January 1921 , Maulbetsch was hired as the head coach at Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College (now Oklahoma State) in Stillwater , Oklahoma . He served as the coach at Oklahoma A & M from 1921 to 1928 , where his teams posted a 28 ? 37 ? 6 (.437) record . In 1924 , his team went 6 ? 1 ? 2 and shut out Oklahoma (6 ? 0) , Arkansas (20 ? 0) and Kansas (3 ? 0) . Maulbetsch 's Aggies also shut out Phillips that year , 13 ? 0 . After the season , attempts were made to lure him to Washington University in St. Louis , Missouri , but Maulbetsch said he was satisfied with his position in Stillwater .

Maulbetsch arranged a game in Ann Arbor against his alma mater to start the 1926 season . Michigan beat the Aggies , 42 ? 3 . Despite an overall record of 3 ? 4 ? 1 , Oklahoma A & M won its first conference football championship by going 3 ? 0 ? 1 in games against Missouri Valley Intercollegiate Athletic Association opponents . Maulbetsch also drew attention in 1926 for his disciplinary methods . When the team lost two games due to fumbles , he ordered eight of his backfield players to carry footballs with them to classes throughout the week and instructed other team members to try knocking the balls from under their arms . The penalty for losing a ball was " a hard run around the stadium . " He also ordered one of his ends to wear boxing gloves after he poked an opposing player in the eye .

The Aggies won only one game against seven defeats in 1928 . In late November , the day after a 46 ? 0 loss to Oklahoma , newspapers reported that " reliable sources " had said Maulbetsch intended to resign . Maulbetsch immediately denied the rumor , saying : " I have not resigned . I am aware that a faction here is trying to get me out , but I do not intend to throw up the sponge . " In December , pressure to fire Maulbetsch grew , and one Oklahoma newspaper observed : " Coach Maulbetsch of the A. & M. football team is the object of attacks from many sides because of the rather poor showing made by his team during the past season . They are looking for a goat and just now Johnnie is cast in that role . Regardless of his past record , those who demand victory at any price and by any means whatsoever , are insisting that he be fired forthwith and a man be placed in the position who , by fair means or foul , will gather in a team that will win victories and never lose a game . " Ultimately , Maulbetsch resigned at the end of May 1929 as Oklahoma A & M 's coach in football , baseball , and basketball . It was announced that he would spend the remaining year of his contract on a leave of absence at half pay .

= = = Head coach at Marshall College (1929 ? 1930) = = =

In July 1929 , Maulbetsch was hired by Marshall College in Huntington , West Virginia to become head coach in charge of football and track . When Marshall 's " Thundering Herd " got off to a 4 ? 1 start , Maulbetsch won praise in the West Virginia press , but Marshall finished the season 1 ? 2 ? 1 in the second half . And in 1930 , the Marshall team went 3 ? 5 ? 1 , including a 65 ? 0 loss to Penn State . Maulbetsch resigned as Marshall 's coach in January 1931 ; his only comment at the time was that he had " other plans . "

= = Later years and legacy = =

After retiring from football , Maulbetsch bought a drug store in Huntington , West Virginia . During World War II , Maulbetsch took a job building B @-@ 24 Liberator bombers at Ford Motor Company

's famed Willow Run Plant near Ypsilanti , Michigan . From 1946 until his death , he owned an automobile sales company in Adrian , Michigan . Maulbetsch died of cancer in 1950 at his home in Ann Arbor . He was survived by his widow , Ida , a son John Maulbetsch , and a daughter Barbara . Maulbetsch had been married to Ida (maiden name Ida Elizabeth Cappon) since May 27 , 1917 .

Maulbetsch was inducted posthumously into the College Football Hall of Fame in 1973 . Since 1956 , the John F. Maulbetsch Award has been given at the University of Michigan after spring practice to a freshman football candidate on the basis of desire , character , capacity for leadership and future success both on and off the football field . The award was established by Frederick C. Matthaei ? a former classmate of Maulbetsch who went on to become a Regent of the University . The award has been a good indicator of future success , as past recipients include Jim Mandich (1967) , Rick Leach (1976) , Charles Woodson (1996) , Marlin Jackson (2002) , and Jake Long (2004) . Maulbetsch Avenue in Ypsilanti Township is presumably named after Maulbetsch .

= = Head coaching record = =

= = = Football = = =

= = = Baseball = = =