

“Shadow” Resetco, arguably the greatest athlete to wear the Red and Blue of Liberty High

The Bethlehem Gadfly History, Bethlehem June 29, 2020

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from Jason Rehm, “Shadow Resetco: Remembering one of Liberty High School's greatest athletes.” Bethlehem Press, June 25, 2020.

As the ball sailed through the uprights, a wave of excitement shot through the crowd gathered at Lehigh's Taylor Stadium.

Liberty High School had just defeated Eastern powerhouse Steelton 3-0 off a stunning field goal drop kicked from the 42 yard line. The drop kick, often used as a surprise tactic in early football, is rarely used today, but this was 1922 and one of George J. Resetco's most thrilling moments on the gridiron.

Resetco, better known as “Shadow,” was arguably the greatest athlete to wear the Red and Blue of Liberty High. He began playing varsity sports as a freshman and was the only person in the school's history to letter in five – football, basketball, baseball, track, and swimming.

“I'd throw the javelin on Friday and the baseball on Saturday,” he once said.

The athletic feats of Shadow Resetco read like legends. For instance, as a freshman he pitched varsity baseball and won six consecutive games, besides playing the outfield when he wasn't on the mound. In his four years he lost only four games.

Shadow's graduating class of 1925 produced many memorable athletes. On the football team were Phil Phillippi who went on to become Athletic Director at Liberty, John “Snooky” Hudak who became track coach, Al Seifert and future state senator, Joe Yosko. Along with Shadow, this

dynamic group ran roughshod over Allen in the Fall of '24 to the score of 64-0.

Shadow helped the basketball team secure a league title his senior year and the team defeated several opponents in state championship playoff contests before finally being eliminated. The captain that year was Joe "Pickles" Preletz who returned to coach basketball at Liberty.

The baseball season was almost capped with an eastern state championship, but Harrisburg Tech pulled out a 3-2 win as Resetco looked on from the outfield. Joe Yosko was the catcher on that team, "and a wonderful catcher he was," said Shadow. "He had plenty of pepper."

After graduating, Shadow attended Allentown Prep before heading to Holy Cross where he had received an athletic scholarship. He played only three quarters of the football season before developing severe pain in his ankles, wrists, and joints that doctors diagnosed as arthritis.

Once destined for stardom, a sportswriter surmised that his "star was setting before it had achieved full brilliancy." His friends believed he had burned himself out with too many sports in his youth.

He stuck it out at Holy Cross the rest of his freshman year and even tried out for baseball, but developed a sore pitching arm during an indoor workout. He returned home to Bethlehem and put in a semester at Lehigh but had to drop out when his pain prevented him from attending classes.

Shadow reunited with former teammate Joe Yosko that next summer and had a comeback of sorts. The two became a dynamic pitching-catching combination for the Bethlehem Catholic Sokols baseball team and won 11 straight games and earned a berth in the league playoffs.

When the playoffs arrived, five players had already departed for Atlantic City vacations and replacements were selected among youth from Bethlehem playgrounds. "I pitched my head off, but we lost 2-1," Shadow recalled.

Resetco began working for the Bethlehem Area School District in 1928 and in 1940, Phil Phillippi recommended Shadow as equipment manager. For 31 years Resetco carried out this job at his alma matter, equipping new generations of athletes with the gear they needed to succeed.

Did the scores of high school students who filed into his office each year realize that he had been one of Liberty's most outstanding athletes? Maybe some did, but many may have overlooked this soft-spoken, aging employee.

In his later years, swimming was the one sport he could still participate in and he often taught it at the Bethlehem Boys Club's Camp Mohican.

George J. "Shadow" Resetco passed at the age of 68 in 1973. He was a charter member of Liberty High School's Athletic Hall of Fame.

Nearly a half-century after his death, Resetco's memory lives on each fall when the winner of the Liberty-Freedom game is presented with the Shadow Resetco trophy.