



# **A GLANCE TO THE PAST**

## **Bill Hawke and Butte High Sports**

**MONTANA HISTORY ORAL  
INTERVIEW**

**Interviewer: Brent Kautzman**

**Person Interviewed: Bill Hawke**

**Butte, MT**

**October 28, 1993**



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Conducted By: Brent Kautzman  
Date: October 28, 1993  
Location: Ramsay, MT, Bill Hawke's home

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### **I. (Brent) To start with I would like to know a little history about yourself (Bill Hawke).**

#### **A. (Brent) Where were you born?**

1. **(Bill)** I was Born in England in a little village called Ganavern.
2. I Came to this Country and Butte when I was 18 months old and I was born in the year 1910 and we have been here ever since.

#### **B. (Brent) Why did your parents leave England?**

1. **(Bill)** My father was a brick layer by trade, a stone mason, and there wasn't much work in England. My mothers sisters followed mining industry and knew things were booming in Butte. They came here and she followed her sisters.

#### **C. (Brent) What did your parents do for a living?**

1. **(Bill)** My father worked at his trade. He used to drive us around Butte and point out buildings he had build but the last 15 - 20 years of his life he ended up as a boss of the concrete work done on the hill.

### **II. (Brent) Next I want to get into your life of growing up in Butte.**

#### **A. How did you like growing up here?**

1. **(Bill)** We didn't own a home and moved around quite a bit.
2. We were always waiting for the ice wagon to come around so they could get a piece of ice. Didn't have much money to buy pop or anything. Money was scarcer.
3. We all had sandlot teams because of all the different sections (different nationalities) in Butte. All had the own teams at all different levels. We would raffle off a ton of coal to make money for jerseys and equipment for game. No umpires so they called it themselves which of course caused a few fights.

4. At one time before I played for Butte High School, we challenged the football team to game. Swede Dahlberg said alright and told us to come down to the field on Saturday morning and play. They didn't have any gear so Swede outfitted them with some extra gear. They played a game where each team would take the ball on the 50 yard line for 10 plays and then the next team would take it for 10 plays. Butte had won the championship the year before and we good again this year. We didn't do so well as a team but some of us impressed Swede and he came over to me after the game and asked if I went to Butte High School and how come I wasn't out for football. I told him that I didn't think I was good enough to play and he said I want you out for football next fall. So I was out for football next fall and made all state tackle. I played in 1928 and 1929. We got second in '28 and won the state championship in '29. So that was my football.
5. Swede wanted me to go out for track my senior year. He asked me if I ran and I said that I didn't run to good, so he said well do you pitch and I said yes I do. Swede said to try to throw the javelin. So I did. We only had about 2 or 3 meets in those days. 1 with Deerlodge and I won the javelin. We had a meet with Dillon and Butte Central, I won the javelin. When it came time to go to the state meet, we could only take 10 boys. Swede had 9 places pretty solid and only 1 place and there were 3 of us left, so we drew numbers out of a hat and I got the biggest number and out of the 10 boys I was the only 1 to get a first place. Great Falls beat us by 1 point in 1929.

### III. Butte High School Years (Sports at Butte High).

- A. (Brent) What did you think of Butte High School when you attended there?
  1. (Bill) Well most Freshman are scared to death and I was in that group. First half of a Freshman year we attended the Washington School which was over on East Granite and it's burned down. We were there until Christmas and then we moved into a building which also burned down later over on the corner of Park and Idaho. It was 3 stories high and was built in 1896. However, when we went there we were an unhappy lot until we got in with the crowd and made friends.
  2. At that time Football was king and in 1912, 13, 14, and 15 Butte High won the State Championship 4 years in a row and also in those years they played for 2 National Championships. So you can see where we got our football heritage.
  3. The old Butte High on the corner of Park and Idaho is all gone now because it burned down and Central is located there now. We left that school 3 or 4 years before it burnt down. We petitioned for a new school

which was finally built in 1938 on Main Street. However, there were some things not finished because they ran out of money. The track was an odd track, it was a very odd distance like a 7th of a mile. So it really couldn't be used for track meets, only for conditioning. This broke Swedes heart and so we had most of our meets out of town.

#### IV. College Sports (University of Montana Grizzlies)

A. (Brent) Did you go to college after graduating from Butte High School in 1929?

1. (Bill) You bet I did. Mr. Dahlberg set me up, I was very fortunate to win the javelin at the state meet and making All-State tackle in football, he got me set up at the University of Montana with 2 scholarships (Football and Track).

B. (Brent) What position did you play in football for the Griz?

1. (Bill) I played tackle and also played running guard, a blocking guard. I think that is why I had get a new hip 4 or 5 years ago because I used to block all the time. All we had was little felt pads, not like the big pads they have now and the helmets we used to wear we fold them up and put it in our back pocket when the game was over. So it was a little different game.

C. (Brent) Do you have any particular memories you remember about football in college?

1. (Bill) I think that I can probably draw on some. We played Stanford my senior year in Paloalto We had a team that was very good at kick off returns and so on. My assignment was an All-American that went by the name The Babyface Assassin, he was a guard for Stanford. It was my job to get him and I did get him. We crossed blocked and he didn't see me coming and I knocked him down and was laying on top of him so he couldn't get up again. Our ball carrier Bob Stansbury ran 95 yards for a touchdown. He got up and congratulated me and told me I was the hardest block he had all year but we didn't win the game. We didn't have enough subs and besides that we ran out of water. Oh it was hot down there. We only had 15 or 16 eligible players. They had tons of them. Tiny Thornhill was the coach of Stanford and they beat Bear Bryant in the Rose Bowl that year for the Rose Bowl Championship.

D. (Brent) What other teams did you play against while you were at U of M?

1. (Bill) We had to play everybody from the PAC 10. We didn't every team every year but that is where we got most of our schedule from. Poor little Montana, we were small potatoes and of coarse those big school



didn't want to come to Montana to play us. They would lose money, they could stay home and play in front of 50,000 or 60,000 people. Up here we didn't have any stands for that. So we had to play USC, California, both Washington schools, Idaho, both Oregon schools and we didn't have much of a chance with the number of kids out for football against all of those big schools and of course we didn't win any games either. We beat Idaho a couple of times and we beat Montana State. They were always on our schedule. The big ones, we had to be content with moral victories. Of which we had a few in which we played real good games and scored but enough. The reason that we stayed in the PAC 10 was because we got a cut of the Rose Bowl. That took care of the entire sports program for the U of M. All the teams got a cut.

## V. Life after College (Coaching).

A. (Brent) After college what profession did you go into?

1. (Bill) About the time that I was in my senior year I got a letter from Swede Dahlberg to come back to Butte High and be his assistant coach. I was tickled to death because I was already fond of him and then to be home with my mother and dad and so on. Anyway, I graduated and then that fall I entered Butte High as Swede's assistant. And the two of us went on maybe the next 4 or 5 years and then we got one more coach. A boy by the name of Sammy Leaper, who was a great Bulldog. Never at anytime when I was there did we have more than 3 coaches. Of course it is different now.

B. (Brent) What sports did you coach?

1. (Bill) I coached them all. I coached Basketball. Well Swede had the basketball at first and then later on he wanted to drop it, so I took it for awhile. I coached football and track all the way. I coached my own Bob Hawke to 2 National Championships. He went down to Sacramento, CA at the end of his senior year and they invited the best 8 of each event. 8 sprinters, 8 pole vaulters, 8 shot putters. He won 2 first places and broke the record in the discus.

C. (Brent) Do you remember any particular moments as a coach for Butte High?

1. (Bill) Oh yes, in 1935 Great Falls had, some people would argue, the best high school football team to ever play in Montana. They were hugh and they had fast backs, they did everything. By the time that we were ready to play them, they would run 35, 40, or 50 points on everybody that they played. But we fought our way up and we got to play them on Thanksgiving in 1935 for the State Championship. Well I had the

opportunity to do all the scouting for Butte High and I went and watched them play a couple of times and I picked up some things. That they passed off of one formation and that they ran off of another one. We changed our defense around for all of that stuff and we gambled. We just gambled all day long that we were going to gamble right. Well anyway we kicked off. They won the toss. Oh but first let me back up a little bit on this game. The Butte train was late and we're all out on the football field in Billings and the Butte train hasn't come in yet with all the Butte supporters (Mothers, Fathers, and the band), so when it's time for the game to start Swede is out there with Professor Scott, who used to be the head man in all high school track, football, and basketball. Anyway, he talked to the Great Falls coach and asked if he would mind waiting 10 or 15 minutes until the train got in. Well the 15 minutes was up and he's getting a little nervous. He wants to get his big horses on the field, so Scott talked him to another 5 minutes and still didn't work. And so finally the coach, his name was Ted Hodge, said that's it I'm taking my boys out onto the field, we won the toss and we're going to kick. Well while we were lining up you could hear something faint and then we could hear On Butte High School coming up the street. The band playing, we're out there and here comes Mothers, Fathers, Sisters, Aunts, Uncles, Cousins. Well they walked all the way from depot and it must have been 2 miles or 3 miles and the band playing On Butte High School and anything else they knew. Well they marched into the stadium and there wasn't a dry eye on our team. There was a lot of kissing and hugging, so they had to hold the game up for 5 minutes more to get the fans up into the stands. So anyway we were a different team after they left. The kids jaws were hanging out and they were wiping the tears away from their eyes. I can see my Mother and Dad walked the whole distance with a little flag waving On Butte High School. So anyway we kicked off and we got a great kick. They tried to run it out of the end zone and a couple of us nailed him just as he got out on about the 2 yard line but that was nothing to them because they run 35 - 40 points on everybody, they could do anything they wanted. They ran 3 plays and maybe got a total of about 2 or 3 yards more and they had to kick. Now when you have great teams you need to practice kicking once in while. They had only kicked once or twice for the entire football season. So there back goes back to kick and Harry Schaeffer from our team blocked it for a 2 point safety. Now I'll give you the end of the game, 2 to nothing Butte High won. There were down in our 20 yard line 2 or 3 times, we fought them off. We kicked out. A little kid from the cabbage patch, named Joe Tumme, would kick them big, blummen spirals and set them back. We fought them hard. It was one of the greatest struggles you would of ever seen for us to hold that magnificent team. It was the number one game that I was ever connected with as a player or a coach, 2 to nothing.

D. **(Brent)** Lets get into the Silver B's next. When did this organization start?

1. **(Bill)** Okay, in the year of 1940, 7 old timers got together and came up with the idea of Silver B's. They thought that basketball and track people were sissies ut football was king. Here are a few of the names: Butter Driscoll, Mig Griffeth, Johnny Curtis, Herb Brotherton, Rex Donnely, Doc Shrider, and Billy Myers. They wanted get something started with the football. Football was king that's all that they ever talked about and these other sports were nothing. But anyway they started this in the year of 1940 and I was at there first meeting as an assistant coach and I haven't missed very many meetings since. I been to an awful lot of them and I think that right now I am the oldest Golden B in the organization, at 83 years old. I know that Doctor Davidson is a year behind me. He is 82 years old but I don't know of anybody else. As I look at old pictures many of my teammates are all gone.

2. **(Brent)** What is a Silver B?

**(Bill)** A Silver B is a man who made his first letter 25 years ago, a Golden B is 50 years ago, and a Diamond B is 75 years ago. In the History of the organization we have had 2 Diamond B's but they are both gone now. We have had lots of letters and questionnaires sent to us on how to get other towns started with an organization such as ours, even Butte Central wants to get a letterman's club going on 25 and 50. We are always happy to do this to help them get started.

3. **(Bill)** What do they do (meaning the Silver B's)?

First of all we are the number one fans of the football team, win or lose, we back them all the way. We give them a yearly banquet. If they need something, we've got them new shoes, new suits, we got them a new scoreboard last year, and equipment. So we are dedicated to helping the football program at Butte High School.

## VI. Life as a Teacher at Butte High School.

A. **(Brent)** What kinds of changes did you see in the school from when you were a student to when you were a teacher there? Also how long did you teach there?

1. **(Bill)** Well I taught 40 years. We went through alot of things. I think that when I retired I was getting out of alot things that have really ballooned over there and that is drugs. The drug situation, we didn't have that when I was there. But anyway Butte kids are great. I enjoyed all of my classes and at times I would look up and say I can't believe it that I am back in my old school and I worked hard at it. I taught Montana History and also I taught Biology. I enjoyed it and my kids were great.

When I retired the kids gave a banquet right in our biology room. They gave me a grand banquet and a plaque.

2. **(Brent)** Can you tell me about the intramural program that you started at Butte High?

**(Bill)** I felt sorrow for so many kids that wanted to be athletes but they just weren't big enough, didn't have the right time, or they had jobs after school. Oh there are all kinds of reasons. A lot of them didn't have the body, the will, or the parents to support them. So I wanted to get a program started, we played touch football, water basketball, horseshoes, tennis, golf, softball, and even pool. We made a deal with a guy who ran a pool hall and had tournaments for kids that liked to do that. So anyway we had a lot of kids in it and they loved it. We gave little awards to it. It was the biggest program in the state at the time. I got letters from other various schools who wanted to know how to get it started. We got the thing started and it snowballed. Kids tell other kids and it really boomed. I tried to get money from the school board but they didn't have any money, so somebody told me to go to the housing committee over at the Silver Bow Homes and they gave me \$100.00 for balls. Then it wasn't long before the school board but us on their budget and then we could get the kids colored jackets and things like that. I just loved it! When I retired that broke my heart to lose that program. I dropped out of basketball and track and put all of my efforts into the Intramural Program. I don't think that they have much of a program now. It's too bad because it was a great program.

- B. **(Brent)** Well I think that about does it for our interview for tonight.

1. **(Bill)** Well it's been fun. I'll be dreaming tonight about all of those good days. Well before we run let me to tell a little bit about the Hall of Fame that they have here in Butte. Well I was picked on the Hall of Fame thanks to a bunch of fellows up there that knew me. I'm overwhelmed that I was chosen so early. Then they went ahead with other awards for me. This is all the Hall of Fame. They wanted me to have a football picture of a team that I played on that won that state championship, one that I helped coach, one of a track team that I helped coached, and also one of basketball team that I coached (all of which won the State Championship). Of course these are just samples because there are a lot more than what I just mentioned. In my career coaching there we probably had 9 or 10 football championships that I helped coach. I am very grateful and I think that it is a wonderful thing that those people do. Have you seen all of the new things for the Hall of Fame in the Civic Center? They have that big arched Hall of Fame now.

2. **(Brent)** I think that Butte High sports is a big part of Butte history also.



**(Bill)** Oh yes, in those old days when they used to win so many games. Playing against the Fort Shaw Indians and all that. It started out that we had the biggest school and then it ended up that we were the only one of the big schools to only have one high school. All of them around Helena, Missoula, Billings, they all have two or three big schools and we still only have the one not counting Butte Central because they are in a different league.

**(Brent)** Well I think that about does it. Thank you!