

6/20/08

Many people are aware of Sister Mary Jeanne's work in academia and in the mental health field but fewer are fully cognizant of her athletic abilities. Sister attended L.S.U. and graduated prior to entering the Dominican Order. While at L.S.U. she played intramural sports as, in the 1940s there were no collegiate sports open to women. One of the teams she played on was a co-ed touch football team, men and women playing on the same team. Her team included Y.A. Tittle, probably the greatest quarterback who ever played at L.S.U. and a first string All-American who then played professional football for the New York Giant for many years – in fact, his playing years (over 15 years) ranked him as one of the longest- playing in professional football.

Realizing it would be unfair to play quarterback on the coed intramural touch football team Tittle decided to play end, and suggested to Sr. Mary Jeanne (then Miss Shirley Girshefski) that she play the quarterback position and try to do the best she could, given her limitations. She modestly agreed to do her best. Tittle called the first play wherein he would run straight down field, the rest of the team would block and Miss Girshefski would make an effort to throw the ball to him. The play was called, the line blocked, Tittle raced downfield and Ms. Girshefski dropped back to pass. Suddenly a bullet pass left her right hand, fast and accurate, traveled downfield flying along ten feet over Tittle's head and twenty five feet ahead of him. Alas, Tittle was too slow to handle Miss Girshefski's passes! Thereafter, it was said the star quarterback never played end again!

Her football passing ability was confirmed by a colleague of mine who taught at Dominican College when Sister was assigned there as Dean of the College of Education. He recalled seeing her throw pass after pass to students, each a perfect spiral with precise accuracy.

After graduating L.S.U. she played on a semi-professional basketball team, touring Central America for a month playing local teams. Thereafter she entered the Dominican novitiate, a little behind the schedule, because they kept winning.

You can never judge a book by its cover!

Bill Oberhelman  
Friend of the Dominicans

*Yelberton Abraham Tittle, better known as Y. A. Tittle, (born October 24, 1926 in Marshall, TX Tittle played college football at Louisiana State University and in his most prolific college season, he passed for 780 yards, leading the Fighting Tigers to a 9-1 record and a #8 ranking in the final AP poll. LSU then tied Arkansas in the Cotton Bowl. Tittle lettered for the Tigers from 1944-47 and LSU compiled a record of 23-11-3 during that time span. Tittle is a member of the LSU Athletics Hall of Fame. He was inducted into the Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame in 1972.*

-- Wikipedia