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## **LONGTIME HILLTOPPER FOOTBALL COACH BUTCH GILBERT PASSES AWAY AT 87**

BOWLING GREEN, Ky. — Lawrence “Butch” Gilbert, who spent the bulk of his adult life as a part of the football program at Western Kentucky University, passed away early Monday (Feb. 27) at the age of 87.

After an outstanding career in the area high school coaching ranks, Gilbert returned to his alma mater as an assistant on head coach Jimmy Feix’ staff in 1969. He spent 15 seasons with Feix, a former teammate of his on The Hill, coaching the WKU offensive line. In 1973, he was promoted to assistant head coach and offensive coordinator, a position he held through 1983.

Following Feix’ retirement from coaching after the 1983 season, Gilbert spent 1984 as an administrative aide and running backs coach for new head coach Dave Roberts before retiring from coaching. When Jack Harbaugh took over the Topper coaching reins in 1989, Gilbert came out of retirement and spent two seasons on the football staff, working primarily with the kickers and special teams.

Even in retirement in later years, Gilbert continued to help out whenever called upon. He was a fixture on the Hilltopper football scene for large parts of eight decades — as a player in the late 1940s and early 1950s; a coach in the late 1960s, the 1970s, the 1980s and the early 1990s; and as a treasured asset the rest of his life.

As a high school athlete, Gilbert lettered three times in both football (as an offensive lineman and linebacker) and baseball (as a pitcher, first baseman and outfielder) at Bowling Green High School. As a senior in 1946, he captained the football team, earning all-conference and honorable mention all-state honors. On the diamond, he helped lead the Purples to appearances in three state tournaments.

After high school graduation in 1947, Gilbert moved three blocks up the street to enroll at WKU, where he earned four letters in football (1948-49-50-51), captaining the Hilltoppers as a senior All-Ohio Valley Conference center in ‘51. His 1950 club went 6-2-2 and took runner-up honors in the OVC. Included in those six victories was a 14-13 triumph over Eastern Kentucky in the WKU Homecoming Game. It was Gilbert’s extra point kick (following a long touchdown pass from Jimmy Feix to Max Stevens) in the final seconds that proved to be the winning point.

After graduation in 1952, Gilbert served stints as an assistant coach at Russellville (1952-53) and Bowling Green (1953-57) high schools before being named head coach at Campbellsville High School where he spent four years (1957-63). He then moved on to Glasgow High School where he was the Scotties’ head coach for six seasons (1963-69) before joining Feix’ staff at WKU in 1969. Overall, his CHS and GHS clubs were 67-47-9.

Eleven of the 18 Hilltopper teams he coached posted winning seasons (with two .500 years and only five below .500), amassing 109 victories against 67 losses and five ties, a 62 percent winning percentage. Twelve of his offensive linemen earned All-OVC honors and three — David Carter (1976), Chip Carpenter (‘77) and Pete Walters (‘80) — were honored as All-Americans.

Gilbert is survived by his wife, Daphna (Gabbard), and four children, two sons (Larry and Steve) and two daughters (Leigh and Kelli).

Arrangements are being handled by the J.C. Kirby and Sons Funeral Chapel at 820 Lovers Lane in Bowling Green. Visitation will be from 2-8 p.m., Wednesday, March 1, and from 9-11 a.m., Thursday, March 2. The funeral is set for 11 a.m., Thursday, March 2.