

THE “KING” – JOE KROL

By Bob Sproule

(official statistician Toronto Argonaut Football Club)
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In the ancient days of Canadian football, the halfback had to be a jack-of-all trades and not a specialist as he is today. Those leather-clad warriors had to be able to run with the ball, pass and catch it and of course, kick it. Following the Second World War, the multi-talented halfback became a dying breed if not all together non-existent as the Canadian Rugby Union clubs imported the more talented American running backs in their quest for the Grey Cup.

At this time an unknown player appeared on the scene, and in the years to come, he would take his team to five Grey Cup victories including three consecutive titles. His name was Joe Krol and he was a Canadian born player in the early days of the imports. During the years that he wore an Argonaut uniform, he became one of the greatest players of the game and perhaps the best halfback ever to play in the Canadian championship.

Because of his natural ability, there was little he couldn't do on the gridiron. His plays brought many a fan to their feet as his last-minute feats turned on defeat into a victory. He was remembered as the triple threat – a running, passing, catching and kicking wizard that at times appeared to be the entire football team. His passes were thrown with uncanny accuracy, and his best punts were with a wet ball into the wind or even under a tremendous rush by the opposition's defenders. He always had a play for every situation – the quick kick, the onside kick, the pass over the middle to a teammate or the fake pass and the run to the sidelines.

Perhaps his best game was his first one with the Argos against Montreal in 1945. Toronto had to win in order to tie Ottawa for first place and force a playoff series. The Double Blue won 31-6, but the big story was Krol. He set two Interprovincial Rugby Football Union records as he completed 13 of 16 passes for a record 305 yards and threw four touchdown passes to Royal Copeland who caught 10 receptions for 224 yards.

In the games that followed, this passing combination of number 55 to number 77 earned them the title of the “Gold Dust Twins” or the “Touchdown Twins”, one of the most feared pass-and-catch teams in history. During their career together, Krol threw 22 touchdown passes, and 13 of them were caught by Copeland. First it was either Krol's or Royal's running. When that was stopped, it was Krol passing to Copeland. And when that was defended, Copeland would then pass to Krol. They were the perfect unit and hard to stop.

Krol won the scoring title with 65 points in 1946, the most points in a season since Lionel Conacher's 85 in 1921. He finished second in both 1947 and 1948. All totaled he scored an Argo record 289 points including 18 field goals and 87 converts. Not only did he hold the Grey Cup career record of 30 points, but also held the playoff record for most career points at 60 on three TD's, 12 converts, five field goals and 18 singles.

During the 1947 playoff games, Krol personally eliminated the Ottawa teams with his kicking. In the first Argo-Rough Rider game his three singles were enough for a 3-0 win and the 16 points in the second game defeated Ottawa 21-0. Against the Ontario Rugby Football Union Champs Krol's running and kicking stopped the Ottawa Trojans 22-1.

By the end of the 1949 season, Krol virtually held all the touchdown passing records: most in a game (four), most in a season (seven), most career (22), most in a playoff game (three), most career playoff games (six), most in a Grey Cup game (three) and

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most career Grey Cup games (seven). In the 1945 Grey Cup classic he threw two TD passes and scored on an interception as Argos dumped Winnipeg 35-0.

A year later he had three major score passes, and was on the receiving end of a Copeland scoring connection as Argos again won 28-6. In 1947 his scoring pass to Copeland and kicks gave the Double Blue their third straight Grey Cup win 10-9. And finally, his kicking again helped defeat the Blue Bombers 13-0 in the 1950 national finale. He returned for the 1952 Grey Cup game against Edmonton only as the third-down punter and it was the first time Krol was held off the scoreboard. Few players dominated the game or the Grey Cup as did Joe Krol.

After the 1953 season, he quit the game. He tried to make a comeback two years later as the team's kicker, but a low punting average and his age, 35 years, caused his return to be short lived.

Krol's mastery of the triple threat and passing alliance with Copeland earned him four-time All-Star honors and his name became a household word. When he retired for good, the Argonaut Football Club directors retired his number 55. To his many fans and fellow players he was truly Joe "King" Krol of Canadian Football.