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U.S. ARMY MANEUVER CENTER OF EXCELLENCE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

## Doughboys to complete historic season Nov. 10

FORT BENNING, Ga. (Nov. 1, 2011) – Echoes of larger-than-life names from Fort Benning’s storied past will fill historic Doughboys Stadium here Nov. 10 when the Maneuver Center’s football heroes take to their home field against the Team James All Stars, a semi-pro team from Atlanta.

Coached by **Columbus Lions** (Professional Indoor Football League - PIFL) head coach **Jason Gibson** and led by quarterback (2<sup>nd</sup> Lt.) **Blake Powers**, who was the starting signal caller for Indiana University of the Big Ten for two years before being commissioned in the Army, the 2011 **Doughboys** have revived a tradition that dates back to 1925.

Over the years, the Doughboys’ roster has included many players and coaches, who went on to great success in college and professional football, including:

- then Army Capt. **Bill Meeks** who later became head coach at Southern Methodist University and then an assistant coach with the NFL Dallas Cowboys,
- **Bob Waterfield** who later played quarterback for the NFL Los Angeles Rams (and was also was the husband of Hollywood film star **Jane Russell**),
- **Jack Stroud** who played 11 years with the NFL New York Giants (including three Pro Bowls),
- **Pat Dye** who was an All American guard at SEC power Georgia before going on to a successful head coaching career at Auburn,
- and even one U.S. President – then Army Capt. **Dwight D. Eisenhower**, Doughboys assistant coach in 1926. Eisenhower’s Army career is legendary, retiring as a “five star” General of the Army.

### Spirit of Fort Benning

Maneuver Center of Excellence and Fort Benning Commander Maj. Gen. Robert Brown said, “We are getting back to the ‘*Spirit of Fort Benning*.’ Much like in the 1920s, the timing was perfect for this American tradition to be revived at Doughboy Stadium. As the leaders knew then, we also know that sport – athleticism and the spirit of competition – helps build resiliency, teamwork and *esprit de corps*.”

Many of the reasons Fort Benning leaders started the Doughboys games back in the 1920s, are the similar to the reasons current leaders decided to bring them back this year – hearty competition that displays the toughness of Soldiers, low-cost entertainment for the community in tough economic times; a great way to encourage healthy athletic competition in the area.

The spirit and resiliency of this team – as they train together and play – reflects the spirit and resiliency of Army Families and the teamwork and spirit of the combined arms of

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Infantry and Armor. "We have all seen that teamwork today is more important than ever (to Soldiers). Cooperation and collaboration leads to success," said Brown.

The Doughboys (2-1) defeated the Columbus State University Cougars 41-6 in the second annual "Doughboy Bowl" played here Oct 27. The Doughboys hit the road this weekend to play Lagrange College before returning home to close out the 2011 season against Team James.

### **Doughboy Memorial Stadium**

Organized team sports have been important at Fort Benning since the post was established in 1918, during World War I. Originally named, "Camp Benning" and located nearer downtown Columbus, Ga., on Macon Road, the Infantry School moved further south to its current location in 1919. Following that move, the school Commandant authorized a simple football field with goal posts where the current Bryant Field House stands to encourage friendly competition among Soldier teams of tenant units.

In 1924, a movement began on the newly-renamed Fort Benning to build a football stadium to replace the dusty field then in use. During January 1924, the Infantry School Recreational Project was announced. Its main function was to foster a stadium idea and to begin plans for an athletic center.

Since government funds were not authorized to build a field, a fund-raising drive began among the Soldiers themselves to construct a gridiron worthy of the "Home of Infantry." The ambitious project would be paid for by contemporary "Doughboys" to honor the Infantry Doughboys who gave their lives in World War I. Soon, U.S. Army Infantry Regiments across the nation and overseas sent contributions to the stadium committee to help fund the memorial field.

On March 10, 1924, ground was broken for construction of the 8,500 seating capacity Doughboy Stadium. By April 28, construction of forms for concrete stands inside the stadium began. Taking advantage of the only dry day during an inspection visit, General of the Armies John J. Pershing ceremonially poured the first yard of concrete for the stadium May 22. In addition, the Cavalry School donated a check for \$1,000 on Jan. 15, 1925, to help put the project over the top.

An all-post team of officers and enlisted men selected from Soldier athletes from across post prepared throughout 1925 to do battle with other clubs in the fall. While variously known as the "Blue Team" for Infantry Blue, the "Infantry Big Blue Tide," the "Doughboy Eleven," and the "Infantry Eleven," the official team name finally became simply the "Doughboys." While locally referred to as GIs or Dogfaces, the term Doughboys was still in universal use to describe the common Soldier throughout World War II.

Long before the official dedication of Doughboy Memorial Stadium, the grass was torn with Soldier cleats as the fans couldn't wait. A Fort Benning post team first played on the new field Sept. 26, 1925 as the new Doughboy Memorial Field was christened by the "Blue Team" when they defeated Stetson University from DeLand, Florida, 51 to 7.

However, the official Stadium dedication game was played Oct. 17, 1925, when the Infantry football team defeated Oglethorpe College, 27 to 6. The Doughboys were on a roll. One of the original Assistant Coaches during that first season was a young Infantryman, Capt. Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Besides providing a first-class sports arena, Doughboy Memorial Stadium also served for many years as the formal review field for Fort Benning. Famous notables who visited troops at Fort Benning viewed formations

crossing the field, including **President Franklin D. Roosevelt** in March 1939, and **President Lyndon B. Johnson** in November 1967.

During the height of World War II, **Bob Hope** entertained Fort Benning Soldiers at the stadium in March 1944. In a scene depicted in the movie version of, “We Were Soldiers Once...And Young.” the 1st Air Cavalry Division held its farewell review in the Doughboy Memorial Stadium before deployment to the Republic of Vietnam in August 1965.

The Doughboys football team stopped play in the early 1980s before being revived for one game last year (comprised of 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade Combat Team players) and then the roster was opened to all Soldiers on post this year.

Doughboy Stadium is located on Fort Benning’s Main Post. This free event is open to the public. Gates open at 6 p.m., and pre-game activities and entertainment will start at 6:30 p.m.

The Fort Benning Silver Wings Parachute Demonstration Team will jump in with the American Flag and deliver the game ball. Armed forces veterans will be honored at halftime.

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