

Gridiron glory in the movies

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While All-American running back Eddie Price (pictured) did not actually appear in the 1949 film 'Father Was a Fullback,' the Tulane team scored a mention in the movie. Price led the Green Wave to the Southeastern Conference football championship that year, for real. (Photo of Eddie Price courtesy Tulane University Archives. Photo illustration by Marian Herbert Bruno)

Editor's note: This column reflects the personal experience of Tulane alumnus Angus Lind. It appears in the December 2018 issue of [Tulanian](#).

As the regular college football season transitions into bowl season, and then into "Wait till next year!" mode, all the football fan can do is hope his/her team is going to a bowl game — or in desperation satisfy a craving by watching a favorite football movie or game replays.

Tulane fans early this season were confident this would be the year the Green Wave would go bowling after being stopped inches short last year. Happily, this weekend on Saturday, Dec. 15, the team is headed to the AutoNation Cure Bowl in Orlando, Florida.

But, you could also opt for the movies. And no matter which way the season turns out, some key Tulane sports figures have their favorite gridiron cinemas. Confident that none of these gentlemen have degrees in film studies, I asked Tulane Head Football Coach Willie Fritz, Athletics Director Troy Dannen, and The Voice of the Green Wave, Todd Graffagnini, to select their favorite football movies.

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Fritz came up with *The Best of Times*, a 1986 Robin Williams comedy about a guy who dropped a crucial pass in the final seconds of a game with their archrivals, and later in life keeps reliving it. Dannen named *Johnny Be Good*, also a comedy from 1988. A top high school quarterback is being hotly recruited and is offered everything from free room and board to girls, cars and cash. His girlfriend wants him to go to their local state college, which is offering him nothing. Graff chose *Rudy*, a 1993 movie about a not-so talented high school player who dreams of playing for Notre Dame.

Having seen all of these movies, rest assured Tulane is not mentioned in any of them. So chances are neither the Coach, nor the AD, nor The Voice saw *Father Was a Fullback*, a 1949 movie starring venerable Hollywood actor Fred MacMurray. MacMurray plays George Cooper, the head coach of State U. Even though State plays a brutal schedule, Cooper's on the hot seat because he's losing — a lot. A meddlesome alum with big bucks named Jessup tells the coach the alums want to fire him. "All the more reason for winning the Tulane game — the last game of the season!" Tulane is State U's traditional rival. At the annual alumni dinner before the game, the coach tells them, "You and I know that any year we beat Tulane is a good year so no matter what else happens, I promise we're going to beat Tulane!"

Today's Green Wave fans may not know that in 1949, a lofty perch usually reserved for Notre Dame or Michigan, went to Tulane. It was picked No. 1 in the country and to win the national championship — for real. They rolled over Alabama and Georgia Tech before hitting a stumbling block. But that's not the point. When the movie debuted in New Orleans, a large crowd stood and cheered when the teams ran on the field. The music played then and throughout the movie was "Roll Green Wave!"

Tulane wins the game 6-0 when Cooper's secret weapon misfires. And then he is told, "You know, any year we lose to Tulane is a bad year."