

Ineligible Player Costs Wittenberg 9 Triumphs

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SPRINGFIELD, Ohio, Dec. 15 (UPI) — Wittenberg UniVersity, which completed the football season undefeated and shared the Ohio Conference championship with Capital, forfeited its nine victories today because its all-Conference tackle, Rick Mako, had not registered for fall classes.

Mako, 21 years old, who should have been a senior at the school, lived in his regular quarters at the university, but merely went through the motions of attending classes.

The discovery that Mako was not registered and was, therefore, ineligible to play varsity football, followed a routine request for his student file by a department of the university last Friday.

The violation was reported to the conference commissioner, A.N. Smith, who ruled that Wittenberg must forfeit its 1970 games.

The Tigers, with a 9-0 record, posted their second successive unbeaten season.

20 Victories in Row

Wittenberg, long a national small-college football power, had set the current national collegiate college division record with 20 straight victories.

The Tigers led the nation's small colleges in scoring this fall with a 40-point average. Wittenberg's Dave Maurer was selected for the second straight year as one of the nation's outstanding small-college football coaches.

Dr. Floyd R. Nave, the chairman of the college council committee on athletics, said an inquiry by the committee showed that the Wittenberg football staff was not aware that Mako was not registered.

Athletic Director Bill Edwards said the fact that Wittenberg played two football games before classes began may have contributed to the fact that Mako's failure to register was not detected.

Edwards said most upper classmen preregister the preceding spring for the fall quarter.

But Mako, at his home in Bay Village, said he was unable to preregister because he still had some outstanding bills at school.

"I hadn't paid my bills from last semester and I didn't have my class cards," Mako said. "I tried to register this fall instead of last spring, but when I went in to register, they told me I was too late.

"I kind of panicked. I got into a trap and didn't know what to do. It's been eating at me. I knew I had made a mistake. It was just a mixup."

Edwards, who coached the Tigers until last year, when Maurer took over, said, "I feel sorry for our coaches and our players. They worked so hard and then to have this happen. But I guess we can live through it."

Edwards said Mako's quietness may have helped get him into the predicament.

“He is a very quiet boy who never says anything,” Edwards said. “The only time you can have a conversation with him is if you initiate it. If he had come to one of the coaches or me we could have straightened this thing out.”

Edwards said Mako apparently went about his daily routine just as if he were attending classes, spending much of his time in the library.

“With so much independent study and so many seminars, it wasn't hard,” Edwards said. “He kind of lived a double life.”