

# JACK MOLLENKOPF LETTER TO MIKE PHIPPS

By Tom Schott

The seeds for Purdue's 1967 Big Ten Conference champion season began to germinate in the spring of 1966.

Quarterback Mike Phipps of Columbus, Indiana, made the decision to attend Purdue, and he would go on to become a three-year starter for the Boilermakers from 1967 to 1969.

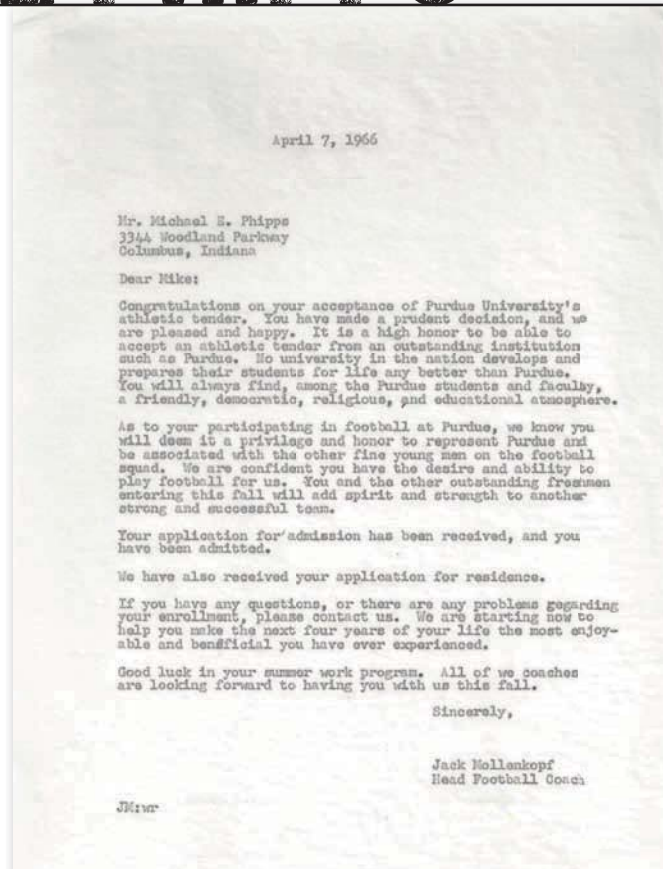
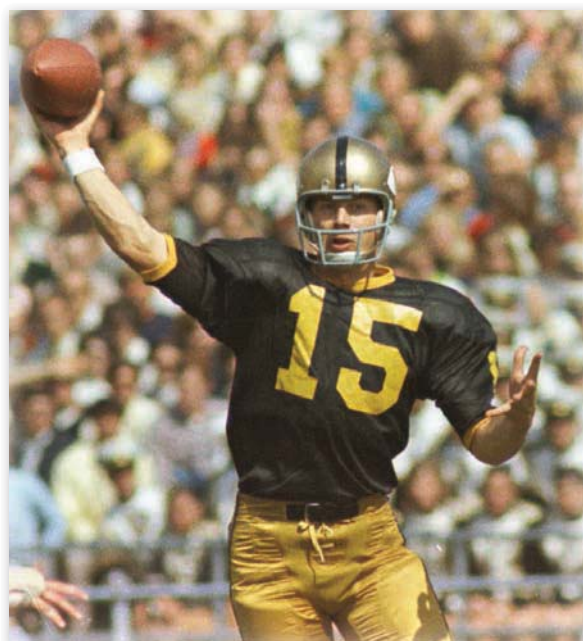
In a letter dated April 7, 1966, head coach Jack Mollenkopf said to Phipps, "We know you will deem it a privilege and honor to represent Purdue and be associated with the other fine young men on the football squad. We are confident you have the desire and ability to play football for us."

Phipps assumed the reins from three-year starter Bob Griese as a sophomore in 1967 and led the Boilermakers to three consecutive 8-2 seasons, establishing himself as the winningest quarterback in school history at the time.

Heading into the 1967 season, junior Mike Engelbrecht was the early favorite to be the starting signal-caller, but Phipps burst onto the scene and, when Engelbrecht was injured prior to the season opener at Texas A&M, Phipps got the nod.

"The Flipper" threw a pair of second-half touchdown passes to lead 10th-ranked Purdue over No. 1 Notre Dame 28-21 at Ross-Ade Stadium on Sept. 30. He would go on to become the first quarterback ever to beat the Fighting Irish three straight years.

As a senior, Phipps was a unanimous All-America selection and finished runner-up in the Heisman Trophy balloting, with Oklahoma's Steve Owens winning by merely 154 votes. Phipps set



school records with 2,527 passing yards and 23 touchdowns that year, while also rushing for eight touchdowns.

Twice named first team All-Big Ten (1967 and 1969), Phipps was selected first team Academic All-American in 1969, received the Big Ten Medal of Honor in 1970 and was the recipient of a prestigious Rhodes scholarship. He played in the 1969 North-South Shrine Game and the 1970 Hula Bowl.

Nearly 50 years after taking his last collegiate snap from center, Phipps' name still appears prominently in the Purdue record book. He ranks tied for seventh in career touchdown passes (37) and eighth in career passing yards (5,423).

Selected by the Cleveland Browns with the third-overall pick in the 1970 NFL Draft, Phipps enjoyed a 12-year professional career with the Browns (1970-76) and Chicago Bears (1977-81). He amassed 10,506 passing yards with 55 touchdown passes.

Phipps, who now makes his home in Lighthouse Point, Florida, was inducted into the Purdue Intercollegiate Athletics Hall of Fame in 1995 and the College Football Hall of Fame in 2006.