

Mystery Solved! Did Oak Ridge High School Football Really Win the Mythical 1958 National Championship?

(As published in *The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking* column on August 6, 2013)

I am pleased to bring you the following story from Earl Nall, Director of Technology at the Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association and a member of the TSSAA Hall of Fame. He writes and maintains all the computer programs that are used to select football playoff teams each year. For many years his high school football ratings were published in newspapers across the state. He is a 1962 graduate of Oak Ridge High School

Earl says he was provided with helpful research for this story by High School Historian Dave Krider.

Here is the astounding story of the research required to prove by actual documentation that Oak Ridge was in fact the National Champions in 1958 as told in Earl Nall's words!

...

The scoreboard at Oak Ridge's Blankenship Field lists state championships won by the football Wildcats and that the 'Cats were the 1958 National Champions.

With the passage of time, no members of the 1958 team can remember who named the Wildcats national champs. Publications tracking the history of the tradition-rich Oak Ridge teams all referenced the national championship but all these publications referenced each other, with none naming the source. Retired coach Don Bordinger doesn't remember anything about it.

Oak Ridge High School Athletic Director, Mike Mullins, has a big trophy in his office that recognizes the 'Cats being awarded the national championship by the Associated Press. Only problem is, the Associated Press has never named a national high school football champion.

For many years Wikipedia listed Portland (Jefferson), Oregon as national champs in 1958, but on October 20, 2012 at 9:37 PM someone with a moniker of "Marvinsicool13" grabbed a Wikipedia account and changed the Wikipedia page to show Oak Ridge as the 1958 champions. This is the only Wikipedia change this user ever made and the user has since deleted their account!

Tracing other changes on the Wikipedia championship page shows it is a common practice for someone to go in and add their school the list - thus further solidifying the fact that one should not believe everything that is on the Internet. In fact, for the 29 years from 1952-1980, people have changed the national championship winners for 1957, 1958, 1960, 1969, 1972, 1973, 1975, and 1976. The list on Wikipedia is woefully incorrect.

So, is there any truth to that great 1958 team being ranked #1 in the nation by anybody?

The answer was found in a storage room at a house in La Port, Indiana. But, the answer required some further digging than just looking up on a list. When the dust cleared there was the answer -- from a June, 1981, Newsletter from the National Sports News Service.

"1958 National Co-Champions Oak Ridge, Tennessee 10-0, Wichita Falls, Texas (Class 4A Champions with a 48-6 victory over Pasadena, TX)."

There it was, a definitive, historical newsletter that provided an official validation of the 1958 claim and an official list of mythical national high school football champions between 1952 and 1980.

The documentation was provided by Dave Krider. Krider is a nationally known high school historian who has a penchant for being a pack rat when it comes to high school sports history. That trait of saving historical documents solved the Oak Ridge question once and for all.

Mystery Solved! Did Oak Ridge High School Football Really Win the Mythical 1958 National Championship?

(As published in *The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking* column on August 6, 2013)

Krider is a member of the National High School Federation Hall of Fame and was the person who for 16 years put together the USA Today national football rankings which began in 1982. He still writes for CBS/MaxPreps as a major high school contributor.

I talked to Mr. Krider for quite a while and he told me of the history of the National Sports News Service. The National Sports News Service was started in 1927. It was the only news service that picked national high school football champions until 1982, when the USA Today, and Mr. Krider, started their ratings.

Today, there are many national high school ratings systems but for 45 years they were the **only** national ranking system, except for a two year publication of the short lived Joe Namath National magazine, which rated teams.

What was the National Sports News Service? Their staff consisted of Art Johlfs, then a 21 year old coach and official from Minnesota who had a love of high school sports. Other staff members were ... well there were none.

Johlfs WAS the National Sports News Service. Johlfs scoured all newspapers he could find and created a loose federation of people from across the nation to supply him with analysis of various teams in their area. He went to the University of Michigan and watched any game films they had of high school teams. Johlfs continued his work until 1978 when he turned the job over to Barry Sollenberger.

Over the years as technology changed so did the way Mr. Johlfs would collect data on the teams nationwide. He created groups of people in six different areas of the nation and had them rate the teams in their area. Then they would all discuss which of the teams were considered the best in each area.

One of the major changes in the National Sports News Service ranking began in 1959, when they started publishing a national top 10 list. It is because of this switch between how the ratings were done between 1958 (the Oak Ridge, Wichita Fall year) and 1959, that the Portland (Jefferson), Oregon #1 rating, happened.

Krider thinks that Portland got listed in 1958 because of a combination of the fact that there were co-champs in 1958 and there was some confusion in the listing of a single team one each year to a top ten listing.

However, by him having the definitive newsletter from 1981 that named Wichita Falls, TX and Oak Ridge, TN - it becomes official. Perceived myth turned to facts. Mr. Krider has provided the definitive documentation! He is a recognized expert in high school sports, and for me his word is gold. Who is qualified to argue with him?

An irony that was uncovered by this research was that in the same June 1981 National Sports News Service Newsletter, the second best team in Oak Ridge history was also listed. On page two was the final Top 25 standings for 1980 - and there was Oak Ridge at No. 3.

Not bad company, as other teams in top 25 are some of the best known high school programs in the nation. Cincinnati, OH, Moeller #1, Odessa, TX, Permian #5, Valdosta, GA, #7, Central Bucks West, PA, #12, and Youngstown, OH, Cardinal Mooney #16.

Now that we have the facts, Oak Ridge can continue to claim *without controversy* that they were national football champions and all Mike Mullins has to do to put the final stamp of approval is to remove the Associated Press National Champions plate on his trophy and replace it with one that reads "National Sports News Service National Champions."

Now we can put this argument in our past and move on and wait for the next national championship that will happen at some point. (SOON! I am sure Coach Gaddis would agree – Ray)

Mystery Solved! Did Oak Ridge High School Football Really Win the Mythical 1958 National Championship?

(As published in *The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking* column on August 6, 2013)

During my research on solving the 1958 National Championship question, the most amazing find to me was that the National Sports News Service was the only news service in the nation that tried to name a mythical national champion in football for over 45 years!

As revered as high school football is in the United States, that no other media outlet even attempted to name a national champions until 1982 when Mr. Krider and the USA Today started theirs is unfathomable to me. And, the National Sports News Service was a one man show.

...

Thank you, Earl Nall! I truly appreciate Earl for letting me publish his outstanding research to prove the 1958 national championship is rightfully Oak Ridge's to claim, even if the trophy needs to be corrected to recognize the proper agency that provided that honor to Oak Ridge.

I hope you have enjoyed this deep dive into history. I find it amazing that such detail can so easily be lost! Without folks like Dave Krider, a natural "Pack Rat," such detailed documentation as this newsletter might be lost forever to future generations.



Earl Nall, the primary source of the energy that proved this championship for Oak Ridge



Dave Krider, the "Pack Rat" who had the documented proof!

Mystery Solved! Did Oak Ridge High School Football Really Win the Mythical 1958 National Championship?

(As published in *The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking* column on August 6, 2013)



National Sports News Service

NEWSLETTER

VOL. 1, NO. 5 (FOOTBALL) JUNE, 1981

FAUST MAY SET TREND

(PHOENIX) Could Gerry Faust be blazing a path for high school coaches? "I certainly hope so," he told *Arizona Republic* sports director Verne Boatner in a recent interview. "I think there are a lot of great high school coaches around the country that really do a fine job."

Faust will appear as the guest speaker at *The Arizona Republic's* annual all-state banquet in June, honoring the top high school sports stars from the 1980-81 season. His exclusive interview with Boatner was unique. Colleges don't hire high school coaches for head jobs every day.

When Notre Dame plucked Faust from the prep ranks to coach the Fighting Irish, it may have raised a lot of eyebrows from coast to coast. But the former Cincinnati Moeller football coach is hardly in a unique situation.

In 1941, Ohio State summoned Paul Brown from another Ohio high school,

when he got to Notre Dame, nobody in the country would have touched him." Dedicated high school coaches dream of reaching the college level, but only a lucky few ever make it. And they

Past National Prep Champs 401
5

(Selected by National Sports News Service, Phoenix, AZ)

- 1980 . Cincinnati Moeller, Ohio
- 1979 . Cincinnati Moeller, Ohio
- 1978 . Annandale, Virginia
- 1977 . Cincinnati Moeller, Ohio
- 1976 . Cincinnati Moeller, Ohio
- 1975 . Los Angeles Lovola, California
- 1974 . Thomasville, Georgia
- 1973 . Chattanooga Baylor, Tennessee
- 1972 . Bristol, Tennessee
- 1971 . Valdosta, Georgia
- 1970 . Austin Reagan, Texas
- 1969 . (CO-CHAMPS) Bogalusa, LA
Coral Gables, Florida
- 1968 . (CO-CHAMPS) Austin Reagan, TX
Coral Gables, Florida
- 1967 . (CO-CHAMPS) Austin Reagan, TX
Coral Gables, Florida
- 1966 . Pico Rivera El Rancho, CA
- 1965 . Miami Senior, Florida
- 1964 . Coral Gables, Florida
- 1963 . Chicago St. Rita, Illinois
- 1962 . Valdosta, Georgia
- 1961 . Massillon Washington, Ohio
- 1960 . Miami Senior, Florida
- 1959 . Massillon Washington, Ohio
- 1958 . (CO-CHAMPS) Wichita Falls, TX
Oak Ridge, Tennessee
- 1957 . Downey, California
- 1956 . Abilene, Texas
- 1955 . San Diego, California
- 1954 . Vallejo, California
- 1953 . Massillon Washington, Ohio
- 1952 . Massillon Washington, Ohio

Information supplied by Prep Historian at
Dave Krider from La Port Indiana. th-
Other research by Earl Nall, TSSAA ib.
Director of Technology cw

team. His previous experience consisted of a stint at Chicago's Mount Carmel High School. But the Brennan experiment was a disaster. After one good year, Notre Dame went into a tailspin.

He left the all-male Catholic school (1,000 students) north of Cincinnati as a legend. When Moeller crushed Massillon Washington 30-7 for its fifth state championship in the past six years, it was the Crusaders' 33rd straight victory and 70th win in the past 71 games. The Ohio powerhouse was again awarded the national high school championship by the NSNS. It's their fourth such award in the past five years (see chart). The Crusaders' 18-year, won-lost record is 174-17. Faust was the only head coach Moeller ever had. His accomplishments will rank right along with the football dynasties built by Paul Brown at Massillon, Jesse Yarbrough at Miami Senior High, Sid Cichy at Fargo Shanley, ND, Wright Bazemore of Valdosta, GA, and R.R. (Robby) Robinson at Phoenix Union, AZ, to name a few.

At Notre Dame he will face not only a reduction in staff, but also a possible drop in pay at South Bend. At Moeller, Faust had 18 assistant coaches, but on the college level the limit is eight. Although Faust earned less than \$20,000 in his position as Moeller's athletic director and football coach, he is much in demand as a motivational speaker before industrial groups.

He was overseer of a new \$1.5 million complex at Moeller that houses indoor tennis courts, running track, wrestling room, band room and classrooms. It is also used for baseball and football practice during inclement weather. The Crusaders have no football stadium. They play their home

The actual PROOF that documents Oak Ridge's historical national championship in 1958