

# The Lee County Legend

K E E P I N G   T H E   M E M O R I E S   A L I V E

## Football Comes to Lee County—Part 2

Football got its start in Lee County High Schools in the 1920's. By the end of the decade, large crowds of dedicated fans watched the games. Games were rough, filled with line plunges, end runs, the occasional forward pass, quick kicks and good punting. Playing games with little practice and less equipment, many athletes played every down of every game. Substitution seem to be a sign of weakness.

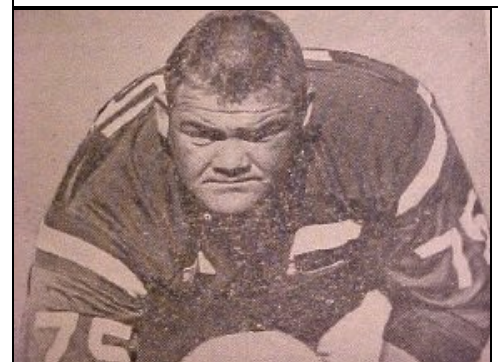
Teams to play were hard to find in those early years. Games were scheduled a few weeks ahead sometimes and only a few days ahead at others. Games were played on weekdays and Saturdays since no lights were available. Inside the *Lee County Legend*, you

will find more firsts and lots of evidence of the growing competitive nature of Lee County residents.



PHS in late 60's. The coach standing on the left is Coach Herndon who was the quarterback on the very first Pennington High football team in 1929. Cheerleaders are identified as Joella Audia Pierce and Veda Crusenberry Ely.

**PAT CARTER  
MID 50S PENNINGTON GRAD  
ONE OF VERY FEW LEE  
COUNTY MEN TO PLAY  
PRO FOOTBALL**



## YEARNING FOR THE OLD DAYS

*Dave Audia*



Each time we prepare an issue of the *Lee County Legend*, I am reminded of how far we have come in Lee County Sports. Because I have had such an enjoyable life in sports, I become more and more appreciative of those in sports in the old days. They did not have it easy, yet, they persevered to overcome the many obstacles before them to create the sports atmosphere we have today.

Finding a place to play was never a problem for me. In early Lee County, finding flat places was a major challenge. The Keokee, Calvin and Robbins Chapel communities are to be commended for carving out baseball fields in their areas. The same is true of the St. Charles community. Don Williams and I spoke recently of St. Charles baseball and football. Innovators there created an admirable sports legacy using the only flat area in the entire community. High school football and Sunday afternoon baseball in St. Charles changed that world. It went from small town to the big time just as you passed through that little gate off the street. These pioneers and those in Pennington Gap who built Leeman Field as the world's largest, created forward momentum in sports that we enjoy.

What about transportation to games? We've always had busses and cars. The old guys at times used trains, horse drawn wagons and maybe just a horse to get to the games. Mostly, they walked. Ty Harber, a distinguished citizen of Lee County, said his grandpa told of the baseball team walking from Pennington Gap to Flatwoods to play a doubleheader. Can you imagine how long that trip home would be if you lost both games?

The early Lee County basketball players were hampered by rain and mud, because they played on outdoor courts. It wasn't until the 1920s and 1930s that basketball started becoming an indoor sport in Lee County. In the early 60s, we played on small courts with low ceilings, but never had to play outside.

Have I mentioned equipment? Footballs were rounder and harder to throw. Helmets were of thin leather with no facemasks. One baseball was used for an entire game. The bats were wood, had thick handles and weighed 42 ounces. The gloves were thin and had no webbing nor pocket. The pitchers were all merciless and the batters had no helmets. I am really thankful that all that changed.

Personal attire is another matter. The freedom of movement is key to any good athlete. Sleek and flexible clothing of today has replaced the wool, baggy and wind resistant attire of yesteryear. The footwear in itself makes a difference too. Our \$10 Converse All Stars in the 60s were lacking compared to 2012 models of athletic shoes. But compared to boots and heels worn in the early days of basketball, my Converse were excellent. But how about my uncle Jerry McElyea. He was captain of the Pennington High Football team. He wore my grandpa's mining boots with hard toes for games. He, too, was paving the way.

To old timers everywhere, the hardships you endured made it easier for us. Though the techniques, the speed, the strength, the equipment and the playing arenas have changed, our games remain. We still run, throw, catch, hit, kick, pass, shoot, block and tackle as in the old days with dreams of performing well when the game is on the line. THANK YOU, MR. HARBER AND FOLKS LIKE YOU, your skill and your willingness to walk to Flatwoods breathed life into Lee County sports for us.

Yearning for the old days? Not really.



My friend and the editor of the *Lee County Legend*, Lowell Lawson, (pictured to the left), has just undergone back surgery. The doctors added some pins and did a few other things to help him overcome some very painful conditions. He is recovering at the Brian Center in Canton, Georgia until about the 20th of March. Please keep Lowell and his wife, Anne, in your thoughts and prayers during his recovery. He is a valued friend to me. Thanks, Dave

## JONESVILLE HIGH AND PENNINGTON HIGH OPEN SCHOOL FOOTBALL HISTORY AT ST. PAUL

See Powell Valley News articles below.

### 1928

Powell Valley News—28 September 1928

FIRST GAME EVER FOR JONESVILLE

ST. PAUL DEFEATS JONESVILLE TEAM

The football season was opened at St. Paul Saturday with the Jonesville high school eleven which resulted in a one sided score, the count standing 42 to 0 when the final whistle blew.

The Lee County boys put up a game fight but this being their first game and inexperienced, they could not cope with the situation. St. Paul scored at will and many substitutions were made by Coach Richmond, only one regular staying in the entire game.

### 1929

Powell Valley News—26 September 1929  
FIRST GAME EVER FOR PENNINGTON

PENNINGTON HI LOSES TO ST PAUL

St Paul—In the first football game of the season, St. Paul defeated Pennington Gap, 26 to 0. In the back field, Jesse, Fletcher and Addington made an exceptionally good showing. Sexton Morris and C. Nash did splendid work in the line.

Pennington Gap brought up 22 husky players and made a bright showing for the first year.

Pennington Gap	Position	St Paul
HERNDON	QB	JESSE
HARBER	RH	ADDINGTON
PETERS	FB	BARROWMAN
R. MYERS	LH	FLETCHER
D. KELLEY	LT	SEXTON
CREECH	LE	NASH
LUCAS	LG	CUNNINGHAM
PENNINGTON	C	EVANS
GIBSON	RG	BRAY
D. MYERS	RT	BARKER
HOLT	RE	MORRIS

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**PENNINGTON HIGH AND JONESVILLE HIGH SPLIT A PAIR IN FOOTBALL—1929**

POWELL VALLEY NEWS, OCTOBER 3, 1929

**PHS WINS FROM JONESVILLE 19—6**

Playing in their 2nd game of football, Pennington High School defeated Jonesville High School 19 to 6. The PHS scored in the first, second and third quarters. (Pee Wee) Herndon, quarterback, ran through the line for extra point.

Holt, Creech, Zion and Pennington played sensational ball for Pennington while Jonesville tackles and quarterback seemed to be outstanding; however, both teams showed that they are improving with experience, and should be blocking and tackling in good form by their next games.

Pennington scored on first play after receiving kick off, when Holt received Harber's long accurate pass and ran 40 yards for a touchdown.

In the middle of the second quarter, the pass was duplicated and Holt again marches across for the second score. Peters tries for extra point through the line and fails.

Jonesville quarterback runs for touchdown at beginning of third quarter after receiving punt, being the prettiest play of the game. The JHS quarterback with his mates blocking almost perfectly, was hardly touched during his run to the goal.

Near the close of the third quarter, Pennington has the visitors on their 5 yard line, when Peters plunges through the line for 4 yards. On the next play, Zion runs around left end for the final score.

The passing and line plunging of JHS carried the ball within the shadows of PHS goal in the closing minute of the game.

**Final Score PHS 19—JHS 6**

POWELL VALLEY NEWS, OCTOBER 31, 1929

**PENNINGTON LOSES TO JONESVILLE HI**

On Friday evening, Jonesville Hi took revenge on Pennington Hi by defeating them 12-6, in a hard fought and very thrilling grid battle. Both teams were well matched but, Jonesville took advantage of Pennington's weak points at the opportune time.

PHS found easy sailing in the early part of the game but a fumble disappointed their hopes of anchoring at port Jonesville. End of quarter. Jonesville kicks to Pennington, Herndon again fumbles, Jonesville was held fast to the spot, they kick to Herndon, who again muffed the pigskin: Jonesville covered the oval on the PHS 10 yard line, line plays net six points for Jonesville. The try for extra point failed.

Jonesville kicked off to PHS, who played the ball to Jonesville's 30 yard segment, Hall intercepted a pass at this point and laid another six pronged anchor at haven, Pennington. End of half—PHS 0, Jonesville 12.

Pennington took on new spirit and energy, while Jonesville seemed to lose her punch. PHS passed and bucked the orb for a touchdown in the third quarter but, failed on the try for the extra point. The final quarter consisted of a punting duel which went in favor of Jonesville.

**Final Score Jonesville 12-Pennington 6.**

**ST CHARLES AND ROSE HILL HIGH SCHOOLS HAVE FOOTBALL VICTORIES IN 1929**

POWELL VALLEY NEWS, OCTOBER 24, 1929

**ST CHARLES FOOTBALL**

The St Charles "WILDCATS" defeated the heavyweight Rose Hill eleven, 7—0, in a very speedy and interesting grid contest.

The winning score, the only touchdown of the game, came in the 4th quarter, about four minutes before the whistle blew for the wind up, with a pass from Denton to Marsee who ran over the line for the score. Marsee passed to Denton who carried it over for the extra Point.

Hugh Masingale also deserves special credit for his unusually heavy line plunges which meant much. The line as a whole did exceptionally well. The school and fans gave the whole team many warm compliments for winning their first victory at home this year.

Rose Hill also merits credit for their fine work through the entire game but as to scoring they did not give their 'Wildcats' very much worry.

St Charles will meet the Pennington Hi boys, at Pennington Gap, Friday, in another hot and speedy one.

Final Score—St Charles 7, Rose Hill 0.

Reporter

POWELL VALLEY NEWS, OCTOBER, 1929

**ROSE HILL DEFEATS PENNINGTON HI**

Rose Hill—The Rose Hill football team came out of a slump last Saturday and showed the most potential scoring punch they have displayed all season. The game started with Rose Hill receiving and they succeeded in keeping the opposition on defense most of the game.

Pennington loosed a passing attack late in the game which the Rose Hill boys were barely able to stop before the game ended and probably would have resulted in a touchdown had the game lasted a little longer.

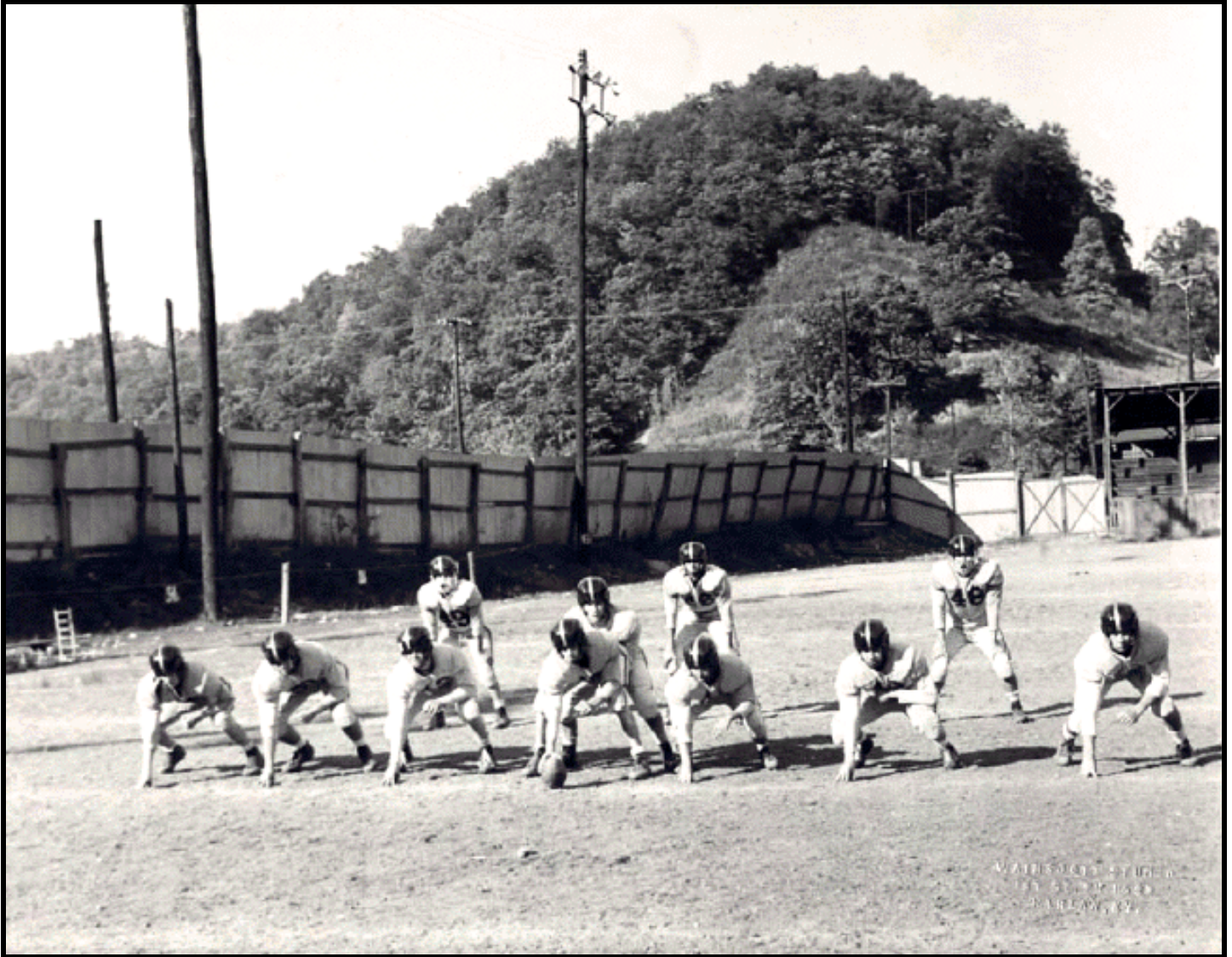
The passing of Seales to Cheek and the running attack of Hoskins was the undoing of Pennington's hopes for victory. But, Saturday was plainly Bill Hoskins day. He gained at will thru the line and around end and, on one occasion, received a 35 yard pass from Captain Seales for a 40 yard gain. Although everyone played heads up football, he was plainly the outstanding player of the game.

Cheek, diminutive left end, came in for his share of glory by receiving one pass for a touchdown and at another time receiving 3 consecutive passes for a total yardage of 50. Captain Seales was placing the passes to the right place, which fact accounts for the success of the passing attack.

(Publisher note—Final Score—No score was reported in the entire article)



# ST CHARLES FOOTBALL IN THE OLD DAYS!



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TO:

**KEEPING THE MEMORIES ALIVE**