

RISING

from obscurity



STAFF PHOTO BY
JENNIFER ZDON

Former St. Augustine football coach Eddie Flint holds up his coach of the year trophy from 1964-65 at his Gentilly home.

Several great New Orleans prep football teams went unnoticed in the LIALO

By Bill Bumgarner
Staff writer

As an accomplished and tireless coaching figure, Eddie Flint occupies a unique tier in the history of local high school football.

Before Coach Otis Washington led St. Augustine High School to three state championships during a five-year span in the 1970s, Flint already had accomplished that feat by accumulating three titles for St. Aug as head coach in the 1960s. Flint later would serve as the defensive architect for those St. Aug championship teams of 1975, '78 and '79.

See **PREP**, D-6

nal score.

But LIALO teams were followed closely by the Louisiana Weekly newspaper and, oddly enough, by the Pittsburgh (Pa.) Courier, a black publication that at one time established bureaus in several major cities in the South.

"The (daily) coverage was not very good at all," Flint said. "The lack of publicity was a major reason why our principal,



Felix James
Coached excellent teams at Landry High School

Father (Joseph) Grant; wanted to join the LHSAA. There were also financial reasons, and we were a Catholic school that we felt would be better off in the Catholic League."

In 1956, Hap Glaudi of the New Orleans Item began devoting space in the sports section to coverage of LIALO events. Later, in the early 1960s, The States-Item and The Times-Picayune each hired African-American sports reporters to cover LIALO events. Each came aboard in time to witness the rise of St. Aug, which won state titles in 1963, '65 and '66.

St. Aug was a LIALO power and remained one when it joined the LHSAA. In its final two LIALO championship seasons, the Purple Knights were a cumulative 26-0. After the merger with the LHSAA, the Purple Knights would conclude a 15-0 season in 1975 after its 10-0 season of 1972 (on the field) was marred by eight forfeits.

"The 1972 team might have been the best of all, talent-wise," Flint said.

LIALO observers estimate that the majority of its games attracted crowds between 3,000 and 5,000 fans, but there were exceptions. In 1966, a playoff game between Cohen and St. Aug at City Park's Tad Gormley Stadium (then known as City Park Stadium) strained the stadium. First the seats filled and then the aisles. Fans eventually would spill onto the circular track and into the areas behind both teams.

"That was the most fans I have ever seen at City Park in my life," said Brown, a former Channel 6 sportscaster. Most estimates listed the crowd at about 5,000 fans above capacity. They were rewarded with a memorable matchup that St. Aug won 24-20.

Another team awash with talent was Landry in 1959. Felix James fielded a Buccaneers team that won nine of 10 games, including the state title. Landry featured two future professional stars: tackle Rich Jackson, a Louisiana Hall of Famer who would become a member of the Denver Broncos 'Ring of Fame,' and defensive back Alvin Haymond, who played for a decade in the NFL.

"We called that (Landry) a million dollar team," Jackson said, "because so many players went on to college (on scholarship)."

It was one of six city championship teams coached by James, who remained at Landry from 1951-65.

Swapping stories

The Top 10 listing includes three city championship teams from the 1940s. Xavier Prep won two of those in 1944 and '48. The 1944 Xavier team finished undefeated as did the 1947 B.T. Washington squad.

Leon Jackson coached Xavier in 1948 and B.T. Washington in 1950. BTW claimed what is thought to be the first sweep in LIALA history (the association later changed to LIALO), with city and state championship victories in 1950. BTW-New Orleans defeated BTW-Shreveport by virtue of an edge in first downs, penetrations and cumulative yardage after the two finished in a scoreless tie.

Coach Henry Crosby, who orchestrated some of the finest West Jefferson teams of all time, won a state title at Lincoln High in 1967. Crosby, 72, concluded his 31-year career at Lincoln, West Jeff and Douglass with a coaching mark of 229-93-0, the 18th-highest total in state football history. Lincoln is still open as a West Bank elementary school, and Crosby is still active at John Ehret.

"The kids on that Lincoln team were tough, and you didn't have to worry about them being ready to play," Crosby said. "They would come up to me and say, 'Coach, let's go.'"

One year ago in Ruston, Crosby attended a gathering of former Grambling players, with whom he swapped stories of his 1967 championship team when Lincoln defeated Monroe-Carroll in the title game.

"I told this man that Carroll had a player who was very tough, and we needed to get him out of the game," Crosby said. "We hit him hard, but clean, and he broke his leg. Then the man said, 'Coach, that player was me.'"

In 1969, Hal Winn coached Clark to eight victories and a city title in the final year of the LIALO, which became part of the LHSAA the following season. Clark was scheduled to play Scotlandville at City Park Stadium in the playoffs but the game was cancelled by torrential rains and lightning.

"There must have been three inches of water on the field," Winn said.

At a subsequent hearing regarding the matter, the LIALO ruled that Clark had to forfeit the game. So Scotlandville advanced, meaning the final football game involving a local LIALO team never was played.

"The whole thing got bogged down at the hearing, and it was a shame," Winn said. "That was a great team and a great bunch of guys. They still get together to this day."

That same year, St. Aug hired Washington, who would rehire Flint one season later.

The headlines and recognition, so conspicuously absent in the 1940s and '50s, would soon come, too.

Bill Bumgarner can be reached at bbumgarner@timespicayune.com or (504) 883-7057.



STAFF PHOTO BY ROBERT STENGER

Henry Crosby guided Lincoln High to the LIALO state title in 1967, then became a successful coach at West Jefferson.

Players get colleges' notice

PREP, from D-1

But those St. Augustine championships were not the same. The trophies awarded to Flint's teams in the 1960s were from the Louisiana Interscholastic Athletic and Literary Organization (LIALO), an organization of the state's African-American high schools. Washington's teams won titles in the Louisiana High School Athletic Association, which before 1970 did not include predominantly African-American high schools.

For decades, high schools in the two associations competed in different worlds. The LIALO included local schools such as Xavier Prep, B.T. Washington, Landry, Cohen, Clark, Carver, St. Aug, McDonough 35 and Lincoln.

The larger, older LHSAA membership included predominantly white schools such as Jesuit, Holy Cross, St. Aloysius, Redemptorist, Fortier and Warren Easton in addition to other statewide schools.

As tonight's high school quarterfinals playoffs kick off, all the competing schools are LHSAA members. But it wasn't always that way, and in post-World War II the LIALO was created as a way to give Louisiana African-American prep football teams a chance to compete for a state championship. But no matter what LIALO schools won, they received little notoriety, as local daily newspapers covered LHSAA schools almost exclusively.

The lack of a substantial printed record makes it difficult to research the history of the LIALO. But in an effort to recognize its greatest teams, The Times-Picayune has compiled an all-time Top 10 list of local

LIALO football squads, as selected by the newspaper, with assistance from Ro Brown, a local sports journalist and historian; R.L. Stockard of Louisiana Weekly; and Paul Beaulieu of the St. Aug alumni office. The list also includes six other worthy candidates — just for argument's sake.

Rallying cry

Even the exact birth date of the LIALO is not known, according to local high school sports historian Ron Brocato, whose book "The Golden Game" chronicles the history of New Orleans area prep football. Brocato said his research shows that the association began at a state rally at Southern University in Baton Rouge in the late 1940s. The term "Literary" was included in the organization's name because it also held competition in English, chemistry, mathematics and other academic subjects among its schools.

And while the LHSAA schools enjoyed far greater resources, those who coached in both organizations, such as Flint, saw parallels. "There were LIALO football teams around the state — Carroll and McKinley, for example — and local teams like Landry who were comparable to the LHSAA teams," said Flint, 71, who after his St. Aug stint went on to coach at Carver and retired after 44 years of teaching football to high schoolers.

"At the latter part of the LIALO, I felt those teams were equal to the LHSAA," said Felix James, a former football coach at Landry who would later serve as the Orleans Parish Athletic Director. "We were anxious to play teams in the



STAFF PHOTO BY JENNIFER ZOOK

Former St. Augustine coach Eddie Flint holds up a newspaper article with a picture of his 1965 team, which was considered one of the best from this area to play in the LIALO.

other league.

"Even though Landry was a small school, we had depth because we recruited throughout the school," James said. "The main difference between the LIALO and the LHSAA teams was probably the practice equipment. But we had athletes."

College recruiters across the nation certainly knew of the LIALO quality. The 1966 St. Aug line tandem of Errol Roy and Ronald Joseph signed with Michigan State, as did a thin tight end from Richardson (now closed) in West Monroe named Billy Joe Dupree, who would become an All-Pro with the Dallas Cowboys. LIALO

players earned their way to distant locations such as UCLA, Arizona and Arizona State.

Not much recognition

The notoriety afforded each organization was as different as the color of the athletes' skin.

Daily newspaper coverage of the LIALO by The New Orleans States, The New Orleans Item and The New Orleans Times-Picayune for much of the organization's tenure was spotty at best and often non-existent. Even state championship LIALO games usually merited nothing more than a listing of fi-

TOP TEAMS

A look at the Metro area's Top 10 LIALO football teams (in chronological order)

XAVIER PREP, 1944

Record: 6-0-0

Coach: Alfred "Zack" Priestley

Highlights: The Yellow Jackets won the city championship with an undefeated record.

Top players: Running back Whitney Arceaux went on to play college football at UCLA. End Herman Blages, counter-back defensive back Warren Braden and full-back Rudolph "Buddy Boy" Lewis were among the Xavier standouts. Blages is the uncle of former St. Augustine player and former head coach Tony Blages.

B.T. WASHINGTON, 1947

Record: 6-0-1

Coach: Charles "Spir" Perkins

Highlights: B.T. Washington won the city championship by beating Landry 20-0 en route to outscoring its seven opponents 126-6. The lone blemish was a tie against Central of Mobile, Ala.

Top players: On the 20-player All-City team picked by The Louisiana Weekly, 11 B.T. Washington players were honored. Eugene Elliott, a fullback who had never played football before 1947, was selected the All-City MVP. Warner Skoner, whose McDonough Trojans pulled off a 10-7 upset of St. Aug in the 1973 state playoffs, was a standout for B.T. Washington.

XAVIER PREP, 1948

Record: 6-0-2

Coach: Leon Jackson

Highlights: Xavier opened the season with a 6-6 tie against P. Wheatley of Houston, the defending Texas state champion, and the Jackets had a scoreless tie against B.T. Washington, in the CVO Classic. Xavier defeated Immaculate Conception of Birmingham, Ala., 13-6. The visitors from Alabama were undefeated and unscored upon prior to that matchup.

Top players: Current Orleans Parish School Board member Eliot Wilford scored the winning touchdown on a 9-yard run in the CVO Classic. Quarterback Eddie Flint was an All-City selection and fullback Joe Lewis was the CVO game MVP.

B.T. WASHINGTON, 1950

Record: 5-0-1

Coach: Leon Jackson

Highlights: B.T. Washington won the city and state championships, outscoring its opponents 148-7. This game is thought to be the first involving a state playoff format in the LIALO. The association would later become the LIALO. The Lions and BTW-Shreveport finished in a scoreless tie in the state title game in Shreveport, but BTW-New Orleans prevailed with a 3-0 advantage in penalties, a 10-2 advantage in first downs and a 400-27 advantage in yardage. BTW advanced with a 20-0 regional victory against Central of Bogalusa.

Perkins, who coached the 1947 team, was sidelined by an illness, so he served as an assistant coach and as athletic director.

Top players: Running back Sterling Dyer, who attended Grambling, was the All-City MVP. Lineman Ernest Campbell would become an All-American at Xavier University.

COHEN, 1952

Record: 7-1-1

Coach: Harold Milon

Highlights: Cohen downed B.T. Washington-New Orleans for the city championship and also poured Landry 45-0 during the regular season. Cohen outscored nine opponents 229-48. Cohen had a scoreless tie against W.O. Boston and lost to Central of Bogalusa 7-6.

Top players: All-City selections included running back Winston Brown, linemen Curtis Miller and running back William Lewis, who led the city in scoring.

LANDRY, 1959

Record: 9-0-1

Coach: Felix James

Highlights: Landry won the state championship against B.T. Washington-Shreveport 28-6 at For Stadium in New Orleans before 3,500 fans. The lone blemish was a 6-6 tie against BTW-NO. The 1951 Landry team had reached the state semifinals where it fell to McKinley on the last play of the game.

Top players: Landry's roster included two future professional players: two-way tackle Rick Jackson, a 6-foot-2, 165-pound player who later played for Oakland, Cleveland and Denver, and defensive back Avin "Jug" Heymond who played in the NFL for 10 seasons with Baltimore, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Washington and Houston. Quarterback Robert Brown attended Tennessee State. The roster included freshmen running backs Jimmy Henderson and Joseph Patterson and freshman wide receiver Charles Levy.

ST. AUGUSTINE, 1963

Record: 10-2-1

Coach: Eddie Flint

Highlights: St. Aug won the first of the school's six state football titles. In the regular season, the Purple Knights lost to Capitol and Carver and had a scoreless tie against Xavier in a rainstorm. But in the semifinals of the playoffs, St. Aug smashed Monroe-Carroll 20-0. Carroll, the defending state champion, had won 37 consecutive games but could not manage a first down until the fourth quarter. St. Aug went on to defeat Xavier Prep 18-9 in the championship game.

Top players: Harold Jubile and Mackin Simmons were regarded as two of St. Aug's all-time best running backs. Ernest Johnson and Alvin Lewis each played quarterback, and Ernie Labat was the

fullback. Denny Bakewell was an exceptional defensive tackle. Offensive guard Alfred Jenkins, an All-State player, played at Tulsa. A No. 2 pick by the Cleveland Browns, Jenkins played for the undefeated Miami Dolphins team of 1972.

ST. AUGUSTINE, 1965

Record: 12-0

Coach: Eddie Flint

Highlights: St. Aug had six shutouts in 12 games, with an offense that averaged 32.8 points. The defense allowed 3.2 points per game. The Knights routed B.T. Washington-Shreveport 21-0 in the title game.

Top players: The St. Aug wing-T backfield included quarterback Charles Manego and running backs Mackin Simmons, Glenn Alexander, the late Alfred Reese and fullback Ernie Labat. Safety Noel Foucher was All-State in four sports, the only Purple Knight to do so. Alexander played on the Buffalo Bills with O.J. Simpson. Offensive tackle LeVern Wood later played with the Saints. Linebacker Anthony Simmons, who signed with Grambling, would return to St. Aug as an assistant coach during the championship reign of the 1970s. Reese, an All-Metro choice at linebacker and running back, attended Tennessee State.

ST. AUGUSTINE, 1966

Record: 14-0

Coach: Eddie Flint

Highlights: St. Aug rolled easily to its first six victories, yet struggled against Clark 6-0, Central Memorial 13-7 and W.O. Boston 7-6. But the Knights blew out McKinley 31-6 and Monroe-Carroll 44-14 in the title game. St. Aug also defeated Cohen 24-20 before an enormous crowd at City Park Stadium (the present East Grambling Stadium) that was estimated at 28,500 fans. Cohen had rallied from a 24-0 deficit. St. Aug would join the LHSAA one year later.

Top players: Offensive lineman Errol Roy and two-way tackle Ronald Joseph signed with Michigan State. Noseguard Ernest Singleton, quarterback Larry Laurant, tackle Louis Age, fullback Stanley Wiltz and wide receiver Melvin Howard also were standouts. Running back Richard Solomon would later coach with the Minnesota Vikings.

LINCOLN, 1967

Record: 9-3

Coach: Henry Crosby

Highlights: Lincoln defeated McKinley 18-6 in the semifinals and Monroe-Carroll 21-13 in the state title game. Top players: Running back Kammit Brooks scored two touchdowns in the championship game. Lincoln featured linebacker Rodney Zeno, who played at West Jefferson, an LHSAA state champion in 1970.

SIX HONORABLE MENTIONS

Clark, 1955

Record: 5-1

Coach: Jesse Bakley

Highlights: Clark won a matchup of underdogs against Cohen 13-6. But Clark would lose in the state semifinals. Top players: Clark's Roosevelt Taylor would star at running back and defensive back and would later play for the Chicago Bears. Lineman Jesse Lee and running back Julius White also stood out.

Landry, 1956

Record: 10-1

Coach: Felix James

Highlights: Landry downed Central of Bogalusa 30-0 and McKinley 13-6 to reach the state semifinals. The two finalists were scoreless until the final minutes when DeSoto took a 6-0 lead. Landry's Anthony "Peeper" Pierre returned the ensuing kickoff 60 yards to tie the game, but Landry missed the extra-point attempt. Landry would lose on cumulative yardage 113-102.

Top players: Pierre was clearly the standout on this squad.

St. Augustine, 1967

Record: 5-1

Coach: George "Nick" Connor

Highlights: St. Aug defeated Xavier Prep 25-0 for the city championship, the school's first city title in football. St. Aug would lose to Capitol in the state semifinals. Eddie Flint was an assistant coach on this staff.

Top players: The late Merin Crawford was the quarterback. Other top players were Frank Vial, who played at Grambling, and wide receiver Gerald Williams, who picked Dillard. The defensive ends were Maurice Baptist, who went to Texas Southern, and Sidney Bartley, who went on to become mayor of New Orleans.

Carver, 1960; Xavier Prep, 1960

Coaches: Enos Hicks, Willie McKee

Records: Carver 7-1; Xavier 9-1

Highlights: Carver and Xavier were each undefeated in the regular season. Carver lost in the first round of the playoffs to Monroe-Carroll 32-18. Xavier downed Wilkmetree of Franklin 12-6 but fell to BTW-Lake Charles 28-14.

Top players: Carver quarterback Lionel Woods and Xavier running back Douglas Ealy, who had 9.5 yards for 100 yards.

Clark, 1969

Record: 9-0

Coach: Hal Wirtz

Highlights: City champion Clark outscored its opponents 244-98 and defeated two LHSAA teams, McDonough and Redemptorist, in the final year of the LIALO.

Top players: Running back Wilbert Smith and linebacker Wally Brumfield were standouts who both signed with Arizona.

Compiled by Bill Bunker