

Forest (Forrey) Hall might have been the greatest player ever in St. Joseph/Venango Christian history.

But, that apparently was up for debate in 1940, Hall's senior year at St. Joseph. His rival? Francis "Cootie" Carroll.

The week before Hall's final high school game against Duquesne Prep of Pittsburgh at Ramage Hasson Field, The Derrick reported in its Oct. 21, 1940, edition:

"Considerable debate has been held on the question whether "Fleet Forrest's" forays have outshone those of his famous predecessor (Cootie Carroll) and there are many who are willing to place Hall's name beside and even above "Cookie the Crusher."

Hall finished his four-year career with 29 touchdowns and 179 points, including 76 his junior season. Scant individual rushing stats were kept, but Hall broke off plenty of long runs, either from scrimmage or on returns. He also did most of the passing and a lot of the place-kicking before graduating from St. Joe and later starring on the collegiate and then the professional level with San Francisco.

"It has come to pass that whenever he gets his hands on the leather...anything is liable to happen," The Derrick continued. "It is nothing to see him come out of a pileup in the center of the line or to skirt the ends for lengthy dashes for scores."

Carroll, by the way, played for St. Joe from 1931-34, scoring 98 points his last three seasons. He scored 15 touchdowns and passed for five other scores. Carroll was written up as a vicious tackler who got off some booming punts.

1940 – Hall's senior year

Forrey Hall was one of nine veterans returning from the 6-3 team in 1939. The others were Jack McNerney, Lynn Camp, Billy Eckert, Max Krasowski, Joe Dzieckciasz, Bob Womer, Max Reichart and John Krensavage.

Coach Joe Connors -- in his final year at St. Joe before moving on to Oil City -- would field a team that averaged about 168 pounds on the line and 163 in the backfield.

It would post a 6-1-1 record, including its third victory in four years over Erie Cathedral Prep.

Here's a game-by-game rundown:

Sept. 5, 1940 -- St. Joe 47, Edinboro (now General McLane) 0

St. Joe returned three interceptions for touchdowns. They were by Joe Boland (65 yards), Krensavage (40) and McNerney (35), who finished the game with two TDs. Hall also scored two touchdowns on runs of 8 and 11 yards, passed for three extra points and kicked another. He rushed for 93 yards on seven carries in what would be the only rushing statistic The Derrick would report for him during the season.

Sept. 13, 1940 -- Farrell 26, St. Joe 7

The Steelers piled up 403 yards total offense, including 358 on the ground as they handed the Irish their only loss of the season. St. Joe's only touchdown came on a 2-yard pass from Hall to Krensavage, which was set up by Hall's 50-yard pass to Jerome "Cowboy" Szafran to the 20. Hall had a 20-yard TD run called back during the game.

Sept. 21, 1940 -- St. Joe 18, Centerville 6

This is the game that Szafran ran 109 yards for a touchdown, which is detailed in another link. Homestanding Centerville, located in Westmoreland County, led 6-0 at the quarter, but Szafran's first TD of the game, 21-yard run, tied the score in the second quarter. His 99-yard run put St. Joe ahead for good. Szafran also had a hand in St. Joe's third TD. He intercepted a pass on the Centerville 30 and ran 10 yards before lateraling to Hall for the score.

Sept. 27, 1940 -- St. Joe 19, Ambridge St. Veronica 0

McNerney scored twice on a 2-yard run and a 51-yard interception return. Hall scored on a 48-yard run and also had an interception.

Oct. 5, 1940 -- St. Joe 6, Johnstown Catholic (now Bishop McCort) 6

Blocks by Reichart and Krasowski sprung Hall loose for a 48-yard scoring dash by Hall in the fourth quarter to salvage the tie. Johnstown Catholic had scored in the first quarter.

Oct. 11, 1940 -- St. Joe 18, Bradford St. Bernard (now Bradford Central Catholic) 0

Phil "Gabby" Stewart's 61-yard run for the third Irish touchdown highlighted this victory. Szafran (8 yards) and Hall (4 yards) also scored TDs.

Oct. 19, 1940 -- St. Joe 25, Erie Cathedral Prep 7

The Irish amassed 371 yards total offense, including 351 on the ground. Hall's 73-yard run gave St. Joe a 6-0 lead. Stewart's 2-yard run capped an 80-yard drive that made it 12-0. Szafran scored on a 43-yard run, and Hall added another TD on a 17-yard sprint.

Oct. 25, 1940 -- St. Joe 12, Duquesne Prep 0

A crowd of 1,200 -- the largest to see St. Joe play in years -- gathered at Ramage-Hasson Field for the finale. Hall's 9-yard run gave St. Joe a 6-0 lead. The TD was set up by Hall's 36-yard pass to Krensavage. McNerney later scored on another 9-yard run. That TD came after Szafran returned a punt 15 yards to the 40 and Hall's 31-yard run from scrimmage. The game was called with five minutes to play due to a heavy fog.

Hall finished the season with 55 points, including nine TDs. Szafran and McNerney each scored five touchdowns.

1939 – Hall's junior year

Sept. 16, 1939 -- St. Joe 32, Mars 0

The Derrick wrote in the pre-game story: The invasion of the Martians will be a real threat and not a fantastical product of an Orson Welles radio broadcast such as (the

one that) caused a panic last spring." Actually, the Butler Countians were no threat, too. Walt "Scooter" Wojtowicz and Forrey Hall each scored two touchdowns and Phil Stewart got the other. One of Hall's TDs came on a 55-yard punt return off a George "Blaze" Kelly lateral. Don Feeney and Jack McNerney threw key blocks.

Sept. 22, 1939 -- Bradford 12, St. Joe 6

The Owls scored twice in the fourth quarter to erase a 6-0 St. Joe lead on Kelly's first-quarter sneak. That, as it turned out, would be the only time all season Bradford would be behind.

Sept. 30, 1939 -- Erie Cathedral Prep 14, St. Joe 0

Nothing special here; St. Joe gained 135 yards total offense, including 125 rushing.

Oct. 6, 1939 -- St. Joe 26, Farrell 7

The Irish exploded for three touchdowns in the fourth quarter all on plays of 55 yards or more. The first was the shortest (55 yards) but most dazzling. Wojtowicz passed to Feeney who lateraled back to Wojtowicz for the touchdown. Then Wojtowicz returned an interception 75 yards for a touchdown before Hall returned a punt 85 yards for another score. Hall also scored on a 7-yard run in the opening quarter.

Oct. 13, 1939 -- St. Joe 25, Altoona Catholic (now Bishop Guilfoyle) 6

Wojtowicz scored on runs of 52 and 8 yards and had a 50-yard TD called back. Hall scored on a 55-yard run and Jack McGraw, who played for Oil City in 1938, hit paydirt from 10 yards out.

Oct. 21, 1939 -- St. Joe 33, Buffalo, N.Y., Canisius 6

For the Irish: 582 yards rushing, 597 yards total offense, plus 90 yards on interception returns. St. Joe's first two TDs came on dashes around the ends: 46 yards by McGraw and 83 by Wojtowicz, who finished the game with three TDs. Kelly followed with a 90-yard interception return. Wojtowicz also scored on a 17-yard run and a 61-yard burst off a lateral from Hall. Ironically, Hall didn't score, but he had an 87-yard TD called back

because he was ruled out of bounds at the 31. Then he and Wojtowicz hooked up on a lateral for the TD.

Oct. 27, 1939 -- St. Joe 24, Ambridge St. Veronica 6

Hall scored three touchdowns on runs of 46, 42 and 77 yards. Wojtowicz scored on a 12-yard run.

Nov. 3, 1939 -- St. Joe 26, Bradford St. Bernard (now Bradford Central Catholic) 0

Hall scored four touchdowns, one on a 50-yard run, and returned four punts for a 23-yard average. Feeney threw a TD pass to Hall, but the yardage wasn't listed.

Nov. 11, 1939 -- Erie Tech 13, St. Joe 6

Wojtowicz scored on a 27-yard run off a Kelly lateral for St. Joe's only TD.

St. Joe finished the season with 1,834 yards rushing (219 off laterals) and 2,148 yards total offense.

Derrick sports editor Jim Rich picked an "All-Oil City" team consisting of St. Joe and Oil City players. Here are his selections:

Ends -- George Richardson (OC) and Jack McNerney (St. Joe) with St. Joe's Don Feeney given strong consideration.

Tackles -- Jim Kennedy (OC) and a tossup between Bob Womer and Joe Dzieckciasz, both from St. Joe

Guards -- Don Taylor (OC) and Bill Eckert (St. Joe) with both Guy Duncan of Oil City and Ed Reinsel -- a four-year starter for the Irish -- "not far behind"

Center -- Dick Stahlman (OC), although Lynn Camp of St. Joe was described as a "steady" player

Backfield -- Bill Ross (OC) and Walt Wojtowicz, Forrey Hall and George Kelly, all of St. Joe

1938 – Hall's sophomore year

Sept. 9, 1938 -- Sharon 71, St. Joe 0

The Tigers scored 45 points in the second half, including 26 in the fourth quarter, but nobody scored more than two touchdowns. Sharon limited the Irish to 80 yards total offense, and piled up 537, including 410 rushing.

Sept. 17, 1938 -- St. Joe 0, Bradford St. Bernard (now Bradford Central Catholic) 0

St. Joe picked up 143 yards rushing.

Sept. 23, 1938 -- St. Joe 20, Clarion 0

The Irish ended a season-long scoring drought of two and a half quarters on Forrey Hall's 6-yard touchdown in the third quarter against the Bobcats. The Irish added two more TDs in the fourth on a 1-yard run by Joe Reinsel and a 27-yard run by Jack McNerney.

Sept. 30, 1938 -- St. Joe 6, Dunkirk, N.Y., St. Mary 0

Hall's 70-yard punt return off a quick kick was the only touchdown of the game.

Oct. 8, 1938 -- St. Joe 27, East Brady 0

St. Joe's first two TDs came on runs of 4 yards by Reinsel and 11 yards by backup QB Tony Czlonka. Then came the razzle-dazzle. Don Feeney, off a fake punt, lateraled to George "Blaze" Kelly who ran 80 yards for a touchdown. Walt "Scooter" Wojtowicz scored on a 20-yard run after Hall's had an 80-yard sprint called back for stepping out of bounds at the 20.

Oct. 14, 1938 -- St. Joe 25, Erie Cathedral Prep 6

Hall scored twice, once on a 64-yard punt return, and had a third TD, a 60-yard run, called back. Wojtowicz scored on runs of 40 and 43 yards. Hall's first TD was set up by Feeney's fumble recovery. The defense held the Ramblers to 71 yards total offense, 58 rushing.

Oct. 22, 1938 -- Buffalo, N.Y., Canisius 6, St. Joe 2

St. Joe was on the Canisius 1 as time was running out, but was called for delay of game before Hall's pass fell incomplete on the last play. Hall's 42-yard punt return took the ball to the 3, and Reinsel advanced to the 1 before the delay of game call. Homestanding Canisius scored on a 13-yard pass in the third quarter. St. Joe's safety came in the fourth.

Oct. 29, 1938 -- St. Joe 32, Edinboro (now General McLane) 0

Wojtowicz scored on an 80-yard interception and a 45-yard run from scrimmage. McNerney opened the St. Joe scoring with a 45-yard interception return. Hall scored on a 15-yard run after a fumble recovery by Chubby Butryn. John Summers also scored for the Irish.

Nov. 12, 1938 -- Duquesne Prep 26, St. Joe 12

St. Joe's TDs came on two more long runs: 78 yards by Hall and 50 yards by McNerney. The Irish outgained Duquesne Prep, 206-193. Tom Rooney, a brother of Steelers owner Art Rooney, was a fullback for Duquesne Prep.

Nov. 24, 1938 -- Altoona Catholic (now Bishop Guilfoyle) 7, St. Joe 0

About 5,000 fans braved a driving snowstorm to see the game, played at Altoona Catholic, which scored on a second-quarter pass. St. Joe was held to 52 yards, all on the ground. Kelly averaged 35 yards on eight punts.

It was so cold the father of the Reinsel brothers (Ed, Jack and Joe), a funeral director, supplied pallbearers' gloves to the players at halftime.

St. Joe finished the season with 1,630 yards total offense, including 1,544 rushing. Opponents gained 1,409 yards, including 1,087 on the ground.

1937 – Hall's freshman year

Sept. 11, 1937 -- St. Joe 0, Titusville 0

A "moral" victory for the Irish, who stopped four Rockets drives, one on the 18. Tony Czlonka tackled a Titusville player there and then batted a pass down in the end zone. A 27-yard run by Joe Reinsel to the Rockets 22 gave St. Joe its only first down of the game, but with the ball on the 18, a fourth-down pass to the end zone was batted down by the Rockets.

Sept. 18, 1937 -- St. Joe 7, Bradford St. Bernard (now Bradford Central Catholic) 0

St. Joe won on a 21-yard fourth-down pass in the second quarter. Blaze Kelly threw a short pass to Matt Badach, who was hemmed in by three St. Bernard defenders and lateraled to Tony Czlonka for the TD. That was St. Joe's first points in 10 games, dating back to the 1935 season.

Sept. 25, 1937 -- Clarion 13, St. Joe 12

The first big game for freshman Forrey Hall. He was starting in place of Marty Gavin, who had a dislocated shoulder. Hall scored the game's first touchdown on a 90-yard interception, and the game's last TD on a 4-yard run to cap a 67-yard drive in the fourth quarter. Only trouble was, Reinsel was stopped on the conversion attempt. In between time, Lou Schribrel accounted for both Clarion touchdowns, throwing a pass to Bill Wilhelm in the second quarter, and sweeping end from 40 yards out on the first play of the fourth quarter. General Lee ran the PAT after the first Bobcats TD, and that was the difference.

Oct. 2, 1937 -- Rimersburg (now Union) 19, St. Joe 7

Reinsel's 5-yard run accounted for St. Joe's only touchdown. The Irish outgained Rimersburg, 244-193.

Oct. 9, 1937 -- St. Joe 19, East Brady 7

Reinsel rushed for 104 yards, scored on an 8-yard run and set up St. Joe's third TD (a run by Gavin) with a 35-yard gain. Blaze Kelly scored on a 4-yard run for St. Joe.

Oct. 16, 1937 -- St. Joe 21, Greenville St. Michael 0

St. Joe's TDs came on runs of 5 yards by Kelly, 32 yards by John Summers and 3 yards by Hall. Reinsel kicked two PATs. All 253 of St. Joe's yards came on the ground.

Oct. 30, 1937 -- St. Joe 20, Erie Cathedral Prep 0

The game was scoreless until the third quarter when Reinsel scored the first of two 2-yard TDs. He also ran for the conversion. Reinsel's second TD came in the fourth quarter and Phil Stewart sealed the victory with a 15-yard interception return. Kelly kicked the points. All 170 of St. Joe's yards came on the ground.

Nov. 5, 1937 -- Duquesne Prep 13, St. Joe 0

Duquesne Prep limited the Irish to 6 yards total offense -- 5 on the ground -- and three first downs.

His collegiate/pro record

As a 23-year-old ex-GI junior for San Francisco in 1946 averaged 38.2 yards on kickoff returns to break the NCAA record set in 1941 by Wyoming's Earl "Shadow" Ray, who ran back 23 kickoffs for 493 yards that season.

Hall's record stood for 15 years before it was broken by Paul Allen, who averaged 40.1 yards a return for Brigham Young in 1961. Hall currently ranks ninth all-time.

Hall had 548 yards on 14 attempts after the game he broke Ray's record. He was averaging 40 yards everytime he touched the ball and was 10th in the nation in all-purpose yards.

Going into the Dons' final game with St. Mary's, Hall increased that total to 602 yards on 15 returns, including runs of 99 yards against Stanford, 86 against Santa Clara and 81 against Kansas State.

Hall was named to the Associated Press' All-Pacific backfield with Herman Wedenmeyer of St. Mary's, Ernie Case of UCLA and Lloyd Merriman of Stanford, and received an honorable mention on the All-America team.

The game with St. Mary's represented a head-to-head matchup with Wedenmeyer, but the game was played on a sloppy, muddy field and ended up as a 6-0 St. Mary's victory.

In addition to his kickoff returns, Hall had rushed for 494 yards on 66 carries before the St. Mary's game. His 12 all-purpose touchdowns (returns, rushing, receiving) covered 48, 6, 99, 82, 40, 86, 30, 81, 71, 31, 14 and 20 yards. He also scored nine extra points, and in a 21-13 loss to Utah -- just to further show his versatility -- made three open-field tackles to save TDs.

Hall began his college career at Duquesne in 1942. He was a second-round draft pick by the Philadelphia Eagles in 1944, and later played professionally with San Francisco in the old All-American Conference.

Listed at 5-8, 155, Hall returned 13 kickoffs for 369 yards for the 1948 49ers. He also returned three punts for 97 yards. On offense, he ran the ball 66 times for 413 yards and caught four passes for 87. He scored two touchdowns.

A plaque honoring Forrey Hall was placed at the entrance of the Oil Field in 2009.

Debra Hall, Forrey's daughter, and her family flew in from San Francisco to be on hand for the dedication ceremony.

The plaque reads:

"A three-sport athlete at St. Joseph High School from 1938-1941, he excelled in baseball, football and basketball. He was a leading scorer on St. Joe's 1939 and 1941 Pennsylvania State

Catholic Championship basketball teams, but he is best known as a standout on the football field.

“One of the fastest men in the country, he finished his high school rushing and receiving career with 29 touchdowns and 179 points. He also did most of the passing and placekicking.

“He was voted “Best Man” at the 1945 East-West Shrine Game, representing the Fourth Air Force while serving his country during WWII. He became a star halfback at the University of San Francisco, setting two NCAA records, and was inducted into the USF Sports Hall of Fame. He went on to a professional career with the San Francisco 49ers, setting several team records.

“An Oil City native, he exemplified discipline, hard work and sportsmanship. He was a true gentleman, a respected coach and a beloved dad.”

After a giving a moving tribute to her father Debra was joined by the rest of the Hall clan on the new Oller track.

It was the first time that her sons Riley and Mike had seen snow.

The family made a generous contribution to the refurbishing of the football field and track complex.