

Sixty-some years ago, the Franklin Knights ruled in football, not only locally but around District 10.

Although they had some pretty good teams here and there, the Knights had never been a consistent power until the late 1950s through the early 1990s.

And it all began when coach Jim McCullough came along in 1957. He started out only 2-6-1 in 1957, but would finish an eight-year coaching stint with a 40-23-4 record, which included four consecutive Section 2 (league) titles from 1958-61, either won outright or shared with other teams.

The Knights' record would include a 15-game S-2 winning streak, after a loss to Corry in 1958, and an 18-game non-losing streak, which ended with a loss to Warren to begin league play in 1962. A tie with Corry in 1961 put an end to the winning streak.

Franklin has had plenty of stars in its history, probably the biggest in its first 50 years being Ted Marchibroda in the late 1940s, but most came during that "golden age" from 1958-92.

And many of those players were members of the 1959 squad, which produced the school's first undefeated team at 7-0-1. The only blemish was a tie with Grove City in which the Eagles scored on a 96-yard run by Bill Purvis one play after Franklin fumbled on the 4.

But that didn't stop the Knights from claiming the mythical District 10 title, and, somewhere, they have a trophy to prove it.

The most heralded player on the '59 juggernaut was end Lou Fogle, who went on to star at Clemson, and flirted with a career in the pros after leading the Tigers in receiving in 1963. He went on to have a very successful high school coaching career in the Carolinas.

"The Rambin' Red Head" was named third team all-state by the United Press International (UPI) in 1959 and made the Big 33 team where he was the only Pennsylvania player to play both offense and defense.

"Lou Fogle is the best football player in the section this year and could play for any team in the country," McCullough said. Added former FHS coach Ken Wolfe (1944-50), "In my 30 years at Franklin High School, he's the best end I have ever seen."

"What hit me?" asked Warren's Art White who was out of action two weeks after being taken down by a Fogle block.

Pitt, Penn State, Wisconsin, Iowa, Maryland and national champion Syracuse all showed interest in Fogle before he took his game to Clemson.

Fogle had at least 806 career yards receiving for Franklin, with a lot of his yardage being unaccounted for. But, he caught at least 23 passes for 510 yards and punted for a 41-yard average in 1959, including two for a 65.5 average against Hickory.

But Fogle wasn't the only FHS all-time great on that team.

Julian "Butch" Conrad, a 5-11, 158-pounder and a cousin of Marchibroda, rushed for 1,110 yards on 128 carries and scored 11 TDs. He also completed 15 of 22 passes for 289 yards. His biggest game came against Oil City in which he ran for 267 yards on 17 carries and scored five touchdowns, all on runs of 10 yards or more.

The two were the only unanimous picks for the All-Section team, but McCullough insisted, "There is no better player in Section 2 than (two-way lineman) Ron Baughman." McCullough also noted Bob Michaels was "the only guard in the section who can get in front of Conrad to lead interference."

All four made first team All-Section 2. End Ted Smith, center Vince Witherup and back Fred Harris made second team, and guard Paul Beals and back Fred Yetka were on the third team. Tackles Tom Sloss, Ken Sherene and Dick Rieter; guard Jim Hoffman and back Frank Fultz received honorable mentions.

“Nobody hits like that Fultz,” assistant coach Joe Stewart said after the 25-7 win over Corry. Conrad scored two TDs against Corry, one on a 76-yard play in which he took a lateral from Fogle, who caught a pass from Ron Harbaugh. Conrad then pulled away from reigning District 10 100-yard dash champ Jim Vanik on his way to payday.

Other cool plays by the Knights that season:

n They scored off two laterals against Mercer, one on a 43-yard play in which Harbaugh passed to Fogle who gave the ball up to Conrad for the TD. The second came on a fumble in which Jack Schosser hit the quarterback, and Sloss recovered and ran 50 yards before lateraling to Witherup for the TD. Harris later returned a fumble 90 yards for another touchdown.

n The Knights’ defense was known as “the Stopettes.” Stopette was a deodorant back in the day, and was a sponsor on the “What’s My Line” TV show. The Stopettes made two goal line stands against Hickory, one after the Hornets reached the 2. Hickory proceeded to lose four yards on the next four plays. The second time came with two minutes left in the game with Franklin nursing a 6-0 lead, and on the first play, Harris forced a fumble that Sloss recovered. Baughman was in on 60 percent of the tackles in that game.

The Knights allowed more than 200 yards only once all season (Grove City), so the Stopettes were aptly named: They didn’t stink.

Next: The Knights follow up with a 7-1 campaign and their initial first-team all-stater.