



Mel Ingram
GPHS Football Coach 1947-1968
Inducted 2017

Growing up in Aberdeen, Washington Mel Ingram was a tremendous athlete. He earned sixteen letters in high school; 4 each in football basketball, baseball, and track. He competed at the collegiate level at Gonzaga University where he earned 15 letters (a football injury kept him out of basketball for one season). Mel Ingram was heralded the greatest all-around athlete in the area. In 1929, he was drafted by the Pittsburg pirates. He signed - with the condition that he be released to coach high school football at the end of the season. He also played for the House of David touring baseball team, also under the condition that he be allowed to leave when it was time to go coach.

Beginning his coaching career in Wallace, Idaho in 1929, he led his Wallace team to 12 Conference Championships. Next, he coached for 3 years in Roseburg before coming to Grants Pass in 1947 where although he also coached baseball, wrestling, and track - football is what he came to GPHS to coach and football is where he made a lasting impact.

While at Grants Pass, Mel Ingram's football coaching stats speak for themselves: 22 years at the helm, 142-49-19 record and 4 Caveman State Championships; the first official football State Championship for GPHS in 1948, and additional State Championships in 1951, 1964, and 1967. In his honor, the varsity football field where the Cavemen play on Friday nights, was dedicated "Mel Ingram Field" in 1980. Mel Ingram was offered opportunities to continue to play professional baseball and to coach college teams. He turned down those offers because what he really wanted to do was coach high school boys. He was quoted as saying "I want to have a part in making good citizens...". Mel Ingram coached for 40 years, 22 at Grants Pass High School, and has a reputation for making good citizens, disciplined individuals, and even stronger teams.

Mel Ingram is credited with raising the level of play for high school football in Oregon. His players that went on to play in college were known for their strong fundamentals. His practices were characterized as organized, with attention to fundamental skills, focused preparation for each opponent, and top mental and physical conditioning. Mel Ingram raised the level of play and the level of expectation in every program where he coached.

During his 40 year career, Mel Ingram's teams were 226-75-20. He has been recognized throughout the years by his peers, not only for his competitive record but for the positive impact he had on athletes and programs. He was awarded the National High School Coach of the Year in 1968, the Spokane Sports Association Inland Empire Hall of Fame in 1972, the High School Coaches Hall of Fame in 1977, and the Gonzaga University Hall of Fame in 1988.

After 22 years as the leader of the Cavemen, Mel Ingram – sometime referred to as the "Old Grey Fox", retired. During his last season, at a Caveman home football game vs. Ashland, hundreds of former coaches and players expressed their appreciation by presenting Mel with a Bronco station wagon so that he could spend his retirement camping and fishing.

