



18 Seniors of the OHS '52-'55 Undeclared Football Team Class of 2016

Eighteen members of the 1956 graduating class of Oroville High School are being honored for Distinguished Service to the Oroville Union High School District.

These students played four years of football, 1952-55, having never lost a game! Members of this group are Clyde Berry, Ken Bettis, Gilbert Bowles, Sonny Brandt, Jack Brereton, Jerry Faunce, Lyle Gross, Dick Hofius, Don Housen, Gary Hunt, Roy Mastelotto, Winford McCracken, Bert Myers, Don Morford, Pete Noyer, John Odekirk, Wilbur Reil and Ray Silver.

This is a highly unique group as they had the same head coach, Johnny Johnson, all four years. The assistant coaches, Herm Stauss and Hugh Harrison were also with them all four years and in 2009, all three coaches were inducted into the Oroville Union High School District Hall of Fame as members of its very first class. An additional tribute to OHS during this period of time saw OHS Principal Chester Nisbet inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2009 along with the three coaches. Joe Felipe, varsity football coach from 1949-54, was elected to the Hall of Fame in 2013. This speaks volumes about the quality of educators who worked with this distinguished group of players.

At the end of the 1955 season, the then San Francisco Examiner newspaper named the team the number one high school football team from Fresno, CA to the Oregon border. The team won Sierra Foothill League (SFL) championships in 1953, 54, and 55 and at one time, owned a 27 game win streak. In the last four games of that 1955 season, the OHS lads outscored their opponents 144-40.

Lyle Gross, Dick Hofius, Win McCracken, and Bert Myers were named to the All-Sierra Foothill League Team as seniors. Lyle Gross and Dick Hofius were awarded scholarships to Stanford University as well as being selected to play in the prestigious North/South Shrine All-Star Game in Los Angeles, CA.

In addition to being outstanding on the gridiron, several of these players were members of the 1955-56 OHS undefeated basketball team that compiled a record on the hardwood of 23-0. Their head coach, Duard Millet, is also a member of the OUHSD Hall of Fame class of 2009. The 1955-56 school year saw OHS winning championships in the then three major sports of football, basketball, and baseball, a unique accomplishment in itself.

A 1969 Oroville Mercury-Register article written by John Soukop, stated, **“The team justly placed itself into the annals of Oroville sports history.”** In March 2016, the 17 players were honored by the Northern California Sports Association, when they were inducted into its Hall of Fame at their annual ceremony held in Yuba City, CA. Four members of the group attended that event.

Coach John Johnson stated at a 1969 gathering of the group, **“It was a hell of a group of kids. We were in a good cycle and it just stayed longer than usual. We were lucky.”** At the same event, Principal Chet Nisbet said (tongue in cheek), **“A whole generation of Oroville High School students has not learned what it is to lose.”**

Dean Andoe, OUHSD Hall of Fame class of 2011, and junior backup quarterback on the 1955 team, learned that seven members of the group, Lyle Gross, Dick Hofius, Don Housen, Winford McCracken, Don Morford, Bert Myers, and Ray Silver are deceased. Dean has managed to locate the 10 living members of the team, several of who plan to attend the induction dinner.