

Obit for Coach "Duke" Hayes

Here's an item, sent to me by a reader, that may be of interest to all you McClain Tiger fans. It is the 1967 obituary of Frank L. "Duke" Hayes who once coached the Tigers and went on to a successful career as a college coach. The obit first appeared in The Greenfield Times on July 6, 1967.

"The untimely passing of Frank L. "Duke" Hayes last Saturday at his family's vacation lodge in Ontario saddened many men and women in this area who knew him when he coached at McClain High School more than four decades ago and whom had seen and talked with him occasionally down through the years since that fabulous ere when his teams won acclaim far and wide. He was 73.

Fresh out of college after service in World War I, "Duke" came to Greenfield in the summer of 1919 and was hired for his first coaching job on the recommendation of the late Prof. F.R. Harris, then principal of MHS. He coached football, basketball, baseball and tennis, and taught physical education.

"Duke" probably was one the very first high school coaches who "recruited". Bainbridge came to McClain Gym one night during the 1919-20 cage season and "Duke" liked the performance of a chunky little Bainbridge freshman named Gerald L. Armstrong.

The lad entered McClain as a sophomore the following fall and promptly acquired the nickname of "Red" and just as quickly established himself as the potential "star of stars" which he eventually became on the gridiron, on the hardwoods, and on the diamond.

About the same time, a Lynchburg family named Stroup moved to Greenfield and contributed Robert "Lubber" Stroup to the Hayes roster.

"Red" and "Lubber" had plenty of help from teammates from Greenfield itself and the rural community as "Duke" built gridiron and court squads with outstanding talent such as Howard "Softy" Robinson, Paul "Shovelhead" Smith, Curtis "Curly" Bumgarner, Homer Watts, Harold Hiatt, Glendon Stephenson, Roy "Spooler" Mossbarger, Stanley "Bus" Carter, Joe Edmonson, Gene Pearce, Morris O'Dell, Ted Harps, Clarence "Rabbit" Sommers, Jack Irvine, and others.

"Duke" was a showman as well as a fine athlete and a keen student of the two major sports. He and his teams built school spirit to a high pitch and it spread throughout the community, particularly for the basketball seasons. He put reserved seat tickets on sale downtown and fans stood in line to get the treasured ducats. "Duke" put Greenfield on the athletic map.

During the years 1920-21-22-23 his court aggregations won 89 out of 97 games, including tournament play, and scored 3319 points to 1251 for their opponents who included teams from Cincinnati, Xenia, Lorain, Sandusky, Chillicothe and elsewhere in Ohio, and a number in Indiana and Illinois.

The 1921 quint was undefeated in its regular season and lost the finals in the

state tournament to Cambridge, 14-11.

The 1922 squad captured five straight wins in the state tourney, including the elimination of Dayton Stivers which had held the championship for six years in a row.

"The Athletic World" known at the time as the All-American Sports magazine, referred to McClain as the world's most remarkable high school and stated its basketball record was unparalleled in high school competition.

"Duke" left McClain in 1924 and that fall became an assistant coach in football and basketball at the University of Michigan. He was head coach at Grinnell College in Iowa for a year before returning to his alma mater, Marietta College, in 1927 as professor of physical education, head football-basketball coach, and director of athletics.

He entered the service for the second time in World War II and attained the rank of lieutenant colonel in the Army Air Force in the Pacific Theater.

He never returned to coaching. Instead, he spent the period 1946-57 as director of special services at the VA Hospital, Ft. Thomas, Ky. Retiring in 1957, he and his wife made their home in Tavares, Fla.

While still at Marietta College, "Duke" used to stop off here with his grid squads for a practice session, while en route to a week-end game.

Several McClain grads played football for him at Marietta, including Everett Marcum who later climaxed a coaching stint at McClain with a perfect season in 1954.

"Duke" and Mrs. Hayes visited here during the Sesqui in 1949.

"Duke" was last in Greenfield on Dec. 8, 1959, to join other former coaches in paying tribute to that year's undefeated and untied McClain Tiger gridgers, coached by Paul Orr. He came by plane from Tavares to attend the gala occasion along with McClain's first grid mentor, Supt.-Emeritus F.R. Harris, and coaches of more recent times: Richard Larkin, "Red" Armstrong, John W. Griesheimer, and Mr. Marcum.

"Duke" spoke in reminiscence of his coaching tenure in Greenfield: "I suppose that football here has had three phases. 1) Mr. Harris began by instilling sportsmanship. 2) I guess I had something to do with building fighting spirit. 3) 'Red' Armstrong came along then and added finesse and polish to McClain's athletics."

"Duke" took the occasion to describe "Red" Armstrong as "the finest athlete ever graduated from McClain."

"Duke" chose the right words when he said of himself: "I guess I had

something to do with building fighting spirit.”

He was too modest, though. His was an indomitable will to win, to play the game to the hilt. Sports and the teaching thereof to young men was life’s blood itself to him.

All of the people who once knew him some day will be no more, but as long as there is a Greenfield and a McClain High School, “Duke” and his great teams and stars will retain their place of eminence in the annals of “the Old Ville.””