

La Salle College High School Football: In Retrospect



NOTE: This is the twelfth of, I hope, many retrospectives highlighting some unique history of the football program at La Salle. The topics to discuss seem endless at this time. Hope you enjoy these.

Bill Wasylenko, '69

Issue Number Twelve: The Lombardis Of La Salle

La Salle College High School has guided many young men into worthy, meaningful, and successful professions, and also have helped those young men nurture a drive for excellence in anything they seek to do. Surely, one of those passions that La Salle grads have had is a passion for coaching. Many La Salle grads have successfully coached many sports at many different schools and colleges. But one segment of those coaches are worthy of note in this retrospective, namely, those La Salle grads who became Catholic League Champion head football coaches.

Twenty-one (21) seasons of Catholic League football ended with a La Salle grad holding a Catholic League Championship trophy, affectionately now known as the "Hubcap". And the Golden Age of La Salle boys winning those championships was the 17 years between 1955 and 1971, when 12 of the 17 championships were won by "Brothers Boys"; incredible!!

Let me give you a quick rundown of the nine La Salle boys who became head football coaches in the Catholic League:

Ken "Cy" Simendinger '18: Cy was featured in a previous retrospect; he was one of the first athletic stars of La Salle, captaining the football and basketball teams. After dabbling in the fledgling NFL for one year, and also coaching at his Alma Mater (Holy Cross), and then at Gonzaga High in Washington, DC, Cy became a legendary coach for North Catholic in the 1930's, and led the Falcons to three straight years of Catholic League championships in both football and basketball!! He coached football at North (Northeast Catholic back then) from 1930 to 1940, and his overall record was 62-22-12. He even refereed Catholic League football games in the 40's.

John "Tex" Flannery '40: Tex will certainly be the subject of a future retrospective, and was a visible member of the La Salle family for over 60 years. He was an All-Catholic end for the Explorers, and went on to the College. After a coaching stint at Bartram, Tex joined the staff at La Salle, was an assistant on the unbeaten 1955 team, and took over the reins in 1956. He was a focal point of the first Golden Age of La Salle football, winning Catholic League championships three times in four years. He retired from coaching after the 1984 season, amassing a record of 149-115-2 in his 29 years at the helm. He was seen at most La Salle games in the 90's and into the 00's, before he passed away in 2007.

Jim Gallagher '43: also a subject of a previous retrospective, Dr. James Gallagher graduated from Villanova, and came back to La Salle to teach and to coach football, becoming an assistant under Johnny Meyers. After a dismal 1951 season which saw the Explorers go 0-10-0, Gallagher was given the nod as head coach, and implemented new offensive schemes which took a while to develop. Each year the team became more successful, and the 1955 team showed some promise that they'd contend for the Catholic League title. Little did anyone know at the time that this team would go undefeated, winning the Catholic League as well as the City Championship, the first ever football crowns for the Explorers. Gallagher went on to coach at Hatboro High School, and became the founding principal at Central Bucks East High School. Jim's overall record at La Salle was 22-15-2.

Vince McAneney '47: playing halfback for the Explorers, Vince was one of a gaggle of McAneney boys to attend La Salle, and he has been a legendary long-time football coach in the Delaware Valley. He coached at West Catholic between 1957 and 1964, and picked up his lone Catholic League Championship in 1962, the last year before divisional play. Vince was voted into the West Chester University Sports Hall of Fame, and, as you'll see on his pictorial page later in this publication, he has been honored at Pennsauken High School by having the field named after him. His overall record at West Catholic was 52-23-5.

Dick Bedesem '49: An All-Catholic, all-purpose back at La Salle, Dick went on to star at Villanova, and had a tryout with the Philadelphia Eagles in 1953. He joined La Salle as a teacher and assistant football coach, and was also on that 1955 staff with Jim Gallagher and Tex Flannery. Dick took over the fledgling football program at brand new Bishop Egan High School in 1957, and these Eagles became a juggernaut in the 1960's, winning 5 Catholic League titles between 1963 and 1970. Bedesem also coached at Archbishop Wood, as well as several college positions, including head coach at Villanova and Delaware Valley. His overall Catholic League record was 85-30-5.

John McAneney '51: a quarterback at La Salle, John followed brother Vince at West Catholic, and coached the 1965 Burrs to the Catholic League Championship. He returned to West Catholic to coach between 1970 and 1976, and his overall Catholic League record is 45-34-0. John also joined his brother Vince as a member of West Chester University's Sports Hall of Fame. His blue and gold colors carried from La Salle to West Catholic to his current position as an assistant at George Washington, extending the McAneney coaching legacy to a sum total of about 100 years!!

Joe McNichol '59: possessor of another great La Salle football surname, Joe was a great back for the Explorers in their first Golden Age. Similar to Bedesem, Joe McNichol grabbed the reins of the football program at the new Archbishop Carroll High School, and in their third year of play, won the Catholic League Championship in 1971, and followed that up with another crown in 1976. Joe had the helm at Bishop Kenrick for 1986 and 1987, and then came to La Salle to coordinate the offense, and the Explorers of 1988 and 1989 benefited from his knowledge, going 10-1-0 in 1988, and winning the Catholic League Championship in 1989. His overall record was 52-52-3.

Joe Colistra '64: Joe was a punishing All-Catholic lineman for the Explorers, and went on to ply his trade for Villanova. Returning to La Salle as a teacher and assistant coach in 1968, Joe waited until 1985 to get the head coaching position after the retirement of Tex Flannery. He instituted weight training to condition his players, and, after a couple of struggling years, the Explorers rose up from their long sleep to dominate the Catholic League in the late eighties and mid-nineties, with a pause for the Archbishop Ryan dynasty of 1990-1993. Joe brought on offensive minds like Joe McNichol and Drew Gordon to solidify the offensive capabilities of the team, and retired as the winningest La Salle football coach in 2005 with an overall record of 153-88-2. And no one who was there will ever forget his last game, an overtime win against St. Joseph's Prep on Thanksgiving Day. Many of Colistra's former players talk about the life lessons they learned from this man.

Chuck Knowles '67: Having played on the La Salle teams in the mid-60's, Chuck was a long-time fixture at Bishop Egan and Conwell-Egan, serving two stints as head coach from 1985-1990 and 1994-1998. The Eagle program had fallen on hard times by then, and Chuck's overall record was 25-84-3. Chuck is now the athletic director at Norristown High School.

Summary and Conclusions

There are many terms that come to mind when I think of these 9 men. Passion, tenacity, longevity, willingness to collaborate, and a drive for excellence are common themes for most of them. Being a successful head coach for any sport, but especially football, can absolutely consume you. You always feel that there's just a little more to do, whether it's watching film, preparing a game plan, or grooming assistant coaches; there just never seems to be enough time in the day, week, month, or year to have the self-satisfaction that you did all you could. But these men all displayed a passion for the game, and for the players they coached, and it is hoped that future Hubcaps will be again won some day by a Brothers Boy who graduated from La Salle College High School.

So, you young grads: think about it!! Do you have all of those traits I just mentioned above? If you do, maybe some day you can join these 9 men in a most challenging endeavor of being a successful Catholic League head football coach!

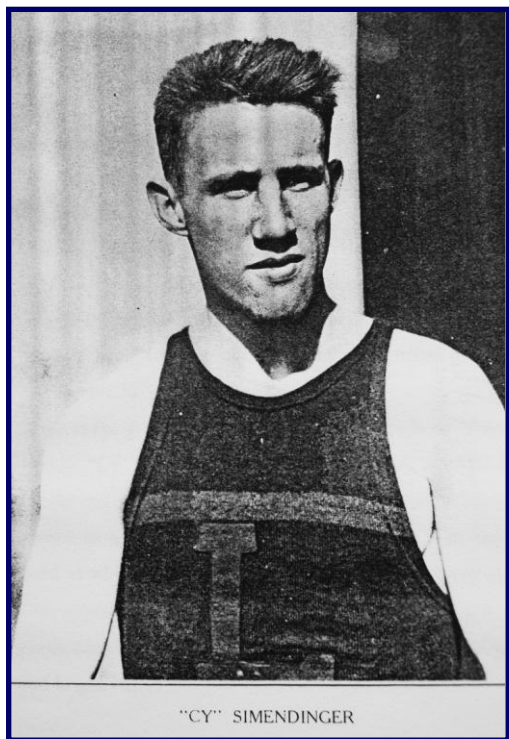
Enjoy the pictorial pages for each coach.

I welcome your comments, corrections, and additions.
Go La Salle!!

Bill Wasylenko, '69
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March 1, 2011, revised May 18, 2013

Ken "Cy" Simendinger, Class of 1918



CATHOLIC LEAGUE CHAMPION 1934, 1935, 1936, 1937

Kenneth Alphonse Simendinger (1899 -1972) was a professional football in the National Football League for the Hartford Blues in 1926. He also played for the Waterbury-Hartford Blues in 1924, prior to that team's entry into the NFL. He was also a head college basketball coach at his alma mater, Holy Cross from 1924 until 1925.

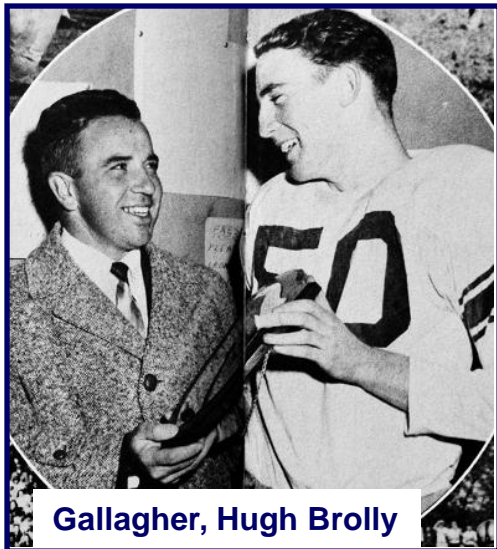
At Holy Cross, Simendinger played three years of college football and baseball. He hit two home runs and a double in his baseball debut against Dartmouth College, earning him the nickname the "Babe Ruth of the Eastern Intercollegiates." Simendinger is the only Crusader coach to have served for just one season, as he then became football coach at Gonzaga High School in Washington D.C. He was inducted into the Crusader Varsity Club Hall of Fame in 1958.

La Salle Defeats Wenonah

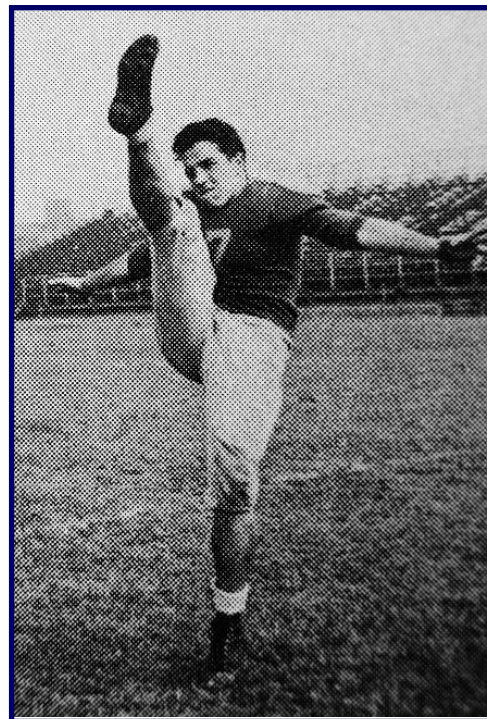
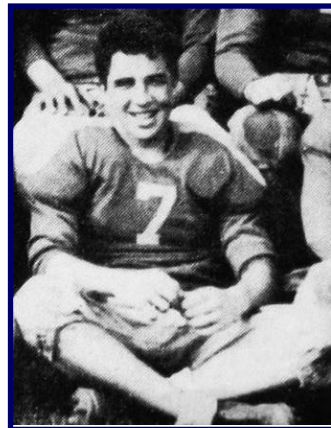
For the first time in nine years Wenonah Military Academy was defeated on their home grounds, and La Salle turned the trick, by the score of 12-7. The game was hard fought throughout. The first score came after Lehman brought the ball from the 25-yard line to the 5-yard line and Simendinger took the ball over on an off tackle play. The second touchdown resulted by a long end run by Simendinger. Wenonah's score came from a long forward pass from Keller to Emery.

Before entering La Salle in the fall of 1916, "Cy" Simendinger studied at Central High School, Philadelphia. Since his arrival here he has made many friends. In fact, he is now one of the most popular young lads in the school. He won his great popularity not only on account of his brilliant athletic achievements, but more so as a result of his manly and upright characteristics. In the athletic line, "Cy" has made an enviable record, starring in base ball, foot ball, and basket ball. When referring to him, a local sporting editor wrote: "Simendinger is the greatest all-around athletic youth since the days of Berry at North-east." "Cy" not only played his part, but instilled his team mates with that "never-say-die" spirit which characterized the teams under his captaincy. His record as a student is equally as creditable. In the class room he worked as hard as when on the gridiron or in the cage. Everywhere he was a hard worker. Consequently he is classified among the honored men of this year's High School graduating class. La Salle boys will long remember "Cy." We wish him a long and bright career.

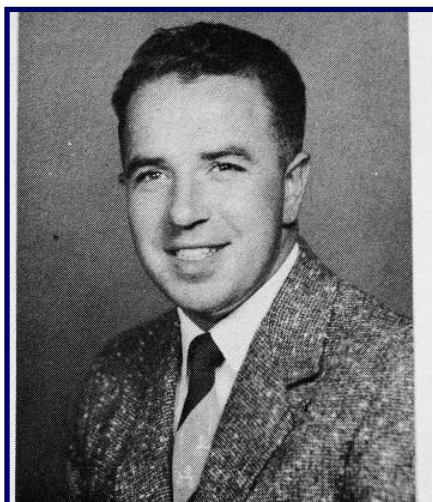
Jim Gallagher, Class of 1943



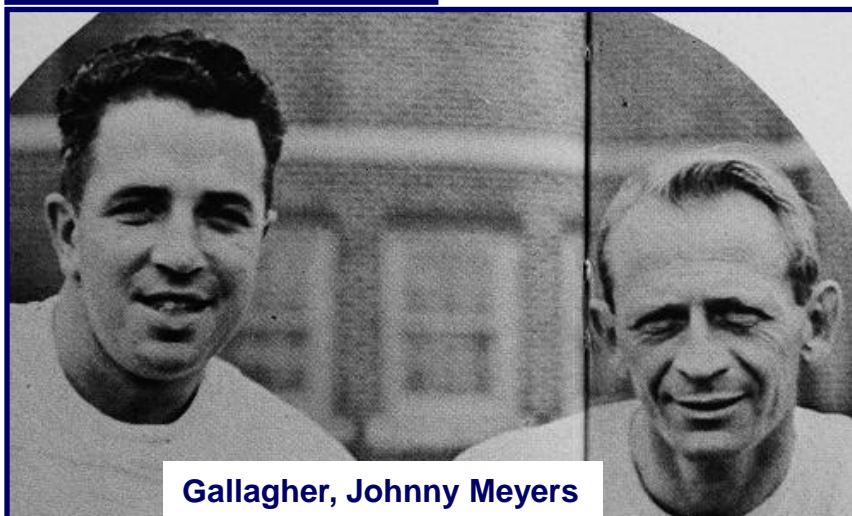
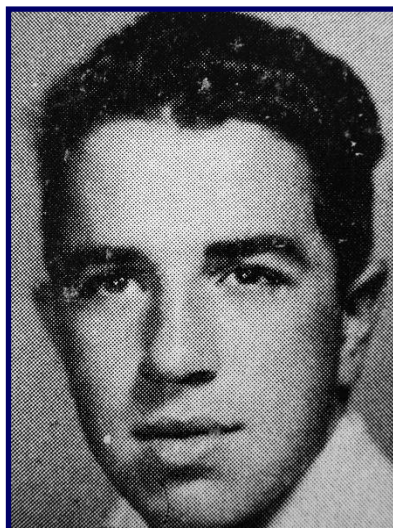
Gallagher, Hugh Brolly



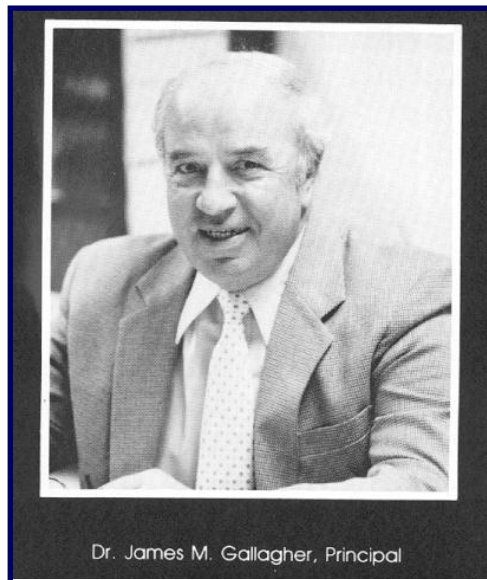
**CATHOLIC
LEAGUE
CHAMPION
1955**



MR. JAMES GALLAGHER
Mechanical Drawing . . . Football
Coach

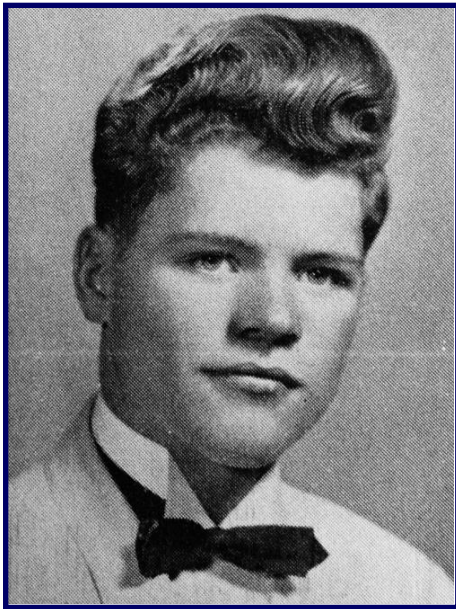


Gallagher, Johnny Meyers



Dr. James M. Gallagher, Principal

Vince McAneney, Class of 1947



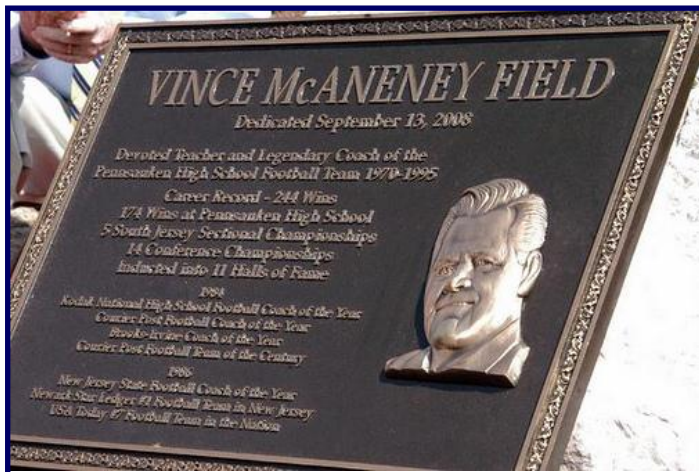
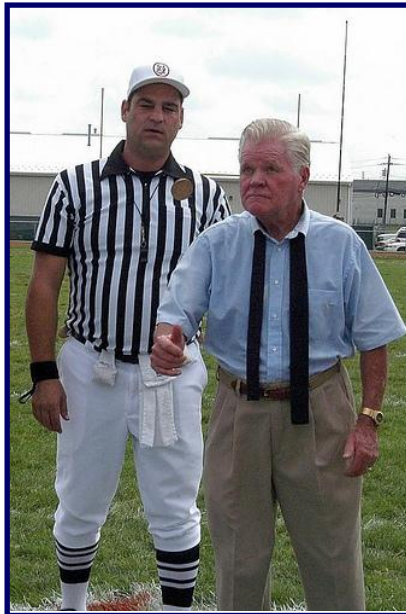
CATHOLIC LEAGUE CHAMPION 1962



Bedesem, V. McAneney

La Salle ----- 27
Salesianum ----- 6

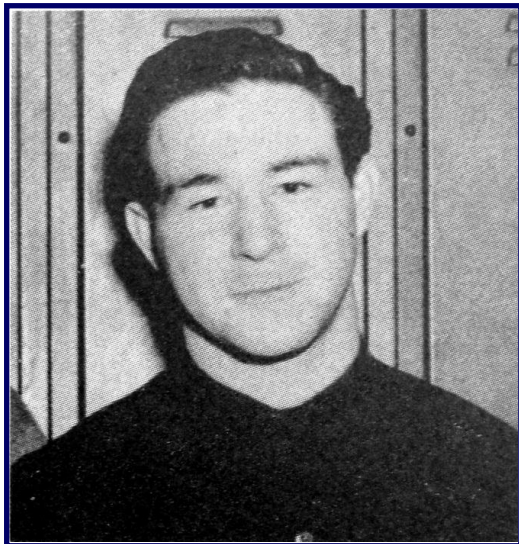
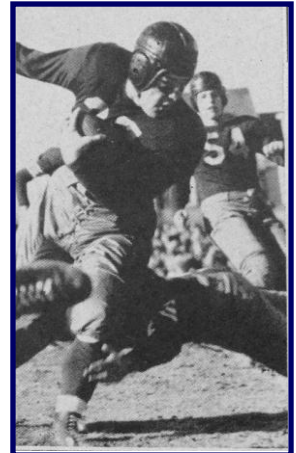
- ★ La Salle rolled to an easy 27-6 victory over Salesianum in a night game at Wilmington. McCoy stole the stardust, as he scored twice, passed for another touch-down, and kicked three of four points. A 28-yard aerial from McCoy to McAneney marked up the first Explorer touchdown. McCoy stole across from the eight several plays later for the second.
- ★ Salesianum's DeShans plunged from the one to score. McCoy ripped through the line for 65 yards in the third and Hoskinson added another score in the fourth to complete the night's work.



Dick Bedesem, Class of 1949

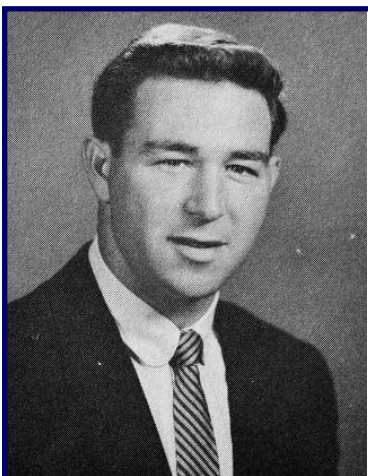


Shining brightest among La Salle's Athletic stars is "All Catholic" Dick Bedesem. As co-captain of La Salle's '49 footballers, Dick sparked the team at all times and kept plugging through the season in the face of odds and defeats. His hard driving and flashy broken field dashes were the highlights of all La Salle's games and won for him a berth on the coach's All-Catholic eleven. He received more votes for this honor than any other candidate thus placing him at the top of league players. As further proof of his athletic excellence, Dick was honored during the season as the outstanding schoolboy in the district for the week by the Maxwell Club.



Bedesem, Francis Gleeson, Gallagher

CATHOLIC LEAGUE CHAMPION 1963, 1966, 1967, 1969, 1970



MR. RICHARD BEDESEM
History I . . . Freshman Football



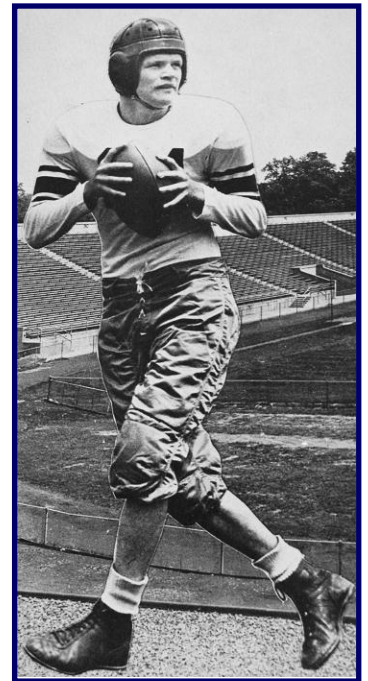
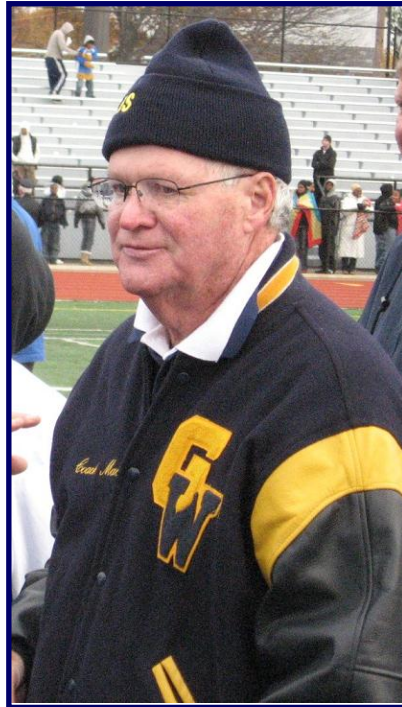
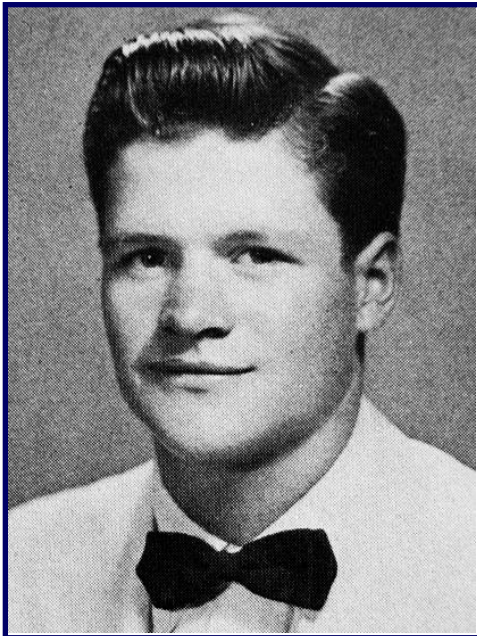
Richard Bedesem

Dick Bedesem was one of the most successful football coaches in the history of Bucks County. He graduated from LaSalle College High School where he was an All-Catholic running back. Dick was the first lay teacher hired at Bishop Egan High School in 1957, as well as the first football coach. Coach Bedesem led Egan to five Philadelphia Catholic League titles in 1963, 66, 67, 69, and 70. His teams won the Northern Division title in 1963, 65, 66, 67, 69, and 70. In 1966, 67, and 69, Egan won the Philadelphia City Title and shared the title in 1963 with Roxborough. His 1966 team was ranked #5 in the nation. Coach Bedesem also coached at Archbishop Wood High School and Neshaminy High School where he won a Suburban One co-championship in 1986.

In 1973-74, Dick began his collegiate career joining the Temple staff of legendary coach Wayne Hardin; from 1975 to 1980, he was Head Coach at his alma mater, Villanova. In 1982, he joined Jackie Sherrill at Pitt. Dick's final collegiate stop was as Head Coach at Delaware Valley College in Doylestown from 1987 to 1991.

Dick was inducted into the Pennsylvania Football Coaches Hall of Fame in 2004.

John McAneney, Class of 1951



La Salle 14 — St. Thomas More 6
A scrappy St. Tommy ball club gave our boys a real battle but were finally subdued 14-6. At the end of a nip and tuck first half, the scoreboard read 7-0 in favor of La Salle on a plunge by Bill Sommers. In the second half, St. Tommy got its only score, making it 7-6. At this time, John McAneney put on a one man show. Deep in his own territory, he bootlegged sixty-five yards before being tackled. After a few short gains, he again faked his way around end for the final score.

**CATHOLIC
LEAGUE
CHAMPION
1965**

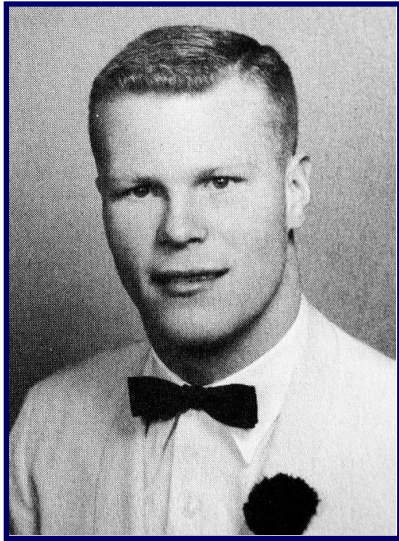


Joe McNichol, Class of 1959

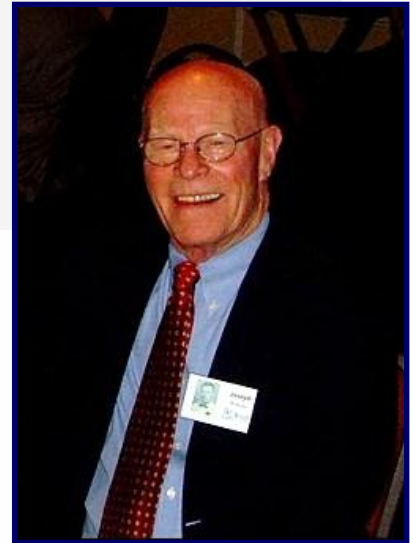
Carroll Football Hall of Fame

JOE MCNICHOL, Head Coach

The architect and founding father of Carroll football. McNichol set the bar high for his Patriots program, a program that would eventually go on to win more playoff games than any other team in Catholic League history. His 48-37-2 record in eight seasons (1969-76) includes two City Championships. His 7-2 playoff record is still tops in winning percentage among Catholic League coaches with five or more playoff games. McNichol not only influenced players but also coaches under his tenure. Dan Bielli and Kevin Clancy, both assistant coaches under McNichol, went on to win championships as head coaches.



CATHOLIC LEAGUE CHAMPION 1971, 1976



Title Game Air-Ground Battle

Pioneers, Patriots Ready

By JULIUS THOMPSON

Last week, Frankford stopped the Central Infantry at the battle of Northeast. Tomorrow at 1 P.M. the Pioneers will try to shoot down the Archbishop Carroll bombers over Franklin Field in the 34th annual City Championship game.

"I'm a great believer in momentum," Carroll coach Joe McNichol said. "Right now, I believe we have it. I like a running attack. We don't have a whole lot of running this year. We like to pass. If I didn't have a great passer, we would be in trouble."

The Patriots' offense is led by All-Catholic and Bulletin All-City first, Iowa, quarterback Bill Zwaan, who has been running the option effectively. He has completed 108 of 183 passes for 1,587 yards and 19 touchdowns, with only 11 interceptions.

The air over Franklin Field will be filled with football, many going to Steve Adelizzi. The Bulletin All-Scholastic, AP All-State and first team UPI All-State end has caught 45 touchdowns, 977 yards and 13 touchdowns.

Running Game Matures
In the last few games, junior John Koester has shown the ability to run and this has made the Carroll attack, which features Mark League coming out of the backfield on pass patterns, even more dangerous.

The offense is explosive, as Bishop Kenrick learned in last Sunday's Catholic title, 35-12. Carroll's defense was porous during the beginning of the season, allowing 26 points to Archbishop Wood, 29 to Cardinal O'Hara, 22 to St. James and 22 to Roman Catholic. But it has matured into a cohesive unit.

All-Catholic defensive end Gary Shugart, Keven Mc-



Joe McNichol
Archbishop Carroll High School

When Archbishop Carroll trots onto the AstroTurf of Franklin Field tomorrow for the 34th annual City Championship game, it will be the culmination of five years of work for Joe McNichol.

McNichol started coaching at Carroll in 1967 when the school opened. The Patriots entered the Catholic League in 1969 and have gone from eighth place (2-8) in 1970 to a Catholic League championship (10-1) this season.

"I hope to be better than last year," McNichol said before the season. "We must gain more confidence."

"I think maturity and experience has been the difference in the squad this year. I can go back to the end of last year. The two Adelizzis (Steve and Mike), Jim McBride and Don Thompson started playing as sophomores and have improved with experience."

"During the first year we used a classroom for the locker room. But, by the next year all the facilities were complete."

McNichol started coaching in 1962 at Bishop McDevitt and stayed there until 1963. He was an assistant coach at Archbishop Ryan in 1966 and moved to the head coaching position at Carroll in 1967.

"I'm from the Northern Division," McNichol said.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO . . .

JOE McNICHOL

Then: Catholic League football coaching legend who built new Archbishop Carroll into one of the city's powers of the 1970s . . . Two City championships at Carroll, 1971 (15-14 over Frankford) and 1976 (21-6 over Bartram) . . . Won first City title at age 30, youngest to do so . . . After Carroll (1967-76), coached at Atlantic City High (1977-78) and Bishop Kenrick (1986-87), and served as offensive coordinator La Salle High (1988-90, including 1989 Catholic League Championship) . . . Also teacher, businessman and assisted briefly at Villanova.



McNichol

Now: Operations manager, Genesis Health Ventures . . . three children (Shannon, Kalin, Joe), three grand-children . . . 61, Lafayette Hill resident . . . Still has coaching itch.

Fondest championship memory
"Coming back to campus at Carroll after the first [City] title in '71 [Franklin Field]. The scene was unbelievable. The buses had nowhere to go in the parking lots filled with more than 2,000 people. It was some celebration."

Most proud of: "The many, many friendships I have with my former players, like Kevin Clancy [Carroll, now the Strath Haven coach], Billy Zwaan [Widener coach, Carroll's City title quarterback in '71] and so many others."

One regret: "I never should have left coaching and teaching."

Incredible coincidence: Both Carroll City titles were on Dec. 10, with his picture on Page 1 of two Dec. 11 Sunday *Inquirers*.

—Kevin Mulligan



Al Angelo
Frankford High School

Al Angelo will be going into a City Championship game, for the fifth time in Frankford history to win 12 games, and a City Title . . .

Angelo played for the Public champion Pioneers in 1967 and 1968. He was an assistant coach in 1964 when Frankford lost to Father Judge, 18-18. In 1963, he was a head coach as the Pioneers lost to Bishop Egan, 28-20.

"I hate to compare teams," Angelo said. "You can't say one is better than the other. The players from the past teams will say that he was nice to us, but now look what he said. I have kids. I can't pick between them. It's really hard to say."

"I told the team that a record can speak for itself. They're the only team in Frankford history to win 12 games, and a City Title—if they can win Saturday."

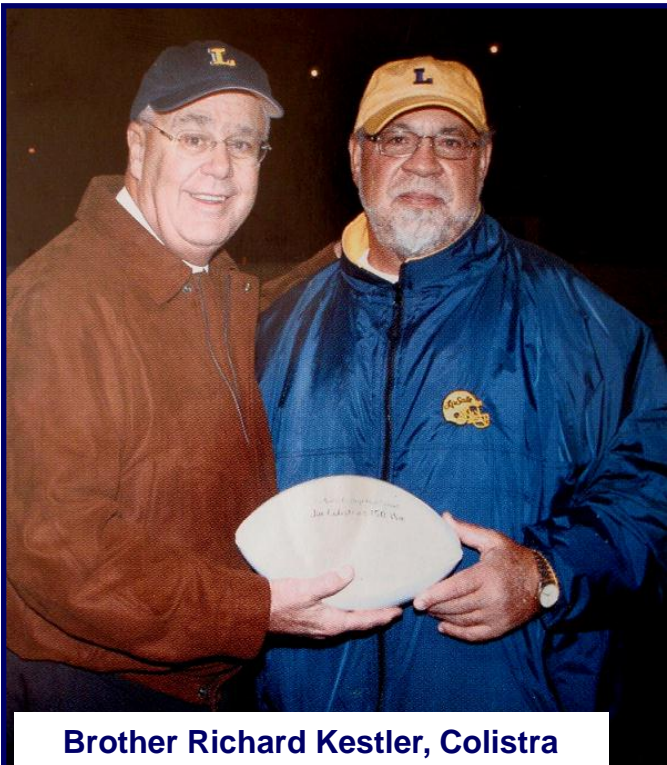
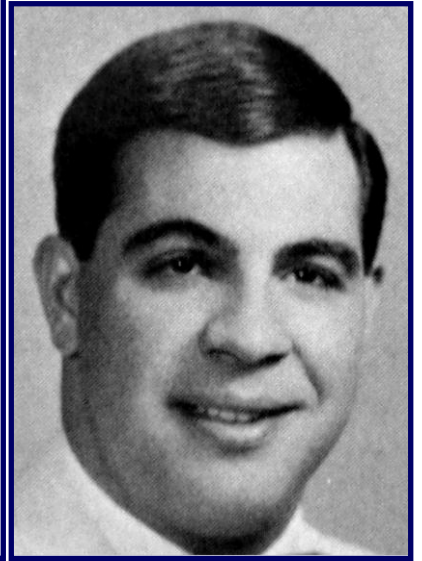
Frankford found itself earlier this season. Before the season Angelo could only name Lincoln, the Pioneers drove late and scored and have jelled. Their momentum hasn't stopped.

"I was discussing with someone about how a team might have rare pride, not regular pride," Angelo said. "Some teams have

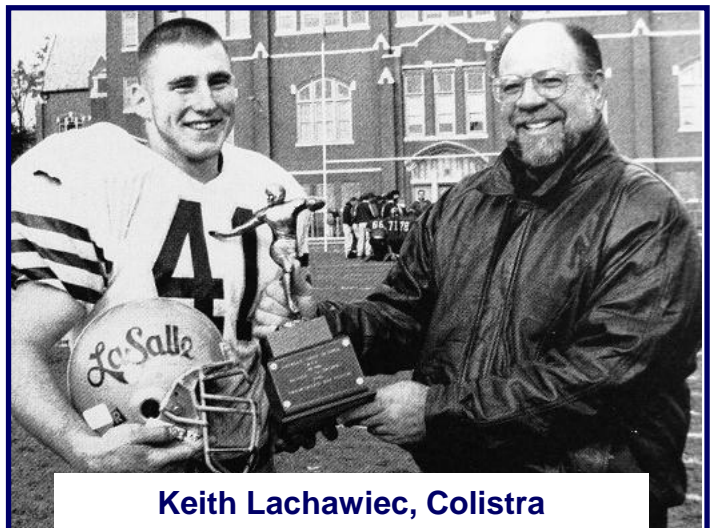
Continued on Page 42, Col. 6

Joe Colistra, Class of 1964

**CATHOLIC LEAGUE CHAMPION
1989, 1995, 1996, 1998**

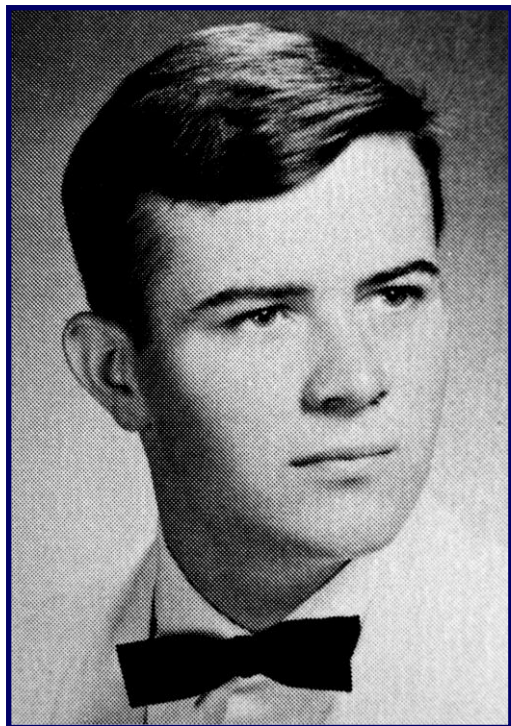


Brother Richard Kestler, Colistra



Keith Lachawiec, Colistra

Chuck Knowles, Class of 1967



Other La Salle Coaching Tidbits...

Billy Pownall, who coached La Salle in 1925, was the star quarterback for the Conshohocken Athletic Club in 1917; the Club played many semi-pro teams who had players who went on to the NFL in 1920.

Mike Saxe, who coached the football and basketball teams in 1926-1927, was the basketball coach at Southern High School in the late-teens; one of his players was a guard named Eddie Gottlieb, who became the founding father of the NBA. Saxe also coached the SPHA's, the South Philadelphia Hebrew Association basketball team.

Vince Taggart '24 could have been the tenth in our group, but for an unfortunate technicality. Taggart played for La Salle in 1922 and 1923, and came back as head coach for the 1928 to 1930 seasons, compiling a fine record of 15-10-0, including a 7-1-0 record in 1928. That 1928 team could have been a contender, but La Salle had been banned from the Catholic League from 1928 to 1933, so Vince Taggart is a victim of a technical knockout.

Jim Henry coached football at both the high school and college; records indicate that he coached the high school between 1930 and 1932. The Maxwell Club honors him by presenting a Jim Henry Award each year. A Villanova grad and La Salle College teacher and coach, he is also one of the founders of the Big Five.