Here is a capsule history of Cardinal Dougherty High School:

In the 1940’s, Northeast Catholic High School was bursting at the seams, and annexed students out to spaces within local parochial grade schools, and North became the largest boys high school in the world in the fall of 1953 with 4,726 students. As North and Northeast Philadelphia were filling up with baby boomer families, plans were made to alleviate the congestion at North with the establishment of new Catholic high schools. Father Judge was the first to open in 1954. Meanwhile, on the edge of the city in North Philadelphia, Cardinal Dougherty High School opened in 1956.

The ground for the high school was purchased by Archbishop O’Hara in 1940, and ground was finally broken on June 28, 1955 for the school named after Dennis Cardinal Dougherty, Archbishop of Philadelphia between 1918 and 1951, who was the sponsor of the building of Northeast Catholic High School in the early 20’s.

Cardinal Dougherty High School for boys and girls (but not co-ed, yet – that happened in 1983) opened its doors on September 5, 1956, to freshman and sophomore classes. Each succeeding year added a class, and the spring of 1959 featured the first graduates from the high school.

The school was built with the future in mind, and was able to accommodate the over 6,000 students that enrolled for classes in the fall of 1965, making it the largest Catholic high school in the world. By that time, the school’s marching band had become world famous, playing for Pope Paul VI at the Vatican, at the inauguration of Lyndon Baines Johnson, for Princess Grace of Monaco, and they performed at the 1962 NFL Championship game between the Packers and the Giants.

Their distinctive colors of garnet and gold were unique in the Philadelphia Catholic League, and the success of their band and their athletic teams in the mid to late 60’s gave the perception of a juggernaut after less than 15 years of existence.
The Early Years

In 1957, Cardinal Dougherty fielded a football team for the first time, and played an abridged schedule that resulted in a 2-5-0 record. Though not yet official members of the Catholic League, the Cardinals played 5 games against their future league-mates, as well as matchups against Reading Central Catholic and Salesianum. Their two wins came against St. Thomas More, and also against their eventual arch-rival, Father Judge, also a fledgling program.

And the Cardinals did take on the Explorers that year on a rainy and muddy day at McCarthy Stadium. La Salle ran their record to 3-0 on their way to an unbeaten City Title season with a 27-12 win over the baby Cards. The Explorers led, 27-0, featuring a 78-yard TD run by John Gallagher, before Dougherty scored twice against the second string to make the score respectable.

In 1958, the Cards were welcomed into the Catholic League, and were competitive under Coach Frank Banas with a 4-5-1 record. But the Explorers manhandled Dougherty, 40-14, as 5 interceptions and 3 fumble recoveries (two by Ray Weinmann) sent La Salle out to a 40-0 lead, as QB Howie Guarini scored three times. The game was much more competitive in 1959, as the 20-8 La Salle win featured Ken Quigley’s 57-yard interception for a touchdown, and a 10 yard TD pass from Howie Guarini to Quigley. La Salle won by the identical score in the 1960 affair on their way to a City Title.

But the school’s enrollment peaked in the mid-60’s, and a long, slow demographic erosion took place that culminated in the closing of the school after the 2010 graduation, ironically closing in the same year as North Catholic, which was birthed by Dennis Cardinal Dougherty himself back in the 1920’s.

This Retrospect celebrates the football rivalry between La Salle and the Cardinals of Cardinal Dougherty.
Banas and the Cards limped home with a 1-7-1 record in 1960, and he was replaced by Gene O’Pella, who was a great end for Villanova, and the 8th round draft pick of the Washington Redskins in 1959.

In the 1961 game at McCarthy Stadium, O’Pella brought an innovation to the Cardinal offense: the shotgun formation, which apparently was confusing to both the Explorers and the Cards themselves. La Salle won, 22-6, behind Frank Daniel’s 20 yard TD pass to Joe Osborne in the 2nd quarter, and his 15 yard run around left end in the third quarter. Bob Mannis accounted for Dougherty’s score with a 90 yard kickoff return for a TD.

It was just a matter of time before the Garnet and Gold would defeat La Salle, and the 14-0 Cards upset victory over the Explorers in 1962 featured two scores right after La Salle turnovers. Under O’Pella, Dougherty earned their 1st winning season, going 5-4-0 in 1962.

Divisional play started in 1963, and the Cardinals were getting closer to a Northern Division title, but that would elude them for a few years. In 1964, they tied with their arch-rival Father Judge by defeating the Crusaders in the final league game, 9-6. In the playoff game the following week, the Cardinals nursed a 7-0 lead, but Judge came back to win the Northern Division, 12-7. It was one of several “close but no cigar” moments that were to come for the Cardinal eleven.

La Salle won the 1963 game, 14-12, but lost to Dougherty at Northeast High School, 13-0, in 1964, spoiling their undefeated league season that ended the following week in a 3-0 loss to Judge. In that 1964 game, Jim Casertano rushed for 181 yards, as the Cardinals expanded on a 3-0 halftime lead to upset the Explorers. 1965 saw the Garnet and Gold pin a 20-6 loss on La Salle, as two interceptions by Wilson and Ed Galbally were returned for scores by the Cardinals.

The solid 1966 La Salle team avenged the 1965 defeat with an 18-0 whitewash of Dougherty. Three Redbird fumbles led to La Salle TD’s, as Kevin Brett and Joe Kohler scored on short runs, and Gerry Murphy hit Kohler for a touchdown on a 4th down pass. La Salle would also win the 1967 game, 18-8, coming back from an 8-6 deficit at the end of the 3rd quarter. Bill Hartman returned a blocked punt for a 30-yard TD in the first quarter, but the Cardinals held the slim lead into the fourth. After a fumble, Joe Kohler ran 33 yards to the Dougherty one-yard line, and junior QB Joe Zaiss scored to give the Blue and Gold the lead. After the Cardinals lost the ball on downs, Joe Kohler sealed the win with a 2-yard TD run.
Cardinal Dougherty was only 4-4-1 in 1967, the identical record in both the 1963 and 1966 campaigns. No one could imagine that their team was poised for greatness.

The 1968 Dougherty team, one of the great teams in PCL history, went 11-0-0, and won the City Title. They defeated Monsignor Bonner, 31-14, at Temple Stadium for their first Catholic League Championship. Running back David Bland rushed for 3 TD's, and quarterback Ray Capriotti threw touchdown passes to Harvey McGee and Bill Chambers. The Cards followed that up with a 48-14 pasting of Northeast High School at Franklin Field for the City Title. Bland scored twice, as well as fellow rusher Dan Heenan, and Capriotti threw for three touchdowns in propelling the Garnet and Gold to a 42-0 lead over the Public League champs. O’Pella’s use of the pro formation, with double wings and double slots, allowed the Cardinal offense to run roughshod over its opponents.

In the 1968 game against the Cards, La Salle was only behind by 6-0 at half, but in the second half, the floodgates opened in a 37-12 Dougherty win. Joe Zaiss scored twice for the Explorers on a 67-yard run and a 14-yard run.

The Cardinals could not repeat their previous year’s exploits in 1969 despite an 8-2-0 record. One of those losses was a big upset in their league opener against La Salle, as the Explorers shut down the Cards offense, 14-0, holding David Bland to about 30 yards rushing. Al Salvitti intercepted a screen pass and returned it for a touchdown, and Bill Loughery passed to John Deeney for the other score.
1970 was Gene O’Pella’s last year as head coach of the Cardinals, and his 6-3-0 record included an 8-7 win over the Explorers. Bill Haury passed to John Deeney for a 50-yard touchdown in the 3rd quarter to give La Salle a 7-0 lead, but, with 4 minutes to go, the Cards’ Mike Smith passed to Rich Koslozski to bring them to within a point, and a fake point after kick resulted in a 2-point pass from Smith to Stan Kryston, and La Salle lost in a heartbreaker.

Jack Boyle took over the Dougherty reins from 1971 to 1973, but the Cards were not a contender anymore. La Salle won big in 1971 and 1972. In 1971, Jack Flannery opened up the scoring with a TD pass to John Mastronardo, but the game was tied at 8-8 at half. In the 3rd quarter, LB Steve Mountain returned an errant Card pass for a 40-yard touchdown, and runs by Flannery and Bob Mizia extended the score to a 30-8 final. The 33-0 win by La Salle’s solid 1972 team seemed to re-establish La Salle’s dominance, but a 7-6 La Salle loss to the Cardinals in 1973 seemed to mirror the 1970 loss. This time, La Salle was trailing, 7-0, on Joe Empson’s 25-yard run, but they came back in the 4th quarter to score on a Mike Cassidy to Pete Uzelac 9-yard reception. Going for two, Cassidy passed short to Uzelac, who was pushed out of bounds on the 1-foot line for another heartbreaking loss.

George Stratts replaced Boyle in 1974, and Dougherty became more competitive. Jim Daley’s 220 yards rushing with 3 TD’s paced the Cards to a 23-14 win over La Salle. The Explorers scored twice in the 4th quarter on QB Bill Tamasitis’ 7-yard scramble, and also a pass from backup QB Gary Uzelac to Tom Ignas.

In 1975, La Salle prepared to take on the Cardinals and their star running back Lawrence Reid, who two weeks before had rushed for a then-record 379 yards against Bishop Egan. Reid scored twice in the first quarter on 7- and 39-yard runs, and the Cards led, 13-0. But Reid was injured in the second quarter, and the Redbirds’ 19-6 halftime lead was tenuous. Gary Uzelac passed to Joe Webster for a touchdown, and John Walsh’s extra point made it 19-13 near the end of the third quarter. Early in the 4th quarter, the Cards had to punt, and John Tamasitis raced 85 yards into the Dougherty end zone to tie the score. Walsh’s extra point gave La Salle a 20-19 lead, and the Blue and Gold defense held off the Dougherty offense for the big win.
QB Gary Uzelac throws in big comeback win in 1975; John Tamasitis’s 85-yard punt return for a touchdown and John Walsh’s extra point wins it, 20-19.

Cardinal Dougherty’s Lawrence Reid (#23), lined up deep in backfield, played for the Michigan Wolverines.

The Cards had a fair team in 1976, going 2-4-3, and lost to the Explorers, 22-15, as several turnovers aided La Salle’s cause. Mike Vesey’s touchdown run got the Blue and Gold going early. But Dougherty had a magical year in 1977, winning the City Section of the Northern Division, and defeating Archbishop Wood, 21-15, to advance to the Catholic League Championship game, as QB Bob Loscalzo scored to break a 15-15 tie at Veterans Stadium. But St. Joseph’s Prep stifled the Cards, 19-7, in the Championship game at Northeast High. The Explorers succumbed to Dougherty during that 1977 season, 24-6.

La Salle’s 21-0 win over the Cards in 1978 was their last victory in this rivalry till 1988, as the Cards racked up 9 straight wins over the Explorers. Some of these games were heartbreakers, like the 19-18 loss in 1979, and the 7-0 loss in Tex Flannery’s last year of 1984.
Stratts’ team made some runs in the playoffs over those years, with many of them falling tragically short. They lost to Wood in 1978, 19-13, at the Vet, fumbling at the Wood 3-yard line with 27 seconds to go. In 1980, they again lost to Wood, 20-18. In the 4th quarter, Tom Empson raced for a 52 yard TD to bring the score to 20-18, but the two-point play resulted in an interception. And 1981 was a 13-7 loss to Egan, as the Cards were stopped on downs at the Eagle 5 in the last minute.

But 1982 was different, and the Cards won the PCL crown behind great linemen like All-Catholics John Incollingo and Bob Lamaina, and running back Keith Rieser, who rushed for 200 yards and 3 TD’s in a playoff win against Bishop Egan. In a thriller at Villanova Stadium, after trailing, 14-0, the Cards edged Archbishop Carroll, 17-14, as All-Catholic kicker Bill Wright nailed a 23-yard field goal on the final play. Rieser stepped in for injured quarterback Rich Ashby to accumulate 161 yards of total offense in the win. It was 14 years between crowns, but no one expected that this would be the last championship for the Cardinals.

Dougherty felt that they were robbed of a title shot in 1983. After defeating Bishop McDevitt, 28-14, in a quarterfinal game, they went overtime with Father Judge in a semifinal game, held at the Vet. After Judge had scored in overtime, missing the extra point, the Cards looked like they had scored on a pass in the end zone. But umpire Jim Reilly, Class of 1944 at La Salle, ruled that the ball hit the turf, crushing the Cards’ hopes of returning to the PCL Championship game.

Gene Kane replaced Stratts in 1985, and coached through 1989, but the heyday of Cardinal Dougherty football had passed. La Salle gave the Cards a scare in 1985: Emmett Harkins’ 4th down pass was tipped by Doug Atkinson and caught by Gerry Stewart to bring the Explorers close at 17-13, but Dougherty maintained possession down the stretch, and scored on the last play for a 24-13 win.

In 1986, the game was even closer; Paul Shelinsky scored 3 TD’s for the Cards, and sophomore Bill Eddis’s 35-yard field goal with 0:03 left sent La Salle to yet another heartbreaking loss, 26-24. Ace Amachi scored twice for La Salle.
Finally, in 1988, La Salle tasted victory for the first time in a decade. Riding a 5-0 start on their fantastic 1988 journey, the Explorers were down to the Cards, 10-7, with less than a minute remaining. QB Jack Stanczak, under a heavy rush, arched a 29-yard TD pass to Jerry Rock in the back corner of the end zone to pull out the win and keep La Salle unbeaten. By 1989, though, on their way to the PCL championship, La Salle had sped by the Cards, and would never lose another matchup. The 34-0 shellacking in their title year of 1989 saw La Salle's RB Jason Pennington score twice, Brian Daly return a punt for a TD, and a defense led by Keith Conlin that stymied the Cards’ offense.

Dom D'Amico replaced Kane for the 1990 through 1993 seasons; his first two years were dismal, but the Cards put together two great seasons in 1992 and 1993, going 8-3-0 and 9-3-0, respectively, in what turned out to be their last winning seasons.

La Salle continued to win the annual matchup. In 1990, the big offensive line led to 261 rushing yards, as Max Guevara ran for 114 of those yards, and Keith Tornetta scored three TD’s in a 28-7 victory over the Garnet and Gold. In 1991, steered by QB Geoff Crawford, the rushing attack was even better, gaining 388 yards in a 40-13 dismantling of Dougherty. Guevara was at it again with 117 yards and 2 TD’s, and he was aided by Frank Osborne’s 111 yards in the Explorer version of the Delaware Wing-T offense.

The Cards were a contender in 1992, but lost in the first round of the playoffs to Archbishop Ryan, 14-7, as their drive to tie the game was stopped by an interception with 21 seconds left. The Explorer defense was the difference in the 13-3 La Salle win, stopping the Cards’ run-and-shoot offense from reaching the end zone. Running back Bill Tatar ran for both of La Salle’s scores.
Though La Salle stopped QB Walt Bartle and the Cards’ run-and-shoot offense in a 20-7 win in 1993, Dougherty had their last great season, going 9-3-0, and winning a playoff game against Father Judge, 28-7, as Terrence Mordecai rushed for 95 yards and a TD, and Walt Bartle was 12 of 17 for 135 yards and a TD. A semifinal loss to Archbishop Ryan kept the Cards away from a title shot.

Cardinal Dougherty had a couple of .500 seasons in 1995 and 1996, while La Salle was winning the PCL championship both years. After two tight games in 1994 and 1995 (14-6 and 21-12), La Salle opened up the floodgates in both 1996 and 1997 against the Cards. In 1996, Brett Gordon threw for 4 touchdowns, two to Mike Mattia, and one each to Jeff Pietrak and Tim McNichol, and Kyle Mallach rushed for two more in the 42-10 mashing. It was worse in 1997: the Explorers won, 61-13, as Gordon threw for 5 TDs this time, three to Mike Lorusso. The matchups seemed no longer competitive.

Little did anyone know that the 1998 game would be the last in the rivalry, as divisional play in 1999 was now based on student population. And it is still hard to believe that Cardinal Dougherty High School, once the largest Catholic high school in the world, was now in a football division for smaller schools. That 1998 game went to La Salle, 45-6, as Rich Krauss scored twice on runs.

Cardinal Dougherty ended the 1998 season at 1-9-0, their worst season record in their history. A surprise playoff win against Archbishop Wood, 26-21, proved to be their last playoff win; Ben Dever led the Cards with 101 yards passing and 2 TDs.

But it wasn’t going to get better, even in the smaller division. For the 4 seasons between 2002 and 2005, the Cards won only one game... total. In 2009, Jim Grugan was in his second year as head coach, and led the Cards to some measure of respectability, going 4-4-0 entering the playoffs. Three weeks before their playoff game, it was announced that Cardinal Dougherty High School would close in June. Their last game was a playoff matchup against West Catholic, and the 44-0 loss was secondary to the loss of their school.

The Cardinal Dougherty High School football team completed their 54-year run with an overall record of 227-290-15. Cynics will claim that a school this big should have been a football powerhouse. Though the long periods of excellence were not evident in the history of their football program, Dougherty had some memorable years where they were among the best teams in the area. And they can hold up that 1968 team as one of the greatest teams in Catholic League history.

*Cardinal Dougherty Alma Mater*

With faith that's strong, With courage bold we wave our colors high; Unfurl our banner to the world, Our cross against the sky. For in this sign we conquer all, For God and school and land. With the Trinity and Mary's love, To guide our youthful hand. Alma Mater's garnet and royal gold. Sons and daughters salute you with pride. Pledging hearts to you in loyalty. We'll bear your glory far and wide. With wisdom and truth you nourish us. With love our souls you fortify. So, dear Alma Mater your sons and daughters hail, We hail Cardinal Dougherty High!
Several Cardinal Dougherty players made it to the NFL. They include:

- Mike Dennery ‘69, linebacker with Oakland and Miami
- Jim Cooper ’73, offensive lineman with Dallas
- Florian Kempf ‘74, kicker with New Orleans and Houston Oilers
- Harry Swayne ‘83, offensive lineman with Tampa Bay, San Diego, Denver, Baltimore Ravens, and Miami
- John Waerig ‘95, tight end with Detroit

Jim Callahan ‘65 held many of Temple’s receiving records.

Lawrence Reid’s 379 yards against Bishop Egan in 1975 is the second highest total yards rushing in a game in PCL history.

Sean McGovern passed for 379 yards in a game in 2000, the highest in PCL history.

Sarina Oeub caught passes for 241 yards in a 1999 game, the 4th highest in PCL history.
Here’s a list of Cardinal Dougherty players who were multiple first-team All-Catholic:
• Harvey McGee, end, 1967-68
• David Bland, running back, 1968-69
• Andre Tennessee, offensive lineman, 1969-70
• Tony Heffner, defensive end, 1977-78
• Michael White, defensive lineman, 1977-78
• John Incollingo, offensive lineman, 1981-82
• Bob Lamain, defensive end, 1981-82
• Bill Wright, kicker, 1982-83
• Joe Lauch, defensive back, 1985-86
• Manny Gonzalez, defensive lineman, 1991-92
• Tom Indio, defensive back 1992-93, running back 1992
• John Waerig, inside linebacker, 1993-94
• Tank Morris, defensive back, 2008-09, running back 2009

Here are the Cardinal players who were named to the All-Scholastic team:
• Jim Casertano, back, 1964 (first team)
• Jim Callahan, end, 1964 (second team)
• Mike Dennery, tackle, 1968 (first team)
• David Bland, back, 1969 (first team)
• Ed Serembus, linebacker, 1969 (second team)
• Andre Tennessee, offensive tackle, 1970 (first team)
• Stan Kryston, offensive end, 1970, (second team)

La Salle’s all-time record against Cardinal Dougherty was 25 wins and 17 losses.

Postscript

Cardinal Dougherty High School once had thousands of students in their halls, and now they have thousands of active alumni to keep their spirit alive. Send this Retrospect on to a Dougherty alum.

Here is the website address for their organization:

http://www.cardinaldoughertyalumni.com/

Long live Cardinal Dougherty High School!!

I welcome your comments, corrections, and additions.

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