

My father, Robert Kelley, Sr., had two brothers and two sisters. Growing up in Cleveland, Ohio, one of the first things that I learned about my oldest uncle, John, was not only that he had been an interior lineman for Cleveland's Cathedral Latin High School, but that, as a member of that team, he had played for the football national championship. His opponent and host in that 1927 championship game? Texas' Waco High School!

To experience a different part of the country, I moved west from Ohio to Oklahoma to attend graduate school. I earned a Master's degree in library science from the University of Oklahoma. I was happy to conclude my 34-year career as a librarian by serving from 2010 to 2016 as manager for the South Waco Branch within the Waco-McLennan County Library. I am now retired.

Soon after I moved to Waco, I stood on the still-intact Cotton Palace football field and thought about my Uncle John vying in that arena for a national championship. After having read about one hundred newspaper articles and other information sources, I relate this account to you of that year culminating in a national championship 90 years ago.



Paul Tyson, Waco High Football Coach

Paul Leighton Tyson began as head football coach at Waco High in 1913. During the summers, he often went to coaching clinics, including ones held by Notre Dame's Knute Rockne, Stanford's Glenn "Pop" Warner, and University of Chicago's Amos Alonzo Stagg. He hired assistant coach E. A. "Dutch" Bernhausen in 1920 to coach the offensive and defensive lines. Tyson implemented a three-tier makeup of the team: about 35 players on the varsity, about the same number as "cannon fodder," scrimmaging against the varsity every practice, and the remaining players as "all-stars." A freshman would learn as an all-star, be moved up to the cannon fodder for sophomore year, and then hopefully make the varsity for junior and senior years. Practices were rigorous. Drills were done over and over until each player was executing his assignment correctly. Tyson strove to have his offenses and defenses perform as units in which the individuals all worked together for their shared goals.

Dr. Howard Dudgeon, who played on Tyson's 1927 team, was quoted in an October 17, 1999 Waco Tribune-Herald article describing Tyson's coaching methods: "Every play had to be exact.

He'd stand there with a stopwatch during practice and made sure every play was run perfectly... The success of our offense depended on speed, aggressiveness, and precise blocking."

To correct a player's errors, "Mr. Tyson would just call you over and tell you this is what you did wrong and say, 'I know you can do it' ," Dudgeon said. Tyson did not raise his voice or berate players. He would even send notes to players describing how to do various plays.

All of these characteristics were fully in play by 1921. The 1921 team went undefeated, unscored upon, and did not allow an opponent inside the Tigers' 25-yard line. But they were not a member of the year-old Texas Interscholastic League, so they could not advance into the playoffs.

Waco High became a member of the League in the off-season, and the 1922 Tigers swept unbeaten to their first state championship. They had one tie (3-3 against Temple), and, as was the custom then, a second game was scheduled, with Waco winning the second meeting 30-0.

The 1923 Tigers were not only unbeaten but unscored upon through the regular season and playoffs. However, the state championship game was a low-scoring 3-0 loss to Abilene High. Waco again reached the finals in 1924 unbeaten, but they were humbled in that championship game by an exceptional Dallas Oak Cliff team, 31-0.

In 1925 the Tigers lost 8-7 in a regional playoff to Beaumont High, but Beaumont forfeited because they had used an ineligible player. In the semifinals Waco High demolished Robstown 32-0, and they went on to win the state championship game against Dallas Forest 20-7. During that season, Knute Rockne told Jinx Tucker, sports editor of the Waco News-Tribune, that Tyson was the most knowledgeable football coach in the country. Tyson corresponded with Rockne, Warner, and Stagg, and they asked his opinions about football subjects.

The 1926 Tigers had another tie with Temple, but avenged that the next week with a 27-10 win. Waco finished the undefeated season with a 20-7 victory over Oak Cliff for their third state championship.



1927 Waco Tigers. From left, first row, manager L.N. Lee, Emmett Wallace, Otha Tiner, John Nunn, Wilton Sullinger, Phil Craven, Jack Buckler, assistant coach Bennie Strickland. Middle row, Robert Kelley, Fenton Slaughter, Odie Sullinger, Newton Jenkins, Aubrey Butts, Howard Dudgeon, Leslie Snell, Thomas Glover, Maurice Pierce, Wendell McClelland, Vernon Horne, Frank Wallace, Jack Smith, Herbert Barrett. Back row, assistant coach E. A. Bernhausen, Felix Nelson, Butler King, Ed Hander, Madison Pruitt, Dave Meers, Tom Hill, Kenneth Clark, Calvin Swift, Charley Leyendecker, Sears Earle, head coach Paul Tyson. Photo by famed Waco photographer Fred A. Gildersleeve.

Paul Tyson had only six members of his starting 1926 team returning in 1927. For the 1927 season he decided to implement a new play from which many options were available. He had watched the effectiveness of a partial-spin handoff from quarterback to running back that famous coach "Pop" Warner had developed at Stanford University. Tyson modified it so that the quarterback, after receiving the snap from center, would spin and, with his back completely toward the defense, would either handoff or pitch the ball to a back or an end or would complete the spin and pass or keep the ball and run. This spin or spinner play, usually guided by quarterback and captain, Tommy Glover, had defenses guessing, often unsuccessfully, throughout the 1927 season. Waco was also absolutely outstanding on defense. The Tigers blanked 11 of their first 12 opponents, and they charged past Georgetown 93-0, Marlin 107-0, and Houston Davis 124-0. The latter game, into which Davis was thrust after the two higher contenders were declared ineligible, is still the one in which a team had the most number of points scored in a playoff game.

Waco High beat Sherman High in the semifinals 59-0. Then Waco hosted Abilene High for the state championship on December 16. Abilene really tested the mettle of the Tigers. Abilene jumped out in front 7-0 on a second-quarter pass. Waco High quickly scored in response, and the score was tied at halftime, 7-7. There was no more scoring until the fourth quarter. Waco's Maurice Pierce scampered 41 yards for a touchdown. Abilene then tied the game again. With 40 seconds remaining, Glover executed a spin play and ran 11 yards for the winning touchdown in the 21-14 contest.

Waco had won its third straight state championship, fourth overall, and had achieved a 13-0 record. In 1927 they had scored 740 points and allowed only 21. Over the seven seasons of 1921-1927, Waco High had gone 80-2-2, with 58 shutouts. Their only two losses during that span were in state championship games. The Tigers appeared in the finals for the state championship six years in a row. All of those feats were unprecedented at the time in Texas high school football history.

Waco High fans were ecstatic about this fourth state championship, but there was sentiment for seeing if the Tigers could be the first Texas high school to vie for a national championship. Cecil Shear, a Waco businessman, had been in Cleveland around the time of the December 3 Ohio high school football championship. Some of his business associates from Cleveland went on vociferously about the brilliance of the Cleveland Cathedral Latin team that beat rural powerhouse, Coshocton High, in the finals, 32-0. Shear came back with the statement that the best team in the country was Waco High. He outlined why he felt that this was true, and Texas business friends that were with him then took Waco's side. A newspaperman that had overheard the lively discussion announced in his paper that Waco High had challenged Latin High. Jinx Tucker, foremost booster of Waco High sports, and particularly of Paul Tyson and the football Tigers, wrote in the December 24 News-Tribune that he received wires from sportswriters in Ohio asking that the story be confirmed. Shear returned to Waco soon after December 3rd and conferred with Coach Paul Tyson and Tucker. Tucker wired back the sportswriters that no such challenge had been made. Shear communicated with his Cleveland friends that there would probably not be such a game, because Coach Tyson was inclined to let his players rest and enjoy the holidays.



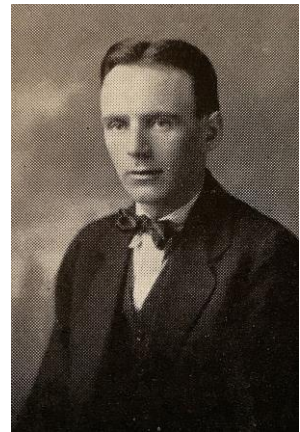
H.H. (Jinx) Tucker

Tucker had written in his newspaper as early as December 12 that the coaches of the Michigan high school football champion team and perennial power Pine Bluff High School in Arkansas were interested in a postseason game against Waco High, and that a multi-state game would show Texans and others the true quality of play in Texas. In the December 17 News-Tribune, Tucker wrote that the best prospect seemed to be Cathedral Latin because the football played in Ohio appeared to be as high a caliber as played anywhere in the country. Also instrumental in promoting the contest for a national championship was Waco banker, J.B. Earle, and sportsman A.J. Bush, who was a member of Waco High School's Athletic Council.

The topic of race was definitely brought up around this time. In the December 17th article, Tucker wrote that he "explained the circumstances" of a national championship game in Waco to Bill Dvorak, the sports editor of the Cleveland Press with whom he had been communicating about the talents of their respective teams. At about the same time, Tucker wrote, George Geisler, Latin athletic director, wired or had Dvorak wire that he would take his team to Waco for a guarantee of expenses and an option on 40 percent of the gate. Tucker explained in a wire that the gate was intended to go to Paul Tyson and E. A. Bernhausen, as part of the day honoring them for their sacrifices over the years of coaching the Waco Tigers. Tucker noted that immediately there came an answer that Latin would play Waco for a \$4000 guarantee and would waive a cut of the gate. Then Bill Dvorak wired back, "Latin High has no Negroes on the team. The oldest player is 19... This team scored 265 points this season against 25 for opponents." He urged Tucker to encourage Waco ISD to negotiate with Cathedral Latin. By December 17 Geisler had issued a challenge to the administration of Waco ISD for a Latin-Waco High game. An account of the trip from Cleveland to Waco and the game by Bob Irwin, a guard on the Latin team, gave another time for the question of race being brought up. He wrote that just before the team left Cleveland, Latin High received a telegram from "Waco people" in which they asked if there were any colored players on the squad. Irwin recalled, "By chance, and only by chance, there were none" on the team. If there had been any black players on Latin's team, Waco High would not have played them, given the segregation existing in Waco and throughout the South at that time.

Coach Tyson told Waco media that if his players, WISD administration, and the school's Athletic Council wanted the Tigers to host this Christmastime, 14th game of the year, he would agree to it. When the answer from all groups was yes, negotiations between the two schools began. The agreement to play December 26 in Waco was announced in the newspapers December 20, 1927. Cathedral Latin would receive a guarantee of \$3500 to cover its trip expenses, and they would arrive Saturday, December 24. The ticket sales from the game would go to the Waco coaches. Over the next week the Waco News-Tribune and the Waco Times-Herald tried to find out and publish some facts about the Cathedral Latin team. Looking at that now is greatly aided by the information unearthed and assembled expertly by sports journalist/historian Timothy Hudak in his book, "When the Lions Roared: The Story of Cathedral Latin School Football," published in 2002.

Cathedral Latin was a Catholic boys' high school established in 1917 and run by the Marianist order of priests and brothers. It was located on the East Side of Cleveland, close to the University Circle area named for the presence of Case Institute and Western Reserve University (later merged as Case Western Reserve University). In 1920 Latin began upgrading its football program by scheduling the larger schools in Cleveland. When it hired Dan Duffy as Head Coach in 1922, the school was still amid that process. Duffy had a 3-4-2 record in his first season, improving it slightly to 5-5-0 in 1923. Duffy (photo at right) had played football and basketball at Huron High School, about 30 miles from Cleveland. He was a better basketball player than footballer at Notre Dame, but Duffy did play enough time at quarterback at Notre Dame under Knute Rockne to learn some of the innovative passing and running plays from that master of the game before he graduated. By 1927 he had earned a law degree, and he was a partner with Don Miller, who had been one of Rockne's Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. At Latin, Duffy continued the custom that each football season would begin with a summer conditioning camp at a Lake Erie recreation area for almost two weeks. Team members enjoyed the mixing of practice with hikes and swimming. Duffy taught the fundamentals of the game to his players well. He sometimes had college and even professional players instruct them in new developments in playing their positions.



By 1924 the fact that the Latin players were learning well finally showed. They had a 7-1-1 record that season, beating their biggest rival, St. Ignatius, to take the Cleveland-area, Catholic "title." In 1925 they went 6-2, beating powerful West Tech. 1926 saw them win not only the Catholic high school title, but also the city championship when 8-0 Cathedral Latin beat 8-0 St. Ignatius in a hard-fought game, 12-6. Latin then played the state championship against Steubenville, a team that had not been beaten since 1921. Steubenville won the contest 14-6.

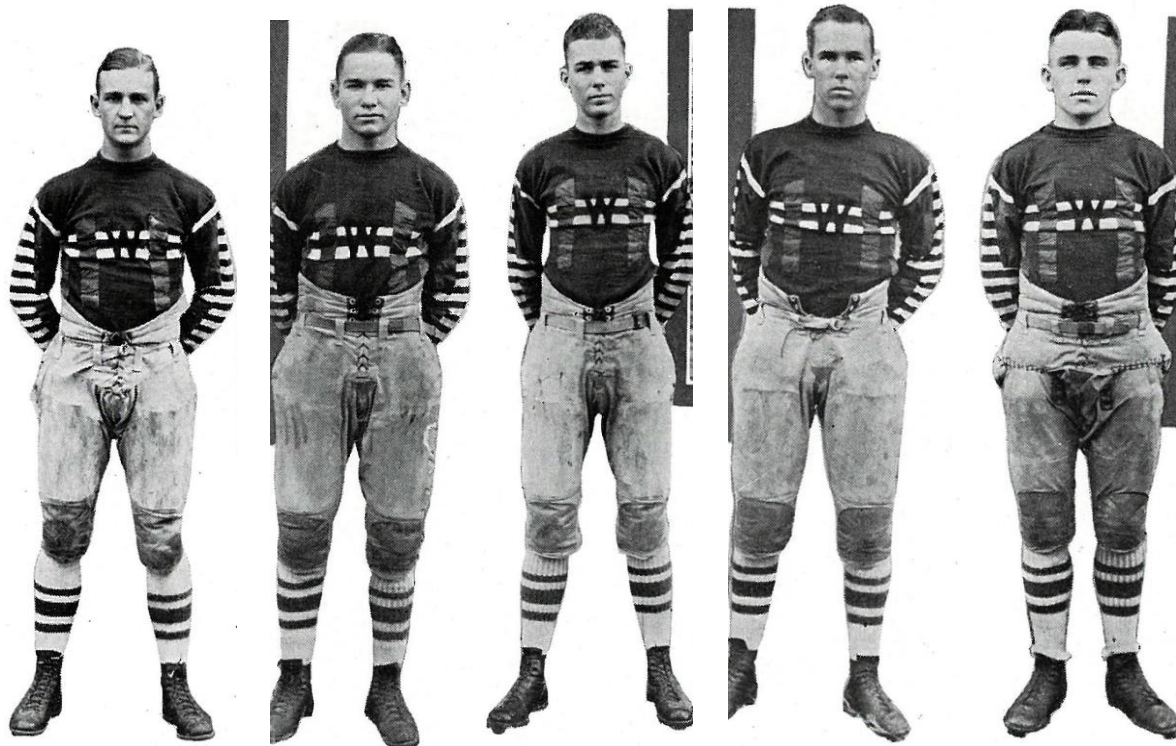
Catholic, City and State Champions



REAR ROW—R. Ulery, R. Wilkinson, R. Collins, J. Lawrence, L. Wurm (Mgr.), E. Gough W. Harr,
 J. Sullivan, M. Gibbons.
 THIRD ROW—E. Halambeck, J. Gunn, R. Irwin, A. Smythe, E. Fischer, F. Keegan J. McGurrin,
 D. Fitzsimmons.
 SECOND ROW—T. Lyons, B. Merriman, J. Kelly, B. Ramsey, E. Ryan, J. Colan, S. Zyznowski J. Bauer,
 W. Van Rooy, T. Callaghan, B. Burowski.
 FIRST ROW—E. Gowan, C. Baker, V. Tanski, M. Sammon (Capt.), J. Poelking, R. Mahoney,
 S. Jakubowski.

The 1927 Cathedral Latin Lions started the year slowly with two 6-0 wins. The second of those was the third year in a row that they had overcome the still-challenging West Tech team by a 6-0 score. They then rattled off five victories, punctuated by one 53-0 drubbing and an impressive 31-6 win over East High, who had the best record of all Cleveland public schools the previous year.

Coach Duffy's Lions now entered the championship phase of the season. For the Catholic championship, Latin clobbered St. Ignatius 44-6. For the city's interscholastic championship, Latin played West High, a team with an excellent 7-1 record, having lost only to historical powerhouse Toledo Scott in a close game. Latin beat West 6-0 in a very hard-fought defensive contest. Duffy then accepted a challenge from Coshocton High to play for the state championship. Coshocton, located in central Ohio, had been undefeated for two years, outscoring its opponents during that time by 499-15. But many of their opponents must have been smaller schools, since Latin surprisingly had a fairly easy time defeating Coshocton, 32-0. The new Ohio state champion with a 10-0 record felt that they had played their last game of the season. Then interests from Waco, Texas "came a'callin'."



Waco's Thomas Glover

Wendell McClelland

Maurice Pierce

Leslie Snell

Vernon Horne

The backfield of the 1927 Waco High Tigers were a memorable group. Senior quarterback and captain Tommy Glover, at only 135 pounds, was the expert conductor of the spin play, a very good runner, and on defense an aggressive cornerback. On the "cannon fodder" squad in 1926, right halfback Wendell (Sonny Boy) McClelland was small at 130 pounds. But he was the fastest runner on the team, and he had proven his broken field running abilities throughout 1927. Fullback Maurice Pierce fiercely smashed his 160-pound frame into the scrimmage line with his runs and his blocks, but he was also the member of the first-string backfield, besides Glover, who could throw passes well. Pierce had been All-state, honorable mention as an end in 1926. Leslie Snell was a 140-pound halfback who could usually pick up several yards on most attempts. Vernon Horne shared playing time with Snell at left halfback.

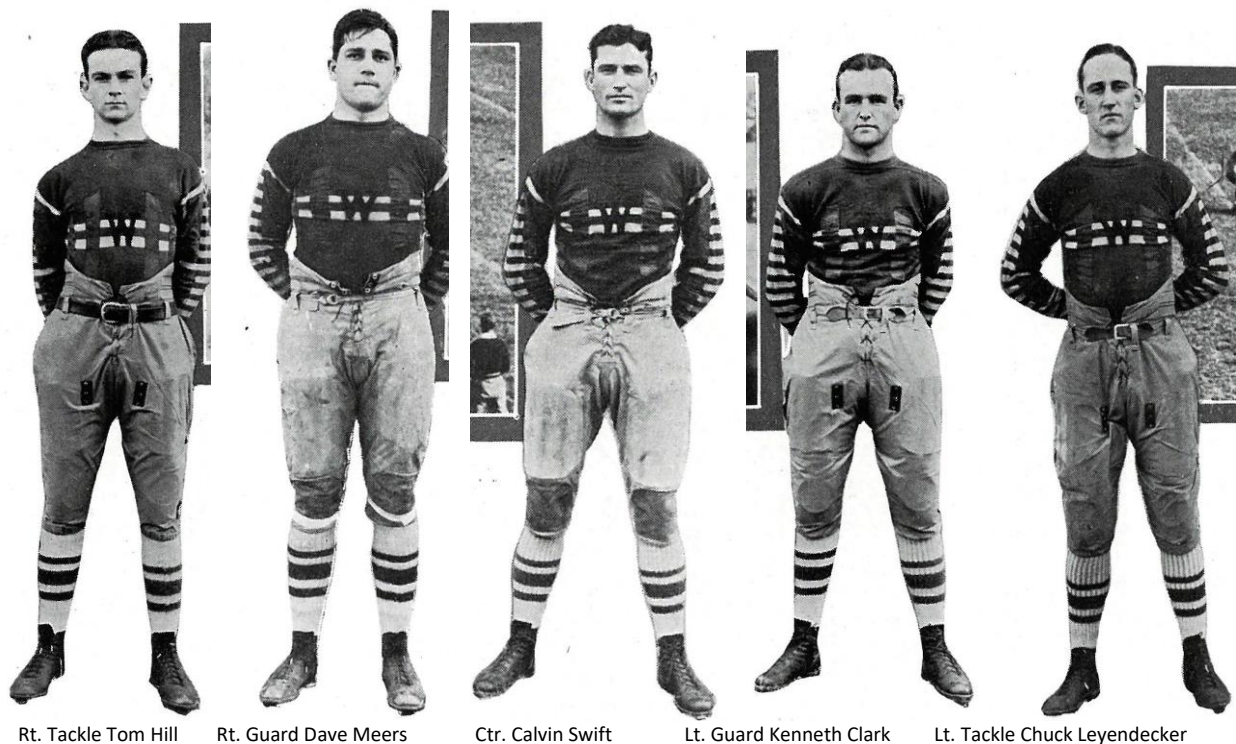


Rt. End Madison Pruitt



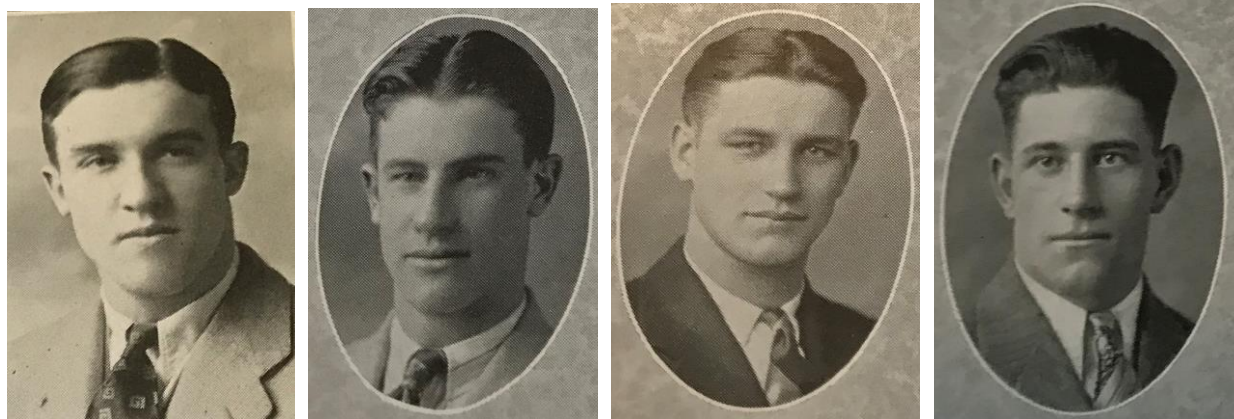
Lt. End Sears Earle

The ends sometimes took handoffs from Glover on spin plays. All-state end Madison Pruitt, a junior, was the best pass catcher on the team, and he was also intrepid on defense, protecting against end runs and making tackles elsewhere on the field. Prior to the Latin game, Pruitt was named to be the captain of the 1928 Tigers. His counterpart at left end, 175-pound Sears Earle could catch passes, but was not called upon to do so as often as Pruitt was. He was a great tackler, and he also handled well the kicking duties for the Tigers. Both ends were excellent blockers.



The line included two players that had received All-State honors, left tackle Charlie Leyendecker (175 pounds) and center Calvin Swift (160 pounds). Right guard Dave Meers, the largest lineman at 195 pounds, had played well earlier in the year, but he had gotten injured. He was approved to start against Latin. Right tackle Tom Hill and left guard Kenneth Clark, each about 170 pounds, were reliable performers on offense and defense.

Students learned football gradually but so completely in Tyson's system, that by the time they made the varsity, substitutes could come in and do almost as well as the first-string players.



Marty Sammon, Latin Captain Ed Gowan, Quarterback Steve Jakubowski, Fullback Chuck Baker, Right Halfback

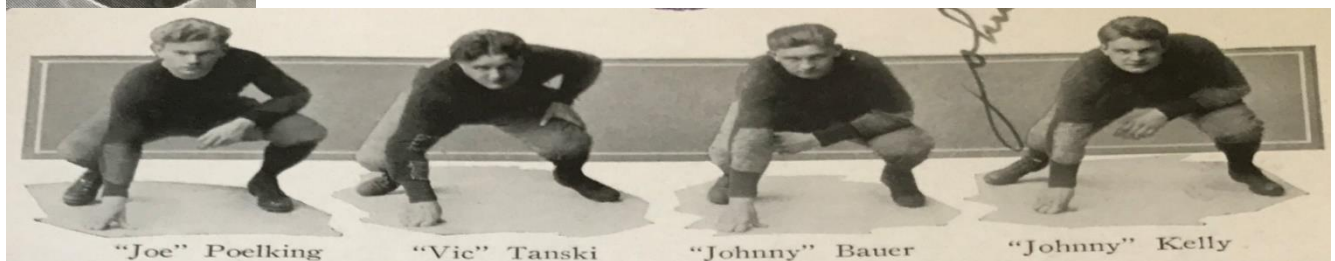
The backfield of Cleveland's Cathedral Latin High Lions was an impressive group. Their brightest star was left halfback and captain Marty Sammon. A three-year starter, 155-pound Sammon had scored 12 rushing touchdowns this season, but he was also an expert passer who

had thrown for nine touchdowns. Quarterback Ed Gowan, the third brother in his family to be a first-stringer for the Lions, called the signals for the team. Fullback Steve Jakubowski was a bruising, 180-pound blocker and runner who had scored seven touchdowns during the season. Right halfback Chuck Baker was very fast for his 180-pound frame, and he had scored six touchdowns already in 1927.

Dick Mahony, Right End



The linemen were led by the exploits of right end Dick Mahony, who had earned first-team, All-Scholastic recognition among Cleveland-area schools in 1926. The 160-pound Mahony could seemingly catch just about any football pass thrown to him. He also had great ability to run pass routes, get free of defenders, and gain long yardage after the catch. He also did the kicking for the team. The left end was 165-pound Joe Colan.



Center Joe Poelking, 170 pounds, had been playing offense and defense so well in 1927 that he was being talked about as a probable All-Scholastic at his position. In 1926 left tackle Vic Tanski had earned second-team All-Scholastic football honors and had won the schoolboy, state heavyweight wrestling championship. The 180-pounder was just as good at blocking and tackling in 1927. Sophomore John Kelley was small for a tackle, 160 pounds, but he was fast off the line of scrimmage offensively and defensively. Left guard Bob Irwin was a smart, scrappy 140-pounder who had been the Ohio lightweight wrestling champ the previous year. Right guard John Bauer, 155 pounds, rounded out the first-string linemen for Latin.

The Waco Tigers had a decided advantage over Latin in the line by weight, while Latin had a larger average weight than Waco in the backfield. That was a fact, however, that was not stressed very much. In the days leading up to the game, generally, newspapermen and sports enthusiasts from the Midwest and east expressed that Latin High would probably beat Waco by one or two touchdowns, while newspapermen and sports enthusiasts in Texas wrote that Waco would probably be victorious by one or two touchdowns. One Cleveland writer wrote there are four or five teams in Ohio that are almost the equal of Cathedral Latin, having lost to Latin by close scores, whereas Waco did not have as hard a group of opponents, having beaten the majority by gigantic numbers. Jinx Tucker of the Waco News-Tribune wrote, "Fans of Central Texas will say that while the Latin line may charge like an infuriated bull...it will meet a line

charging back with the same kind of fury.” George Fall of the Waco Times-Herald wrote, “The long trip is certain to handicap the visitors a bit. However, the main reason we’re predicting a Waco victory is we figure the Tigers will outfight the warriors from the mid-west.” About the 1927 Tigers, Fall noted, “When the line charges, all seven players charge together and they get off swiftly... The manner in which Tommy Glover handles the ball and directs the team keeps the opposition guessing at all times...The Tigers of ‘27 are deceptive, uncanny diagnosticians. Above all, they work together, forming a machine.” Tucker and Fall also encouraged people from all over Texas to come to see this historic game, and ticket sales became very active.

The administration of Cathedral Latin obviously felt that they could not afford financially to bring the entire football team for the round-trip train ride and stay in Waco. They and Coach Duffy decided that they would bring the best 19 players, essentially the first string and eight substitutes. Accompanying them were Coach Duffy, Athletic Director Brother George Geisler, student team manager Lenny Wurm, and Assistant Coach Brother Nick Schweicher, who had been head coach in the first years of football at Latin. Also traveling with the team were two newspaper reporters, Harold Kelch of the Cleveland News and Bill Dvorak of the Cleveland Press.

One thing that gave trepidation to the Latin coaches, the players, and their families and friends was that they did not know whether a team of Northerners and Catholics from a large city would experience prejudice in a Southern, primarily Protestant, smaller city. In an effort to allay those fears, Coach Duffy would refer to his team as Cleveland Latin rather than the more accurate Cathedral Latin, which had stronger religious undertones. Cathedral Latin would be only the second Catholic school that would vie in a national championship game, following Massachusetts’ St. John’s Prep who had played the Oak Park, Illinois team in 1911. And even though the nickname of Cathedral Latin was the Lions, Duffy did not stress that. From previous experience, he knew that any Catholic football team then suffered probability of being called the Irish, or Fighting Irish, given the prominence at the time of Notre Dame in peoples’ minds associating Catholics and football.

With snow blizzard conditions prevalent in Cleveland, Cathedral Latin could only do very light practice indoors at the school gym and a larger facility, Cleveland Public Auditorium. Their last game had been the state finals on December 3. On Thursday, December 22, the team, cheered on by about 1,000 fans, left the railroad station in Cleveland. On Friday morning, December 23, the train stopped in St. Louis, where the team had two brisk practices at the field of a Marianist school and a dinner banquet. The train departed St. Louis on the final leg of its trip Friday at 7:00 p.m.



The Cathedral Latin contingent got off the train in St. Louis to practice, eat, and sightsee before getting back on the train to continue to Waco.

While the train was in route, Jinx Tucker published articles for two or three days urging Wacoans to welcome the Clevelanders with Southern hospitality. "It would be a splendid thing for the Waco high school band, as many students as possible, representatives of the Waco Chamber of Commerce, and as many sportsmen of the city to be on hand at the station to give the boys from faraway Ohio a vociferous welcome... It is a golden opportunity for Waco to open wide its hospitality doors and make the boys of Ohio feel the Christmas spirit as it is known down here in Texas."

When the train finally pulled into Waco's Katy station Saturday, December 24 at 4:30 p.m., the Clevelanders were greeted by about 5,000 people, including that band, those hundreds of students, the Athletic Council, civil authorities, business people, and a happy general populace. The crowd escorted them three blocks to the Raleigh Hotel, where the players, coach, and athletic director were interviewed by the press. When the team contingent went to their rooms, they found that the hotel manager had placed a decorated, Christmas tree in each room. After a team dinner, the visitors were hosted to a special program at the downtown Hippodrome Theater in which they were individually introduced and later viewed the horror movie, "London After Midnight," starring Lon Chaney. The team finished the long day by getting a little bit of home away from home - they attended Midnight Mass at Waco's Church of the Assumption.

Sunday, Christmas Day, was mainly a day of rest for both teams. I am sure that there were presents at home for the Waco players. Some of them, I am sure, attended a Christmas evening program along with the Cathedral Latin team, who had been invited to a cantata, "The Coming of the King," at Austin Avenue Methodist Church. Harold Kelch, the visiting Cleveland

News sports editor, wrote in the combined Sunday edition of the Waco News-Record and Times Herald, "I want to say to the people of Waco that never has a high school team anywhere received such a welcome and such wonderful treatment as the boys from up north have received. The people of Waco can rest assured that their kindly treatment will not be forgotten. They have made 'southern hospitality' more than a byword."

Monday, December 26, 1927: Game Day. The teams will meet at Waco's Cotton Palace Field at 2:00 p.m. Jinx Tucker sums up the situation in the December 26 edition of the morning paper, the News-Tribune: "We have shouted with emphasis, yes, with anger, that the grade of football in Texas was the equal of the best of other sections. Now for the first time... the question is about to be answered." And sportswriters in Texas and the Midwest agree that the winner of this game would legitimately lay claim to the title of national high school football champion.

At 2:00 p.m. 18,000 people are in the stands and in standing-room-only areas to witness the game. It is believed to be to that time the largest crowd in Texas to see a high school football game. Waco High wins the coin toss and opts to receive. Cathedral Latin's Dick Mahony kicks to the Tigers' Wendell (Sonny Boy) McClelland, who catches the ball at the five and runs the ball back to his 33-yard line, where he is tackled by linebacker Chuck Baker. In its first play from scrimmage, Waco High runs a spinner, with quarterback Tommy Glover faking a handoff to a back and then spinning back around to run and gain six yards. Fullback Maurice Pierce took the next snap from center and picked up four yards for the Tigers' first down. On another spin play Glover handed the ball to McClelland, spun around and plunged through the line, followed by several Latin defenders. McClelland scampered around end for 26 yards before he was tackled by Safety Ed Gowan at Latin's 28-yard line. Pierce took the handoff from Glover and bulled his way to the 18-yard line for a first down. Pierce took the ball again, but tackle John Kelley made a vicious stop that held him to 2 yards. McClelland took the handoff over right tackle and gained six yards. Glover tried a spin keeper, but was tackled by Latin defenders after only one yard. Pierce then exploded through the line for ten yards to the 4-yard line. Glover then handed off to McClellan who shot around the left side of the line. With end Sears Earle blocking Kelley and fullback Pierce blocking Mahony, McClellan made it around end for the first score of the game. All 67 yards of the drive were gained on the ground. Glover kicked the extra point. Score: Waco 7, Cathedral Latin, 0.



Cathedral Latin defenders try to block one of Waco's point-after-touchdown kicks by Quarterback Tommy Glover.

Latin came right back on their possession. At the 26-yard line on a stop of halfback and captain Marty Sammon, the Tigers were found by the officials to have jumped offsides. Waco received a five-yard penalty. On the second play on defense, the Tigers again were penalized five yards for being offsides, and Latin got its initial first down. Then Baker, the 180-pound halfback, raced ten yards around right end for a second first down. Sammon cut through left end, and, using an effective stiff arm, ran for 20 yards to the Waco 30-yard line. Baker burst into the line but right tackle Tom Hill rose up and held the big running back to two yards. End Mahony ran around end for eight yards to Waco's 20-yard line for another first down. Then came a play that was the most contested of the game. Sammon threw a pass that Mahony caught at the 12 and sped his way into the end zone for a seeming touchdown. Field judge Shorty Alderson called the play back and penalized Latin 15 yards for holding. Legendary Cleveland Indians player and manager Tris Speaker, who lived in the offseason in his hometown of Hubbard, near Waco, was watching the game from the Latin sidelines. He and the Latin coaches rushed onto the field to protest the call but to no avail, and Speaker almost was tossed from the game. On fourth down, quarterback Gowan, dropping back to pass, was brought down by Pruitt for a five-yard loss. The ball went on downs to Waco on its 35-yard line. Some Cleveland sportsmen saw the touchdown being called back as a turning point of the game. Tucker, in his next-day account of the game, wrote, "It was a beautiful play, well-executed and even the Tiger fans were sorry that the official was forced to call the play back."

Waco initiated a 65-yard drive that featured several notable plays. On a spin play, Pierce's feint that he had the ball drew movement of a few Latin players, while Glover went over center with the ball for 13 yards. Pierce did get the ball on a subsequent play and gained 10 yards over center as the first quarter ended. After play continued, McClelland startled everyone when he tore through the center of the line for a gain of 17 yards and a touchdown. A swarm of Latin defenders blocked the point-after-touchdown (PAT) try by Glover. Score: Waco 13, Latin 0.

Cathedral Latin could not get a first down, so Mahony punted and McClelland ran it back 15 yards. Pierce threw a bullet pass to Pruitt that gained 25 yards. McClelland made another beautiful run to Latin's 5-yard line, from which Pierce then went over right tackle for the 3rd TD of the game for the Tigers. Glover ran in an extra point, which counted as one point at the time. Score: Waco 20, Latin 0.

End Sears Earle kicked off short and tackle Vic Tanski fielded and returned it seven yards before being tackled by three or four Tigers. Sammon lofted a pass to Mahony that gained 35 yards. After a 5-yard gain by Sammon, quarterback Gowan slipped through a slight hole in the center of the line for 10 yards. Sammon accomplished another 10-yard gain, this time being touched or running past all but one of the Tigers, thereby getting to Waco's four-yard line. After Pruitt tackled the ballcarrier Baker for a 5-yard loss, Sammon, feinting as if to plunge the line, connected with a completely open Baker in the endzone for a touchdown. Mahony's try to run in the extra point was foiled. Score: Waco 20, Latin 6.

Waco answered with a drive that most featured fullback Pierce's abilities. He threw a 22-yard pass to McClelland. Pierce then astounded everyone with a run around end that gained 35 yards. After halfback Snell gained seven yards to Latin's six-yard line, Pierce tossed a pass to Snell for a TD. The PAT kick was missed. Score: Waco 26, Latin 6.



Waco Fullback Maurice Pierce on an open field run, pursued by Cathedral Latin defenders.

Tyson sent in an entire second team with the first half waning. The Tigers Robert Kelly kicked off to Latin's Mahony, who returned the ball to his 28-yard line. After two incompletions, Sammon passed to Mahony, who scampered 72 yards for a touchdown. Mahony's drop-kick extra point attempt was no good. Score: Waco 26, Latin 12. A few seconds later, the first half ended.

The second half started by Mahony kicking off to Waco. The same lineups that began the game were present, except that Latin's Ryan had relieved Kelley at right tackle. I can only imagine the physical pain my uncle was in for him not to start the second half. The 15-year-old sophomore had fought at the scrimmage line against Tigers who were more experienced and outweighed him by 15-20 pounds. Waco's McClelland showed his broken field prowess in a run around the well-blocked end Colan for 32 yards before he was chased out-of-bounds at Cleveland's 24-yard line by Sammon. After gains by Snell and Glover brought another first down, a fumble by Pierce was recovered by Latin's Gowan at his 10-yard line.

Sammon gained just three yards. Then, in order to get better eventual placement on the gridiron, Mahony kicked a punt but it only went 35 yards. Waco's McClelland ran it back 22 yards to Cleveland's 20-yard line. On 4th and three at the 13-yard line, Pierce hit the line with a crash and drove the 13 yards to a TD. Latin's All-City center Poelking was hurt on the play and replaced by Ramsey. Glover's extra point attempt went wide right. Score: Waco 32, Latin 12.

Earle kicked off to Latin. Mahony took the ball at his own 15-yard line and only made two yards before he was brought to the ground by Earle's tackle. Perhaps the best example of Latin's ability to gain yardage meeting Waco's ultimately-stronger defensive toughness ensued in this drive. Sammons gained three yards before being tackled by Pierce, Glover, and right guard Dave Meers. Gowan's quarterback sneak was halted by Meers after one yard. After receiving a lateral from Baker, Sammon threw a 16-yard pass to Mahony to Latin's 35-yard line. Latin kept gaining first downs on short runs and passes, getting to Waco's 18-yard line. After two runs were stopped at the line of scrimmage, left guard Kenneth Clark broke through blocks

and dropped Gowan for a seven-yard loss. Facing 4th and 17, Sammon threw a pass to Mahony which Waco's Meers intercepted and took to his own 24-yard line before being stopped. Latin's 65-yard drive had ended unsuccessfully.

After three plays that gained little yardage, Waco punted for the first time in the game, and the third quarter ended with the Tigers holding a 20-point lead.

Waco held Latin to a few yards on the next three plays. Mahony kicked a 50-yard punt, which impressed the crowd, but they were immediately impressed also by McClelland's 25-yard runback. Starting at Cleveland's 40-yard line, the Tigers ran for a first down. On the next play, with the ball at the 25-yard line, McClelland cut back and ran through the entire defense for a touchdown. Glover missed the extra-point kick. Score: Waco 38, Latin 12.

Latin's Baker received the kickoff at his 10 and returned it 20 yards. After two incomplete passes, Sammon tried a heave to Baker, but Glover intercepted it and took it to the Cleveland 35-yard line. After Waco could not make a first down, Pierce brought the crowd to its feet with a 70-yard punt that Earle touched down at Latin's 11-yard line. After Latin earned two first downs, the Tigers' defense tightened. Mahony, dropped back to punt, decided to run instead. He was tackled for a loss by Leyendecker and the ball went to Waco on downs at the Latin 35. After Waco gained a first down, McClelland had an 11-yard gain for a second first down. Poelking came back in at center for Latin. On a spin play, Glover eluded the defense and ran 11 yards for the touchdown. Glover missed the PAT kick. Score: Waco 44, Latin, 12.



Waco Quarterback Tommy Glover scores the game's final touchdown on a spin-play run against Cathedral Latin.

Earle kicked off to Sammon, and the captain carried the ball 16 yards to his own 26-yard line. Coach Duffy had McGuinnan go in for Mahony. Sammon ran for 16 yards over two plays. Fred Keegan went in for Baker for Latin. Keegan ran for nine yards, then got a first down on a short gain. Keegan tried a pass to Sammon, but it was intercepted by Pierce. Fitzsimmons went in for Gowan at quarterback. When Gunn substituted for Sammon, several of the Tigers gave Marty slaps on the back and congratulated him on the great game that he had played. After two short gains by Waco, the gun signaled that the historic game was over. The Waco Tigers were the new, national high school football champions!

Most observers agreed that the game was a lot closer than the 44-12 final score indicated. Cathedral Latin had earned the most yardage (294 yards) and the most first downs (20) of any opponent that Waco High had faced over the past seven halcyon years. Waco had never seen a passing attack as good as Latin's, which gained 165 yards and both of their touchdowns. George Fall wrote in the Waco Times-Herald, "The Waco defense, led by ends Sears Earle and Madison Pruitt, tackle Charles Leyendecker, and center Calvin Swift, tightened at crucial stages and held the powerful Cleveland team to two touchdowns."

On the offensive front, all observers agree that Waco High had achieved its greatest victory. Fall noted, "Offensively Waco was virtually unstoppable. The Tigers punted only twice and the only other time they failed to score came on a fumble lost deep in Latin territory." The Tigers at game's end had accumulated a phenomenal 499 yards of offense that included 25 first downs.

Fall saw the Waco offensive stars of the game as being the running of Sonny Boy McClelland, the spin-play runs of Tommy Glover, the running of Leslie Snell, and the line work of tackle Tom Hill and guards Kenneth Clark and Dave Meers.

Jinx Tucker summarized the outcome in the Waco News-Tribune, "It is fortunate for the Tigers that they were at their best, for they met the greatest offensive team they have met in their seven-year reign on the Cotton Palace gridiron. Do you know that this team from Ohio gained enough ground to win the average game, but because of the bewildering, smashing, crashing, inspired, fighting Waco offense, this stupendous yardage turned in by the Cathedral Latin team was not enough to make the game close. They had the courage, they had the fight, but they did not have enough football weapons to combat such a powerful genius as Paul Tyson and such a splendid band of championship gridsters as the Tigers of 1927." He felt that the game showed that Latin had a better offense than defense, and that Waco had a team that was better-balanced between its offense and defense.

Tucker compiled a more extensive list of players that deserved recognition than his fellow Waco sports editor. He cited these Waco Tigers: Sears Earle for his energetic tackling; Madison Pruitt for his tackling and pass catching; Charlie Leyendecker, "who loomed as big as a mountain in offensive and defensive lines"; Dave Meers for his blocking on the line and downfield; Calvin Swift for outplaying an all-state center; "Sonny Boy" McClelland for his running prowess in gaining the most yardage; Captain Glover for directing the attack and for his work as a defensive back; Maurice Pierce for his determined running, excellent passing, and good punting; and Snell and Horne for their flashes of brilliance at halfback. Of Cathedral Latin players, Tucker honored Captain Marty Sammon as a run-pass "constant offensive menace," the running of Chuck Baker, Steve Jakubowski, and Ed Gowan, the pass catching and running after the pass of Dick Mahony, and the offensive blocking of Joe Colan and Vic Tanski.

Bill Dvorak, sportswriter of the Cleveland Press, wrote, "Ohio, and Cleveland in particular, has been the home of some mighty fine football teams in recent years. The caliber of football displayed in the Buckeye district has been heralded throughout the nation. Coach Dan Duffy's eleven was good enough to overcome the toughest competition Ohio teams could offer... After being almost unrecognized for seven years, the Waco Tigers yesterday glided into national prominence by decisively whipping Cathedral Latin 44 to 12... Waco may well claim the scholastic championship of the nation by virtue of the victory... Latin's defense proved incapable of stopping Waco's deadly attack... Of the two attacks, Waco's was superior."

The Cathedral Latin team were guests of the Waco Catholic Knights of Columbus for a banquet Monday night after the game. Captain Marty Sammon told the attendees, "We want to compliment Waco for its sportsmanship... We want to thank the citizens of Waco for the hospitality shown to us." Coach Duffy spoke and said, "We congratulate the Tigers for being a little better than we are. You beat us: I can't say we are glad, but we met a clean-playing, well-coached, spirited team that represents a clean body of sportsmen." Added Brother George Geisler, "Waco is indeed a city with a soul. We will leave her with the fondest recollections and hope that we will have the opportunity to repay the citizens of Waco for the overwhelming welcome shown to all of us." Assistant Coach Brother Schweicher noted, "We met the finest that can be met in the United States this year. They play a clean brand of football, and we give praise to their coach." Two Waco sportsmen that were integral in arranging the game, A. J. Bush and J. B. Earle, complimented Cathedral Latin, saying that they fought the cleanest and hardest game ever played against Waco at the Cotton Palace.

As the Latin team prepared to board the train for Ohio the following day, Coach Duffy shook hands with Coach Tyson and told him, "You have absolutely the best high school football team that I have ever seen in action, and I have seen all the leaders in the middle west for 10 years... We are not going back to Cleveland with any alibi. We are going to go back and tell the truth that your Waco team not only beat us 44 to 12 Monday, but that you could also do it in Cleveland, in New York, and do it every day of the week. We are going back and tell them that your team could come to Cleveland and beat all 25 of the high school teams in Cleveland in 25 days and then lay off a day and beat the three colleges of Cleveland three days in a row, and that not one of the teams would come within three touchdowns of beating your machine." When the contingent arrived back at the Terminal Tower in Cleveland, they were greeted by hundreds of cheering fans. The team was celebrated in a banquet a few days later for their great season. They were only the second team in Northeastern Ohio high school history to even play for the national championship, the first being an excellent Cleveland East Tech team in 1920.

Tucker wrote in the News-Tribune on December 28, "It was the remarkable execution of the spin play which spelled defeat for the Latin team. (Latin) did about as well as any team in this section in endeavoring to stop the play, but there was too much rhythm on the part of the Tigers, too much drive. The Tigers had the urge for victory. They were fighting every inch of the way."

The aspect of the Waco Tigers fighting for something that Cathedral Latin was not in this national championship game may have been a deciding factor in their win. It was only ten days since they had a tough struggle with Abilene High for the state championship. It took an 11-yard spin-play touchdown by Tommy Glover with 40 seconds left in order to eke out the 21-14 victory. Assistant Coach E. A. Bernhausen would tell a Waco Times Herald reporter in 1961 that the Waco players were not in a celebratory mood after the Abilene game, because they felt that they had not played anywhere near where they could and should have played. Their reputation as a domineering team had been sullied. Looking back 34 years, Bernhausen said, "The boys had another chance to prove themselves, and you should have seen them tear into that Cleveland team." So in the national championship game, individually the Waco Tigers were fighting for their self-esteem, and collectively they were fighting for their team's reputation. They were also fighting to maintain the undefeated run at their own Cotton Palace

stadium since its inauguration in 1921. They were fighting to uphold the tradition of excellence that Paul Tyson's teams had experienced since that year. And they were fighting for Texas, that people in other areas of the country would see the quality of high school and college football played in Texas as equal to, if not better than, their own area.

The outcome of the national championship game meant numerically that the 1927 Waco High team scored 784 points in 14 games, an average of 56 points per game. That was a new record for Texas high school football, and it would stand for 48 years! In 1975 Big Sandy High School rang up 824 points over 14 games for an average of 58.9 points per game. That total and points per game were also national records that would prevail until 1994, when Bloomington (Calif.) High School scored 880 points in 14 games, a 62.8 average points per game. The Waco Tigers held opponents to a total of 33 points in 1927.

In the 1920s individual Texas sportswriters, rather than a state entity, named players to their All-state and honorable mention teams. Most writers put on their All-State team Maurice Pierce at fullback, Thomas Glover at quarterback, Charles Leyendecker at tackle, Calvin Swift at center, and Madison Pruitt at end. Receiving honorable mention were Kenneth Clark and Dave Meers at guard and Sears Earle at end. Glover, who received the national championship game ball, also set a Texas season record in having scored 160 points in 1927.

Cleveland sportswriters of the time determined an All-Scholastic first- and second-team among high schools in the Cleveland area. Cathedral Latin had six players named to these teams in 1927. End and Kicker Dick Mahony was recognized as first-team All-Scholastic in both 1926 and 1927. Named first-team All-Scholastic were Halfback Marty Sammon and center Joe Poelking. Named second-team All-Scholastic were halfback Charles Baker and fullback Steve Jakubowski. Tackle Vic Tanski was recognized as second-team All-Scholastic in both 1926 and 1927.

Dan Duffy announced his resignation January 19, 1928 as Latin's head coach. He had built a winning program at Latin, and he had achieved the dream of many high school coaches, to win a state championship and even play for a national championship. He said that he either wanted to get into college coaching or turn all of his efforts to practicing law with his law degree newly earned from Western Reserve University. However, a few months later, he became head football coach at Holy Name, another Catholic high school in Cleveland. He coached there for four years before moving into a career of law and politics fulltime. Duffy ran unsuccessfully for mayor of Cleveland in 1937, but he remained active in Democratic Party politics in the area until his death in 1971.

Cathedral Latin hired Herb Eisele as head football coach in April, 1928. He had played at Latin, graduating in 1922. He played varsity football three years at the University of Dayton, earning All-American honorable mention in his sophomore and senior years. He had one head coaching job at a Sandusky high school before being hired by Latin. Most of the starters from the 1927 team had graduated, so Latin had a rough 4-4-2 record in 1928. But Eisele established his defense as the bulwark for his team throughout his career. My uncle, John Kelley, was elected captain for the 1929 team. The tackle had gotten great experience, including in the very punishing national championship game, as the only sophomore starter on the 1927 team. In 1928 and 1929 he learned with the rest of the team Herb Eisele's teachings on offense and defense. The 1930 Cathedral Latin yearbook editors described Kelley as having a "fighting spirit" and "cleverness": "His knowledge of the game is thorough; and even when fighting mad,

he remained cool, and every inch a captain.” Cathedral Latin improved to a 6-1-3 record in 1929. Eisele coached the 1931 team to a city championship in the first “Charity Game,” in which the proceeds went to needy families during the Depression. My father, Robert Kelley, Sr., played on the 1931 team and the 1932 team that repeated as city champion.

With Eisele at the helm, Cathedral Latin continued to be a powerhouse in Cleveland-area football through most of the 1930s and 1940s. My other uncle, Frank Kelley, played on the 1939 and 1940 teams, the latter a winner of a city championship. The greatest achievements of Eisele and his Lions were that in his last four seasons, 1943-1946, his teams went undefeated in 34 consecutive games, won four city championships and three straight state crowns (1944-46). No national champion was named in 1944 and 1945, because of the war, or they might have been tapped for such a championship. Eisele went on to be head coach at Cleveland’s John Carroll University. He was the eleventh person inducted into the University of Dayton Sports Hall of Fame.

Coach Tyson received \$6,000, 75 percent of the gate from the 1927 national championship game. Coach Bernhausen received \$2,000, the remaining 25 percent. With some of his money, Tyson bought the first car that he ever owned, a Packard. He did not know how to drive, so students taught him. In a 1999 article in the Waco Tribune-Herald, John Werner wrote, “Tyson would often use his car to take players to the Elite Restaurant to eat and would sometimes drive them to Dallas or Fort Worth to watch football games or attend track meets. Jinx Tucker would often go along for the ride and the boys would listen as he’d swap stories with Tyson.”

The Waco Tigers had a 9-1-1 record in 1928, losing to Corsicana and tying Cleburne, who, with an unbeaten record, would be the district champion. After 1928, opponents, with progressive exposure to the spin play, were able to improve their defensive maneuvers against it. Waco High football teams produced respectful records in the 1930s, but not to the level that Paul Tyson had achieved with them in the 1920s. The last great Tyson Tiger team was in 1939, when Waco High reached the state finals but lost there, to Lubbock High, 20-14.

Waco High had its first losing season in 1940 in over twenty years. Although the 1941 team improved to an 8-2 record, the Waco school board asked for Tyson’s resignation in the Spring of 1942. There had been rumors for several years that Tyson had been too intimate with some of his players, but that was never proved. After Tyson refused to resign, he was fired. Many people were up in arms about the firing. A petition signed by over 300 mothers of current and previous football players was presented to the school board, asking that Tyson be reinstated, and praising Tyson as a coach, a teacher of boys, and as a man. The school board did not change its action. Howard Ratliff, an Associated Press regional sports writer, conjectured that Tyson “had set too great a pattern. His fabulous accomplishments had become his undoing. Waco could not reconcile itself to an average record for its great coach.” The school board never gave the true reason for the firing to the public. John Werner’s 1999 article about Tyson in the Waco Tribune-Herald quotes a few former players saying that the rumors were a hoax and that Tyson was fired because he was no longer winning championships. There was no doubt that former players were upset by this ill treatment of Tyson.

Tyson tried several high school coaching jobs at other schools in Texas over the next several years. He tried teaching at Westminster College in Tehuacana, Texas, away from the football field. Several sportswriters who saw Tyson in the late 1940s wrote that the firing from Waco

seemed to have broken his spirit. Dave Campbell, a dean of Waco sportswriters mentored by Jinx Tucker, saw Tyson as Waco High defeated Amarillo High 21-0 in the state finals in 1948. Campbell, in a 2016 Waco Tribune-Herald article, said that he saw that this fifth state championship for the Waco Tigers, the previous four being under Tyson, was bittersweet for Waco's former coach. But the desire to coach drew Tyson back to the gridiron as head football coach at tiny Daniel Baker College in Brownwood, where his first season produced a 2-6-2 record in 1949. A week before his first game of the 1950 season, Tyson suffered a cerebral hemorrhage at a faculty meeting and died on September 9, 1950.

Jinx Tucker wrote a heartfelt summary of Paul Tyson's career the next day in the Tribune Herald. He also wrote that the petition of support from the mothers of football players would rest in Coach Tyson's coat pocket when he was buried at Oakwood Cemetery.

That second national championship for Waco High in 1948 was designated by rankings by an organization called the National Sports News Service. After 1939 there were no actual national championship games played to determine the national champion. National Sports News Service had been doing its ranking most years between 1910 and 1999. They provided a basis from 1910-1939 for the top teams in the ranking to contact each other to see about a playoff game to determine a national champ. The Associated Press (AP) and United Press International (UPI) began their polls in 1947. USA Today started its rankings in 1982, and National Prep Poll began in 1987. Those two entities agreed in 2016 to yearly award the USA Today/National Prep Poll high school national championship to its highest-ranked team at the complete end of the football season.

Since 1927 Texas has fared well in national championships, and Ohio has continued as a strong area in high school football. Texas has claimed 15 national titles received by nine Texas schools. Only three other states – Ohio (25), California (17), and Florida (15) can boast as many or more national championships. The popularity of the book, movie, and television series, "Friday Night Lights," mirrors the reality of the intensity and excellence of football being played in Texas high schools today and the opportunities for Texas high school players to be recruited to attend and play, not only at universities and colleges in Texas, but also those in many other states.

Alumni of the football program at Waco High put together a display of materials about the coaching legacy of Paul Tyson for inclusion in the Texas Sports Hall of Fame in 1955 when Tyson became the tenth individual inducted into the Hall. "Dutch" Meyer, a Waco Tiger in the early 1920s and one of the most successful head coaches at Texas Christian University, was sobbing when he gave the welcoming speech and presented the plaque to Tyson's sister. Paul Tyson Field was dedicated as Waco High's game-day locale in 1961. And players from all of Tyson's Waco High football teams organized the Paul Tyson Tiger Club in 1976. They had their first reunion in May, 1977, and met in well-attended conclaves about every other year until the end of the 1980s.

The players from the 1927 teams went onto diverse lives. Waco's Thomas Glover went to Stanford University, where he led the spin play and other offensive formations for Coach Glenn "Pop" Warner, the coach whose partial-spin handoffs Tyson had improved upon. Glover settled

in Los Angeles, where he and his wife had two children and seven grandchildren. He died in 1986. Maurice Pierce became a consistent player for the Baylor Bears, captaining the team in 1931. After graduation from Baylor, Pierce worked for Holt Seven-Up Bottling and then the trailer division of Hicks Motor Company, both in Waco. When he died after a short illness at the age of 43, he left a wife and two children. Dave Meers, Jr., attended the University of South Carolina, at which he made All-Southeast Conference in football. He became a master plumber back in Waco. He died at the age of 49 in 1960.

Madison Pruitt played four years at end at TCU. He was named to the All-American team as a senior and was All-Southwest Conference as a junior and senior. After graduating TCU, Pruitt was named head coach of athletics at Mangum High School in Oklahoma. He then served as head football coach at Plainview High and ended his coaching career as football coach at Gatesville High. He worked for the Veterans Administration and the U.S. Corps of Engineers. Pruitt refereed local athletic events. He was very involved in Waco community organizations and ran unsuccessfully for county commissioner in 1974. He passed away in 1996. Sometime after high school Henry Sears Earle moved to Crane County in West Texas. When he died there in 1995, his survivors were his wife, two daughters, three sons, 13 grandchildren, and eight great-grandchildren.

Charles B. Leyendecker went to Vanderbilt, where he was an All-Southern Conference tackle. His son played tackle at Southern Methodist University in the 1950s. Leyendecker became an asphalt contractor in Houston, where he died in 1971. Calvin Ernest Swift moved to the Washington D.C. area soon after high school. He furthered his education at George Washington University and other universities. He enlisted in the Army's Engineers' Corps in 1943 and served with distinction in the European and Pacific theaters, attaining the rank of staff sergeant and earning several medals for his two years of duty. He then served for 38 years as a cartographic supervisor in the U.S. Geological Survey. He passed away in Alexandria, Virginia in 1998. Kenneth Kirby Clark became a civil engineer for the Texas Forest Service. He died in Bosque County in 1977.

Thomas B. Hill went on to play football at Texas A & M University, graduating from there in 1932. He served as an administrator for the farm program in Ballinger, Texas, south of Abilene, under the New Deal's Agricultural Adjustment Administration. He then engaged in his main career as an insurance agent for several companies over 48 years in San Angelo. He helped start a scholarship program for needy students in that city. Hill died in 1993. Wendell McClelland served in the Navy for the last two years of World War II. He died in 2004 in Shreveport, Louisiana.

The Cathedral Latin players from 1927 also had interesting lives. Captain Marty Sammon attended Kenyon College, a liberal arts institution in central Ohio. He played four years of football there and graduated in 1932. He then worked in Ohio steel mills as an apprentice foreman and foreman for 15 years. Sammon was hired as a foreman for Pacific States Steel Corporation, and he spent the rest of his career as a foreman at the Union City steel plant, which produced steel for World War II government contracts and, later, Bay Area Rapid Transit lines and Oakland Stadium. He and his wife were active supporters of the schools and city government in their adopted city of Newark, California. After retirement, in 1972 he visited Waco and was interviewed by Robert Lyster of the Waco Tribune Herald. "Waco High had the

best team I've ever faced," Sammon said. "The thing that I remember most about Waco was the way that we were treated. Nothing was too good for us. People here treated us like we were kings. It's that great hospitality I will always remember when someone mentions Waco... Some members of the police department got together a copy of a brochure on the Tigers under Paul Tyson and sent it to me with a nice note. They also sent me the account of the game from the Waco paper. I still have that paper although it's 45 years old." Sammon, named to the Latin Athletic Hall of Fame in 1962, was one of the first alumni to be so honored. He died in 1980.

The Paul Tyson Tiger Club, after its first reunion in 1977, was a big draw for another Cathedral Latin visitor for their fourth reunion in February, 1985.

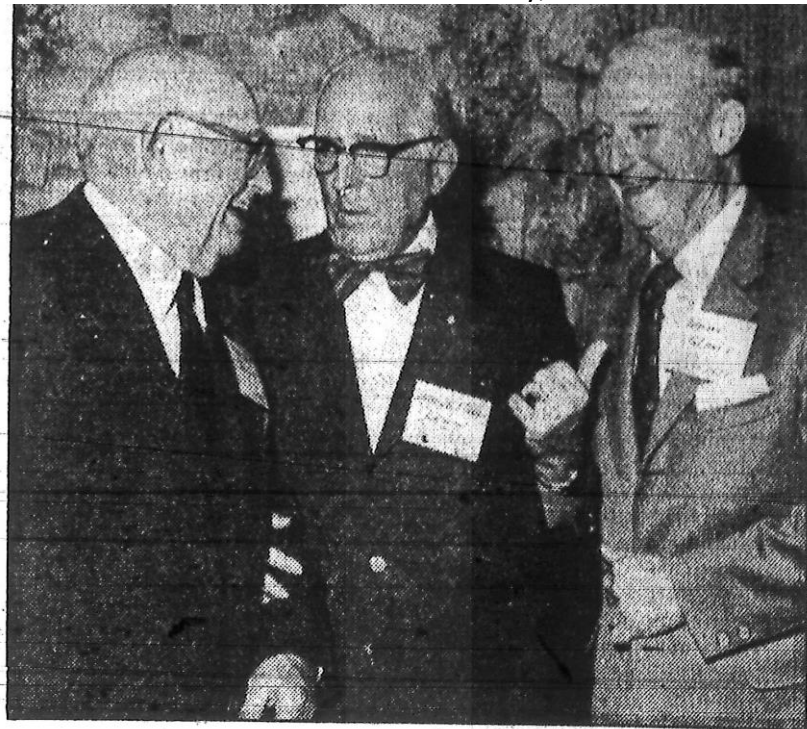


Photo courtesy of Jimmie Willis

A pair of Waco High heroes of 1927, Madison Pruitt (left) and team captain Tommy Glover (right), welcome an old adversary, Bob Irwin of the 1927 Latin High team of Cleveland, back to Waco

Bob Irwin, the 140-pound guard who had played every minute of the 1927 championship game, was invited and spoke at this reunion of his adversaries. "The captain of my old team told me, that while I was here, to be sure to go out to the Cotton Palace field and look for his teeth. And I wanted to find out who it was who broke my nose," Irwin joked with the audience, which prompted many laughs. Of that year's Tigers, Irwin said, "Yes they were great. We met our superiors. But the score should have been closer. The weather in Cleveland was so bad, we never got to scrimmage there before the game. And it's hard to believe, but we only brought three substitute linemen. We did leave a great deal of our sweat and blood on the Cotton Palace field. But we had a wonderful time. Waco's hospitality was out of this world. It was something we could never forget. I wanted to tell Wacoans that."

Tommy Glover showed the retired Cleveland businessman around 1985 Waco. While many at the reunion, including Irwin, told Glover he was the man who made the spin play go, he

replied that the credit belonged up front. "We had such a great line," Glover remembered. Irwin, inducted into the Latin Athletic Hall of Fame in 1984, died in 2009.

Latin tackle Vic Tanski became a mechanical engineer. Tanski was inducted into the Latin Athletic Hall of Fame in 1972. He died in Clark County, Nevada in 1991.

Joseph Poelking, Sr., attended the University of Dayton, where he continued his prowess as a football center until he graduated in 1932. He stayed in the city of Dayton, Ohio and did well as a property owner. He donated to his beloved university money for annual awards in both chemistry and writing in campus publications. Poelking was voted into the Latin Athletic Hall of Fame in 1963, and he was very active in the Latin Alumni Association. He died in 1988.

Joseph Colan became a shipping clerk for a Cleveland auto manufacturer. He and his wife had five children and 11 grandchildren. Colan passed away in 1991.

Richard Mahony went on to star as an end for Notre Dame University, from which he graduated in 1932. He was a charter inductee of the Latin Athletic Hall of Fame in 1961. Mahony worked in the sanitary engineering department of Cuyahoga County, the county in which Cleveland is located. He was a father of two children and grandfather of five when he died in 1982.

Stephen Jakubowski, born in Poland in 1909, became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1939. In 1940 he worked as a packer in a Cleveland department store. Jakubowski was inducted into the Latin Athletic Hall of Fame in 1966. At his death in 1982 in Cleveland Heights, he was father of two, grandfather of four, and great-grandfather of one.

My uncle, John Joseph Kelley, received a football scholarship to the University of Dayton, where he played tackle for four years. After he received a B.S. degree, he worked for U.S. Steel in industry sales. He married Mitzi Karg of Akron, Ohio in 1939. Living in a Detroit suburb, they had two children, Jack and Patti. Uncle John kept his competitive spirit alive in his work and his golfing; he was a low-digit handicapper into the beginning of his seventies. His children exhibited his competitive nature, Jack in car racing and Patti in swimming and later in golf. Jack graduated from Michigan State University, married Helen, and they have three children. Patti graduated from University of Michigan, married Bob Wells, and they had one child. Bob had two children from a previous marriage, so he and Patti had a household of five.

My Uncle John and Aunt Mitz retired to the same community to which my father and mother had retired, Wellington, Florida. The two couples were instrumental in establishing a new Catholic parish there. John served as president of the ushers' group, my father sang baritone in the choir, and my mother and aunt were founding members of the Marian Society chapter. In 1997, as my parents were starting to experience significant health problems, I got a job in my career field close enough where I could visit my parents frequently. Around that time, I had noticed that if I were asking about how he felt about something that he enjoyed or appreciated, Uncle John would often respond with the same one-word answer, "Super!" If I asked him what he thought of a recent Miami Dolphins victory, his answer would be "Super!" If I asked him at the restaurant that we went after church how his pancakes, eggs, and sausage were, the answer was "Super!" If I asked him how his golf game was lately, his answer was "Super!"

On one of those visits, I asked my Uncle John what it was like to participate in a national championship football game in high school. He thought for a minute, looked at me with even more sparkle than usual in his sparkling blue eyes, and said wistfully and appreciatively, "It was super!" I knew from that answer that the trip down to Texas and the game itself represented a

positive part of his teenage years, something that was unique and appreciated. I knew from his years of playing it in high school and college and watching it on television in later years that he really loved the game of football. I later learned from reading the words of his coach and fellow Latin players that part of the appreciation was for the kind and thoughtful treatment that they had received from those they encountered in Waco off the field and for the mutual respect that the adversaries had when the game was over. I knew from his answer that he was honored and proud to have gotten the chance to represent his school, his city, and his state in a game to determine a national champion. And in that, he was like each of the players on both sides that day!

My Uncle John was named to the Latin Athletic Hall of Fame in 1979. After his wife died March 8, 1999, John went to live with his daughter Patti and her family in Park City, Utah. He died on March 31, 2001.



Cotton Palace Field, Dutton Ave. & S. 15th St., site of the 1927 National Championship game, as it appears in 2017. Photo by Robert Kelley.

By Robert Kelley

Photos of Cathedral Latin players and coach and of the game itself provided courtesy of the Cathedral Latin Alumni Association. Photos of Waco High players provided courtesy of Waco High yearbook, The Daisy Chain, 1928 edition. All other photos, except the last one above, provided courtesy of the Texas Collection, Baylor University Libraries. Thanks to the Genealogy Department at Waco-McLennan County Library for their assistance and resources.