



*Mark holds West Virginia records for most receptions in a season and career.*

# Mark Raugh:

*Became four-year WVU starter and record-breaker*

## By Neil Rudel

Coaches who groomed Mark Raugh from the beginning saw an intense, gifted athlete driven to prove himself.

Few back go further with Raugh than Harry Clarke and Fred Guyer, Clarke as the leader of Central High School's football program, Guyer as a coach, teacher and close family friend.

"In 1969, we started a flag football program," Clarke said in a recent

interview. "Mark would have been nine years old at the time and even then you could see his ability, how his hands were so good and how he could really run."

Raugh was also a standout basketball player and baseball pitcher for Central "with a major-league baseball," Guyer said, but his best opportunity to earn a scholarship came via football.

Clarke spent 20-plus years coaching high school football in Pennsylvania. He is a member of the Pa. Coaches

Hall of Fame and last year was inducted into the Blair County Sports Hall of Fame.

Clarke considers Raugh one of the two best players he coached, along with Midway's Ralph Felton, who went on to play for Maryland and the Washington Redskins.

"They were two great high school football players," Clarke said.

Penn State wasn't sure Raugh was

## Mark Raugh

big enough to play tight end or fast enough to be a wide receiver.

In 1978, he signed with West Virginia, then coached by Frank Cignetti, who left the Mountaineers two years into Raugh's career and was replaced by Don Nehlen.

"Mark was truly a natural athlete," Guyer said. "He didn't spend much time in the weight room until Coach Nehlen got there and that's when Mark got serious and grew into his body."

Following his freshman season, Raugh had ankle surgery that threatened his football future. But he accepted the rehabilitation challenge and won the starting tight end job in the spring.

"That's when I started working," he said. "I had three or four playbooks my freshman year. I played strong safety, outside linebacker, receiver. When I came back in the spring, (assistant coach) Gary Stevens asked me what position I wanted to play and I said tight end. I was comfortable with it. I liked catching the ball. I was never satisfied with my blocking, but I liked doing it. It was a challenge."

Though he never got to be more than 225 pounds, Raugh became a four-year starter and was a key player in helping Nehlen establish the solid foundation on which WVU's program stands today.

"Coach Nehlen was unreal," Raugh said. "The guy came in and I'll never forget the first meeting. He put some stipulations on people and he really brought discipline to the team and a winning attitude, a believe-in-yourself-attitude. He turned the whole place around. It wasn't as relaxed as maybe it was before he came."

Raugh and set season (64) and

## Mark Raugh



**Age:** 35.

**Sport:** Football.

**High School:** Central.

**College:** West Virginia.

**Hall of Fame achievement:**

*Spent three seasons as a tight end in the United States Football League and remains West Virginia's single season and all-time leading reception leader.*

**Current occupation:**

*Automobile dealership manager.*

**Current residence:**

*Lexington, Ky.*

career (119) records for receptions — marks that still stand today, some 13 seasons later.

From West Virginia, Raugh was drafted by the Pittsburgh Steelers, and spent three seasons in the now-defunct United States Football League, one with the Pittsburgh Maulers and two with the Memphis Showboats.

"I thought it was great," he said. "There was a lot of talent in the league, an opportunity for a guy like me to get another look and some more exposure and a chance to play another couple years. It was a good experience and I hated to see it end."

Raugh values many of the coaches he's had along the way, particularly at Central, where his junior year was marred by the 1977 death of his father, John, who suffered a heart attack.

"That was a key decision-making time of your life and somebody who was always there and very influential and all of a sudden he's gone, and there's a void there," he said. "Thank God there were a lot of people willing to step in and help me — Mom (JoAnne) and Joe (Oakes, stepfather) and Fred Guyer and guys like (coaches) Bill Groff and Fred Price."

Raugh, who now manages a car dealership in Lexington, Ky, is humbled by his selection to the Blair County Sports Hall of Fame.

"This honor beats everything I have achieved in the past," Raugh, who presented Clarke for induction at the '94 dinner, said. "The All-American and All-East mentions, school records, everything else comes after this honor."

"It is my athletic curtain call. It is probably the last award I will ever get."

**Former Central High School and West Virginia Mountaineer**

**Dr. Brian Gates**

Podiatrist ~ Logan, Blvd., Lakemont

**Congratulations Mark Raugh and the '96 Inductees**