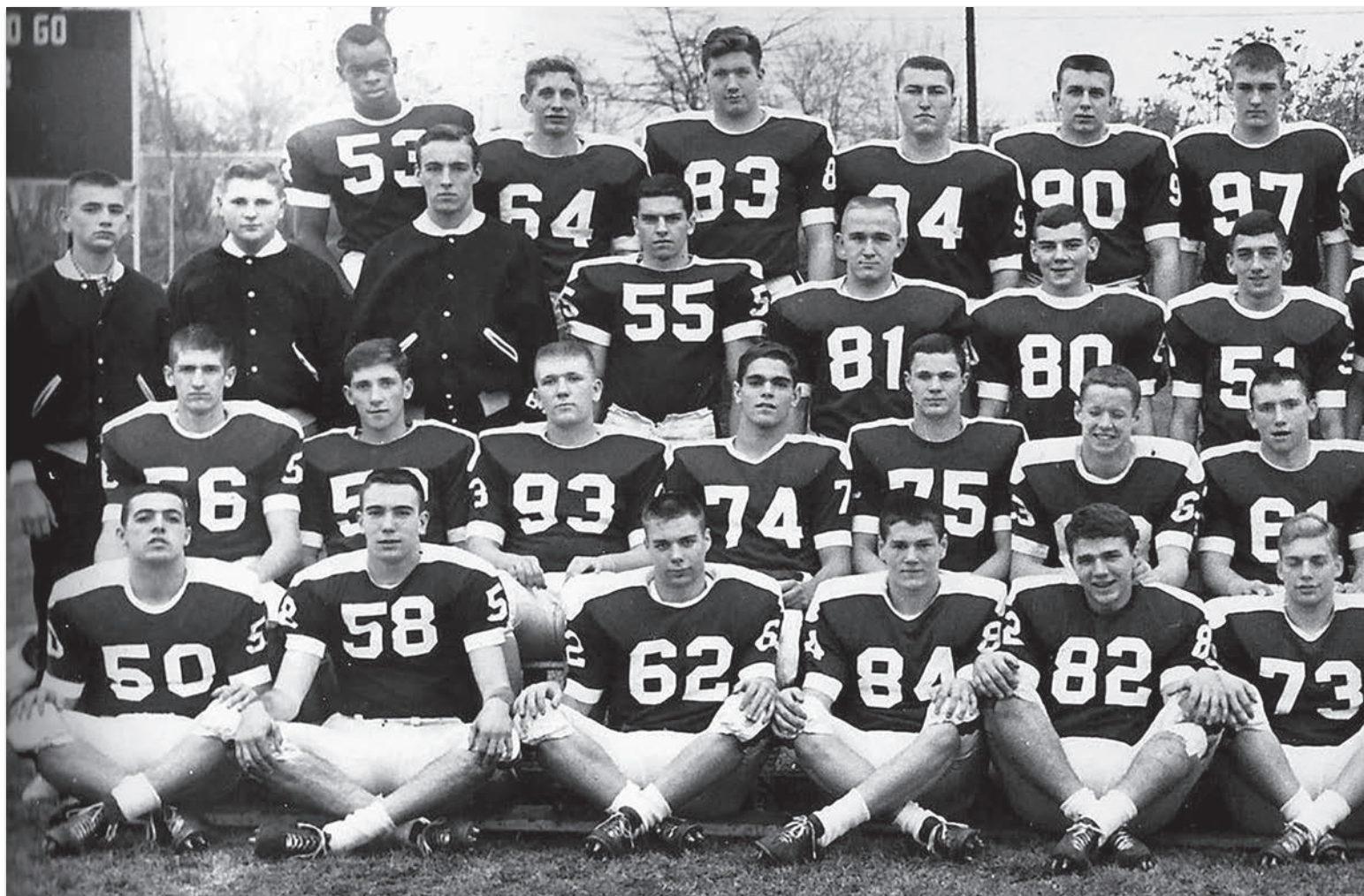


HALL OF FAME TEAM AWARD



1962 Altoona High School football team members were, from left, first row — Buddy Geis, Mel Frye, Bob Fogle, Dan McKnight, Joe Nicodem, Dave McNichol, Jim Nardella, Ed Trexler, Chuck Brenner, Tim Murriff, Steve Flanagan, Bill Mills, Jim Yingling, Steve Howe, Jim Miller, John Phillip, Gary Sacks, Dave Thompson, Dennis Rossman, John Trion, Mgr. Lindsey, Mgr. Varner. Fourth row — Dick Johnson, Frank Barry, Jim Graham, Tom

Unbeaten Lions of 1962 would pl

By Jim Lane

Altoona Mirror

Undefeated, untied teams are few and far between in any sport. In fact, in Altoona High School's proud football history, only a handful of teams have had a perfect season.

The last Mountain Lion football team to win them all was the 1962 unit — that's right, 1962 — 56 years ago.

That '62 group will be inducted into the Blair County Sports Hall of

Fame in the team category.

"It's an honor," said Dan McKnight, who was the driving force behind organizing the team's nomination. "We're expecting a great turnout. We've got guys in Idaho, Florida, the Carolinas — all over — and everybody is looking forward to coming back."

The overriding theme of former players interviewed was "team."

"Seniors, juniors, sophomores — it was a team," offered McKnight, who

played end at Maryland before becoming a Pennsylvania state policeman in Butler for many years.

"It was a great team, no great individuals," said two-way halfback Buddy Geis, who has coached football on the college and professional levels for more than 30 years and was inducted into the Hall in 2010. "We didn't have one guy. We had a lot of good players. The coaches made us great, and we came together as one."

HALL OF FAME TEAM AWARD



us, Bob Black, Bill Shawley, John Kerns, Milt Lantz, Jerry Sanker, Jeff Miller, Bob Prindible. Second row — Bill Books, Mike Auker, Ted Werner, ips. Third row — Mgr. Kraff, Mgr. McGinnis, Tim Hudson, Frank Magaraci, Carl Bennett, Sam Ianuzzi, Paul Springman, Tom Sanker, Dick Jones, om Bussman, Bob Johnston, Mike Reid, John Harris, Dennis Blackburn, Ed Smith, Rick Noonan, Tom Creighton, Tony Glasson, Tony Muro.

anybody, anywhere, anytime'

"It was a unit," said fullback-defensive back Bob Prindible, who has spent most of his adult life in New Jersey. "We didn't depend on one guy. There were no stars."

Coached by Earl Strohm, the Mountain Lions went 10-0 in the regular season, but lacked the necessary points in the Gardner Points System to be eligible for the WPIAL playoffs. The Lions outscored the opposition, 311-66, and gave up more than 13 points only twice.

Among the wins were victories over McKeesport, Easton, Indiana, Johnstown, Redstone and Williamsport.

"We always seemed to lack one game for the WPIAL playoffs," recalled two-way back Bob Fogle, who returned to Altoona a couple years ago after spending much of his career in Flint, Michigan and later Las Vegas. "We just couldn't get enough (WPIAL) games in the '60s to be eligible for the playoffs."

A look at Altoona High's early football history shows the Mountain Lions were very successful during the 1930s, 1940s and 1960s.

Fogle said the 1961 team, which went 9-1, set the tone for the unbeaten 1962 season.

"In 1961, we lost to Indiana, 6-0, at Mansion Park," Fogle recalled. "It was a big upset. We were supposed to win."

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Buddy Geis burst through the line for yardage on a muddy track against Williamsport.

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Everyone thought we would have an undefeated season.

"We got Strohm's 100th win during the season, but the one loss propelled us into 1962," Fogle added.

Prindible agreed, saying "That loss to Indiana in 1961 was a great incentive for 1962.

"One of our linemen, John (Peaches) Kerns, started a 10-0 chant during the summer," Prindible said, "and that's what we worked for — one game at a time."

Prindible gave credit for much of the team's success to the coaches, particularly Strohm, who took over the Altoona program when Prindible was in junior high school.

Strohm was enshrined with the Hall of Fame's second class in 1988 and

was inducted into the Pennsylvania Football Coaches Hall of Fame as well.

"Earl came when I was in seventh grade at Keith," Prindible recalled.

"From seventh grade on, we always ran the same plays. Repetition. Repetition. We gained a lot of respect for each other and knew we could count on each other no matter what."

McKnight fondly recalls a preseason scrimmage with WPIAL power Uniontown at a camp in Farmington, PA.

"I think that scrimmage made us," McKnight said. "They were good, and it was a real battle.

"We went undefeated during the season, and they did, too, but there was no playoff because we didn't have enough points to qualify. It would have been interesting.

"Earl (Strohm) used to say, 'We'll

play anyone, anywhere, anytime,' and we did," said McKnight. "The '60s — that's where it was — Easton, McKeesport, all good football teams."

McKnight also credited coaches Strohm, Ron Rickens, Wally Fields, Harry Dinges and Jack Hopper for preaching team play and team effort.

"They were coaches, but they also were teachers and always had an eye on us educationally and athletically," McKnight said. "Earl brought in guys like (former players) Ed Flanagan and Geech Gutshall to work with us. He was way ahead of his time. His practices, his drills — I can see that now.

"The team takes on a life of its own, and we did."

Of all the college and pro teams



Altoona's coaching staff was comprised of, from left: Head coach Earl Strohm, Ron Rickens, Harry Dinges and Wally Fields.

1962 SCHEDULE	
Opponent.....	Score
*Chambersburg	25-6
Windber	43-13
*Schenley	60-0
McKeesport	13-9
Easton	32-14
Indiana	26-0
*Beth Center	46-7
*Johnstown.....	21-6
*Redstone	19-6
*Williamsport	26-7

*at Mansion Park



Some of the team members were present for their 50th class reunion, held in 2013. Among them, from left: Dan McKnight, Bob Fogle, Gary Sacks, Paul Springman, Bob Prindible, Bob Black, Joe Nicodemus, Sam Ianuzzi, and Jerry Sanker.

Geis has been associated with, the 1962 Altoona team was the only time he was part of an undefeated team.

"It's amazing, when you think about it, to be part of something like that," Geis said. "To come together as one and have pride in what you're doing.

"It's something like the New England Patriots — a bunch of good players who became a phenomenal team. It's a great honor."



Dan McKnight (left) and Bob Fogle were a big part of the Mountain Lions' ground game.



Mansion Park was regularly packed, even in the rain.

An ode to the 'Undefeated'

The following poem was written in 2013 by Mountain Lion team leader Dan McKnight for the 50th reunion for the Class of 63:

They were all young men back in sixty-two
Hoping they had the right stuff,
Coaches on your back yelling at you
Trying to make you tough.

Ten teams they would face across the state
Traveling from east to west,
From Easton to McKeesport in busses first rate
They would face the oppositions best.

Fifty players making up the team
As football players they were blessed,
Coming together without a seam
To find a star you would be hard pressed.

Film study and scouting reports
Were discussed throughout the week.
Guarding their end zone like a fort
This was certainly no season for the meek.

Ten Fridays in a row they would trot onto the field
Following their coaches lead,
Scoring enough points each week would yield
Ten teams that would finally concede.

It is now fifty years later and their record still stands
To their Alma Mater they have been true,
Boys turned to men but their memories command
Never forget that team in sixty-two!