

INDUCTEE PROFILE

# Nedimyer 'never took a play off'

## Altoona football standout helped Wake Forest to its first ACC title

By Jim Lane

Altoona Mirror

Football. Basketball. Baseball. Vince Nedimyer played them all at Altoona High School. Football coach. Athletic director. Teacher. Principal.

Nedimyer held all those positions in the Altoona Area School District, too.

And except for a couple years when he was coaching college football, Vince and his wife, Linda, have lived in Altoona. They raised their kids (Keri and Vince Jr.) here, and now they enjoy watching grandkids play on local fields and in local gyms.

Memories? Nedimyer has a ton of them. When you're born and raised in Altoona, grow up playing sports here and then spend 36 years working for your hometown school district, you've pretty much seen and done it all.

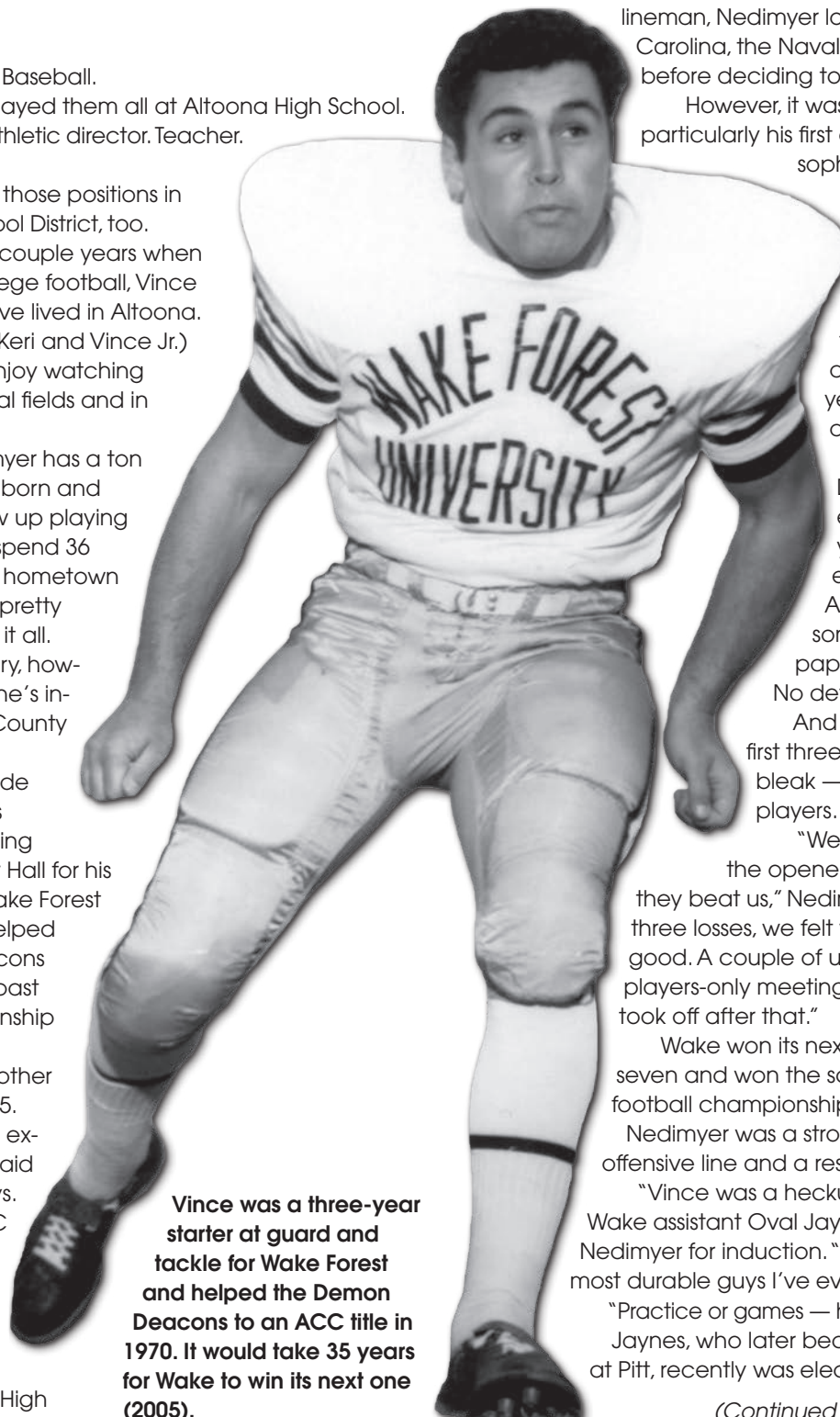
His biggest memory, however, will come when he's inducted into the Blair County Sports Hall of Fame.

Although he's made his mark in many ways locally, Nedimyer is being inducted into the Blair Hall for his football prowess at Wake Forest University, where he helped lead the Demon Deacons to their first Atlantic Coast Conference championship in 1970.

The school's only other ACC title came in 2005.

"That was a great experience," Nedimyer said of his Wake Forest days. "That 1970 team (ACC champs) had 11 guys from Pennsylvania, and we all started."

After earning Pennsylvania all-state honors as an Altoona High



**Vince was a three-year starter at guard and tackle for Wake Forest and helped the Demon Deacons to an ACC title in 1970. It would take 35 years for Wake to win its next one (2005).**

lineman, Nedimyer looked at Pitt, North Carolina, the Naval Academy and others before deciding to attend Wake Forest.

However, it wasn't all rosy at Wake, particularly his first couple of years. As a sophomore, the Deacons had a 2-7-1 record.

They were 3-7 his junior year.

"When Cal Stoll came in to coach from Michigan State after my sophomore year, he turned things around," Nedimyer said.

Even though the Deacons were expected to improve his senior year, Nedimyer said everybody wasn't sold. A headline on a pre-season story in a local newspaper blared: "No offense. No defense. No hope."

And when the team lost its first three games, things looked bleak — to everyone but the players.

"We went to Nebraska for the opener and led 10-0 before they beat us," Nedimyer said. "Even after three losses, we felt we could be pretty good. A couple of us (seniors) called a players-only meeting, and things kind of took off after that."

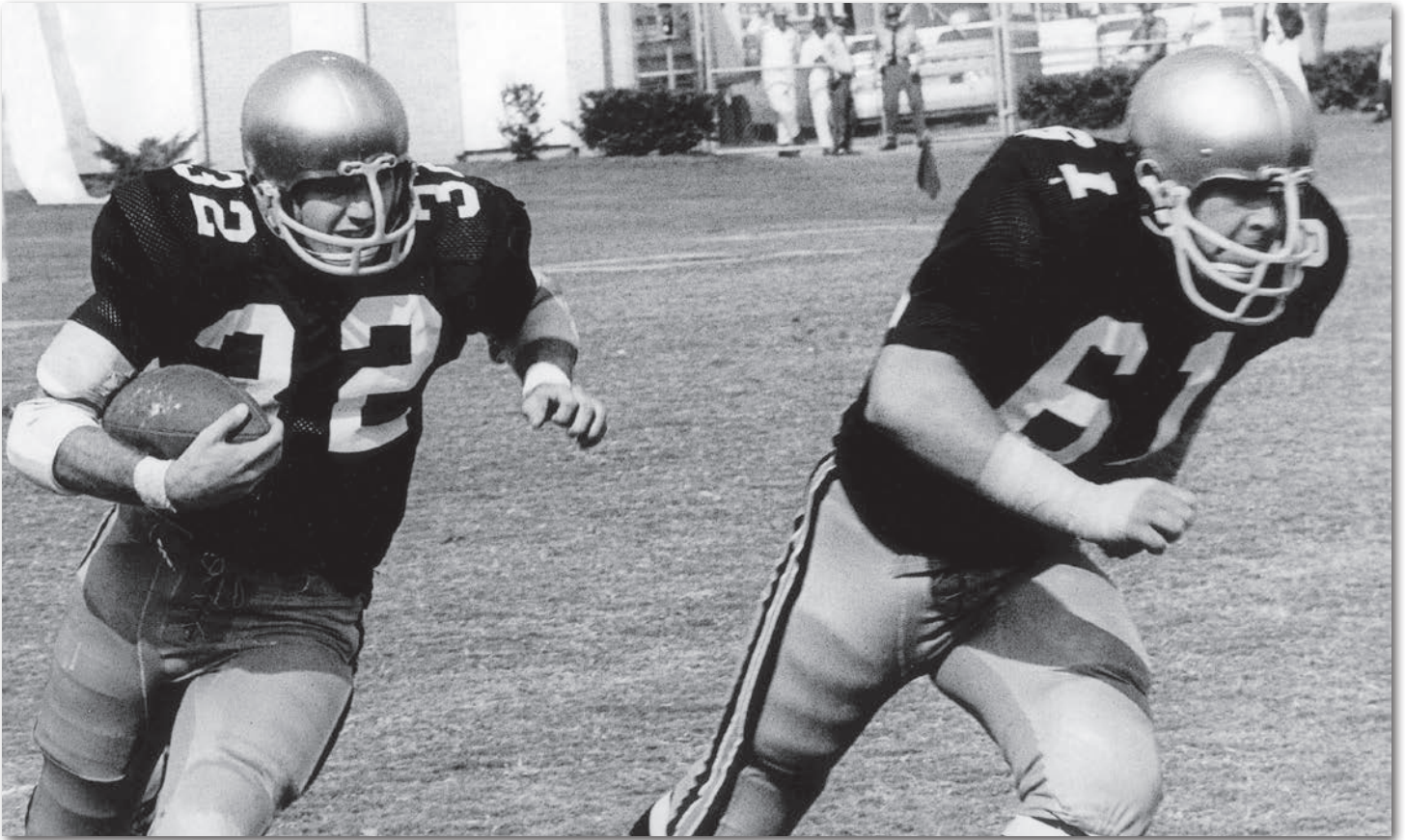
Wake won its next four and six of its next seven and won the school's first-ever ACC football championship.

Nedimyer was a strong anchor on the offensive line and a respected leader.

"Vince was a heckuva player," said former Wake assistant Oval Jaynes, who will present Nedimyer for induction. "He was one of the most durable guys I've ever coached."

"Practice or games — he never took off a play," Jaynes, who later became athletic director at Pitt, recently was elected to the National

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**No. 61 (Vince) leads the way for Wake running back Gary Johnson during the 1970 season.**

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Athletic Directors Hall of Fame.

"Vince was a great team player, always excited," Jaynes recalled. "He was an undersized right tackle — probably about 220 or 225 — but he was quick and good off the ball and could get to the next level.

"As an offensive lineman, you don't get a lot of glory," Jaynes said, "but he was a real team player — the leader of our band."

Most teams put their best defensive lineman at left tackle and, as the right tackle on offense, Nedimyer usually took on the opponent's best.

"He probably faced a half dozen All-Americans that year," Jaynes noted.

Wake ran the split-back veer offense, and Nedimyer was a key performer, opening holes for a couple of solid running backs.

"Vince was definitely fun to coach and fun to be around," Jaynes said. "I've stayed in touch with him and have seen him at some reunions. I'm definitely happy for him and his family for his selection to the Hall of Fame. It's well-deserved."

Nedimyer said Jaynes was a member of "a great staff" at Wake.

"Everything we did was predicated on four quarters," Nedimyer said. "We bought into it, and nobody could stop us that (1970) season."

Despite the ACC title, the Deacons were passed over for the Peach Bowl by North Carolina, which Wake had beaten during the season.

"The (Peach Bowl) committee thought they'd be a bigger draw," Nedimyer said. "That was the biggest disheartening thing in my four years at Wake."

After a year as a grad assistant at Wake, Nedimyer coached one season at Gardner-Webb College before returning to

Altoona as a teacher-coach in 1973. He coached under Ron Rickens and Frank Rocco before becoming head coach in 1981.

"I was on the beach in Ocean City, Md., when (principal) Herk Betar and (AD) Jack Ray called me and offered the job because Rocco was going to Penn State," said Nedimyer, who later became a principal and then AD in the Altoona system before retiring in 2009.



## *Nedimyer bio*

**Sport:** Football

**High school:** Altoona

**College:** Wake Forest

**Hall of Fame achievement:** Vince was

a three-year starter at offensive guard and tackle at Wake Forest (1968-70), highlighted by the Deacons' Atlantic Coast Conference championship during his senior year. He was a standout athlete at Altoona High School and was part of the Mountain Lions' legendary victory at Massillon in 1966. He later became Altoona's head football coach and athletic director.

**Current residence:** Altoona

There were several memorable moments for Nedimyer as an athlete at Altoona High. He played on an undefeated (all sophomores) jayvee basketball team, was a member of the first Altoona District 6 championship in baseball (1967) and played on the only Altoona football team to win at Massillon, Ohio.

"It was just like yesterday," said Nedimyer, now 68 years old. "So many positive memories. You were allowed to play three sports. All-state in football — I was in the right place at the right time.

"When I was a sophomore, I learned how to play from guys like (Mike) Reid, (Buddy) Geis and (John) Phillips. And, later there was John Ebersole and Steve Thompson.

"When I was a kid, I watched (Jim) Curry and (Geech) Gutshall," he said. "And, the coaches — wow! — Earl Strohm, Ron Rickens, Harry Dinges, Jack Hopper. Then there was climbing under the fence to get into Mansion as a kid. Things you don't forget."

Nedimyer continued to rave about his experience as a Mountain Lion player.

"When we ran out of that tunnel (at Mansion), there were 10,000 or more fans, no empty seats," he said. "We played the best, anywhere, anytime.

"We went to Massillon overnight and the team always wore maroon blazers," he recalled. "We didn't talk about winning — it was expected."

A 1988 inductee, Ebersole grew



**Vince shares a nice moment with his parents, Christine and Gerald, after a late-season game in 1970.**

up with Nedimyer and remains close friends to this day.

"We were friends then, and we've been friends all these years, Vince and Steve Thompson," the former Penn State standout who spent eight years with the New York Jets said. "Those friendships from high school that last that long are pretty special. He was a great athlete and a great guy. It's hard to beat those kind of friendships and relationships."

Nedimyer is humbled by his Hall of Fame selection.

"It means more to me than anything that happened in my athletic career," he said. "My dad used to tell me that you're never as good as you think you are in your own hometown, but this puts a good ending on what I think of as a lucky and opportunistic career.

"I can't thank everybody enough."

## NOMINATION INFORMATION

**The Blair County Sports Hall of Fame has been consistent throughout its existence in having the same criteria for induction consideration. It is as follows:**

1. The individual was born or lived in Blair County.
2. The individual has attained national, regional or statewide recognition in his or her sport.
3. The individual must be retired from his or her sport a minimum of two years.

**To nominate an individual or team for consideration, please send a letter of nomination, with documented information, to:**

Blair County Sports Hall of Fame, P.O. Box 162, Altoona, PA 16603  
or email to [bcsportshalloffame@gmail.com](mailto:bcsportshalloffame@gmail.com).