

Coach Chuck Mather

1948 - 1953 – Won 57, Lost 3, Tied 0
Years State Champion – 1948, 1949, 1950, 1951, 1952, 1953
Years National Champion – 1950, 1952, 1953

- Six State Championships,
 - Three National Championships,
 - Fifty-seven victories in sixty games.
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- Born April 17, 1915, Blomingdale, OH
 - Died May 20, 2006

That is the football record of teams coached by Charles V. Mather in his six years as the head man of Massillon Washington High School athletics, 1948-1953.

His six consecutive championships hold the coaching record at Washington High since the Associated Press football poll was inaugurated in 1947. Only one other Massillon coach has been able to boast six state titles. Paul E. Brown's teams were considered state champs by popular acclaim in the pre-poll years 1935-1940.



Mather came to Massillon in 1948 from Hamilton, Ohio, High School, where he had compiled a 17-3 record in his first two years of coaching in Class A circles.

Chuck Mather - Massillon Record

Year	Won	Lost	Tied	Points		Ranking
				Mass.	Opp.	
1948	9	1	0	271	95	1st State - AP
1949	9	1	0	395	93	1st State - AP
1950	10	0	0	407	37	1st State - AP 1st Nation - NSNS
1951	9	1	0	316	65	1st State - AP
1952	10	0	0	437	93	1st State - AP 1st Nation - NSNS
1953	10	0	0	399	55	1st State - AP 1st Nation - NSNS
Total	57	3	0	2225	438	

Winning Percentage 0.950

His previous coaching experience had been in Class B competition. His first position, following his graduation in 1937 from Ohio Northern University, was at Brilliant, Ohio. He failed to win a game in his baptism year, but in three years changed the record to 6-2. He moved to Leetonia, Ohio, High School where in three seasons, interrupted by a stint in the Navy in World War II, his

teams won 27 games, tied two and lost one. That got him to Hamilton in 1946 and his immediate success in Class A competition.

Employing the T with balanced line, Mather's 1948 team got off to a fast start, caught the fancy of fans and finished with a 9-1 record.

The only loss was to Alliance High School. The pattern was the same in his remaining five years at Massillon. It was 9-1 in 1949, the only loss being to Mansfield High School; 10-0 in 1950, 9-1 in 1951, the only loss being to Warren, Ohio, and 10-0 in 1952 and again in 1953.

While in Massillon, Mather pioneered in combining IBM cards with movies in grading players in game performances. He also experimented with closed circuit television with a view of giving the bench a bird's-eye view of what was going on, on the field.

His success at Massillon attracted the attention of the nation. He turned down offers of a number of smaller college coaching jobs but in 1954 accepted the offer of the University of Kansas and took four members of his staff with him.

The talent was thin at Kansas and Mather failed to win a game his first year there. But he did a remarkable building job during the three succeeding years, bringing his teams along from an 0-10 record their first year to second place in the Big Eight Conference in 1957, his final year. Only three teams in the previous 28 years had done better. Chuck's 1957 team finished the season with four straight wins and during the campaign beat Missouri, Kansas State, Nebraska and Colorado. No other Kansas team had defeated all four in one season.

Chuck and his staff left Kansas because of what he then said was "a lack of understanding by some prominent alumni."

He came back to Stark County to sell for an investment firm, but soon found football was coursing through his veins. He accepted an offer in 1958 to join the staff of the Chicago Bears as an assistant coach until 1966, when he was moved into talent scouting.

In 1991, after Chuck attended the Massillon-McKinley game, he was guest of honor for a class reunion held at the Shady Hollow Country Club. Many of his past players and friends had a wonderful evening reliving great Massillon memories.

Mechanical Coach

Possessing one of the finest records ever owned by an Ohio football coach, Chuck Mather was among the 'best known high school coaches in the State and the Nation.

Writers have referred to Mather as "the mechanical coach", because of the mechanical aids he employed in his coaching. For years, a firm believer in the camera for exploring his own team's weakness, he added International Business Machines and a television camera to his "silent assistants."

His television camera, mounted on the roof of the stadium, connected by wire to a receiver in front of the bench, gave him a birds-eye view of what was transpiring on the field, eliminating much telephoning from his spotters, making it possible to correct errors on the field more quickly and freeing one or more spotters the night of a game for scouting future opponents. A similar receiver was installed for use of the coach of the opposing team.

Teacher and speaker

Mather's fine coaching record and his being selected Coach of the Year in 1948, 1950, and 1952 made him in demand as a teacher at football clinics and as an after dinner speaker at athletic functions.

During the years he participated in football clinics in Ohio, Florida, Indiana, Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania.

Technician

Chuck was a hard and tireless worker and his labors were reflected in the high caliber play of his teams. They were noted for their fine technique in blocking and versatile ground and passing attacks. His six teams at Massillon averaged over 4,000 yards per season total offense.

Tiger Opponents- During Mather's Tenur, 1948 - 1953					
Opponents	Won	Lost	Tied	Points	
				Mass.	Opp.
Akron Central	1	0	0	49	0
Akron Garfield	1	0	0	39	0
Akron South	2	0	0	108	13
Alliance	5	1	0	171	84
Barberton	5	0	0	143	31
Canton Lincoln	4	0	0	186	13
Canton McKinley	6	0	0	189	27
Cincinnati Elder	2	0	0	75	6
Cleveland Cathedral Latin	3	0	0	146	19
Fremont Ross	1	0	0	40	7
Lima Central	1	0	0	40	0
Mansfield	5	1	0	236	36
Steubenville	6	0	0	223	58
Toledo Libby	1	0	0	39	0
Toledo Waite	6	0	0	239	47
Warren Harding	5	1	0	168	64
Youngstown South	3	0	0	134	33
Total	57	3	0	2225	438

Leaving Massillon, Coach Mather became head coach at the University of Kansas. After a successful 4 years, he resigned his head coaching position and became the running back coach for the Chicago Bears under the Hall of Famer George Hallis. Spending 10 years with the Bears, he coached Mike Ditka who became Bears head coach.

Mather restored grid magic to Massillon

By Mike Keating
Independent Sports Writer

For a one-time high school baseball and basketball standout, Chuck Mather developed into a remarkable head football coach, guiding the Massillon Tigers to an uncanny 57-3 record in six years (1948-53).

Mather had wanted to go out for the sport his senior year at Hopedale High located less than 20 miles west of Steubenville, but extenuating circumstances prevented him from pursuing that dream.

“The football coach at Hopedale had stolen all of the equipment, so we didn’t have football that year,” Mather said.

Instead, the 6-foot Mather concentrated on basketball and baseball. In his senior year, he averaged better than 20 points in three tournament games. He also was a successful pitcher on the baseball team. His athletic prowess earned him a partial scholarship to Ohio Northern University.

It was at Ohio Northern where Mather started playing football. “I went out for the team my freshman year,” he said. “I had to go out. I was a physical education major and it was a requirement.” Being on the team and impacting the team were two different stories.

“I didn’t start until my senior year when we played Bowling Green,” Mather said. That bench time didn’t prove to be a waste. “I learned all my football at this point because I wasn’t good enough to play regularly,” Mather said.

And Mather was ready to put that knowledge to the test, accepting an offer to be the head coach at Brilliant High in 1937. That first season was quite an educational experience for Mather. Brilliant didn’t win a game. In its season opener against Bergholz High, Mather’s charges fell behind 21-0 in the first 27 seconds. Brilliant lost three fumbles, including two that were recovered in the end zone. Brilliant’s first play from scrimmage resulted in a lost fumble that was returned for another touchdown. “We improved as the game went along,” Mather said, “We only lost 56-0.”

In his third season, Mather turned Brilliant’s grid fortunes around, leading the team to a 6-2 record.

Mather’s coaching education was expanding as football was evolving. He switched from the single wing to the T formation. “We shifted and used that Notre Dame box that Knute Rockne made famous,” Mather said. “It was a good offense.”

Anxious to move up the coaching ladder, Mather submitted an application to Leetonia High in Columbiana County. He was the last person interviewed for the job, but impressed the administration enough to be hired.

His coaching at Leetonia commenced in 1940 and his stay lasted three years, although his stint was interrupted with a three-year hitch in the service. Mather returned in 1945 and coached one final season. His three-year record at Leetonia was 27-2-1.

Pat Mancuso, who went on to become a prominent head coach at Cincinnati Princeton, was an All-Ohio end at Leetonia. "Pat was a great receiver," Mather said. "He had incredible hands. He once caught a ball that was completely behind him."

Leetonia was a Class B school Mather was looking to move to a bigger school. Hamilton, a Class A school in southwestern Ohio, had an opening. Mather interviewed for the job and was offered it. "I wasn't interested at first," Mather said. "They offered me the same salary that I had at Leetonia and they wanted me to teach five classes. I taught three at Leetonia."

"They tried to (persuade) me with the idea of moving to a bigger school. I told them my Leetonia team could beat Hamilton." Backing off, the Hamilton administration made a counter proposal that Mather accepted. "They increased my salary 400 dollars," he said. "I also only had to teach three classes."

Mather stayed two years at Hamilton, posting a 17-3 record. Joe Nuxhall, who pitched for the Cincinnati Reds during World War II but regained his amateur status after sitting out a year, was a star fullback on Mather's team.

Mather was building a football powerhouse at Hamilton, much like Paul Brown had developed a decade earlier at Massillon. Ironically, the Massillon job opened up following the 1947 season when Bud Houghton resigned to become head coach at the University of Akron.

"I remember (former Independent editor) Luther Emery was agitated by big brother to let the search committee look at me," The Booster Club came down to watch our spring practice.

"I had heard Howard Brinker of Steubenville had the inside track on the job, but (Superintendent) L.J. Smith must have been impressed with our practice. He offered me the job, but the money was \$400 less than what I was making at Hamilton."

Mather said thanks but no thanks to that original offer, using a shrewd negotiating ploy with Smith, the same one he used with the Hamilton administration while interviewing for that job.

"(Smith) tried to sell the Massillon tradition, but I told him I had a chance to have the best team in Ohio at Hamilton (in 1948)."

It was Smith who budged, offering Mather more money than he was making at Hamilton. Once again, Mather accepted. "They offered me \$5,800 to coach at Massillon," he said, "I was making \$5,200 at Hamilton."

Brown left Massillon for the Ohio State job after the 1940 season. The Tigers were 80-8-2 during his tenure. In seven years between Brown and Mather, Massillon football teams went 57-11-7.

Smith's counter offer proved to be money well spent. Mather's 1948 Massillon team finished 9-1, losing only 14-0 to Alliance in Week Six.

Mather Never Lost a Game to Canton McKinley

Four weeks later, Mather began what proved to be a successful run against arch-rival McKinley. The outsized Tigers tamed the previously undefeated Bulldogs 21-12.

"McKinley averaged 215 pounds a man up front, we averaged 173." Mather said. "McKinley had also beaten Alliance something like 40-0, so this was a very big win for our program." Massillon offensive line was anchored by senior center John McVay, the team's captain who went on to coach at Central Catholic, The University of Dayton and the New York Giants before becoming an executive in the front office of the San Francisco 49ers.

Jack Hill was the quarterback and one of the running backs was Al Brown. "We started our first drive against McKinley on our two-yard line," Mather said. "Jack threw a (backward) lateral pass to Al Brown in the end zone on our first play. That's a dangerous play, but we picked up 10 yards on it. That seemed to set the tone for the game."

That McKinley victory also set the tone for Massillon football domination under Mather. His next five teams went 9-1, 10-0, 9-1, 10-0 and 10-0.

Don James, who later was a successful collegiate head coach at Kent State and the University of Washington, was Mather's quarterback in 1949.

All-Ohio halfback Irvin "Ace" Crable was one of three running backs who averaged more than 10 yards a carry on the 1949 Tigers, whose only loss was 16-12 to Mansfield.

Jim Reichenbach, an All-Ohio guard who later played for Woody Hayes at Ohio State and came back to Stark County to enjoy successful head coaching stints at Glenwood, Tuslaw and Dover, missed that Mansfield game. "Jim's loss hurt us," Mather said. "He was an excellent offensive lineman."

With Reichenbach and 250-pound Jerry Krisher anchoring the offensive line in 1950, Mather recorded his first of three undefeated seasons. Its closest game was a 23-6 victory over Warren Harding.

"That was the biggest and strongest team I had at Massillon," Mather said.

In 1951, Massillon was flirting with controversy. Henry "Ace" Grooms, an all-state end in Pennsylvania had moved to Massillon and wanted to play for the Tigers. Mather was leery, until Grooms pulled his own negotiating ploy. "He said, 'if I don't play here, I'll go to Steubenville,'" Mather said. "I called the Ohio High School Athletic Association commissioner – He said, 'If Grooms is telling you the truth, you have to let him play.'" Grooms not only played, but he scored the winning touchdown for the Tigers in their 13-6 victory over Steubenville. "He scored on a three-yard run with only three seconds left," Mather said.

Warren Harding spoiled Massillon's bid for an unbeaten season with a 19-12 victory in week seven, but a Mather-coached Tiger team never lost another game.

With speedy running back Homer Floyd the offensive catalyst in 1952 and 1953, the Tigers crushed 19 of their 20 regular season opponents. The only close game was a 27-21 victory in 1952 at Alliance, which was quarterbacked by future NFL Hall of Famer Len Dawson.

"Two things I remember about that game," Mather said, "We scored three touchdowns on kickoff returns and Len Dawson came over to our bus and congratulated us. I couldn't believe a high school boy would have such maturity to make a high-class gesture like that."

Mather's final game at Massillon was a 48-7 demolition of McKinley in 1953, capping a 6-0 record against the Bulldogs.

Itching for another challenge, Mather left Massillon for college coaching. He was hired at the University of Kansas. He built the program from the ground up. While failing to win a game his first year, Mather's Jayhawks wound up finishing second in the Big Eight in 1957, his final year.

Mather later became an assistant coach with the Chicago Bears, spending nine years on the job.

Working for NFL legend George Halas, Mather served on the coaching staff that helped guide the Bears to a 14-10 victory over the New York Giants in the 1963 NFL Championship game.

After 1966, Mather abandoned the coaching ranks to get into scouting. That decision came 13 years after he left Massillon, the place of his greatest coaching accomplishments.

"Massillon was such a unique coaching situation," he said. "We had discipline and such strong community support.

"We had rules at Massillon that (prohibited) smoking," he said. "The players were to be in bed at 9 p.m. every night. They weren't allowed to drive cars or ride motorbikes. The parents appreciated that. We had eighty four summer jobs. We felt it was important for the boys to be around adults. We thought it helped them mature.