

MASSILLON TIGER FOOTBALL HISTORY

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*“In the beginning when The Great Creator was drawing plans for this world of ours,
He decided there should be something for everyone.
He gave us mountains that reach to the sky, deep blue seas,
green forests, dry deserts, gorgeous flowers and gigantic trees.
Then he decided there should be football and he gave us Massillon.
He created only one Massillon. He knew that would be enough.”*
Ron Maly, Des Moines Sunday Register

The Massillon Mystique

Coach Paul Brown put Massillon on the national map. His success in coaching high school football and references to the Massillon Tigers as he continued his successful career brought national attention to this enthusiastic community in northeast Ohio. He started the Booster Club organization that has continued to support the team and the community. He created the “Greatest Show in High School Football” with Swing Band Leader George “Red” Bird who followed him to the Cleveland Browns. Yet there is more to the story. In the late nineteenth century the Massillon Tiger Pro Football team was among the pioneers of the game and the local fans were vigorous in the support of football. Dave Stewart was Paul Brown’s high school coach and Paul gave him a great deal of credit his success. Here is how it all happened.

The Early Days

Northeast Ohio is arguably the cradle of football. Early popularity of the game stems from professional teams in Akron, Canton and Massillon. The Massillon high school team received its mascot name from the early professional Massillon Tigers. Professional football in Stark County lasted until 1923.

The team of 1891 was the first Massillon high school team to receive recognition in the press. That team was not equipped as the teams of today. Each player had to secure his own uniform. Generous fathers occasionally supplied several team members with the necessary equipment. The players received their instructions from college boys home on vacation, or some adults who took interest in the sport and would coach after school. Games were played on any suitable spot, not on a well-lighted field with eighteen to twenty thousand fans in attendance.

The spectators in those early days had to stand to see the contest and the only way to collect admissions was to pass the hat during games. If anyone wonders why so many of the early football players are pictured with hair parted in the middle, the answer is simple. There were no helmets for head protection so the boys parted their hair in the middle to help cushion any blow received from an opponent.

In the early 1900's the high school began supporting its teams and encouraging student participation. According to historians the first official Massillon High team was organized in 1904. In "The Snail," the yearbook of 1908, the following paragraph appears. "If Massillon High pursues the same policy in the future that she has this year, the coming years will see some triumphs in athletics. Nothing will influence a student to take an interest in school work more effectively than athletics."

The school team of 1909, coached by Ralph "Hap" Fugate (13-4-3), **claimed the championship of Northeastern Ohio**, winning all its games except one - a tie with Akron Central High School. That team was the first to be awarded letters and was a self-supporting team, turning \$200 back into the school treasury and providing Coach Fugate who served without charge a purse of \$50. The Tigers had winning seasons in the three years coached by Fugate.

In 1912, Sydney Jones (9-9-1) was the first faculty member to coach the tigers. During next years Superintendent Charles L. Cronbaugh elevated the football program to a well organized activity. Massillon native, John Snavely (41-8-2), turned out the first undefeated, untied club in 1916 and **Massillon's second state championship**.

In 1916 Massillon High School was first admitted to the High School Athletic Association. The yearbook of that year states, "We hereby take this means of expressing to the townspeople the school's appreciation of the loyal support rendered at all times. Not a game was played to which a great number of Massillon boosters did not 'turn out,' and at many out of town games they outnumbered the local rooters. We trust that in the future the M.H.S. teams may be imbued with the same fighting spirit and that same love of fair play that always characterized their work in the past."

John Snavely stayed until 1919 and coached the first game against the new Canton McKinley High School. The Tigers won 21-0. Elmer Snyder (3-4-1) piloted the Tigers in 1920 and then Dave Stewart (38-9-0), who, because he coached Paul Brown, was the precursor of the modern era of Massillon high school football. After his 5-4 season in 1921, Stewart gave Massillon the Ohio Scholastic championship with ten straight victories in 1922.

He followed with three more fine teams before leaving Massillon in 1925. He was succeeded by Dan Atkinson (8-7-3) in 1926 - 1927. Elmer McGrew (20-16-4) coached through 1931 and produced some historical highlights. In **1930 the first high school night game occurred on October 30** when Massillon defeated Conneaut 26-0. The same year the Tigers broke Cleveland Heights 27 game winning streak. In 1931 the Tigers lost to Toledo Scott which was coached by Jimmy Aiken and to an undefeated Dover team coached by Bup Rearick. Both of those coaches would eventually coach the McKinley Bulldogs.

There can be little wonder at the present attitude of the citizens of Massillon toward their schools and their teams. The tradition supporting school projects had a long period of growth.

The Paul Brown Years

Paul Brown was nine years old when his family moved to Massillon from Norwalk, Ohio. In PB: The Paul Brown Story he describes Massillon in 1917 as “a wealthy, thriving steel town with a healthy blue-collar work ethic and....some fine sports teams including the **Massillon Tigers, one of professional footballs first franchises**, a healthy semipro baseball team called the Agathons....and a healthy assortment of good high school teams, particularly a football team that had for years turned out tough, hard nosed players who later went on to colleges in Ohio, Indiana and western Pennsylvania.” Brown played high school football under Dave Stewart and credited Stewart with teaching him the fundamentals of winning and instilling in him the desire to coach. After graduation, he attended Ohio State for a year but felt it was too large for him. He transferred to Miami of Ohio where he eventually took over as starting quarterback for his junior and senior years. His grades were good enough to recommend him as a Rhodes Scholar, but in 1930 the country was in the midst of the Great Depression and the goal was survival. He was recommended for a teaching and coaching job at Severn Tech, a prep school for the Naval Academy, by Dave Stewart and was fortunate to receive the job. In his two year term his teams were 16-1-1.

In 1931 Massillon was 1-9 and was looking for a new coach. He wasted no time in arranging an interview to coach where football was the focus of the entire community. There were several factions pushing their candidates and finally a school board member called Dave Stewart to read a list of the candidates. “Pick Brown” was the reply. Paul Brown was just 24 years old when selected as the Massillon High School football coach.

There is no doubt that Paul Brown put Massillon “on the map.” His achievements in the game and his continuing references to his roots kept Massillon in the public eye. But he has meant more than that to the community.

Success was not immediate to the fledgling coach. The first two years ended with defeat by the traditional rival Canton McKinley Bulldogs. This rivalry dated back to the professional days and in 1913 was scheduled as the last game of the high school season. There was some grumbling in the town. At the same time the coach noticed a player at practice sick to his stomach ejecting green tomatoes. When it was found that the player’s family could not afford a healthy diet in the depression environment Paul Brown started a booster club to make sure his players would be fed. The club became a vital part of his contribution to the Massillon mystique. It was an organization to help the team and it also provided a forum for meetings where the coach discussed his program. All walks of life became close in their relationship to Brown and his kids. The grumbling stopped, the team was fed and the program became the rallying point for the community.

In his nine years (1932-1940) as head football coach his teams were 80-8-2 (90.9 winning percentage). There were **6 state championships and 4 national championships**. Paul Brown took his relationship with sports beyond football. He was appointed athletic director for all sports

in 1934. He believed in excellence in all extracurricular activities. For example, in his last five years the Massillon High basketball team went to the state level tournament reaching the semi-finals three times and the finals once.

In 1936 the athletic program was so popular that the school board purchased land and obtained WPA funds to build a 21,000 seat stadium. **Tiger stadium opened in 1939**, was eventually renamed Paul Brown Tiger Stadium and still stands as a jewel of the community.

Paul Brown's innovations in football eventually earned him a place in the Football Hall of Fame. Many started in Massillon - play books, individual grading on game performance, coaches calling plays, and scripting opening offensive plays. But there is more to the story. Paul Brown recognized that what happened under the Friday night lights and the final Saturday afternoon game was entertainment for the fans. He worked with and encouraged George (Red) Bird to develop the **Massillon Tiger Swing Band** and created the greatest show in high school football. It was through his effort that the mascot in a real tiger skin urged the fans on from the sidelines and during half-time shows. On the day of a game the downtown area was awash with the orange and black tiger motif with flags flying and a large sign in the center of town announcing the season schedule. That tradition flourishes today.

Under Paul Brown the football program generated enough revenue to support all extracurricular activities. In *PB: The Paul Brown Story* he is quoted, "We wanted to have the best because we wanted our students to see nothing but the best and be content with nothing less than the best - whether in football or any other area."

The only other job Paul ever wanted was to be the Ohio State football coach. That chance came in 1941. He went a long way from there but never forgot Massillon.

William G. "Bud" Houghton (The Legacy Lives On) 1941, 1946, 1947

Elwood "Kam" Kammer 1942, 1943, 1944

August "Augie Morningstar 1945

Many of the Massillon assistants went with Paul Brown to Ohio State. William G. "Bud" Houghton stayed behind with one year of varsity experience. He was a 1928 Massillon graduate and served as Head Coach at Longfellow Junior High School. Paul Brown endorsed him as Head Coach. His 1941 team experienced a 6-6 tie with Mansfield which broke a 33 game winning streak. The season ended with a 32-0 defeat of McKinley before 25,000 in Fawcett Stadium and a **seventh straight State Championship**.

Bud Houghton joined the Navy and was replaced by interim Coach Elwood "Kam" Kammer. The Tigers were 9-1 in 1942, losing to Canton McKinley in the final game. In 1943 the Tigers stormed through 10 opponents beating Canton McKinley 21-0 and **winning the State Championship**. "Kam" retired from coaching football after the 7-3 1944 season. His three year record was 24-4 (85.7%). He stayed as teacher and basketball coach.

Bud Houghton was still in the service so Massillon legend August “Augie” Morningstar was appointed the second interim coach. A football hero in Massillon High School and Purdue University “Augie” was loved by all Massillon fans. His 1945 team was undefeated. They were 5-0-5! Until Earle Bruce, he was the only Massillon coach to have never lost a game. One of the ties (6-6) was played against Cleveland Cathedral Latin at Cleveland Municipal Stadium before 57,000 fans. Another tie was the final game with McKinley. Augie recalled that the game was to be at Canton so we loaned Canton our tarp to cover the field. When they went over to check the field at 8:00 AM game day they lifted a corner of the tarp and it was sopping wet beneath. They named the stadium Faucet stadium instead of Fawcett Stadium. After two plays the players were covered with mud on the quagmire field. The game ended in a 0-0 tie.

Bud Houghton returned in 1946. His 1946 and 1947 teams were 11-6-3. He was then selected as Akron University football coach. His record at Massillon was 21-6-3 (77.8%).

Charles V. “Chuck” Mather

After a string of “home grown” coaches Massillon football turned to the outside with an aggressive search process. The job fell to Charles V. “Chuck” Mather. His experience started after his graduation from Ohio Northern in 1937 with an all losing season at Brilliant. He brought that program to 6-2 in three seasons and moved on to Leetonia where in three seasons interrupted by a stint in the Navy his teams were 27-1-2. That success elevated him to Hamilton and a 17-3 record in two years.

He was an immediate success using the T formation with balanced line. Coach Mather always commented about how well the junior high feeder system worked and how well Bud Houghton had prepared the players. **The Tigers dominated Ohio high school football for six years winning six State Championships and three National Championships.** While at Massillon, Coach Mather pioneered the use of IBM cards in grading player game performance. He also **experimented with closed circuit TV** to give the bench a better view of what was happening on the field. During his tenure at Massillon he started the Touchdown Club a social club for those who do not have the time for more involved booster club activities. Meetings are held on Tuesday at noon during the football season at a downtown restaurant to hear comments by the coach.

The Massillon High School football program promoted by super star Paul Brown and Chuck Mather now achieved the pinnacle of public relations, the making of the nationally distributed movie short “Touchdown Town”. The film covered activities of the Booster club such as small footballs given to new born baby boys, the enthusiasm of the town with flags flying and most important the coaching of state champions. It was the golden era of Tiger football.

Attention for Massillon football shined on Mather and he received many small college coaching offers, all rejected. However in 1954 the University made an offer he could not refuse. He accepted and took four assistants with him. Mather’s record at Massillon was 57-3 (95%).

Tom Harp

There were over 100 applications for the coaching vacancy. The search process resulted in the selection of Tom Harp who had impressed Mather with his coaching at Carrolton. During the selection process one interviewer commented that he was young for the Massillon job. Tom responded that at 26 he was two years older than Paul Brown was when he started at Massillon. In the 1954 season an early season loss to Alliance jeopardized the Tiger string of championships but they regrouped to run the season with a final 26-6 win over McKinley and a **seventh straight State Championship**. The 1955 season was 8-1-1 breaking the string of championships. His ingenuity and 17-2-1 (89.5%) record was recognized by the immortal Earl Blake and he was hired as offensive coordinator for Army varsity football.

Lee Tressel

This time the selection process picked Lee Tressel to coach the Tigers. Lee formed the “Tiger Sideliners” during his two year tenure. Each Sideliners is assigned a player and together they form a mentoring partnership. Before every game there is a meal for sideliners and players. It was during this time that the tradition took on the playing of a calliope for the football program. The Hoover Company had an instrument and Paul Ringley arranged to use a pickup truck from his company to carry the instrument while he played at events. Eventually the Booster Club bought their own calliope and truck, decorated them in the tiger motif and used the ensemble widely in the community. Coach Tressel has another legacy with Massillon. His son Jim went on to become coach at Ohio State University. Coach Tressel’s two year record was 16-3-0 (84.2%, the Mansfield game in 1957 was canceled because of flu). Baldwin Wallace College was looking for a coach and they hired alumnus Lee Tressel.

Leo Strang

In 1958 Massillon hired Leo Strang, a former art major at Ashland University, who had produced outstanding teams at Caldwell, Upper Sandusky and East Cleveland Shaw. By the fall of 1959 Leo decided to throw out the old regime and introduce a unique style of high school football he called the goulash system. Coach Strang recalled the unbalanced line, added rule blocking and influence blocking. His coaching was oriented to “area coaching.” He was recognized as a trendsetter. And his teams showed his arts background with colored shoes and combinations of orange, white and black shirts and pants so that they rarely wore the same outfit. He developed the leaping tigers emblem and pioneered decals on helmets.

In six years, 1958-1963, Leo Strang’s teams (54-8-1, 87.1%) **won three State Championships and two national championships**. Coach Strang left Massillon in 1964 to become head coach at Kent State University.

Earle Bruce

Earle Bruce came to Massillon from Sandusky where his four year record was 34-3-3. In eight seasons starting at Salem High he was 62-12-3. He is the only undefeated, untied coach at Massillon. His teams were 20-0 **winning two State Championships**. ABC news sent in a camera crew and produced a program called “Scope” which embellished the notoriety of the Tigers.

There were many memorable games along the way. In 1964 Massillon and McKinley entered the final game with perfect records and the state title on the line. Amid a record crowd of 22,695 at Tiger Stadium, the Massillon fans sat stunned as the Bulldogs led 14-0 into the fourth quarter. The Tigers scored 20 points in 11 minutes and hung on to win 20-14. Again in 1965, the Tigers trailed in the McKinley game at half-time but rallied to win 18-14 and claim a second state title for Coach Bruce. However, Earl said he first became a “real tiger” the night Massillon broke Niles 48 game undefeated streak 14-8 before 31,128 at the Akron Rubber Bowl. Coach Woody Hayes at Ohio State took note of Earle Bruce’s winning record and hired him as an assistant in 1966. Earl would have a distinguished career eventually including Head Coach at Ohio State University. His 100% winning record at Massillon is unmatched.

Bob Seaman

It seemed natural that the head coach at Sandusky who had served on Earle Bruce’s staff would follow at Massillon. An opening year record of 4-5-1 stunned the Massillon fans. But there were many thrilling games during the tenure of Bob Seaman. The Tigers knocked on the door of the State title in 1967 but a heart breaking 7-6 loss to Upper Arlington stopped the bid. Coach Seaman noted that, “in the old days you could draw a target on the wall and the kids would run through it. Now you have to tell them why. The game is for the kids. It has to be fun for them to play.” Always hard working Coach Seaman carried out an initiative to rehabilitate the seating areas in Tiger Stadium. The old wooden seat tops were covered with orange and black seat covers. In the west stands orange and black spells TIGERS. The team was 7-3 in 1968 including a final game loss to Canton McKinley and Coach Seaman (20-9-1, 69%) moved to the college ranks as an assistant.

Bob Commings

The next search committee found Bob Commings at Struthers where he coached two consecutive undefeated years at Struthers in the tough Steel Valley Conference. His overall record in 7 years was 50-16-4. Coach Commings possessed one of the most knowledgeable football minds to appear on the scholastic scene in many years. His ability to evaluate personnel, motivate players, understand people, instill confidence, analyze opponents and instruct his girders in the subtle techniques of football were outstanding. In his first (7-2-1) season the fans could see the good things to come. Indeed his 1970 team went 10-0 and won the State Championship. 1970 was the year that the Booster Club started the live tiger project. Originally conceived as maintaining a permanent tiger, the project converted to obtaining a live tiger cub for the football season every year. It became a tradition where fans look ahead eagerly to the arrival of OBIE identified with the consecutive number of the project in Roman numerals.

Commings’ 1971 team had two one point losses to go 8-2. The 1972 team was 10-0 and was named AP State Champs. That was the first year of a playoff system and the Tigers were defeated in the first round 17-14 on a long field goal by eventual State Champ Cincinnati Princeton. During the long winter the Booster Club conceived and built an active electronic message board. It was a trend setting 8X50 arrangement of lights that was programmed to display stationary or moving messages. It was soon copied by others. The 1973 Tigers were 8-1-1 and were edged out of the playoffs by a narrow margin. Bob Commings teams at Massillon

were 43-6-2 (87.8%) in an era of stiff competition. He left to become Head Coach at his alma mater Iowa University. Coach Commings said that there is nothing like the Massillon-McKinley game. Once at Iowa he walked out on the field before over 100,000 fans against Michigan and he felt right at home in the excitement. In recalling Massillon he said, "If anyone wants to get anything worthwhile done they should come to Massillon and see how they do football. Nothing ever suffered from football and much was improved because of football."

Chuck Shuff

Chuck Shuff came from two 9-1 seasons at Fremont Ross to coach the Tigers in 1974-75. The selection committee observed that his style of football resembled that of Commings. Though not as successful under Coach Shuff the Tigers last second victory over a 9-0 McKinley was a memorable day as was the defeat of the previous year State Champion Warren. Coach Shuff was a model citizen respected by all who knew him. After his two year 12-7-1 (63.2%) record at Massillon. Chuck retired to private industry.

Mike Currence

The search committee looked for a coach with a more open style of football. Hired in 1976, Mile Currence filled the bill. He was an innovator in the high school passing game and brought excitement to newly renamed Paul Brown Tiger Stadium. To support the wide open football style the community raised \$10,000 for a tarp to cover the field. In nine years Coach Currence was 79-16-2 (83.2%) a record only exceeded by Paul Brown. His teams were in the playoffs three times and reached the final game twice. He was 7-3 versus McKinley (two games in 1980).

' The Orangemen were formed in 1981. These are fans who don't have much time to spend but provide financial support for the needs of the Tigers. They meet socially occasionally during the season. In 1984 after a 6-4 season Coach Currence left the Tigers at odds with the School Board.

John Maronto

This time the new coach came from out of state. John Maronto was brought in from the Detroit metropolitan area. His teams were denied playoff eligibility by the OSHAA because of a recruiting violation by some overenthusiastic fans. However, there were some very important milestones for the Tigers. In 1985, they won their 600th game 34-0 over Warren. Steve Studer joined Maronto's staff and built a weight room that became the exemplary goal of high school programs everywhere. After losing three straight to McKinley, Coach Maronto (20-10, 67%) left in 1987 to pursue coaching in Florida.

Lee Owens

Lee Owens came to coach the Tigers in 1988 and his debut at the Massillon-Canton game was spectacular. After four straight losses to McKinley. the Tiger went to overtime and won on a field goal by Lee Hurst. In 1989 Coach Owens noted that facilities in the East Stands had deteriorated. The Booster Club took on a major project to improve the facilities and add a press box. The improvements and a three story pressbox addition were opened for the last two games

of the 1990 season. The addition includes displays of Massillon Football History and is open by appointment. The major space provides seating for press and paying fans. In 1989 the Tigers returned to the playoffs, losing to eventual State Champion St. Ignatius in a semi-final game. Highlights of the season included a 29-6 thrashing of McKinley and a thrilling playoff comeback win 42-24 over Walsh Jesuit after being down 24-7 at the half. In 1989 during a turf meeting the concept of a professional level message board was first discussed. The Tigers reached the playoffs in the last three years of Lee Owens tenure. In 1991, St. Ignatius, the eventual State Champions defeated the Tigers 14-13. In 1992 the Wall of Fame was inaugurated. From time to time Massillon athletes are honored with a banquet and their portrait is displayed permanently in the high school. . Coach Owens paid tribute to the booster club that maintains consistency to keep Massillon the best high school football program in the state.

During this period the Booster Club took on a project to install artificial turf to keep Tiger Stadium ahead of all other high school programs. The project was funded through community subscription and completed in 1989. At this height of community spirit a bond issue for a new high school was passed. The new school opened in 1990. This academic and athletic complex which included Ducky Schroeder baseball field was a model of community dedication. Coach Owens (35-13-0, 72.9%) left in 1992 to become an assistant at Ohio State University.

Jack Rose

This time the Tigers promoted from within selecting defensive coordinator, Jack Rose, as Head Coach. The booster club provided an inflatable tunnel for the Tiger's entrance to the field. It can be transported to out of town games. After a disastrous 5-5 season in 1992, the Tigers returned to the playoffs in 1993 and 1994, getting to the second round both years. In 1993 a 64 by 128 inch Daktronics Starburst Message Center became operational. The highlight of the 1994 was the 100th game between Massillon and McKinley. ESPN and Sports Illustrated came in and raised the excitement to a level rivaling the Super Bowl. The Tigers won 42-41 in overtime. The fortune was reversed in the playoffs when McKinley defeated the Tigers in the second round. In 1995 the Tigers were 7-3 and lost to McKinley. The 1996 season started off with great success and the 9-0 Tigers entered the McKinley game assured of a playoff spot but the Bulldogs won and the Tigers were defeated 7-6 during a snowstorm in the first round by Brunswick. In 1997, the Tigers won their 700th game but after a 7-3 season and another McKinley loss Coach Rose's contract was not renewed. Under Coach Rose the Tigers were 48-17 (73.8%) a record envied by many but not lauded in Massillon when including a 1-6 record against McKinley.

Rick Shepas

In his high school career Rick Shepas played at Tiger Stadium in an all-star game and decided he wanted to coach at Massillon some day. He made plans to do so. While a successful coach at Poland he asked a former Massillonian if he could get the Massillon job from Poland. The reply was "no, you have to have successful Division I experience." So Rick got the job at Seneca Valley in Pennsylvania and took them to playoff experience. When the job at Massillon opened he aggressively pursued and won the job.

Unfortunately, the contract could not be consummated until late spring and Coach Shepas came on the scene in June when much planning, conditioning and staff coordination is normally over. The fans were understanding as the Tigers struggled through a 4-6 1998 season and a final game loss to McKinley. Adding to the dismal season were accusations of recruiting when Coach Shepas was not even on the scene. The controversy lasted through the next year and the Tigers aggressively fought the case. A Massillon Defense Committee formed and hired excellent lawyers, largely with the help of Paul David. The Tigers were never found in error. In 1999 the Tigers were undefeated in the regular season including a win over the Perry Panthers who had brought the recruiting charges. During the season the movie Go Tigers! was recorded. After the cameras left town, the Tigers were defeated by Perry in the first playoff round. The film was released the next fall to critical acclaim. Though many locals did not like the depiction of teenage lifestyle, a general reaction in the nation was one of envy for the Massillon spirit.

The Tigers were 8-3 making the playoffs in 2000 amid the continuing recruiting allegations. These were settled by the next season and the Tigers responded by going 12-2 and 11-3 in 2001 and 2002 and making the final four. The semifinal loss in 2002 was an overtime 21-20 heartbreaker after leading 14-7 with less than two minutes to play.

In his eight seasons Coach Shepas is 53-27 (66.2%). After a 4-6 start he was 41-9 (82%) with five straight wins over McKinley. In 2003 and 2004 playing arguably one of the toughest schedules in the state, the Tigers fell to 4-6 each year with two straight losses to McKinley.

Tom Stacy

Tom Stacy was hired in June 2005 as Head Football Coach and Dean of Students. Jeff Thornberry became Athletic Director. The previous two years the Tigers were 4-6 and with the late start for Coach Stacy, expectations for the season were low.

The Tigers won the first three games (the second over Cincinnati Elder in Paul Brown Stadium) and then faced the St. Ignatius jinx of five losses in a row. The Tigers won in a last minute comeback and the fans knew this was a special team.

After nine wins the Tigers faced the 9-0 Canton Bulldogs and were shocked with a 38-8 loss. However, Massillon finished fourth in the region computer rankings and entered the playoffs at home against North Canton. After defeating the Vikings, the Tigers defeated Findlay and faced McKinley again. A payback 21-3 victory brought the Tigers to the State Semi-finals against Lakewood St. Edward. A comeback 21-17 victory led to the State Finals against St. Xavier. The furious comeback after trailing 24-3 at the half fell short at 24-17.

The 2005 Tigers won more games in a season (13) than any other Tiger team. It was a great year for first year Coach Tom Stacy, his assistants and the Tiger Team. In 2006 Jeff Thornberry retired as Athletic Director and Tim Ridgley was appointed as athletic Director.

In 2006 the Tigers were 6-4 with a hard fought 10-7 win over McKinley. After winning over Perry in the first playoff game, they were defeated 10-14 in the regional semifinals.

In 2007 the Tigers were 6-4 including a 23-20 overtime win over McKinley, but they did not make the playoffs.

Tom Stacy resigned as head coach of the Tigers in 2008. The Tigers were 26-11 (70%) 2005-2007.

Jason Hall

After a focused search by the school board in April 2008, Jason Hall, coach at Nordonia, was named to head the Tigers. During his first year the (unparalleled in high school facilities) Paul L. David Athletic Training Facility was dedicated. Given the late start in Jason Hall's tenure the first year the Tigers went 6-4 but a hard won 17-0 victory over Canton McKinley provided a playoff position. The Tigers lost a heartbreaking 14-7 playoff game to North Canton Hoover but the future of the Tigers looks bright

On and off the field the 2008 Tigers made the grade. The 2008 Tigers topped the OHSFCA's All Academic List. The Ohio High School Football Coaches Association awarded Massillon for having the top Grade Point Average of all high schools in Ohio with a 3.819 GPA.

The following year the Tigers finished the regular season with a 7-3 record losing the final game to Canton McKinley but advancing to the State Playoffs. A seconding meeting with Canton in the playoffs was won by Massillon (10-7) and Massillon advanced to a State Semi-Final game against Cleveland Glenville. Losing by a 31-17 score the Tigers finished the season with a 10-4 record.

In 2010 the Tigers won their 800th game beating Steubenville 28-7. The Tigers again finished the regular season with a 7-3 record losing the final game to Canton McKinley. They advanced to the State Playoffs meeting Toledo Whitmer losing in the final minutes of the game as Toledo scored to win 28-24 making the Tigers record for the season 7-4.

In 2011 Massillon won their first game and lost the second then won 6 straight games before losing the final two games of the regular season. The 7-3 season resulted in Massillon not being in the state playoff for the first time since 2007.

2012 saw Massillon re-enter the playoffs with a 9-1 regular season record before losing in the Regional championship game. 2013 saw Massillon again in the playoffs having lost 2 games to undefeated opponents. Losing the second game of the plays the Tigers ended the year 9-3.

Brief Statistical Summary

The Tigers have accumulated 24 State Championships and 9 National Championships. In the years since the playoffs were instituted (1972-2013) the Tigers are 341-124-4 (73.3%) against tough opposition. They have been in the playoffs 21 times, the final four 10 times and the final game three times.

The overall record for high school football in Massillon for 1151 games is 842-273-36 (75.5%). Prior to Paul Brown the record for 247 games was 160-102-18 (61.1%). In the 871 games in the modern era starting with Paul Brown (1932-2013) the Tigers record is 682-171-18 (80.0%), a performance not approached by any Ohio team. There have been 23 professional players, 3 NFL coaches and 14 collegiate all-Americans graduated from Massillon High School.

The Tradition

Massillon in the fall is obviously a rabid football town. “Touchdown Town” and “Go Tigers!” in their national release attempted to catch the community spirit but nothing beats being here.

In the fall as you ride through the town you see the huge sign downtown showing the schedule. In the windows of the businesses, signs exhort the Tigers to defeat the opponent of the week. Permanent for the seasons are pictures of the starting players and schedules to keep track of the season results. Signs in the neighborhoods homes proudly display “A MASSILLON TIGER LIVES HERE”. On game day, orange and black flags of the Tigers fly along the main street. For special games a huge banner stretches above the street with a slogan like BEAT McKinley.

At special times the live tiger patrols the streets in a cage mounted on a truck. The mascot is often on display at community events as is the calliope playing the traditional “Massillon songs.”

A special time is McKinley week. This is a weeklong event for the town and school. The decorations in the class rooms and common areas are worthy of a trip. There is a weeklong series of community events - Booster Club, Touchdown Club, the live tiger visiting the schools, service clubs visiting their rival, the band marching through town, the pre-game rally at the school and the Friday night parade and bonfire rally attended by thousands.

Paul Brown Tiger Stadium is located in the academic-athletic complex at One Paul Brown Drive. The impressive stadium opened in 1939 has been beautifully maintained. It uses artificial turf, has a covered stand and maintains press box facilities for a huge media following. In the East Press Box there is a comfortable area for media and fans and there is a separate floor for booster club memorabilia displays. Tours are provided by appointment. The locker rooms provide a professional atmosphere for the team including a history of teams and coaches pictures. A “Walk of Pride” leads to the stadium west entrance featuring dedicatory bricks, a large stone “M” and a life size statue of Paul Brown.

The pre-game time brings an air of expectancy as the message board greets the crowd and the Tiger Swing Band enters the field. After the color guard carries the colors, the band swings down the field with the traditional “Fan Fare”, “Tiger Rag”, and “Carry On”, with the Obie skin cavorting along. They play the National Anthem and form a block M for the alma mater. Cheerleaders bring the live tiger cage through the band and the hoop goes up. It’s game time!

Here come the Tigers through the tunnel to a tremendous roar with orange and black balloons flying. During the game noise after a touchdown happens and much more often than not so does a victory.

A visiting team once commented *“It is the experience of an athlete’s lifetime, and the Massillon community is a first-class group of folks.”They know their football and they are very generous in their remarks and courtesy toward their opponent. If you get the opportunity, you’ve got to attend a game at Paul Brown Tiger Stadium.”*

State Final Playoff games have been conducted here since 1994. The Tigers have played before over 10.5 million fans since 1891, more than 135.000 fans in 2002 . Don’t miss an opportunity to attend a game!

*“.....and through the long, long years to come,
wherever we may be,
oh alma mater Massillon we’re true to thee.!”*