

THE HISTORY OF FOOTBALL AT GRANTS
PASS HIGH SCHOOL, GRANTS PASS, OREGON

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION.....	1
PURPOSE.....	3
METHOD OF STUDY.....	3
SCHOOL SYMBOLS.....	3
LEAGUES.....	4
FINANCING.....	5
COMMUNITY INTEREST.....	8
FOOTBALL HIGHLIGHTS.....	9
THE MEL INGRAM ERA.....	13
SOUTHERN OREGON CONFERENCE ALL-STAR TEAMS.....	27
FOOTBALL HISTORY INFORMATION CHART.....	30
GRANTS PASS - OPPONENT RECORDS.....	32
SUMMARY.....	44
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	48
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	49

INTRODUCTION

By the act of the Territorial Legislature, Josephine County became Oregon's 18th county on January 22, 1856, three years before Oregon became a state. It is the only county in the state of Oregon named in honor of a woman. It derives its name directly from Miss Josephine Rollins, who was the first white woman to settle for any length of time in this part of Oregon.

Gold was first discovered in Oregon on Josephine Creek some months before the Jacksonville discovery in December of 1851.

On July 7, 1857, Kerbyville was declared the seat of government for Josephine County. There it remained until 1885. At that time the voters cast a majority of their votes for Grants Pass as a permanent location for the county government.

Many stories have been circulated as to how Grants Pass got its name. According to Oregon Geographic Names by Lewis A. McArthur, the most generally accepted story states about the time news arrived in Southern Oregon of the capture of Vicksburg by General Grant during the Civil War, men were engaged in improving the road over the low hills north of this point and they celebrated General Grant's victory by naming the summit Grants Pass. The city was incorporated in 1887. The present population in Grants Pass is 12,271.

Josephine County is divided into two school districts for administrative purposes. School District #7, or the City School District, serves Grants Pass within the city limits and some parts of the immediate vicinity outside the city limits. Josephine County School District is made up of the rest of the county.

Both of the school districts rate well in the state educational system. This in itself is inconclusive unless some comparison of state systems is made. In May, 1960, in the edition of Education News, Rex Putman, the Superintendent of Public Instruction in Oregon, revealed that Oregon for the last fifteen years had consistently rated from first to fourth from the top in nationwide studies concerning the quality of its educational program in comparison with other states. Again in 1967, a private research organization ranked Oregon's school system as No. 1 in the nation.

The accomplishments of the students in the area schools, academically and athletically, have long been recognized throughout the state. The Caveman athletic teams are always to be reckoned with in state-wide competition.

The present Grants Pass School System started in 1884 when the school district bought the old Eureka Academy from the Eureka Academy Association of Jerome Prairie and moved the two-story building to the present site of Washington Grade School. The school was known as Central School.

In 1896, when C. S. Price was superintendent of schools, the grade school and high school were separated, and what had formerly been known as Grants Pass Academy, which had its first graduating class in 1888, became Grants Pass High School.

The first football stories are brief sketches. The writer found that only two games were played in 1908. At that time the number of pupils enrolled in high school was 104. This year, 1970, District #7 had 4878 students enrolled in school with 1877 attending

Grants Pass High School. Pre-registration indicates Grants Pass High School will house 2100 students in the fall for the school year 1971-1972.

Grants Pass is a three-year high school. It is fed by four junior high schools and fourteen elementary schools.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is two-fold: (1) to provide a record of the history of football at Grants Pass High School up to the present school year as well as to (2) record the coaches and to present their won-loss records throughout the years. The writer has been interested in obtaining and recording this information for some time. The complete facts had not previously been composed in any form for future reference.

It is hoped the information gathered in this report will be of significant nature to warrant its future use.

METHOD OF STUDY

Material for this study of football at Grants Pass High School was procured by various methods. The main sources of information were former coaches, former players, superintendents, principals, teachers, newspapers, school papers, score books, and high school yearbooks.

SCHOOL SYMBOLS

The Grants Pass High School colors are royal blue and white.

With the beginning of athletics, the high school adopted as their mascot insignia the Caveman. This adoption led to the later

development of the famous Oregon Cavemen from Grants Pass, composed of business and professional men who, dressed in animal skins, wearing horsehair wigs, buck teeth and big horns, run rampant at athletic contests, parades and gatherings of the public. Their main purpose is to publicize athletics and Grants Pass to the surrounding area.

LEAGUES

The Southern Oregon Conference is one of the oldest, if not the oldest, conference in the state. It was formed in 1910.

The charter members of this league included the following schools: Grants Pass, Medford, and Ashland.

An article found in the Rogue River Courier, October 14, 1910, stated:

...in order to facilitate the arrangement of games between the rival high schools of Southern Oregon a tri-high school league has been formed by the managers of the football teams and a schedule of football games made for the season. Each high school will play each of its opponents in two games until six games in all have been played.

The article closed by observing, "...with all games duly scheduled the boys have something always in sight and, to say the least, it encourages regular practice and maintains enthusiasm."

The article also stated that the formation of a conference offered a definite way of securing the championship besides excluding those players commonly known as ringers in keeping a clean high school team free from professionalism which so often mars school athletics.

The three schools listed in the schedule that year were Grants Pass, Medford and Ashland. Klamath Falls was added a few years later,

and in the ensuing decades, the Southern Oregon Conference has carried on.

There were a few years when the teams were unable to meet all of the other teams in the conference, but the championships were established on the basis of the best record in conference play.

Crater was added to the conference in 1956 and in 1966 Roseburg was shifted to the Southern Oregon Conference which comprises District 6, AAA schools, for determining which team will go into state championship playoffs.

FINANCING

In reviewing the football news from old newspaper files, the writer noted the growth of the enthusiasm on the part of the fans for the high school football program. This was particularly noticeable in the increased paid attendance at football games.

As in all athletic contests there is a correlation between gate receipts and attendance capacity of the facility involved. One has a hard time visualizing the attendance at football games without grandstands. In 1931 the entire gate receipts for the season amounted to only \$70.63. No one has been able to explain the odd cents, but in 1933 the receipts had more than doubled to the astounding amount of \$189.92.

Up to this period of time, there were no grandstands. The few fans would patrol the sidelines kicking up the dust or wading through mud, depending on the weather. There were no grandstands until 1936 when the 1500 seat grandstand which presently serves the students was

built. When it was built, many persons had misgivings about getting its cost back. The venture was financed through non-interest bearing student body bonds which were redeemed in a period of three years. Lights were included in this initial venture.

In 1941 the dust bowl or mud lake, depending on the whims of nature, was changed to a turf field. This venture was also financed through student body bonds sold to the townspeople and redeemed within a four year period.

During the summer of 1947, just prior to the advent of the Coach Mel Ingram era, it was anticipated that the increasing interest in football would justify the building of a new 3,000 seating capacity grandstand which was financed by the sale of \$9,000 of student body bonds, plus \$3,000 in cash supplied by the high school student body and \$2,000 furnished by the school district. The resulting attendance paid off these debts in three years - two years earlier than was originally planned.

The present Athletic Director Jesse Loffer, who has been on the staff at Grants Pass High School since 1945, notes the above grandstand construction plus added facility improvements in the recent years has resulted in an attendance average of approximately 7,000 people per game since 1948.

It is truly an awesome sight to witness the pre-sale of season tickets at Grants Pass High School. In preparation for the 1970 football season, news releases announced season tickets would go on sale Monday, August 24th, at 7:00 P. M. Because of the always present feeling of a successful season by the community, these news releases stimulated the formation of a waiting line to purchase season tickets the

Thursday previous to the above mentioned date. After standing in line and sleeping in the grandstand for four days previous to the sale of season tickets, approximately \$12,000 was realized by Grants Pass High during the first two hours of this sale. This should give one an insight to the enthusiasm shown toward football in Grants Pass.

Unfortunately, the entire financial receipt records were not available. As confirmed by Mr. Loffer, athletic financial records other than those mentioned previously are not retained after a five-year period.

The following records show the receipts and expenditures from 1965 through 1970 for football are as follows:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Receipts</u>	<u>Expenditures</u>	<u>Balance</u>
1965	\$32,330.10	\$23,910.10	\$8,420.00
1966	21,959.67	15,768.95	6,190.72
1967	44,314.00	38,893.00	5,421.00
1968	23,475.00	17,858.00	5,617.00
1969	19,282.00	23,294.00	-4,012.00
1970	31,290.00	24,006.00	7,284.00

The writer of this report feels it is worthy of note to explain the variation in receipts and expenditures from year to year. Receipts will vary because of the number of home games, championship play-offs experienced, and weather factors. Expenditures will vary because of travel, equipment replacements, scouting costs, and the increase of coaching staff members.

In talking with the present superintendent, Eugene F. Allison, planning has begun for a new concrete football stadium with a seating capacity of ten to twelve thousand people and may be realized in the near future.

COMMUNITY INTEREST

As far back as the records could be found, Grants Pass has always been an enthusiastic football city. The writer noted other southern Oregon cities are equally as rabid about football.

The remarks made to the writer of this report prompted some research through newspaper files at the Daily Courier going back to 1895 to find out as much as possible about football competition at Grants Pass.

Diligent search through the old files and through old copies of the high school yearbook, the Toka, supplied by various alumni of Grants Pass High School, and those books that have been preserved in the high school library, have resulted in the game scores dating back to 1908.

The phenomenal growth of interest in the football teams at Grants Pass is the result of many things. The personal interest of many prominent business and professional men throughout the years, plus the various civic organizations, such as the Grants Pass Junior Chamber of Commerce, now known as the Jaycees, the Rotary, Lions and Kiwanis Clubs, the Elks Club, all added status to the program.

At the same time, the quality of the football teams improved with the growth of the turnouts for football which in recent years have numbered around 170 boys.

The fine halftime programs furnished by the Grants Pass High School Marching Band, under the direction of Mr. Raymond E. McAllister, has added color to the sport. In the more than two decades Mr. McAllister has been directing the band at Grants Pass, the group has

won honor ratings in the Portland Rose Festival and other parades in the Pacific Northwest. Mr. McAllister's bands have participated in the massed bands at the East-West Shrine game at San Francisco, and for several alternate years has furnished the halftime entertainment for the San Francisco 49ers during one of their nationally televised games. The 100-piece band provides pre-game and halftime entertainment at every home game.

Also the excellent enthusiasm and pride evidenced by the Pep Club and the Rally Squad, and the help of the ticket squad and ushers involving nearly 500 high school students in the extra-curricular activity have helped build character and responsibility in the football program.

It's the spirit of Grants Pass that makes football so important.

As can be seen by checking the records over the years and the scores of the games played, football hasn't always been the success it has been in the past two decades. During the past 22 years, the school has won four state championships, the last being a co-championship, and reached the playoffs on other occasions.

In earlier times only two criteria were used to judge the success of the season. The most important was to beat Medford. The other was to win the Southern Oregon Conference title.

FOOTBALL HIGHLIGHTS

In compiling the highlights and season records of football at Grants Pass, only brief sketches and game scores could be uncovered about the early years at Grants Pass High School.

The rules were different in the earlier days. In 1912 Grants Pass couldn't field a football team. After the Grants Pass boys had been taunted by the Medford players, a team including some who were not in high school was organized. The account of this is given in the Rogue River Courier for October 25, 1912. In this article it was pointed out that considerable interest was shown in the organizing of a football team to represent Grants Pass in the Rogue Valley. Lack of material was responsible for nothing being done along this line at the high school that year, while Medford and Ashland both had strong teams, each of them intending to play teams of the larger northern schools that season. Meetings were held and the results indicated that a very husky bunch of football stars of the days when Grants Pass used to triumph over the valley could be brought together to duplicate victories of the past. It went without saying that if Grants Pass could produce a winning football team their place as the metropolis of the Rogue River Valley would be more fully recognized. Later stories revealed the Grants Pass team lost to Medford 12 to 0 in the first game, and then beat the Medford squad 9 to 0 in the second game.

In the earlier years, more than one game was scheduled between two teams each year. It wasn't uncommon to have the loser of the first game win the second.

In 1917, Paul Blanchard, who retired in Grants Pass after many years as a successful lawyer in Chicago, coached the Grants Pass team to a 52 to 0 victory over Medford and won the first Southern Oregon Conference championship for the school.

The late Neil Allen coached the 1919 team through an undefeated season to gain the mythical state championship which was an unofficial

recognition for undefeated teams by the sports writers of that day. The claim was established by the record of the team that challenged all other undefeated teams, if any, to a Thanksgiving Day game for the championship. No other team in Grants Pass history achieved this distinction until 1950 when the Grants Pass Cavemen became the uncrowned champions.

The 1919 undefeated team was composed of the following members: Harold Isham, Landa Gillette, Wilbur Bearss, Leroy Histon, Steve Woodlin, Floyd Bailey, Adric Fields, Robert Bestul, Howard Bearss, Sherman Smith, Leonard Kendall, Malden LeRoy, Gene Murphy, and Joe Harper, manager.

The late Leonard Mayfield, former City Superintendent of Schools at Medford, coached the 1930 Grants Pass team to a 7 to 6 win over Medford and won the Southern Oregon Conference for that year.

The 1932 football season was a very successful one for the local gridiron artists. Only two games were lost during the entire season. Aside from the championship year of 1930, no other Grants Pass team of footballers can boast of as good a record. In 1932, this was the first season in local gridiron history when the opponents had been held to such a low season's total score. Only 33 points were scored against the local pigskin chasers while the Cavemen garnered a total of 135 points. In the 1930 championship year, 74 points were scored against the Grants Pass eleven.

In 1936, Loren Tuttle's football team won the Southern Oregon Conference crown after Medford had to forfeit all its games for using ineligible players.

The 1939 football team compiled a 5-3-0 won loss record. Under the guidance of Superintendent M. B. Winslow and Principal L. B.

Mayfield it was made possible for the student body to obtain the first lighted football field in southern Oregon. This project was started before that year. The Student Council paid off the remaining bond debt amounting to \$920.

The 1940 football squad compiled the best season's record since 1930. Out of eight games played, the Cavemen won 6, lost 1, and tied 1, ending the season in second place in the Southern Oregon Conference. During the season the Cavemen lost 20 to 6 to the Medford Black Tornadoes.

Tuffy Keith, now Dean of Boys at Grants Pass High School, coached the 1942 Cavemen who won a 12 to 6 victory over Medford. This marked the fifth time in history the Grants Pass team actually beat the team now known as the Black Tornado.

There may be some question of the authenticity of that being the fifth win for the school or actually the fourth, especially in view of the 1936 situation when Medford had to forfeit its games because of ineligible players.

In 1943 Medford scored 6 points on an off-tackle play winning 6-0. Coach Tuffy Keith produced from a green squad five all-conference players on the first and second teams. The Cavemen registered a 4-4-0 record for that season.

In 1944, the freshman year for Coach Mel Johnson in three years at Grants Pass, Medford boasted of a 41-0 victory. The Cavemen ended with a 3-4-1 season record.

The 1946 season saw the Medford football team give the Cavemen their worst defeat of the season. The Black Tornado won the game 56-0.

The Cavemen ended the season with a .444 percentage standing. Winning one of the three conference games gave the Grants Pass team 3rd place in the final Southern Oregon Conference standings.

THE MEL INGRAM ERA (1947-1968)

Before proceeding with the highlights of football at Grants Pass High School, a brief resume of the facts would be in order regarding Mr. Mel Ingram, the man who became the head football coach in 1947. It is felt a short history of his life is important before one can appreciate the outstanding success he has achieved in his 40 years of high school coaching.

Mel Ingram was born on the Fourth of July in 1903 in Acton, North Carolina. He traveled to the Pacific Northwest with his parents, the B. F. Ingram family, when he was six years old, and the family settled in Aberdeen, Washington.

His arrival in Aberdeen was about the same time Grants Pass High School started playing football games seven decades ago.

The middle member of five children in the home, Mel's enthusiasm generally instigated all the fireworks that probably got him started on the fabulous athletic career which lead him into a 40-year high school coaching career that ended with the close of the 1968 football season. Young Mel was hailed around Aberdeen and Spokane as the greatest all-around athlete of the area for his explosive achievements. It is the same success story everywhere Mel has coached, which has been confined to three high schools in the two-score years.

Mel's father lived until the ripe old age of 97, and a sister and a brother still live in Aberdeen.

Mel's wife, Marion, was his most faithful fan and made an effort to attend every major event in which her husband was involved. Mr. and Mrs. Ingram celebrated their 42nd wedding anniversary last spring. A son and a daughter, both married, keep in close contact with them. Mel still continues to substitute teach at Grants Pass High School since his retirement in 1968.

Coach Ingram attended Weatherwax High School in Aberdeen. While in high school, it was said Ingram could and did almost everything with a football. He had amazing shiftiness and tackle-evading ability. Added to this was speed equaled by few, plus possession of a keen football sense. Mel was also outstanding and lettered all four years in basketball, baseball, and track while attending high school.

Newspaper clippings report Ingram was the outstanding star of all grammar and high school athletics on Grays Harbor. During his career as a member of the high school football team, he made more scores and won more games than the total of the remaining players on the team. Mel was always good for at least one 50 yard dash to the goal line each game and his defensive work made him a terror of opponents. The newspapers also stated he was a star track athlete, featuring in the sprints. Ingram ran the 100 yard dash in 10.2, a record never challenged during his four years in high school.

The newspapers during the 1920's in Washington seldom missed an opportunity to tell of some athletic prowess of the peppery athlete who was and still is interested in all forms of competitive sports.

Ingram entered Gonzaga University in 1924 after graduating from Aberdeen High School, where he had been a star in interscholastic athletics, states the newspapers in the Spokane area. Ingram ranks as the greatest all-around athlete ever to attend Gonzaga.

It was felt by many West Coast sportswriters that if Ingram had gone to a major college or university he would have received All-American status, but colleges of Gonzaga's size seldom attract attention sufficient to get many places on the mythical selections.

Mel Ingram won four letters each year in football, basketball, baseball, and track while attending Gonzaga University. In every department of athletics his performance was outstanding - as a half-back in football, a forward in basketball, an outfielder in baseball, and a broad jumper and sprinter in track.

After sorting through the records accumulated by Ingram in his four years of college athletics, it would be difficult to speculate as to which game he performed best. To read old newspaper accounts of Ingram's sports activities, one might wonder if one sport had actually ended before he started practicing for the next. The headlines were still shouting his exploits on the gridiron when he was starting basketball play, and when that was over, he competed in baseball and doubled in track; baseball then ran into football for a new round of sports.

Perhaps Mel Ingram's greatest athletic opportunity came in the field of baseball. He was signed by the Pittsburg Pirates in 1929 but refused to enter into the contract until he had been promised an early release by the end of the summer in order to return to the West, where he was to begin his coaching career at Wallace, Idaho, on Septem-

With terms agreeable to all concerned, Ingram proceeded to do so well with the Pirates that they voted him a split of the second-place share of the World Series money that fall even though he left before the season was completed.

Perhaps that is the secret of the success that followed in his coaching for the next 40 years which ended with the 1968 football season. His entire coaching career has been in three high schools. He turned down offers to become a college coach because he preferred to work with young boys. He was always striving to make men out of boys and points with pride to literally thousands of men scattered over the United States who are important citizens in their communities due in a large part to the intense interest Ingram took in them in their early years.

An avid fisherman and hunter and a great outdoorsman, Ingram will have many hours to enjoy his favorite relaxation through the expressions of gratitude from the boys and their parents who are thankful they got some coaching from one who knew how to play the game according to the rules and to play to win.

His boys were all competitors. This is because he was a competitor from start to finish. It is estimated Mel Ingram has touched the lives of at least 20,000 boys at three different high schools.

The official story of Mel Ingram's coaching career started at Wallace High School in Wallace, Idaho, in 1929. Ingram was hired as athletic director and head coach in all sports at Wallace High School.

It should be noted that Wallace experienced very little success in athletics before the advent of Ingram. This fact was pointed out by one of his former athletes at Wallace. These remarks were also

echoed by Bud Riley, presently the defensive backfield coach at Oregon State University, and a coach at Wallace several years after Ingram left for his Oregon jobs. Coach Riley relates how Ingram set a pattern that was a real challenge to uphold for anyone who followed.

At Wallace, Ingram's teams won 63 football games, lost 19, and tied two. In the 15 years, he had nine all-panhandle football teams including three North Idaho championship teams. One of the teams was rated first in the entire state of Idaho. Ingram's teams were never below fourth in competition, nor were they ever beaten twice in any one year by one team, according to information gained from the North Idaho Press.

The story is similar at the two schools in Oregon where Mel Ingram has coached. At this point in his coaching career he acquired the name of The Old Grey Fox because of his early coaching success.

In 1944 at Roseburg High School in Roseburg, Oregon, Ingram's first two teams had 4-4 records and his third team in the 1946 season posted an 8-1 mark, making it into the state playoffs for the first time in the history of the school.

The Mel Ingram success story started in Grants Pass in 1947 with a respectable 5-3 football season. One of the reasons for the apparent success of the football teams at Grants Pass was the emphasis placed upon adequate conditioning early in the season.

When Mel Ingram came to Grants Pass in 1947, the townspeople helped to arrange for a conditioning camp at the old Civilian Conservation Corp Camp on Mt. Greyback on the Oregon Caves highway beyond Cave Junction, Oregon.

The initials, CCC, took on new meaning as the prospective football players spent a week or ten days at the start of each football season at this camp which became known as the Cavemen Conditioning Camp.

The boys found a concentrated football program at this camp which was held as soon after the official start of football practice as funds permitted. The determining factor for the length of the camp was the opening day of school. The camp ended in time for the boys to enter school on the opening day. The money for the rent and training table was obtained through donations from the local businessmen.

The typical day's progress at the camp saw the boys getting up at 7:00, calisthenics at 7:10, breakfast at 7:30, and camp clean-up at 8:00 A. M.

At 8:30 the boys had chalk talks by the coaches and by 9:00 were out on the practice field in full uniform for a two-hour drill session. After the noon luncheon, a repeat session of chalk talks was held, and football practice got underway at 2:00 and continued until 5:00.

The evenings found the boys getting a slight variety in their chalk talks - either individual conferences with the coaches and study of the plays, or some movies of football play. After the evening sessions they went to bed to sleep or dream football.

When the squad completed its week at the CCC, the boys found the nightly grind on the football practice field at school much easier.

Because of pressure applied by other high schools on the Oregon School Activities Association, Grants Pass was told to discontinue this camp in 1951.

The first official state championship team in Grants Pass history was in 1948, coming in the second year after Mel Ingram became head coach for the Cavemen. The team won 10 games, lost one and tied one that year. The loss was to Medford in regular season play but the Cavemen won in the semi-finals when the two teams represented different districts. The tie was a 19-19 affair with Roseburg.

Oregon State High School Championship playoffs date back to 1940 when Bend beat Medford, 20 to 7, for the official title under the Oregon Schools Athletic Association.

The Oregon School Activities Association was organized in 1918. The OSAA is a voluntary non-profit incorporated organization. Any high school, junior high school, or elementary school in the state of Oregon, public or private, may become a member by subscribing to the rules and regulations of the Association. Membership is mandatory to be eligible for state playoffs. The purpose of the OSAA is to regulate interscholastic activities such as meets, contests, or tournaments that embrace schools of the state of Oregon or sections thereof by the establishment of uniform and equitable rules.

The OSAA implemented a four classification system in the fall of 1970 using the 10 through 12 grade enrollment figures based on average daily membership. The four classifications systems in the state of Oregon are as follows: AAA - 600 and up, AA - 200 through 599, A - 70 through 199, B - up to 69.

There were no playoffs in 1941 or 1942, but since 1943 when Grant beat Kalmath Falls, 6 to 0, for the title, there has been a playoff every year.

Originally there were four divisions in the state but in 1947 the four divisions were increased to eight. Grants Pass was shifted to the Southwest District known as District 3 while the other Southern Oregon Conference teams of that time were in District 2.

Thus, it became possible for Grants Pass to lose a 7 to 6 decision to Medford in Southern Oregon Conference play in 1948, but still win the District 3 title and eventually get to meet Medford, the District 2 winner in a semi-final game. Grants Pass won that game 13-6 and went on to beat Jefferson High School of Portland 6-0 for the Cavemen's first state title.

On the way home from the championship game with Jefferson High School of Portland, the state title was quickly forgotten when the chartered bus crashed on Mt. Sexton, located 10 miles from Grants Pass, and two players, Sterling Heater and Al Newman for whom the Grants Pass High School Memorial Gym is named, were killed.

The championship team of that year was composed of the following members: Bill Moore, Gerald Egger, Dick Warren, Keith Bertrand, Harold Dotts, Don Donovan, Walter Johnson, Gerald Hudson, Dick Bayless, Russ Jacobson, Bob Davis, Bob Flock, Jon Walker, Bill Wilcox, Bob Roark, Clinton Reese, Bob Grove, Ed Malone, Dale Ferguson, Orville Miller, Don Hedgepeth, Sterling Heater, Sid Franks, Tom Burgwin, Jim Peckham, James Jordan, Ed Zottola, Bob Orey, Al Newman, Mike Burgwin, Jack Williams, and Vernon Craft.

In 1949, the Grants Pass Cavemen compiled a respectable 7-1-0 season, the only loss being to Klamath Falls 21-39. Also that same year the other schools in District 3 voted Grants Pass out of that