

# RICH HISTORY

TAYLOR DUCKS

VS

CANYON LAKE HAWKS

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2017

**100 YEARS OF FOOTBALL  
ON MEMORIAL FIELD**



Walt Disney's signed artwork featuring Donald Duck was sent to Taylor in 1941.

1924:  
C.R. Drake was THS football coach during a rainy football season. Most of the time the team played in rain or mud. Someone said they were just like a flock of ducks, and the team was called, "Drake's Ducks."



## END OF FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS AT

“The story of...football...of the Taylor Ducks is the story of dedication, response, loyalty, determination and rugged play.” Although true today, those words were written by coaching legend, educator and former superintendent T.H. Johnson more than three decades ago as he labored to preserve Taylor’s rich football history. His recollections, “Down the Years with Football, the Duck Pond and Taylor Ducks,” is a treasure trove of information on Taylor football and historic Memorial Field.

Barring a home playoff appearance, the November 10 season finale against Canyon Lake will mark an historical milestone in Taylor Duck football as it will be the last game played at the 99-year-old stadium. Only stadiums in El Paso, Marlin and San Antonio have hosted high school football longer than Taylor’s Memorial Field. When the lights go out this fateful Friday, Memorial Field will be relegated to the mists of history and the hearts and minds of the thousands of Taylor Ducks who, each in their own way, helped weave the colorful fabric of its storied existence.

High school football had already existed in some fashion in Taylor for nearly two decades when 5.5 acres of the Murphy tract was purchased in February 1918 from Mrs. Dan Murphy, a member of the namesake family of Murphy Park. According to the Taylor Daily Press, the tract, known as the “old circus grounds,” was bought with the intent of converting it to a “first-class athletic field.”

Prior to 1912 in Taylor, football teams were organized jointly by the city and school, according to former coach Johnson, himself the architect of a great

deal of Taylor’s early success. Before that, teams had neither a coach nor a dedicated field upon which to play. Early contests took place near the railroad tracks close to where Taylor Feed is now located.

A faded photograph at Taylor’s Moody Museum shows the Taylor football team that played Calvert on Jan. 1, 1900, which would indicate that football in the community dates to at least 1899. Johnson’s research did not unearth what year Taylor football became a school-only event. The year 1915 has often been declared the inaugural year of high school football in Taylor, but Johnson’s research puts the date at 1912. In an interview a few years before his passing, the coach conceded he could not confirm any date with certainty. No definitive answer to the question has yet emerged.

“First-class” improvements to the new Murphy Park field included a board fence to surround the field and two sets of wooden bleachers. Research does not reveal if football was played there in 1918, but the Taylor Daily Press noted in 1919 that there was difficulty scheduling games there that season because of muddy conditions. Mother Nature and the area’s black gumbo earth quickly conspired to give the school and community its most enduring legacy, the Duck mascot. As any good Taylor Duck knows, it was during the muddy 1924 season that the team began to be known as the Ducks. Coached by C.R. Drake (a drake is a male duck), it was probably inevitable that during an unusually muddy season the players would become tagged “Ducks” and the field, “The Duck Pond.” In any case, the moniker has endured and 93

## MEMORIAL FIELD WILL NOT DIM MEMORIES

years later, Taylor High remains the only high school in America that boasts a duck for a mascot. Taylor’s Duck predates the University of Oregon’s duck mascot.

Memorial Field was certainly a bit more primitive in its earliest days. It sloped toward the south, which resulted in it being three feet higher on its north end than the south. Johnson recalls large rocks in the field were painted white so that players might attempt to avoid contact with them and yard lines were typically so wide, it might take two tries to cross them. Games were played in the daytime because there were no lights, although Johnson’s depiction of the field shows automobile entrances, suggesting that car headlights could provide illumination if a game ran long. In 1933, lights finally came to the Duck Pond. Four light poles with four reflectors on each cost the school \$1,150. Admission to that first lighted game against Belton on October 27 was 45 cents for adults, 25 cents for students. Taylor prevailed 13-0 en route to an undefeated season. The Ducks played under lights for the first time ever on September 29 in Austin, defeating Austin High 7-6. Improvements to the field continued over the ensuing years. In 1947, a \$125,000 bond package included improvements to Memorial Field. Two sides of the original wood fence were replaced, the football field was moved a short distance to the north and leveled by transferring dirt from the north to the south end, steel bleachers were installed, and a hot-water system was added to the locker room, which was enlarged. The first electronic scoreboard was purchased in 1953 for \$1,865.55. In 1953 and 1954, nearly 18 train cars of cinders were used to create the

surrounding track at a cost of \$14,599.39. The cedar trees that provide a windbreak on the field’s north end were planted at a cost of \$156. Other improvements continued over the years, including the use of a synthetic material on the track, aluminum cladding for the bleachers and facilities improvements. No discussion about Memorial Field would be complete without wondering which was the greatest game ever played there. While the answer to that question can spur a lot of debate, many would argue it was the Nov. 22, 1963 contest played against Rockdale, won 9-7 by the Ducks. Played hours after President John F. Kennedy’s assassination, both teams were self-described “zombies.” The Rockdale Reporter in 1999 ranked the game as one of the school’s Top 10 games of all time. It noted that Rockdale was ranked No. 1 in the state in Class 2A and had only allowed three points by opposing teams. All the scoring happened in the first half, concluding with Mike Tennill’s 24-yard field goal with five seconds left before intermission. The memory of that game is clearly etched in the minds of Rockdale fans, as the newspaper recalled “Tennill’s field goal wobbling, floating, careening, fluttering and finally making it between the uprights.”

This and countless other memorials of Memorial Field will remain when the lights are ceremoniously turned off this historic Friday night. Then, it will fall to a new generation of Ducks to make history and memories at a new field in a new era.

*Author David J. Wolbrueck is a 1978 Taylor High School graduate.*

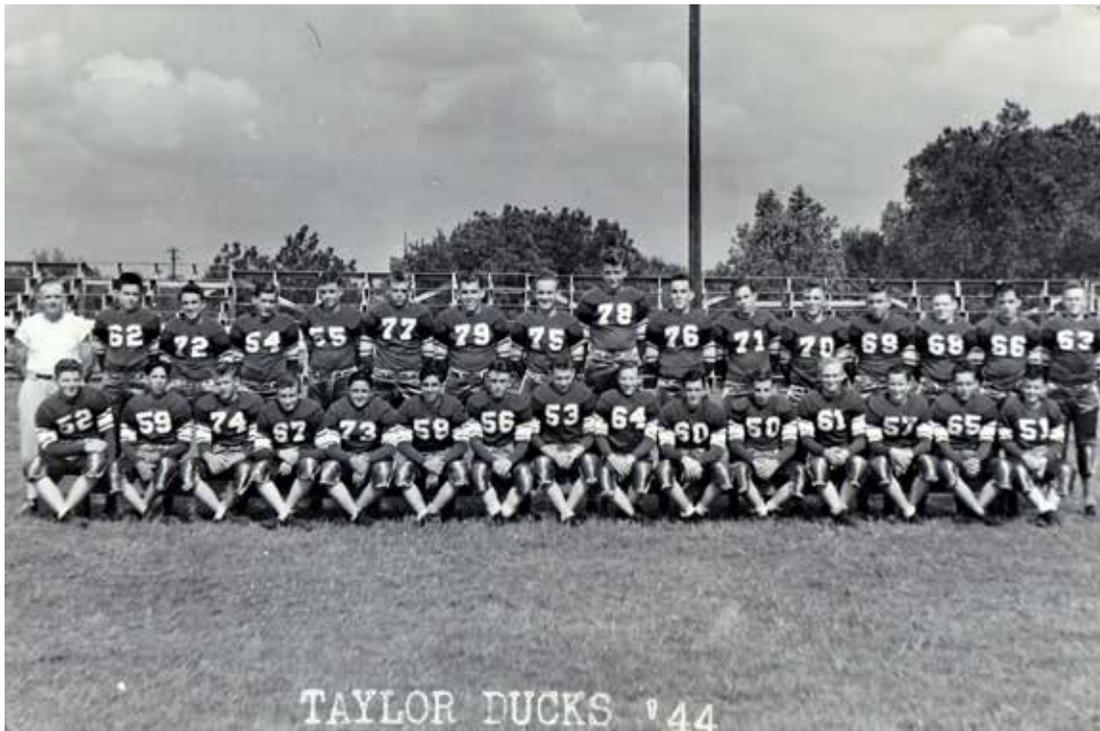
# MEMORIAL FIELD: SACRED GROUND FOR 1940'S TEAMS

"This memorable season was made possible by a superb group of boys, and the memory of them will linger on and on as long as I shall live." Coach T.H. Johnson, 1943



**PHIL PIERCE**

Duck Mascot for the teams of 1936, 1937, 1938, and 1939  
B-Team in 1940 and 1941  
4 year Letterman 1942 to 1945  
Team Captain in 1945

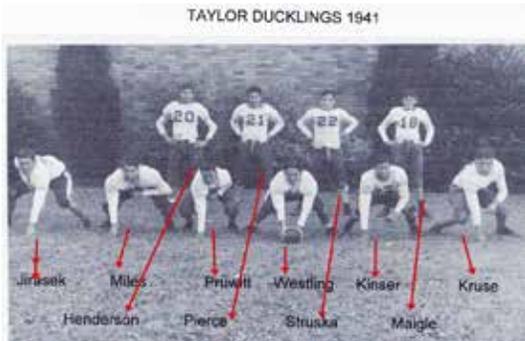


Top row: Coach Johnson, Ralph Westling, Frank Struska, Albert Buzan (capt), Carmen Jirasek, Eugene White, Emery Teichelman, Milton Miller, John Miles, Arthur Jansa (co-capt), L.M, McCoy, Raymond Valenta, Aleen Leshikar, Otis Miller Bottom Row: Dan Havelka, Milton Jirasek, Floyd Sanders, Don Wilson, Raymond Clark, James Constantine, Eugene Warren, James Shinn, Andrew Mclaughlin, Phil Pierce, Bobby Kinser, Earney Smith, Bobby Miller, Bobby Pieser



**DOROTHY JOHNSON, 1942**

Tonight between halves of the the Lockhart-Taylor football game the band will recognize their sweetheart for this year. Dorothy Jean Johnson, daughter of Coach and Mrs. TH Johnson was chosen by the band members early in the season and tonight while the band plays "Let Me Call You Sweetheart," the drum major will present her with a bouquet from the band.



**FROM COACH JOHNSON:**

"The talent, dedication, cooperation, loyalty, determination, and the sincere belief in football and the success of their team and school inspired the members of the 1943 squad to go through an undefeated season."



**"SHORTY" SANDERS**  
WITH EDWARD KRUSE

**TAYLOR VS LAMPASAS, 1945:**

Floyd "Shorty" Sanders practically beat the Lampasas Badgers single handed scoring 33 points to the Badgers' 7, here tuesday night as the Taylor Ducks advance to the Region 8 football finals.

**LETTERMEN 1943:**

John Miles, Phil Pierce, Bobby Kinser

**TAYLOR VS ROCKDALE, 1942:**

Another fumble recovery by Kinser behind Rockdale goal for final score.



**COACH T.H. JOHNSON**

WHEN THE 1946 FOOTBAL SEASON ENDED, COACH T.H. JOHNSON APPLIED FOR AND WAS APPOINTED SUPERINTENDENT OF TAYLOR ISD, THUS ENDING 20 YEARS OF COACHING AT TAYLOR HIGH.

LONGEST WINNING STREAK: 30 (1942-44)  
DUCKS WENT 42-1 (1942-46)  
DUCKS BI-DISTRICT CHAMPS: 7 (1933, 38-39, 41-43, 45)  
DUCKS REGIONAL CHAMPS: 6 (1933, 38-39, 42-43, 45)

**COACH JOHNSON WROTE:** World War II had massive influence on football. 1942, 1943, and 1944 were tough years - many colleges abandoned football. High schools fared better; good teams developed even with skeleton coaching staffs, travel and scouting difficulties. During this time, the Ducks played 31 games, won 30, lost 1, tied 0, scored 908 points to the opponents 85.

# CAROLYN "TUTTA" JACKSON A MEMORIAL FIELD MEMORY



Anyone who lived in the Austin area in the 1960s and 1970s will most likely remember Carolyn Jackson. After graduating from Taylor High School in 1944, Jackson went on to receive a broadcasting degree from the University of Texas and became one of the most popular TV and Radio hosts in central Texas.

As a Taylor High School cheerleader, Carolyn Jackson cheered the Ducks on to many victories on Memorial Field. In a video interview for the Taylor High School Duck Hall of Fame series, Jackson describes one particular game where a quick-thinking player saved her from ending up at the bottom of a tackle.

On this particular play, Jackson and the other cheerleaders were facing the stands to start a cheer. There was no track, so they were literally at the edge of the field.

"All of a sudden, Paul Moegle came at me and took me to the ground," Jackson recalls in the video interview. "He pushed me so hard he almost landed on top of me, but he was protecting me."

Jackson goes on to say that Eugene White, a large center, was coming toward her along with other team members as they chased a player from the opposing side.

They were going to hit her, but Moegle saw it coming and got

Carolyn Gossett Jackson (THS class of 1944 and THS Yell Leader is presented with a gift from students at Taylor High School in appreciation for visiting and speaking to their class. Jackson talked about growing up in Taylor, attending the Taylor schools, and her career in TV and radio.



Jackson out of the way just in time. Her megaphone wasn't so lucky and ended up getting flattened in the play.

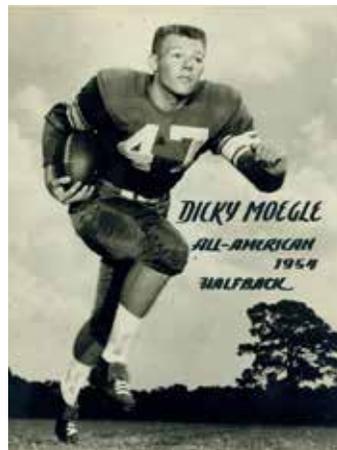
"The next week someone at school tried to pull it back out. They did a really good job, except it still has one little dent to give me that memory of almost being killed by the football team."

Jackson also recalls the Green Jackets, and the wonderful Taylor High School Band that brought down the house with the way they pranced to one particular number.

Her favorite memories from Memorial Field include the incredible winning seasons.

"Coach Johnson held the record for the most consecutive wins of any high school in Texas," she recalled. "All the time I was in high school, we won. We never lost."

*Author Tim Crow is a 1980 Taylor High School graduate.*



It is a reflection of Dicky Maegle's eventful life that he can talk for 30 minutes without mentioning his moment 60 years ago as the focal point of one of college football's most unusual plays.

Pick a topic, in fact, and Maegle, 79, is off with the same rhetorical speed he displayed as a Rice running back in the 1950s.

Maegle, the Owls' All-America running back, was in the midst of what would have been a 95-yard touchdown run when Alabama player Tommy Lewis came off the bench at midfield and threw a block at Maegle as he sped down the Crimson Tide sideline.

Game officials awarded a touchdown to Maegle, who was knocked off his feet and had the breath knocked out of him by the unexpected blow, and the Owls went on to win 28-6. He had scoring runs of 79, 95 and 34 yards and totaled 265 rushing yards on 11 carries, which stood as a Cotton Bowl record for more than 40 years.

It was a "SportsCenter" moment before there was such a thing, and it always comes up in conversation around bowl season, in years ending in "3" or in cases such as Pittsburgh Steelers coach Mike Tomlin's interference with Baltimore Ravens punt returner Jacoby Jones on Thanksgiving Day.

"After it happened, I said this play is going to be pretty long-lasting," Maegle said last week. "I went back and researched it, and to my knowledge it had never happened. I knew it would be something that would be talked about forever." It's inarguably the most famous play in the history of Rice football.

Maegle, whose name was spelled "Moegle" when he was in college before he

changed it to match its pronunciation, moved several years ago to Katy. He still enjoys attending Rice games, but the questions about the bench tackle over the years have gotten repetitive.

"If I go up to the 'R' Room, people ask questions and I can't watch the game," he said. "I've gone to a lot of games and sat on the (east) side of the stadium or the end zone. I'm not trying to be reluctant or act like I'm a superstar. I just want to enjoy the game."

Maegle's road to the bench tackle began in his hometown of Taylor. He always was one of the smallest guys on the football field or basketball court, albeit one of the best.

"I always thought I was a better basketball player than football player," Maegle said. "People say, 'You never saw yourself play,' and I take that as a compliment."

Baylor was an early favorite, and Texas asked him to walk on as a freshman in anticipation of a scholarship down the line. But the last word went to Red Bale, one of Rice coach Jess Neely's longtime assistant coaches, and he accepted a scholarship at Rice.

"I drove there for a visit, and there was this magnificent new stadium (Rice Stadium, which opened in 1950) and a brand-new field house for basketball and a new dorm, and I said, 'Y'all got me. Where do I sign?'" he said.

The Owls were 21-10 during Maegle's three varsity seasons, with a Southwest Conference title in 1953 and a 7-3 finish in 1954, when he was a consensus All-American.

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Written By David Barron,*



- The two sets of bleachers at Memorial Field, The Duck Pond, have a seating capacity of 3,350
- 1933 Ducks were the first THS team to post an undefeated season and actually was the first team to go to the playoffs.
- The 1926 team went 8-0-1 but failed to win district due to a refusal to play Granger.
- 1926: Johnson was in his first year at Taylor and served as coach for the backs and ends.
- The Golden Era - 20's and 30's when the Ducks played 84 games with a record of 51-25-8 and outscored the opposition 1293 to 624.
- 1930 to 1940 - The Ducks played 107 games, lost 18 games, and tied 5 times. Taylor won five regional championships and had two undefeated seasons.
- William "Cricket" Horsak was the highest individual scorer in high school football throughout the state in 1940. Cricket scored a total of 170 points.
- Taylor did not lose a game at the Duck Pond during 1926, 1933, 1938, 1940 to 1943, and 1945.
- 1950's - Taylor played 112 games - 64-44-3
- 1960's - 72-35-3; highest scoring machine ever in 67 years of THS grid competition: 483 points in 12 games
- 1970's - 54-46-3
- Carl Stried, stat keeper for more than 50 years, never missed a game.
- Since 1914, the head coaches/athletic directors for Taylor High School have been: J.T. Hutto, R.B. Galbraith, J.C. Oehler, C.R. Drake, Eugene Lambert, T.H. Johnson, Dan Hannan, Ross Baldwin, Bill Ford, Cliff Vandeventer, Harold Mayo, Shirl Frazier, Bob Lindquist, Eddy Spiller, Wayne Schroeder, Tim Holt, Rick Cobia, Rusty Purser