

1990 Hall of Fame Class

Ross Hall of Fame inductee. 1990

Harold "Whitey" Althoff

Harold "Whitey" Althoff has been described as possibly the best athlete ever to carry the colors of Ross High School.

He participated in football, basketball, and track and field from 1925 -28. Althoff earned eight high school letters and played on the Fremont district basketball championship team that reached the state tournament in that era.

He qualified for the Ohio High School State Track and Field Meet in the pole vault and high jump, and was an all-league performer in football and basketball.

A physical education instructor at Fremont High School, Althoff served as head cross country coach, assistant and head track coach, head basketball coach during the World War II years, and assistant basketball and football coach.

He found time to be the official starter for Fremont High School swimming and diving meets for several years.

Althoff also served as a state track and field official for over 30 years.

In 1986, Althoff was inducted into the Western Michigan University Hall of Fame. Now he joins another prestigious organization.

Ross Hall of Fame inductee. 1990

Bob Brudzinski

Bob “Byrd” Brudzinski was a three-sport star at Ross High School but it was football in which he earned fame.

He played offensive and defensive end, earning first-team All-Buckeye Conference honors at both positions in 1972. In that banner year, “Byrd” was named the Associated Press (AP) Northwest Ohio District “Lineman of the Year,” winning first team AP All-Ohio honors on offense and first team United Press International (UPI) on defense while being named UPI’s “Lineman of the Year.”

Brudzinski lettered three years in football, basketball, and baseball.

After graduating from Ross, Brudzinski played defensive end for Woody Hayes at Ohio State, where he lettered three years, winning All-America honors in 1976. Hayes called Brudzinski “The greatest defensive end I have ever coached.”

Brudzinski was drafted third in the first round of the 1977 National Football League college draft by the Los Angeles Rams. After starting briefly as a rookie for the Rams, he earned a starting slot at outside linebacker in his second year.

A 13-year NFL veteran, Brudzinski played in the Super Bowl with the Rams and was in two others while a member of the Miami Dolphins.

Ross Hall of Fame inductee. 1990

Bernard “Benny” Hayes

Records and the name Bernard “Benny” Hayes were common when the amazing swimmer was at Ross High School.

From 1937 through 1941, Hayes heated up the swimming pools in Ohio with record after record, setting nine while lettering four years in the water sport.

In his freshman year, Hayes set records in the 100-yard butterfly in pools in Kenyon, Ross, and Canton, topping it off with a record in the district meet. He followed up his sophomore year with 100-yard butterfly records in the Ross pool and in the district and state meets, winning the state title with the latter effort.

Also, in his sophomore year, Hayes was the Pitt Invitational champ in the butterfly and finished third in the National AAU 220-yard butterfly-breaststroke event. He was a member of the national record interscholastic 300-yard medley relay and swam on the 150-yard district and state medley champions. His performance as a sophomore earned second-team prep All-America status.

As a junior, he was the district and state champion in the 100-meter butterfly and breaststroke, repeating that accomplishment as a senior. He also swam on the district, state, and national 150-yard medley relay championship team.

In those years when you said swimming at Ross, you said Benny Hayes in the same breath.

Ross Hall of Fame inductee. 1990

John “Big Thunder” Lewis

John Lewis’ nickname was his trademark.

To opponents, it was not a nickname; Lewis was BIG THUNDER.

He won four letters in football and basketball and added three more in track.

Lewis held the Ross football single-season rushing record of 214 yards for over 40 years. And ranks fourth in single-season rushing with 1,535 yards in 1951 and is third in career rushing with 2,787 yards. He once scored 36 points in a game. The Little Giants were 32-5-3 during Big Thunder’s playing days.

When football season ended, Lewis took his act to the hardwood. He led the 1951 basketball team in scoring with a single-season high of 29 points, which at the time was a school record.

Lewis won All-Buckeye Conference honors in both football and basketball and won All-Ohio honors in football.

He was a Scholastic Magazine prep All-American.

After his Ross days, Lewis earned three football letters at Michigan State University, was named All-America in 1954, and played in the 1954 and 1956 Rose Bowls. He scored two touchdowns in the 1954 Rose Bowl.

He played professional football for the Vancouver (British Columbia) Lions in the Canadian Football League, the Baltimore Colts of the National Football League, and the New York Jets of the American Football League.

Ross Hall of Fame inductee. 1990

Joe Lotycz

“Let Joe do it.” And when it came to letting Joe do it, Joe Lotycz would accomplish the task or find someone who could.

Lotycz has spent nearly four decades involved with Ross High School athletics and Fremont Recreation Board activities.

For 39 years, Lotycz has been the football equipment manager. Ross’s equipment was Joe’s equipment, and he cared for it that way. When it came in Harmon Field, Joe was there to manicure the sprawling beast. The playing surface at the half-century-old facility became known as the best in the area when Lotycz handled the mowers, rakes, and shovels and called the shots that beautified his baby.

He has served as driver for the Little Giant basketball team, and he was instrumental in establishing football practice facilities at Camp Yukita in the early 1950s. Lotycz won a Merit Award from the Northwest Ohio Football Coaches Association for his service to Ross and youth athletics.

Lotycz served for 38 years as the American Legion child welfare officer and received two national citations and five honorable mentions during that time.

“Letting Joe do it” enriched Ross athletics, and the name Lotycz will forever be entrenched in the school’s athletic history.

Ross Hall of Fame inductee. 1990

Rob Lytle

Rob Lytle won seven football and track letters at Ross from 1969 through 1972. In football Lytle, a running back, scored 242 career points while rushing for 2,593 yards – an average of 8.4 yards per carry.

In 1971, Lytle was named to the Buckeye Conference first team as a running back and earned first-team Associated Press (AP) district honors and honorable mention All-Ohio honors. Lytle was first-team All-BC and the conference back-of-the-year, earning AP first-team all-district honors, second-team All-Ohio, and first-team United Press International (UPI) All-Ohio in 1972.

In track, Lytle won conference titles in the 100 and 220-yard dashes his junior year and was a state qualifier in the 100 as a sophomore and junior.

As a running back for the University of Michigan, Lytle earned All-American honors, was the Big Ten Most Valuable Player, was third in the Heisman Trophy voting, and won the Wiseman Trophy – an award from a national restaurant chain – for being the top collegiate player, all in 1976.

He was drafted in the second round of the 1977 NFL draft by the Denver Broncos and played seven seasons in the NFL. He was the second rookie to score a touchdown in the Super Bowl.

Rob was posthumously inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in 2015.

Ross Hall of Fame inductee 1990

Mal Mackey

Mal Mackey and Ross football were synonymous from 1950 to 1966.

Mackey is the only Ross coach to win more than 100 games, compiling a 104-59-8 record.

Five of Mackey's teams won nine or more games, including a trio of teams that produced a 29-0-1 record from 1955 through 1957.

Mackey's teams were undefeated in two seasons and had only a tie in another.

Possibly the most memorable game in Mackey's illustrious career was the one that ended the Little Giants' 29-game winning streak, a 13-13 deadlock against a tough Toledo Scott team in 1957. The game featured the legendary 70-yard pass from fullback John Level to Charlie Houdeshell.

Mackey's teams featured stingy defenses and potent offenses. His 1956 team outscored opponents 360-65, and the following year, the Little Giants allowed just 38 points while rolling up 283.

In 1956, Mackey was named the Ohio High School Football Coach of the Year.

In 1954, Mackey began the Ross wrestling program and served as its coach until his death in 1972.

He also served as the Little Giant track coach.

He was also instrumental in founding the Ross Boosters Club and in designing the Little Giants logo.

But it is football that Mackey is best remembered for, and as long as there are football coaches at Ross, they will be measured by his success.

Ross Hall of Fame inductee. 1990

Robert Pettiford

Robert Pettiford was a multi-faceted star for Ross High School teams in the 1920s and early 1930s.

Pettiford is the only 12-letter winner in the school's history, earning four letters each in football, basketball, and track and field.

During his track days, Pettiford set the school high jump record of 5'10.5" and held the 120-yard-high hurdles record of 16.3 seconds, both Little Big Seven league records. Pettiford played end and halfback on the football team.

His football coach, Robert Oldfather, in a newspaper clipping, described Pettiford as "one of the hardest workers and most dependable of all the athletes in the history of the big school (Ross)."

The football teams Pettiford played on compiled a 20-13-3 record.

Pettiford's play on the gridiron earned him a scholarship to Findlay College. Later, the Ross star served 22 years in the United States Army, retiring as a chief warrant officer. He served in North Africa and Sicily in World War II and in the Korean War. Pettiford passed away in 1980.

Ross Hall of Fame inductee. 1990

Robert "Bob" Shaw

Robert "Bob" Shaw combined strength and speed to become one of the top athletes in Ross history.

He lettered nine times in football, basketball, and track from 1937 to 1940. He was first-team All-Ohio in both football and basketball, won the shot put and discus, and placed fifth in the high hurdles at one Ohio High School State Track and Field Meet.

In football, he was unofficially the leading scorer in Ohio during the 1939 season, scoring 148 points. His 92-yard touchdown punt return against Tiffin Columbian is the longest in Ross history.

Shaw attended Ohio State University, winning All-American football honors. He is the first Ross High School athlete to earn collegiate All-America honors.

After Ohio State, Shaw joined the Chicago Cardinals of the National Football League. In one game, Shaw caught five touchdown passes, an NFL record he still shares.

Shaw turned to coaching after his playing days, spending 10 years as an assistant coach in the NFL and 7 as a head coach in the Canadian Football League. He was the head coach and general manager of the Hamilton Tiger Cats of the CFL.

Ross Hall of Fame inductee. 1990

Jim Tiller

Mention Jim Tiller, and longtime Fremont Ross football fans remember a running back who seemed to be uncatchable. An athlete of speed and grace, a running back who helped lead his team to a 36-4 record from 1954-57.

He was a key member of the Mal Mackey-coached Ross teams that were 29-0-1 in the 1955-57 seasons.

Tiller holds three Ross records and is second in another.

His 3,755-career rushing yards sit at the top, while 366 career points put him in second place on the Little Giant list. He scored 180 points as a junior in 1956, which also ranks second, and his 1,598 yards rushing, also in 1956, ranks third among Ross running back greats as of 2022.

He was a four-year letterman on Mackey's teams and, after his high school career, earned a scholarship to Purdue University.

The gridiron was not the only place where Tiller exhibited his speed. He dominated the sprints and the long jump events.

As a junior in 1956, Tiller won the "outstanding performer" award at the Ohio High School Track and Field meet after winning the 100-yard dash in 9.8 seconds and the long jump with a leap of 23' 1.5". He was the only Class A athlete to win two events, pacing Ross to a seventh-place finish with his 12 team points.

At Ross, Tiller was poetry in motion. A poet whom Ross' opponents knew only by the blur of his flying feet.