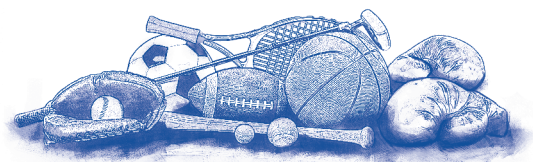


UP FRONT



WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA SPORTS MUSEUM

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The Streak – Braddock and Clairton

Fifty years separate the end of one streak and the start of another. Despite thousands of high school football games by dozens of teams across the region, no team came close to breaking the Braddock Tigers' WPIAL record of 46 consecutive wins in high school football from 1954 to 1959. Yet when Braddock's streak was finally eclipsed on December 16, 2011, with a 35-19 victory by the Clairton Bears in the PIAA Class A championship game, it almost felt like time had stood still.

Separated by 50 years, eight miles, and the Monongahela River are two very similar towns and two very similar teams. Braddock and Clairton are tough mill towns.

Nestled close to the brown waters of the Mon River, both have seen their share of hard times. And both still have steel at their core – for Clairton it is the coke works of U.S. Steel, once the largest facility of its kind in the world. There, a material vital to the forging of steel is formed, then shipped to Braddock's Edgar Thomson works, the first mill of its kind in this area, and the only one of U.S. Steel's plants still operating this close to Pittsburgh. In 1959, when Braddock's streak ended, the town had already begun to

struggle. During the 1950s, as the Tigers piled on the wins, their fans began to move on and out, and the town's population started its long slide downward, from 16,488 in 1950, to 12,337 in 1960, to just 2,159 today. As people left, the strength of the downtown faded and businesses were shuttered. Clairton too has struggled, losing two-thirds of its population from 1960, when it stood at 18,389, to today's low of 6,796.

But football has remained essential to the psyche of these towns and to these communities. More than 10,000 fans turned out to cheer on their Tigers during each game in the glory years of Braddock's streak, from 1954 through the 1959 season, when Coach Chuck Klausing's teams netted a 55-0-1 record, won five WPIAL titles outright and shared a sixth, and put together a 46-game win streak. Braddock had no



**Clairton helmet, 2011 state
championship season.**

Gift of Clairton High School.
HHC Museum collection, 2012. 23.1.
Photo by Paula Andras.

RIGHT: The 1958 Braddock High School football team, which claimed WPIAL championship number five for coach Chuck Klausing.

From *Never Lost a Game (Time Just Ran Out)*
by Bob Fulton and Chuck Klausing, 1997, HHC L&A.




home field during those years. They practiced on a rocky, oil-streaked patch of land, and played their home games on the field of their arch rival, North Braddock. Coach Klausing had only 19 players when the streak began. But Braddock didn't need numbers to win: they had talent and they had heart.

As Coach Klausing has acknowledged, putting together a consecutive win streak is much harder now. "Today they get a chance to play more games in a season and win more games," he said. "But I think when they finally get to play the top team from the east in the state championship, there is more of a chance for them to get defeated. We didn't have that. I think it would be much tougher to go without a loss for a long time today." Yet Clairton overcame those odds, winning

47 straight games and three consecutive state championships from 2009 through 2011. They did it in the 2011 season with just 29 players on the roster, including nine starters who played both offense and defense. They put up incredible numbers along the way, scoring 705 points and giving up only 78. And they did it with the support of their community. As starting quarterback Capri Thompson said, "Our community is definitely our '12th man' on the field...We do play for a lot more than just ourselves."

This fall, Clairton returns to the playing field with the streak intact and the door open to extending it. They have the longest active

winning streak in high school football in the country. Their offensive weapon, tailback Tyler Boyd, who accounted for almost half the team's points last season, will be playing his final season. And as always, just as it was in Braddock, Clairton football will have meaning beyond just the team. The Bears will play for a town that turns out 2,000 strong to support them. 

Clairton football from 2011 PIAA championship game.

Gift of Clairton High School. HHC Museum collection, 2012. 23.1.
Photo by Paula Andras.

