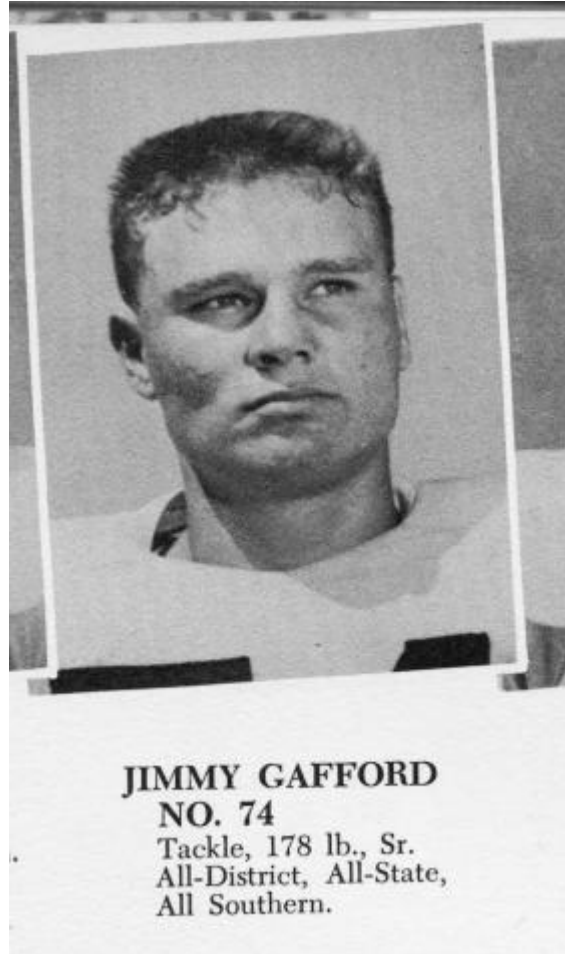


Four 1950s Lubbock High stars to be inducted into hall of honor

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A-J MEDIA

Dick Lowrey remembers the bus trips to Lubbock High road games in the early 1950s. Lowrey, an offensive guard, would sit next to the center and go over the blocking assignments for all the Westerners' running plays. Then he'd go sit next to a tackle and do the same thing again.

No wonder.

"Coach Pat (Pattison) was a genius," former Westerners tackle Jimmy Gafford said. "Would you believe we ran the pro offense before the pros did?"

Lubbock High won 29 games in a row from 1951-53, a Class 4A record at the time, including state championships in 1951 and 1952. Four standouts from those teams will be among the inductees Saturday at the annual Lubbock ISD Athletic Hall of Honor banquet at the Memorial Civic Center. The ex-Westerners are Gafford and Lowrey, who were stalwarts on the Westerners' line, and star running backs James Sides and Jimmy Welch, both of whom died in 2012.

Sides rushed for 1,143 yards and 23 touchdowns during the 1951 regular season and scored both TDs in Lubbock High's 14-12 victory against Baytown in the state-championship game. Welch ran for 1,101 yards and 18 TDs in 1952, and that team beat Baytown again in the title game.

The Westerners were a machine that ran a thinking man's offense.

"We called all of our offensive plays at the line of scrimmage – or we called the blocking down there," Lowrey said. "All seven people along the line of scrimmage made a call. Some applied to the people at the hole, and the rest of them were just fictitious calls.

"We had playbooks, and I think I counted one time and we had 57 running plays and about 17 pass plays. And in our playbook, we had eight different defenses. We needed to know who we were going to block on all eight of those on 57 running plays.

"It was a lot of stuff going on in our heads out on the football field."

When the LISD Hall of Honor started in 2011, the Westerners' coach was a charter member. Pattison coached at Lubbock High from 1948-53 and compiled an overall coaching record of 253-70-10.

"There's not a shadow of a doubt in my mind, he was the difference," Gafford said. "At that time, I don't have any doubt that he was the finest high school coach in Texas. He was an excellent motivator. His offensive strategy was superb, and so was his defense. And so far as that was concerned, his special teams were, too."

Gafford said Pattison not only was cutting edge as an Xs and Os mind, but ahead of his time in weekday preparation.

"A lot of coaches, younger coaches especially, at the beginning of the year in September and October, they leave their teams' ability on the practice field," Gafford said. "They beat the daylights out of them to make sure they're tough and ready."

Pattison's idea was to be more physical in the spring, do some hitting in August and, once the season started, use practice to strategize and stay in shape. Limited contact in practice, from the NFL and major colleges on down, is far more prevalent today.

"We spent our time running our plays and then setting our defenses up and everything we were going to do that week," Gafford said, "but we didn't have any contact. That's hard to believe, but that's the way it was.

"It did accomplish this thing of having a desire for contact. You really in your mind thought, 'I want to get somebody. I want to hit them.'"

It worked on a grand scale, borne out by the long winning streak and two titles. More than 30 players and three managers on those teams got college scholarships. About a dozen played at Texas and Texas Tech. And Lubbock High football was the big game in town, arguably as much as Tech.

"It was something," Lowrey said. "We had so many people that were behind us. The city of Lubbock had a population of about 100,000, but when we played games out at Jones Stadium, there were 15,000 to 20,000 people in the stands rooting for us.

"It was a good time – and something for a bunch of little West Texas boys to go down to Dallas, Texas, and play two state championships in the Cotton Bowl."

The Hall of Honor banquet is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Saturday, and 10 new members will be inducted.

Also going in will be former Monterey football lineman Dan Irons and baseball player Jimmy Shankle; Coronado 1975 tennis doubles state champions Doug Davis and Charles Key; the 1960 Dunbar state champion basketball team; and Jimmie Keeling and Kenneth Wallace, coach and quarterback of Estacado's 1968 state-champion football team.