

# Segregated school made Fort Worth '60s football king

By John Henry

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Gerald Beal didn't need a landmark Supreme Court decision to know that separate was not equal.

"I went down to North Side every year to pick up the cleats they wore the year before," Beal said. "And we were purple, so we used Paschal's old jerseys."



Beal said he didn't tolerate any complaining. Real bad circumstances weren't an excuse. He ordered his willing and enthusiastic players to do with what they had and work as hard as they could.

In doing so, the Kirkpatrick Wildcats, a segregated black school on Fort Worth's North Side led by Beal, their young head football coach, built something that has never been equaled.

"Kirkpatrick raps Fidelity for 3A crown," read a headline buried deep in the sports section of a December edition of the Star-Telegram in 1962.

The account of the game might well have received front-page treatment above the fold had anyone known the significance of Kirkpatrick's back-to-back titles.

Kirkpatrick, Prairie View Interscholastic League Class 3A state football champions of 1962 and '63, is the last school from the Fort Worth school district to win a state football title.

The 2010 District 6-4A champion Arlington Heights team was considered the city's next best hope. But the previously unbeaten Yellow Jackets were upset by Saginaw Boswell 52-49 Thursday night in a Class 4A Region I bi-district game.

"We had a community that was starved for success in athletics," Beal said. "We became that for the community."

What these Kirkpatrick Wildcats actually became were the best high school team then-TCU coach Abe Martin said he had ever seen, regardless of any classification, black or white.

Not bad for a group that lacked size and, according to Morris Franklin, a senior on the '62 team, was outweighed in some games 40 pounds per man.

But let there be no mistake: Speed kills.

"We were a small school," Beal said. "But we were blessed with exceptional athletes and speed."

So as North Side played in its new shoes and Paschal played in crisp uniforms, Kirkpatrick just played... longer and longer each season than anybody else.

Slow but sure

Before 1954, black students in Fort Worth attended only I.M. Terrell, the city's famed high school institution.

After the high court's decision in Brown v. the Board of Education, school administrators decided to add grades to the city's three black junior highs, Como, Dunbar and Kirkpatrick, until those schools were full high schools. Many speculate that this decision was the result of administrators bowing to pressure to skirt integration.

It was in 1954 that Beal, 20 years old and fresh out of Bishop College in Marshall, took his first coaching job. He and a volunteer assistant set to work on freshman and 10th-grade teams.

Repetition, repetition, repetition.

Trap 34. Trap 34. Trap 34. Trap 34...

"I bet if I could get them right now, they could run Trap 34," Beal said.

It wasn't Trap 34 but rather an unlikely hero who keyed victory in one of the most memorable games at Farrington Field, in 1963.

Kirkpatrick, the defending Class 3A champion, met Dunbar, a Class 4A finalist that lost to Houston Yates in 1961.

Kirkpatrick trailed 36-28 in the final minute of a game it led by 14 points in the first half. Dunbar's Wildcats had first-and-10 on Kirkpatrick's 25-yard line with seconds remaining. Instead of taking a knee, Dunbar quarterback Willie Price, trying to kill more time, took off toward the sideline. When he reached the corner, he was met by Kirkpatrick's Shelly Franklin.

Out of nowhere the ball shot into the air. There waiting was defensive lineman Corrie Harris.

"Corrie Harris, the slowest man on the team," Beal said, laughing about the moment. "Dunbar didn't know he had the ball. They could have gotten off the ground and caught him. I could have caught him. The slowest man on the team.

"In fact, the slowest man at Kirkpatrick."

Harris, though, defied his odds, rumbling down the sideline 75 yards for the touchdown.

"You had time to eat lunch," joked Beal.

Said Harris: "Well, I wasn't going out for track. I think there were 18 seconds left when I started to run, and there was two when I got to the end zone."

On the 2-point attempt, running back James "Metoe" Millard took a quick pitch.

"The guy meets Metoe at the 1-yard line, he hits him and Metoe goes airborne," Beal said. "He lands about 3 yards deep in the end zone. End of the game. Tied 36-36."

That result and a loss to Jerry LeVias-led Beaumont Hebert were the only blemishes on the record of 1963.

'Metoe'

Jordan is Mike, Tiger is Tiger and James Millard is just "Metoe."

Metoe represented the toughness of the '62 team, Morris Franklin said.

"This kid was as tough as a can of nails," Beal said. "I've seen kids come out of the game, and say, 'Coach, Metoe is driving us too hard.' He never let down."

He also had a mind of his own, Beal said. Metoe liked the audible.

"Metoe changed a lot of plays on me. 'No, coach, this will work,'" Beal said shaking his head as if the exchange were last week. "I said, 'Metoe, that's fine if you change the plays, but you better hope every time you change the play, it works.'"

It was Beal who called an audible on Metoe the next season. Carl Williams showed promise at quarterback and started the season splitting time at quarterback with Metoe, who was also taking snaps at running back. Metoe wanted answers: Coach, do you want me at quarterback or running back?

"I told him, 'I'm glad you asked me. You're now the starting halfback.'"

There never seemed to be a void at running back. Top college-caliber talent always seemed to roam in the backfield. Johnny Ray Jones, a Michigan State recruit, and his quick feet starred there in 1962. And an upstart sophomore shared carries with Metoe in 1963. He also played cornerback and returned punts.

His name was Margene Adkins, who wanted nothing to do with football. It looked like it hurt.

"They made him play football. He didn't want to," Beal said. "He wanted to play basketball. The principal saw him out in P.E. and called his mother and said this boy needs to play football.

"He was absolutely right. This is a kid who could stand flat-footed, about 5-foot-10, and touch the crossbar. He was an exceptional athlete."

Adkins went on to play four seasons in the NFL, including two with the Dallas Cowboys, as a wide receiver and returner.

"We could convince those kids to move mountains, and they'd do it," Beal said. "It almost brings you to tears."

Said Morris Franklin: "The coaches were perfect role models for us. Because of our relationship to them, we wanted to win. 'We've got to do this for Coach.'"

Triumph

And for Coach was a third opportunity for a state title. Kirkpatrick had lost title games in 1959 and '61 against Bay City and Baytown.

"The coaches came and checked to make sure we were home, make sure we weren't at the movies or out with our girlfriends," Franklin said.

"'We've got to win this one,' they said."

Galena Park Fidelity Manor was unbeaten when it traveled to Farrington Field in December 1962.

Kirkpatrick completed one pass that day, an 18-yarder from Metoe to Ronald Bailey for a touchdown in the first quarter that, according to a newspaper account, capped a 65-yard drive. Jones bolted for runs of 23 and 18 yards on the drive. The Wildcats gained fewer than 100 yards the rest of the game.

Antonio Jackson and Johnny Clyde Lee were heralded for leading a Kirkpatrick defensive effort that forced four turnovers that day and held Fidelity scoreless. Galena Park nonetheless drove 70 yards to the Wildcats' 10 with just under 2 minutes left, poised to deny Kirkpatrick a title a third time.

It was the pass Fidelity didn't complete that made the difference.

Franklin, a cornerback, will never forget fourth down. Fidelity's quarterback rolled right...

"I was thinking I could hit him. I was about to come up and hit him," Franklin remembered, "and just as I was about to, Ronald Bailey said, 'Don't let anybody get behind you.'"

"I started [to run] back and the guy threw the ball, and I jumped up and knocked the ball away."

Kirkpatrick and Beal, with a 6-0 victory, finally had their state championship and the reward of finishing the journey at 9-1.

The Wildcats dominated the next season with a loaded lineup. Williams, having emerged at quarterback (he went on to play at UT-Arlington), led Kirkpatrick to an 11-1-1 record after a 46-14 state-championship victory over Gladewater Weldon.

"That's the thing that prides me the most," Beal said. "Kids had the opportunity to experience some things that they never would have without Kirkpatrick."