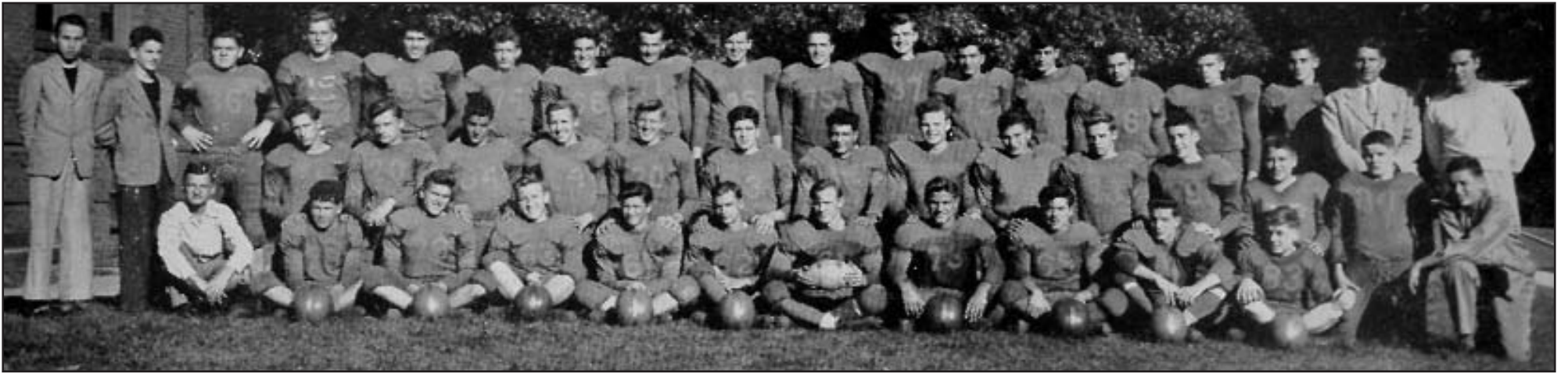


Hall of Fame



COURTESY OF THE SOUTHTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The 1949 Lewis High School football team went 11-0 and set the pace for Southington's rich sports history. Back, from left, Haight (mgr), Niland (mgr) Tangney, Crandall, Montague, Porydzy, Tedesco, Michanczyk, Stanish, Fortier, Kuscinkas, Galiette, Adams, Morelli, Merriman, Bennett, Coach Joseph Fontana, Coach Boland. Middle, Hubeny, Scott, D'Agostino, Nyren, Smith, Sabatella, Liguori, Cooley, Borys, Barry, Mayo, Reisch, Patz, Fontana. Bottom, Beebe, Wendt, Gemmell, Snow, Jalowieki, Beshuk, Albrecht, Knap, Badgley, Verderame, Norton.

When We Were Kings

1949 football team is considered the best in local sports

By JOHN GORALSKI
SPORTS WRITER

It's been more than 60 years since big Bill Albrecht has charged into defenders behind a line of childhood friends. More than six decades have passed since Southington fans cheered as the Lewis High School running back slipped through an opponent's grasp and into the end zone.

The local high school has changed names and moved. The small farm community has swelled into one of the largest school districts in the state, but one thing hasn't changed. Southington sports fans have maintained the argument that the 1949 football team was the best that the town has ever seen.

Team

"There were a lot of other successful teams in the town thereafter. You can't take anything away from those teams, but if you look at the 1949 team we had three major players that ended up playing at top football conference in the country," said Ray Michanczyk, an underclassman on the team, a future high school all-American, and one of three teammates to go on to play at the

“ I think that everyone just came together. As we played, we got better and better. ”

Ray Michanczyk,
Member of the 1949 football team

University of Washington. "So when I go look at other local teams that were pronounced to be the best, I always try to evaluate it with the top level of athletes that they had and the schools that they attended."

No team before or since measures up. The 1949 team played a perfect 11-0. They outscored opponents, 385-39. They collected seven shutouts, and just one team came within a touchdown in the final minute of the game. The Southington boys were good, and they knew it.

Heading into their final game against Rockville, one player was grilled by the local press about the team's chances on Thanksgiving Day. "We've got to win this Rockville game and get it out of the way," he said with a grin, "so we can start serious training for our banquet on

Dec. 8." They won the game, 64-0. Albrecht capped his all-state season with three touchdowns and one extra point in the Thanksgiving rout. Albrecht shattered the single-season state scoring record (155 points), and Lewis High was crowned state champions.

"Running constituted about 80 percent of the game, and Bill Albrecht was tough," said Michanczyk. "He just put everything he had into it every minute that he was on the football field. He wasn't the flashiest runner, because you didn't have much flash when you were running the single wing. You're double-teaming the hole in which you're running through. It's all power driven. To be physically fit, he did a lot to keep himself in condition."

He wasn't alone. Stan Kuscinkas and Michanczyk were both future teammates with Albrecht at the University of Washington. Quarterback Roy Sabatella called the plays, while Jim Morelli, Dick Stanish, Larry Montague, Gus Merriman, and Roy Nyren anchored the line. Eddie Knapp and Rog Fortier joined Albrecht in the backfield.

Fran Verderame, Joe Adams, Jack Barry, Tony Tedesco, Joe D'Agostino, and Henry Badgley saw plenty of action.

"We know, in sports, it takes 11 people to make a good football team. One individual star never makes it, but in that particular team there were three people that went on to play at the top collegiate football in the country," said Michanczyk. "I won't take away anything from some of the other individual kids that came out of this town like Vinnie Clements or Tom Cichowski, but the personnel on that particular team was probably stronger than most of the other teams that were presented down the road."

Southington was a lot smaller at the time, but the Lewis High squad held their own against the larger schools on the schedule. Players didn't shuffle in and out of the lineup. They

**Southington
Sports
Hall of Fame**

1949 Football

**Lewis High School
Overall record: 11-0**

Opponent	Score
Branford	31-0
Notre Dame WH	34-7
East Haven	19-0
Woodrow Wilson	19-13
Gilbert	46-0
Meriden	40-12
Sacred Heart	46-0
Shelton	19-0
St. Mary NH	54-7
Plainville	13-0
Rockville	61-0

the team, and made it a stronger team. Being able to win by some lopsided scores gave the opportunity for many other kids to participate and show their skills in the game for the future years."

That's why the Southington Sports Hall of Fame selection committee selected the 1949 football team to head its 2010 inaugural class. They were a unanimous choice. They were certainly the best in Lewis High School history and arguably the best in the history of Southington sports.

"The ones that are around, when we see each other, we talk a little bit about our team, how good the team was, and what made it good," said Michanczyk. "Whenever we congregate and meet each other, it brings back the old times of what that '49 team did achieve and the type of individuals that played on that team."

For more than six decades, they've set the standard for Southington sports. On Wednesday, Nov. 10, the team will finally be honored in an induction ceremony at the Aqua Turf Club in Plantsville.

To comment on this story, email John Goralski at jgoralski@southingtonobserver.com.

played from the first whistle to the last. They played offense, defense, and special teams, but that didn't slow them on the field.

"I think that everyone just came together," said Michanczyk. "As we played, we got better and better. It was an opportunity for everyone to show what they had in comparison to the year before. We carried over a nucleus of fellows, and we had a few younger classmates that came in, made

