As Cedaredge wrapped up a fantastic season Saturday, Nov. 24 with a win over Buena Vista in the Class 1A state championship game, the minds of some gentlemen with ties to Holyoke have been thinking back to memories made some 60 years ago.

The 1952 Phillips County High School Dragons had a season that most wouldn't ever forget and following the success of this year's Holyoke Dragon team, took some of them back recently.

As the seniors on the 2012 HHS football team probably won't ever forget their final year in a Holyoke uniform, the same goes for those gentlemen who can look back to an unbelievable 1952 season on the gridiron.

Under the direction of coaches Harold Chaffee and Bill Knuckles, the Dragons were poised to have a good season.

The team returned 12 of 22 letterwinners from the previous season which entailed a conference championship and Class A state playoff quarterfinal 0-39 loss to LaJunta.

This is a photo of the 1952 Phillips County High School Dragon football team. The team racked off 10 straight wins, including a playoff win over Rocky Ford. All 10 wins were shutouts as the stiff Holyoke defense held all of their opponents out of the end zone. The feat garnered national attention. The first points they surrendered came in a disappointing home playoff semifinal game against Fort Morgan when they lost 12-19 on a frigid day in Holyoke. It was reported 1,500 people attended the 1952 semifinal game in Holyoke. After the first 1,200 tickets were sold out, standing room only tickets were sold. Pictured from left, front row, Dan Krueger, Dick Jung, Bud Leppard, John Ortner, Jay

Dean Krueger, Jim McFadden, Jerry Ahnstedt, Paul Hassler, Gene Rockwell and Stan Willmon; second row, Bill Sandall, Dallas Shafer, Bob Briggs, Tommy Thompson, Jim Saylor, Ron McDonald, Junior Bovee, Don Kruse and Jim Deselms; third row, Vern Woodmancy, Delmer Dudden, Dick Whittaker, Robert (Bob) Trumper, Bob Schmidt, Bob Fisher, Roger Trumper, Bob Kramer and Gene Kelso; fourth row, Earl Colglazier, Larry McCormick, Elwin Poe, Grant Ferguson, Chuck Smith, Gary Wernet, trainers Jim Brosby and Dan Clark; and back row, assistant coach Bill Knuckles, Albert Bahler, Dan Guernsey, Don Church, Doug Keasling and head coach Harold Chaffee.

The Dragons had a nine-game schedule staring them in the face as they kicked off the season with a 48-0 win over rival Imperial, Neb. “The boys are in good shape,” Chaffee was quoted saying a day before the Dragons opened their season against Imperial.

“What we were blessed with were two great coaches,” Bob Trumper, who was a junior end on the 1952 Dragon squad, said.

Chaffee had just graduated from Colorado A&M College (current Colorado State University) and wasn’t much older than the boys he was coaching. It was also the first year Holyoke had two coaches roaming the sidelines.

Assistant coach Bill Knuckles joined the staff for the 1952 season.

“Really nice guys that were good to us,” Trumper said. “Everybody bought into it.”

“Coach Chaffee taught teamwork,” senior guard Jay Dean Krueger said. Krueger said he still hears from Chaffee every three or four months. He said he also still receives Christmas cards from Knuckles. Chaffee currently resides in Lincoln, Neb. while Knuckles lives in Spokane, Wash.

Krueger said Chaffee had three winning seasons during his time in Holyoke. “He simply taught us how to work together,” Krueger said.

No one would've thought the Dragons would go on to win eight more regular season games and a playoff game all the while, never letting anyone cross their goal line.

Heading into the season, they were favored to win the Eastern conference for the second straight year, however coach Chaffee said victories were not won on paper.

The Dragons went on to win their next two non-conference games against Wauneta, Neb. 33-0 and a tough Brighton team, 40-0.

Conference play began Oct. 3 as the Dragons traveled south to face the Wray Eagles. Headlines read, "Holyoke Powerhouse Faces Acid Test Friday at Wray." The game was being billed as the conference championship as the two teams seemed to be the two strongest in the league.

A year earlier, the Dragons had taken down the Eagles for their first conference title in quite some time. It had been the Eagles who were dubbed a powerhouse in years prior.

"The widely-heralded battle between the Holyoke and Wray High School football teams turned out to be 'no contest' last night as the Holyoke Dragons had far too much power for an outclassed but scrappy Wray squad," the paper read the day after a 47-0 Dragon victory.

The next shutout came against Akron Oct. 10 as the Dragons dropped the Ramblers 38-0 in Akron on their Homecoming.

The next week's game had Haxtun coming to Holyoke as the Dragons celebrated its own Homecoming Oct. 17.

Clark's Corner in the Oct. 16, 1952 edition of the Enterprise read "Tomorrow evening, as you no

doubt already know, the Haxtun Bulldogs will be here attempting to throw a crimp into the PCHS homecoming festivities. The Dragons have been impressive so far this season, but the best laid plans of mice and men go oft astray. The Bulldogs could be the ones to upset the apple cart."

There were no apple carts upset as the Dragons tacked on number six with a 53-0 thumping of Haxtun. The 53 points would prove to be the most the Dragons scored on anyone that season.

Krueger said it was fun each week to read what Ted Clark had to say in his Clark's Corner front-page section of the newspaper.

The next game on Oct. 24, Holyoke played host to Fleming and came away with another shutout after winning 41-0. The Wildcats never crossed the Holyoke 45 yard line in the game, according to the paper.

On a roll and leading the conference with three victories and no losses, it was Yuma's turn to face Holyoke Oct. 29.

Trumper remembers the Yuma game well. He said Verne Haruf, who had played with the Dragons a year earlier, intercepted a pass in the opening quarter and returned it down near the goal line and almost scored which would've put an end to the Dragons' perfect goose egg on the defensive side of the ball. The Dragon defense stood tough and went on to take a 52-0 win from the Indians.

Julesburg was the only team standing between Holyoke and its undefeated and unscored upon regular season. The Dragons played host to the Lions Nov. 8 and trounced their way to a 41-0 win.

Sitting at 9-0, Holyoke was beginning to raise some eyebrows in northeast Colorado. They had scored 393 points for an average of 43.6 points a game—all the while, not letting one opponent cross their goal line—an impressive feat for sure.

“I never thought too much about it at the time,” Trumper said of going undefeated and never scored on until the semifinal playoff game.

“Dragons Aim At State Grid Crown”

The Dragons were paired with Rocky Ford to begin the 1952 state playoffs. A year earlier, Holyoke saw its playoff run end after a 0-39 loss to LaJunta in the quarterfinals.

“One of the biggest football crowds in Holyoke’s history is expected to jam the local stadium for that event,” it was reported in the Nov. 13 issue of the Enterprise. “All present bleachers will be used for reserved seats and more bleachers will be moved in from other towns for general admission spectators.”

“The attendance at these games was overwhelming,” Krueger remembers.

The Dragons amazingly kept their streak alive with an 8-0 shutout of Rocky Ford in front of a massive crowd. The lone touchdown came when Clyde (Junior) Bovee took the ball from quarterback Gene Rockwell on one of the oldest plays in the book—the Statue of Liberty.

The other two points came off a safety when Krueger and Bob Fisher went crashing through the line to tackle Jim Proctor.

Up next were the Fort Morgan Maroons.

“In Holyoke’s path is a strong Fort Morgan squad, backed by a town that is equally full of

football fever," the Enterprise read following the Dragons' win over Rocky Ford.

Dream season comes to halt on frigid day

Three interceptions and four fumbles spelled doom for the Dragons Nov. 28 as they lost what has been dubbed a controversial 12-19 game.

Holyoke's first score of the game came when junior Dick Whittaker broke through the line for an 81-yard touchdown score.

"He broke it and I can still see him going down the west sidelines. This kid was after him but he wasn't about to catch Dick," Trumper said of Whittaker's score. "Dick was a marvelous football player," he added.

Fort Morgan went on to score the next 19 points. One of the touchdowns scored came on a controversial call. The Holyoke sideline claimed a Fort Morgan runner stepped out of bounds on his way to the end zone but the referees called it the other way. Some of the players said they still remember seeing the footprints in the snow where the Maroon runner had stepped out of bounds on his way to the end zone.

Holyoke's final six points came on a fake punt in the final quarter. Bovee went back in punt formation but instead of punting, passed to Gene Kelso in the flat who went on to score a 54-yard touchdown.

"That's one I'll never forget," Krueger said of the loss. To this day he feels the refereeing wasn't fair.

The unbelievable season ended in heartache but to this day, many of the men on that team can recall moments from throughout the amazing season.

Trumper said he wasn't one of the main guys by any stretch of the imagination. "We really had a lot of speed," he noted. Trumper said Jerry Ahnstedt, Gene Kelso, Dick Whittaker and Bob Briggs were the state track champions in the 880 relay. Trumper also noted Gene Rockwell was a great quarterback. "We had some tough guys on the line," he added.

Trumper also noted the team had a tremendous amount of support from the town.

Krueger said the season left the team with some great memories. "I believe each one of the first string players have gone on to be pretty successful guys."

Krueger said that season taught him determination, teamwork and never to give up.

Team members on the 1952 PCHS football team were seniors Junior Bovee, Bob Fisher, Paul Hassler, Gene Kelso, Bob Kramer, Jay Dean Krueger, Jim McFadden, John Ortner and Gene Rockwell; juniors Jerry Ahnstedt, Jim Deselms, Grant Ferguson, Bill Sandall, Dallas Shafer, Bob Schmidt, Tommy Thompson, Bob Trumper, Dick Whittaker and Stanley Willmon; sophomores Bob Briggs, Earl Colglazier, Delmer Dudden, Richard Jung, Dan Krueger, Buddy Leppard, Larry McCormick, Ronald McDonald, Jim Saylor, Charles Smith and Vern Woodmancy; and freshmen Albert Barber, Don Church, Douglas Keasling, Elwin Poe, Roger Trumper and Gary Wernet.

Editor's note: All of the unforgettable moments from the 1952 season can't be captured in a single article. The stories and statistics are permanently recorded in the Enterprise archives. Interested parties are always invited to stop by the Enterprise office to take a walk down memory lane.

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