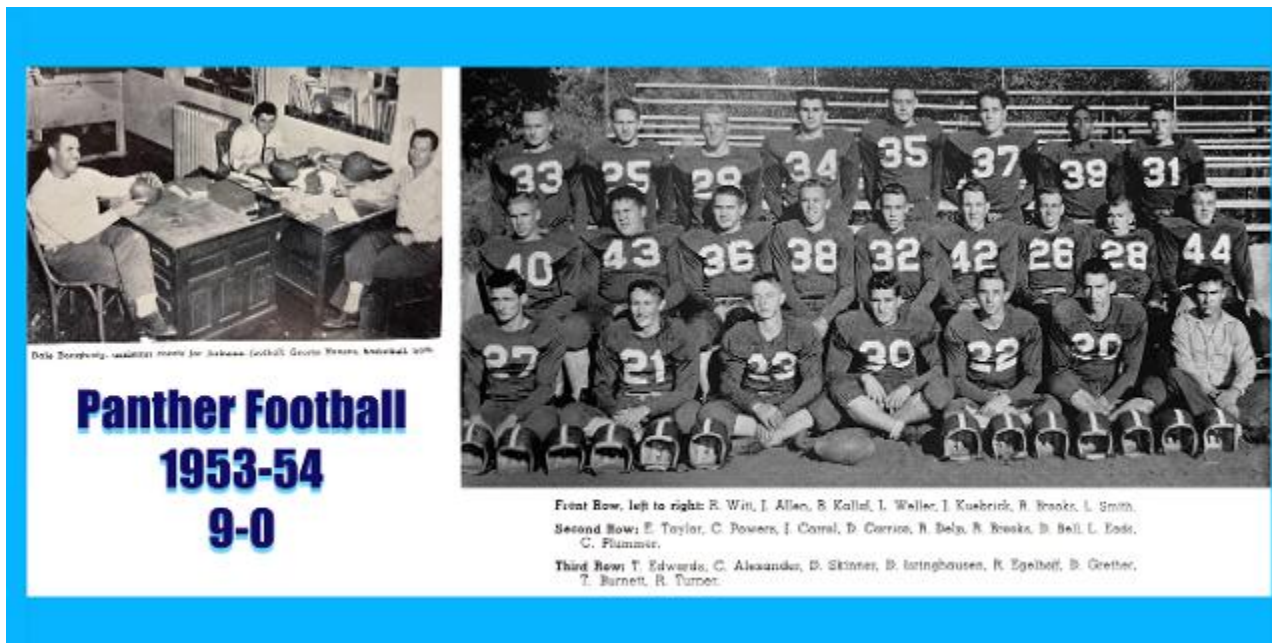


70 Years Later, Stan Sinclair Reflects On 1953 Jersey Panthers Football Team

by Dalton Brown, News Reporter
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JERSEYVILLE - During their 1953-54 season, the Jersey Community High School Panthers football team went 9-0. Stan Sinclair, former general manager of Sinclair Foods in Jerseyville, recently recalled his experience playing on the team, which will be honored at tonight's Panthers football game for their 70th anniversary.

To help honor the team's outstanding record 70 years later, Sinclair asked JCHS Photoshop Teacher Lisa Kolkmeier to compile a photo of the team and coaches with their 9-0 record, which is shown above. While Sinclair is not pictured in the photo, he said he started with the team as a freshman lineman in 1953 and went on to play quarterback from 1954 to 1956.

“In 52, they were 7-2 and we were picking up on football, but before that, we were just a mediocre football school,” Sinclair said. “Joe Jurkanin came in ‘52 when we were 7-2, he came from Staunton, Illinois.”

Sinclair said Coach Jurkanin, who he called “Jersey Joe,” had been successful as a coach in Staunton before coaching the Panthers. Sinclair credits “Jersey Joe” with leading them to their 9-0 record in 1953, and said he implemented a single-wing offensive system with two-on-one blocking. Coach Jurkanin can be seen in the center of the upper-left photo above, seated behind the football on his desk.

The new single-wing system worked well for the Panthers, many of whom Sinclair said were big and strong from working on farms.

“The new system, the single-wing, the boys bought into it and we just had the right people to play it,” Sinclair said. “We had some big boys, and most of them were farm boys, very strong, and we had a couple pretty fast guys.

“Jersey Joe, he was quite a coach. This team was really, really good.”

Sinclair added that he’s been a sports and history enthusiast in Jerseyville his entire life, so he helped organize the celebration of the 1953 Panthers at tonight’s football game. He said the last two living members of the team will be honored at tonight’s game against Civic Memorial at 7 p.m. at the Donald W. Snyders Community Sports Complex next to Jersey Community Middle School.