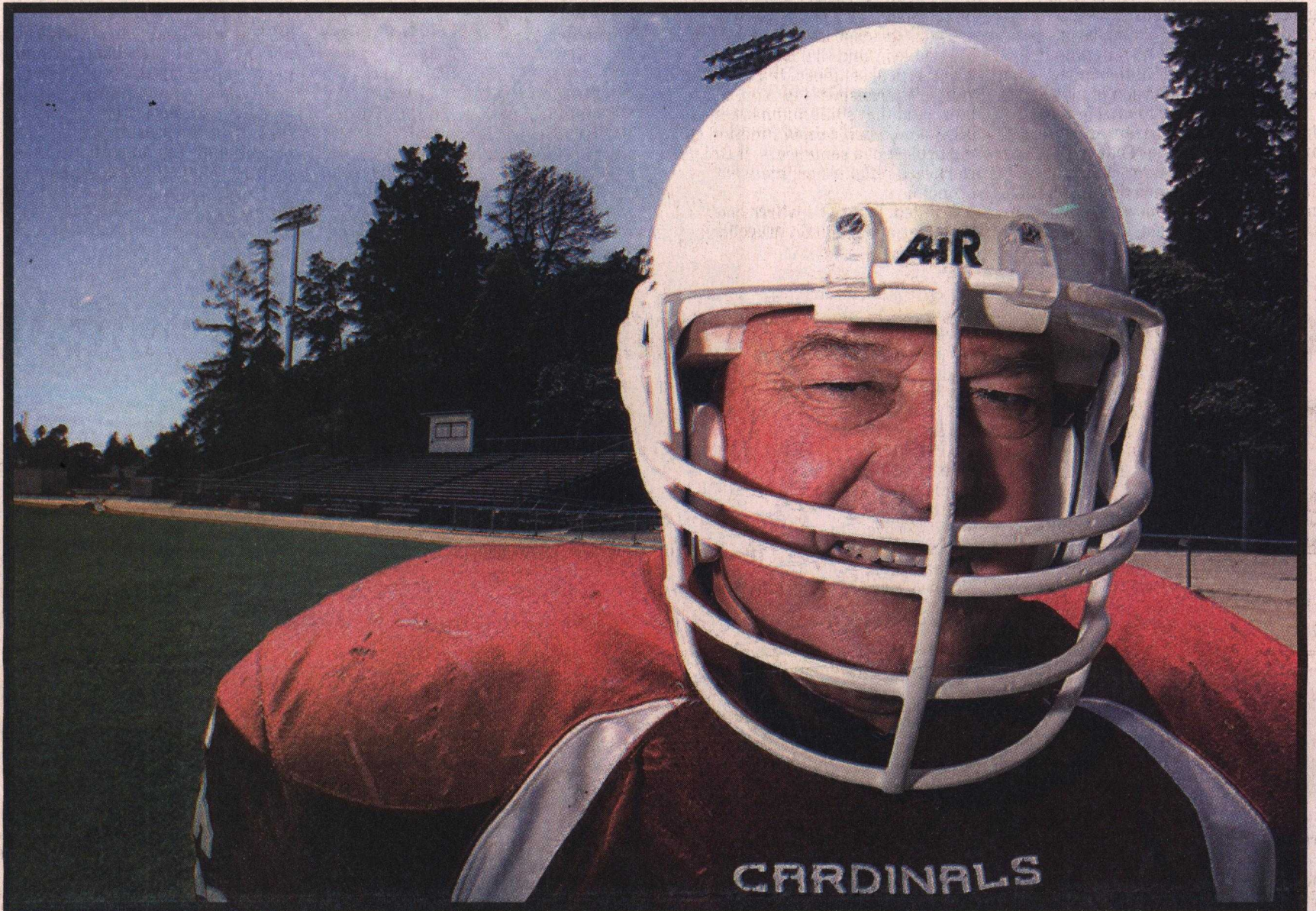


THE SENTINEL'S ALL-TIME
ALL-COUNTY FOOTBALL TEAM

THE PROTOTYPE



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

ABOUT THIS PACKAGE

In honor of the Sentinel's 150th anniversary, staff writer Jim Seimas poured over decades of microfilm from the Sentinel archive and interviewed scores of local football experts to come up with the an all-time Santa Cruz County team. He also fleshed out some of the untold stories from years on the gridiron gone by. We hope you enjoy. Contribute your own thoughts or stories and we'll publish the highlights next Sunday.

Send them to
sports@santacruzsentinel.com

JARRIN' JOHN KIRBY EMBODIED EVERYTHING YOU COULD ASK FOR IN A FOOTBALL PLAYER. FAST, TOUGH, TALENTED. THAT'S WHY THE SANTA CRUZ HIGH STAR OF THE '50s IS EVERY BIT THE POSTER CHILD FOR WHAT THE MODERN PLAYER SHOULD BE.

By JIM SEIMAS
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

The jovial, 65-year-old pulls the skin-tight, Santa Cruz High football jersey over his bulky shoulder pads. His belly slightly protrudes.

He places the glistening, white helmet over his balding head and tugs on the facemask to make sure the fit is good.

The old warrior is ready for action — a photo shoot with the hometown paper.

Just then a group of freshmen storm into the Cardinals locker room to dress for football practice. They wonder why a man old enough to be their grandfather is suiting up. A reporter helps them out.

"This guy was one of the best. All-state. All-Ameri-

can. He's in your school Hall of Fame."

They don't know they're staring at a legend, the type of big, fast, gritty athlete who helped put Santa Cruz High football on the map a half century ago. Probably the type of football player they dream of becoming.

Youngsters, meet Jarrin' John Kirby, a football player who transcends generations.

As the Sentinel celebrates its 150th year in Santa Cruz County, today it honors an all-time, all-county football team highlighted by guys like Kirby.

He never strayed from contact and never went down easily. Jarrin' John was as tough as they come.

See KIRBY on PAGE C4

MORE INSIDE



■ The first, second and third teams, and a look back at some of the pre-1950 greats.

■ Old-timers remember days when there were no facemasks, but plenty of love of the game.

■ The county's single season all-time leaders for rushing, passing, receiving and scoring.

PAGES C4-C5

Go to **WWW.SANTACRUZPHOTOGALLERY.COM** for an online slideshow of Santa Cruz County football greats

THE SENTINEL'S ALL-TIME

Kirby

Continued from Page C1

He played football in the late 1950s — the final era of flimsy, leather shoulder pads and peanut shell-looking helmets [without facemasks]. Kirby's 6-foot-1, 205-pound frame was built for the grind.

"The defender's equipment was the same as yours, so no one had an advantage," he said. "There was nothing wrong with the equipment."

Kirby turned football fields into his personal playground.

"I remember them all well," he said of his playing days. "At least I think I do."

His playful disclaimer? He was knocked unconscious in 1958 during his final prep game — the now-defunct North-South Shrine Football Classic played in front of 57,989 fans at Los Angeles Coliseum.

He was knocked out, but he also came back in the game and was named MVP. He also garnered all-state and fifth-team Wigwam Wisemen of America All-American honors that year. He was recruited by the majority of the nation's big-name programs — Cal, Washington, Notre Dame and Oregon to name a few — but elected to play for Cabrillo College's first football team in '59 before transferring to Oregon State. He was battling for extra yards when he suffered an injury would cut his career short as a college sophomore.

The game has evolved since Kirby became a Cardinals legend. [He was elected to Santa Cruz's Hall of Fame as part of the school's centennial celebration in '95.]

"John was a big, fast kid, the best I saw in that period of time," said ex-Cardinals teammate Norm Costa, who became a successful football coach at Holy Cross and later at Palma in Salinas. "It's hard to compare eras. John was the best of his time."

Kirby, a retired educator who lives in King City, helped the '58 team go unbeaten

[9-0 overall], bringing the program the No. 1 ranking in Northern California.

He played three years of varsity football for Cardinals coach Larry Siemerling, who served as an assistant to legend Amos Alonzo Stagg at Pacific. Siemerling replaced Stagg in Stockton and later served as Arizona State's head coach before coming to Santa Cruz.

"John was a tough player, one of toughest I'd seen in a long, long time," said Siemerling, now 95. "He was a very smart player too."

Siemerling also coached the North team in that '58 Shrine Classic in Los Angeles.

Kirby was knocked unconscious in the second quarter when he was kicked in the head by a tackler who fell over him. He was taken to the locker room on a stretcher, but returned in the second half and was later named the game's outstanding player on 37 of 50 media ballots. He scored two touchdowns and returned an interception 43 yards to set up another score in the North's 26-6 victory.

Kirby was all over the field on his interception return — a stark contrast to his running style on offense.

"I was a north-south runner," said Kirby, who rushed for 641 yards on 108 carries as a senior, scoring 20 touchdowns, including four receiving. "Back then, you went straight ahead and ran people over. And when you went down, you went down. Defenses played hard-nosed, straight up. If you had the horses you had a good battle."

Santa Cruz had the horses in '58, guys like fellow halfback Ken Negro, end Fred McPherson and linemen Paul McDuffee, Dave Wylie and Wally Hicks. Hicks was also selected to the Shrine Classic.

"It took others to do it," Kirby said of the 122 points he scored as a senior. "It wasn't just one person. But I had the tools, quickness, good hands ... I thought, 'No one is gonna get me.' I mean, no matter who you are, you're going to get beat a few times.



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

John Kirby returns to Memorial Field in Santa Cruz, where he ran over opposing defenders during his playing days in the late 1950s.

But that was the way I thought."

Siemerling left Santa Cruz High after three seasons to coach Cabrillo's inaugural season in '59. Kirby followed his mentor to Aptos.

There, he led all rushers with 444 yards on 85 carries. He also had 203 yards receiving.

"I never fumbled," Kirby said of his biggest strength as a player. "I had good hands."

Kirby also had strong, churning legs, which he developed by running the sand dunes in Scotts Valley as a youngster and riding his bike everywhere.

The game was all toughness, and Kirby never let down. He was battling for extra

yards at Iowa for Oregon State when he suffered a back injury in his second game as a college sophomore. He remembers getting hit by a helmet in his back as he took on a slew of defenders. He ruptured three discs, but finished out the game and the season too.

When the pain persisted a year later, he visited specialists in Oregon and Washington and was advised not to get it operated on. His football career ended then. Instead of keeping his scholarship, he left school so that another player could gain financial aid. He obtained his teaching credential at San Jose State.

Kirby never stopped loving football. He coached the sport at San Lorenzo Valley

High, Junipero Serra of Monterey and later King City, where he was hired in '76. Kirby, who played basketball and baseball at Santa Cruz, also coached baseball and softball at King City.

He said he still tracks local high school football scores and performances on his computer, reading numerous online publications.

He followed Johnny Johnson's record-setting rushing season at Santa Cruz in 1985, when the future NFLer ran for 1,729 yards and 24 touchdowns. He's familiar with Harbor's Calvin Keyser-Allen, who broke the season-yardage mark in 2000 with 2,360 yards on 300 carries. And he knows of ex-Watsonville back Shawn Benjamin, whose chase of Keyser-Allen's record in 2003 ended with 2,233 yards and 27 touchdowns.

Kirby said occasionally he wonders how he would fare in today's game.

The game has changed. Offenses have become more complex. Players are bigger, stronger and faster. Most players are lifting weights year-round, others are specializing in the sport.

"I could run 100 yards in 9.8 or 9.8 seconds at 225 pounds," Kirby said. "But I was an exception. It's not like it is nowadays. Now each team has four or five guys doing that. The linemen are just as fast as the running backs."

The one thing that hasn't changed — football is still a game for the physically and mentally tough.

Kirby was dominant with those two traits and secured his spot in county history.

When he tried on the modern Cardinals football uniform, he looked like he was ready to go. He gripped the football like it was an extension of his hand. If just for a brief moment, he put on his game face.

Contact Jim Seimas at
jseimas@santacruzsentinel.com.

A STAR-STUDDDED LINEUP

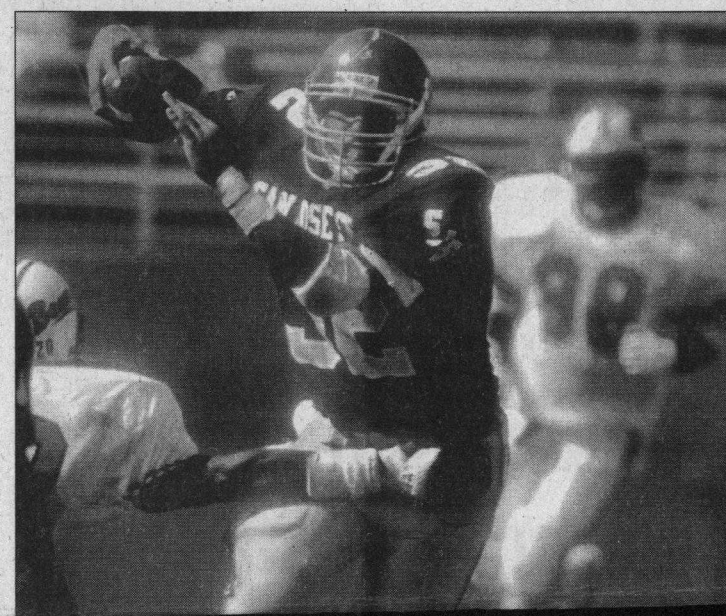
FIRST TEAM (Post-1950)

OFFENSE

POS.— NAME (SCHOOLS)	HT., WT.	NOTES
QB — TRENT DILFER (Aptos, '89/Fresno State)	6-4, 227	NFL Pro Bowler; Super Bowl XXXV champ; In 13th NFL season; Now with 49ers
RB — JOHNNY JOHNSON (SC, '85/San Jose State)	6-2, 218	NFL Pro Bowler (1990); Jets MVP in '93; Played 5 seasons in NFL
RB — OBAFEMI AYANBADEJO (SC, '91/Cabrillo/SDSU)	6-2, 235	One year of h.s. football; NFL Europe; Now in 8th NFL season
RB — JOHN KIRBY (SC, '58/Cabrillo/Oregon St.)	6-1, 205	North-South Shrine MVP in '58, All-State and All-American pick
WR — AL MARSHALL (SC, '68/Boise State)	6-2, 190	Seven 100-yard games at Boise; AA in '72; NFL (1 season)
WR — BLAKE TUFFLI (SLV, '91/St. Mary's)	6-2, 185	Has St. Mary's career records in catches (194) and yards (2,990)
WR/TE — DANIEL CADA (SLV, '90/UC Davis/Cabrillo)	6-2, 215	Only sophomore to ever play varsity under SLV coach Doug Morris
OL — JIM LEONARD (Harbor, '74/Santa Clara)	6-3, 260	NFL (6 seasons); Consensus AA in '79; Also in USFL with Oakland Invaders
OL — MARV MARINOVICH (Watsonville, '57/Santa Monica/USC)	6-3, 260	AFL (1 season); Asst. o-line coach for Oakland Raiders in '70
OL — JON ZOGG (Watsonville, '78/Hartnell JC/Boise St.)	6-4, 290	Played for USFL's S.A. Gunslingers in '84 and NFL's Raiders in '87
OL — GREG SINNOTT (Marelo Prep, '81/Utah St.)	6-7, 280	4-year letterwinner at Utah St.; NFL (1 season; Rams in '87)

DEFENSE

DL — ROB TRUHITE (Santa Cruz, '94/Cabrillo/Cal)	6-5, 290	Big-time career stalled by injury, mysterious allergic reaction; Played OL at Cal
DL — JEFF MILLER (Soquel, '78/Cabrillo/San Diego St.)	6-3, 240	Ankle injury ruined Blue-Gray Classic and tryout with 49ers
DL — DICK SKOCKO (Watsonville, '49/USC)	6-3, 220	End war in football



LB — BRENDON AYANBADEJO (SC, '93/Cabrillo/UCLA)	6-3, 235	Played LB at SJSU; NFL (1 season), last USFL season in '85
LB — WILLIE SELDEN (Watsonville, '79/Santa Clara)	6-2, 235	All-Pac-10 as senior at UCLA; 185 career tackles and 10 INTs; In 4th NFL season
LB — JORDAN BECK (SLV, 2000/Cal Poly-SLO)	6-3, 220	FA with 49ers; 77TD INT return for Santa Clara in '84; third longest in team history
LB — JEFF SKOCKO (Wats., '74/Cabrillo/Fresno St.)	6-2, 233	Set Cal Poly's game, season and career records in tackles; In 2nd NFL season
DB — SHERMAN COCROFT (Watsonville/Cabrillo, 79-80/SJSU)	6-2, 187	Knee injury prevented ferocious hitter from UCLA scholarship, likely the pros too
DB — REGGIE STEPHENS (SC, '93/Cabrillo/Rutgers)	6-1, 195	Career INTs: 23 at Cabrillo, 14 at SJSU; Played 5 seasons in NFL
DB — BOB PEDERSON (SC, '63/Washington)	5-10, 200	Rutgers star played in East-West Shrine Game; Had 4-year NFL career
	6-1, 190	All-Coast and honorable mention AA in '66; 90-yd INT return for TD vs. Oregon St.

SPECIAL TEAMS		
PK — SERGIO OLIVAREZ (Watsonville, '83/Cabrillo/SJSU)	5-7, 158	SJSU-record 86 kicking points in '86 — 41 of 43 XP and 15 of 21 FG
P — SCOTT HAMM (Soquel, '65/Air Force)	6-3, 200	4-year letterman played in '71 Sugar Bowl loss to Tennessee
KR — SHAWN BENJAMIN (Watsonville, '03)	6-0, 195	Great open-field runner ran 4.4-second 40-yard dash; 2,233 rushing yards in '03

*HEIGHTS AND WEIGHTS REPRESENT FINAL CAREER NUMBERS OR MOST CURRENT FOR ACTIVE PLAYERS; YEAR LISTED AFTER HIGH SCHOOL IS PLAYER'S SENIOR SEASON, NOT GRADUATION YEAR

SECOND TEAM

OFFENSE

POS.— NAME (SCHOOLS)	HT., WT.
QB — NICK NOCE (SLV, '00/Cabrillo/Arkansas St.)	6-3, 210
RB — MIKE ALLSHOUSE (Aptos, '91/Cal Poly)	5-8, 185
RB — CALVIN KEYSER-ALLEN (Harbor, '00/Willamette)	5-8, 200
RB — ADRIAN CORDOVA (Watsonville, '94/Cabrillo/Menlo)	5-7, 180
WR — JEREMIAH BRISTER (SLV, '93/Cabrillo/Tulsa)	6-3, 200
WR — DAN BARKER (Soquel, '70/Cabrillo)	6-2, 190
WR/TE — ORION LATIN (SLV, '97/Cal Poly)	6-5, 220
OL — ERNIE BOMPREZZI (Harbor, '75, UC Davis)	6-5, 240
OL — JUSTIN D'ARCY (SLV, '00/Cabrillo/Colorado St.)	6-3, 298
OL — KEN KIFF (Soquel, '83/Oregon St.)	6-7, 272
OL — KEN ANTLE (Watsonville, '53, USC)	6-0, 185

DEFENSE

DL — DANNY LEAHY (Watsonville, '94/Cabrillo/Cal Poly)	6-5, 285
DL — WALT EDWARDS (SC, '67/SJSU)	6-4, 210
DL — WES BERGAZZI (SC, '66/Navarro College/Navy)	6-2, 210
DL — REY MARTINEZ (Harbor/Cabrillo, '73-74/UC Davis)	6-3, 200
LB — PAT WORK (Watsonville, '90/Army)	6-1, 210
LB — JOHN GERINGER (Soquel, '81/Cal)	6-1, 190
LB — CHINO CHIARAMONTE (Soquel, '95/Fresno St.)	6-0, 250
LB — JEFF BREDY (Aptos, '90/Cabrillo/Hawaii)	6-2, 228
DB — TY LOCATELLI (SLV, '92/Pacific/Western Illinois)	6-1, 210
DB — DWIGHT LOWERY (Soquel, '03/Cabrillo/SJSU)	6-1, 185
DB — JERMAINE ROBINSON (SC, '93/Cabrillo/Rutgers)	5-11, 205

SPECIAL TEAMS

PK — STEVE SEYMOUR (SC, '69/Cabrillo/SFSU)	6-2, 185
P — JEFF ROBERTS (SLV, '93/Fresno St)	6-4, 215
KR — MIKE SCOTT (SC, '79/Walla Walla/Hawaii)	6-0, 170

THIRD TEAM

OFFENSE

POS.— NAME (SCHOOLS)	HT., WT.
QB — RANDY PECK (Soquel, '68/Utah)	5-11, 180
RB — JACK KNIGHT (SC, '56/Fresno St.)	6-2, 195
RB — PAT VERUTTI (SLV, '65/Oregon)	5-9, 175
RB — MICHAEL FRYE (SC, '03/Cabrillo)	6-2, 205
WR — MATTY KIEL (SLV '05/Cabrillo)	6-1, 180
WR — JIMMY FOX (MVC, '99/Cal Lutheran)	5-9, 170
WR/TE — DAVID VERDUZCO (Soquel, '86)	6-1, 165
OL — ANDY LEVITRE (SLV, '04/Oregon St.)	6-3, 330
OL — ERICK LEVITRE (SLV, '02/Arizona)	6-1, 282
OL — DAN MCGUIRE (Harbor, '71)	6-3, 230
OL — RUSS MILLER (Soquel, '80/Cabrillo/SFSU)	6-0, 215

DEFENSE

DL — PHIL SOTOMAYOR (Watsonville, '81/Cabrillo/Weber St.)	6-3, 240
DL — GEORGE BARBIC (SC, '72/Cabrillo/Cal/Utah St.)	6-5, 225
DL — ERNIE HIGHTOWER (SC/Mt. San Jacinto JC)	6-5, 205
DL — DOMINGO RUIZ (Watsonville, '91/St. Mary's)	6-0, 250
LB — JAMES JESSEN (Harbor, '00/UCLA)	6-4, 235
LB — MIKE BREDY (Aptos, '89/Cal Poly)	6-2, 240
LB — JARED HUNTER (SC, '01/Boise St.)	6-4, 225
LB — CURTIS HUTSLAR (SLV, '99/Cabrillo/Arkansas-Monticello)	6-2, 210
DB — PAUL BAGNASCO (Holy Cross, '67/Cabrillo/SCU)	6-0, 180
DB — DON COULTER (Harbor, '75/Cabrillo)	6-2, 185
DB — ROB PIFFERINI (Harbor, '92/De Anza/Northridge)	6-1, 237

SPECIAL TEAMS

PK — WAYLON PRATHER (SLV, '02/SJSU)	6-2, 229
P — DOUG SAUCEDO (Watsonville, '73/Cabrillo/Hayward St.)	5-9, 170
KR — DAVE MERCER (Watsonville, '64/SJSU)	5-9, 170

Pre-1950 greats

■ LEO HARRIS — Santa Cruz High guard and fullback went onto play for Stanford, earning letters under coach Glenn "Pop" Warner in 1925 and '26. He later served as head coach at Fresno State (1933-35) before becoming athletic director at the University of Oregon, a post he held 25 years.

■ ANTHONY "DUKE" VALINE — Ex-Holy Cross and Santa Cruz standout played for Santa Clara University. Prior to embarking on a government career that led him to the position of Director of Civil Defense, he was a Broncos star from 1925-'28, earning All-Coast and All-American.

■ BRADLEY LYNN — The '35 Santa Cruz graduate lettered at halfback for the '37 Notre Dame team, which went 6-2-1 under coach Elmer Layden, one of the famed "Four Horsemen." He later coached the American Legion Santa Cruz Seahawks.

■ ROBERT F. DITLEVSEN — Ex-Watsonville standout from the '36 season played four years for Stanford, including the team's 1941 Rose Bowl victory.

■ KEN GLEASON — After his senior season at Santa Cruz in '33, he shined for Fresno State, lettering in 1935 and '36. Helped the Bulldogs win the '37 Little All-American Bowl game against Arkansas State. Served as coach of the Bulldogs in 1947-'48 seasons.

■ SYLVIO "LOU" RIMASSA — The four-time All-CCAL pick at Watsonville made the defensive play of the game in St. Mary's win over Texas Tech in '39 Cotton Bowl, when he ran down Tech's George Cobb to stop a 60-yard pass play. Little St. Mary's upset previously unbeaten Tech 20-13.

■ DICK VORIS — An All-CCAL center and linebacker for Santa Cruz in '39, played for Hartnell in '40 and San Jose State in 1947 and '48, following a brief stint in the U.S. Marines. The one-time member of the semi-pro Seahawks in '46 went on to coach Virginia and serve as NFL assistant coach for many years.

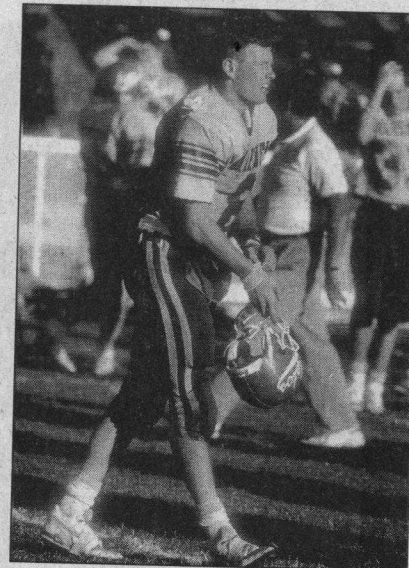
■ EDDIE DYSLE — After his senior season with the Cardinals in '44, the 5-foot-9, 215 pound offensive lineman played for Nevada for one season before returning to play for Hartnell, where he became a JC all-American. Later played for S.C. Seahawks.

■ BILL SAMBRAILO — Ex-Watsonville star halfback was a member of the Santa Clara University team that played in the '50 Orange Bowl.



ABOVE: Johnny Johnson makes a move for San Jose State in 1988 before his NFL career, which included a Pro Bowl season in 1990. **LEFT:** Trent Difer gets ready to take the field with Aptos in 1989. He went on to win a Super Bowl with Baltimore and is now with the 49ers. **BELOW:** Reggie Stephens celebrates an unbeaten season in 1993 for Santa Cruz. He went on to play in the NFL for four seasons.

Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel file photos



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Calvin Keyser-Allen, Sherman Cocroft, Blake Tuffli, Brendon Ayanbadejo.

HOW THIS TEAM WAS SELECTED

More art than science, this squad was put together by staff writer Jim Seimas based on suggestions by longtime county football coaches, nominations by friends and family of players and extensive research in the Sentinel archives.

— Jim Seimas

ALL-COUNTY FOOTBALL TEAM

COUNTY TOP MARKS

■ RUSHING

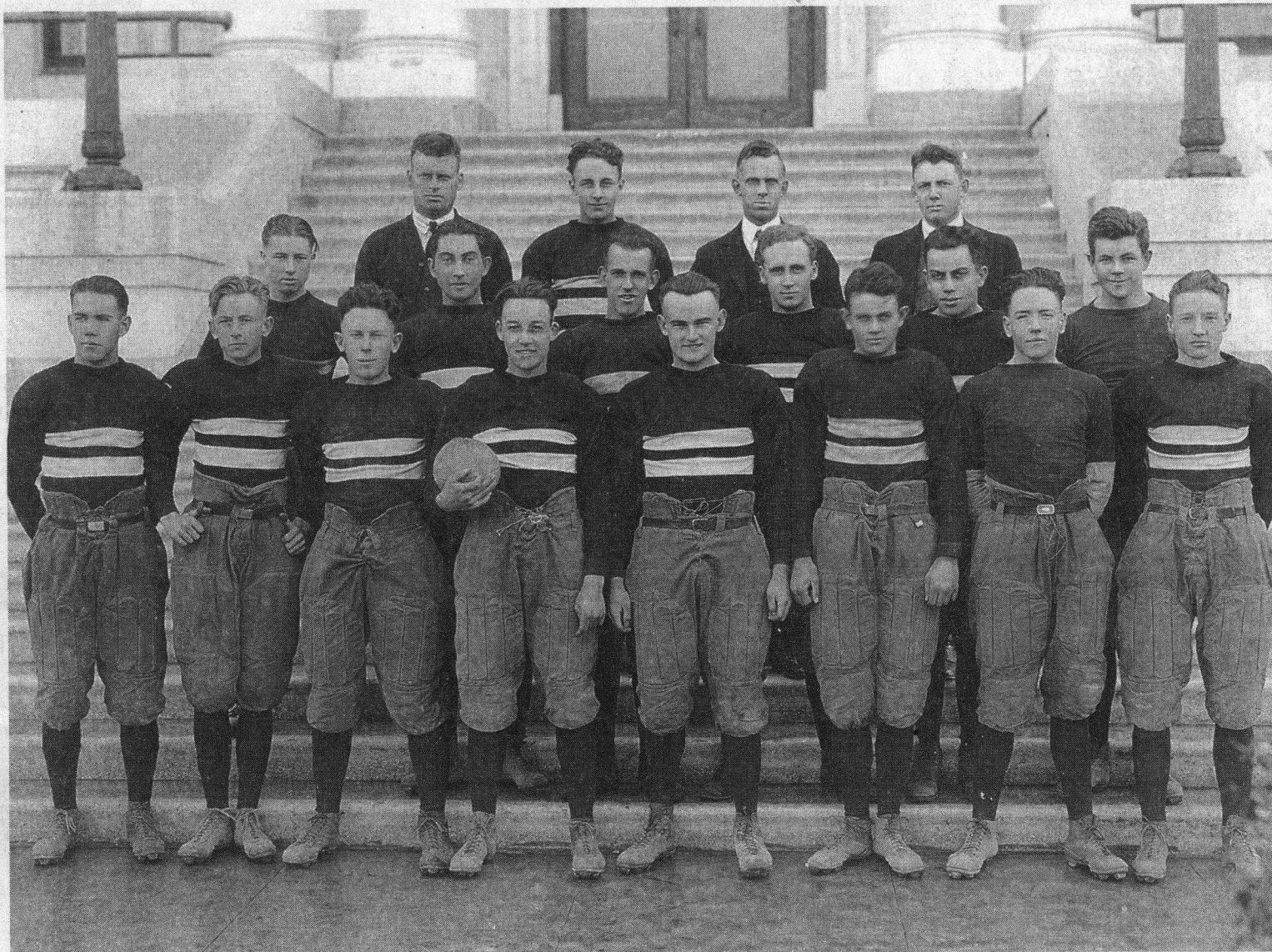
SEASON (1,000 MINIMUM)

Player, School	Year	Yards
Calvin Keyser-Allen (Har.)	2000	2,360
Shawn Benjamin (Wats.)	2003	2,233
Johnny Johnson (SC)	1985	1,729
Adrian Cordova (Wats.)	1994	1,701
Mike Allshouse (Aptos)	1991	1,609
Jimmy Fox (MVC)	1999	1,505
Shawn Benjamin (Wats.)	2002	1,298
Noah Hall (Aptos)	1994	1,282
Reggie Stephens (SC)	1993	1,266
Jeff Bredy (Aptos)	1990	1,264
Michael Frye (SC)	2003	1,231
Charlie Smith (Harbor)	1979	1,213
Nick Sanchez (Harbor)	2005	1,197
Loren Jensen (SLV)	2001	1,187
Ted Fehn (Harbor)	1981	1,169
Glenallen Hill (SC)	1982	1,165
Augie Rose (SLV)	1997	1,164
Jim Courtright (SC)	1984	1,157
Josh Sugidono (Wats.)	1988	1,138
Ken Murray (Harbor)	1976	1,114
Gabe Haro (Aptos)	1998	1,102
Calvin Keyser-Allen (Har.)	1999	1,094
Efren Lomeli (Wats.)	2003	1,084
Ken Wright (SLV)	1960	1,083
Joey Barsi (Watsonville)	1987	1,079
Rande Olds (Harbor)	1986	1,076
Joe Garbini (Aptos)	1978	1,075
Carlos Flores (Soquel)	1999	1,050
Dan Johnston (Soquel)	1977	1,007
Bobby Costa (SC)	1956	1,002

■ PASSING

SEASON (1,500 MINIMUM)

Player, School	Year	Yards
Mike Crisler (SLV)	2002	2,286
Andrew Wick (Scotts Valley)	2002	2,024
Bobby Verduzco (Soquel)	1985	2,021
Trevin Kent (MVC)	2005	2,064
Andrew Wick (Scotts Valley)	2001	1,977
Wali Razaqi (Harbor)	1996	1,955
Jeff Roberts (SLV)	1992	1,807
Matty Sinnott (SLV)	2001	1,730
Nick Noge (SLV)	2000	1,717
Dusty Dixon (SLV)	1997	1,685
Jason Fritch (SLV)	1986	1,655
Mike Volarvich (SLV)	1994	1,621
Bob Veduzco (Soquel)	1984	1,593
Dennis O'Conner (Soquel)	1970	1,560
Ryan Summerrill (Soquel)	1996	1,540
Robbie Bumbaca (SLV)	1998	1,525



Contributed photos

Santa Cruz High's 1922 football team poses in their uniforms in front of the school.

OLD SCHOOL

Back in the day, they played without facemasks. Old-timers remember community pride, an evolving sport ... and a couple shots to the head.

By JIM SEIMAS
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

more safe for players.
In 1931, the American Football Coach

The play was signaled dead before Santa Cruz High's Mal Macaulay suffered what he believed was a deliberate late hit in a football game against Salinas.

Playing in an era of loose officiating — where after-the-whistle gang tackling, dog-pile punches and other dirty tactics were commonplace — Macaulay took off his helmet and swung it at the player who hit him. Macaulay was ejected from the game.

The situation unfolded 60-some years ago. Macaulay, now 80, is giggling as he tells the story, like it happened yesterday.

"I was a dumb little kid," he said, sounding embarrassed by his actions.

The Sentinel, celebrating its 150th year of publication, has compiled an all-time, all-Santa Cruz County football team. During the past century, thousands of games have taken place and thousands of players have suited up and knocked helmets. No player was ever bigger than the game.

More than anything, the all-time Sentinel team is a celebration of the game: the bone-jarring hits, last-second scores, monumental upsets and heartbreaking losses. It's about the friendships built and retained, and memories saved for a lifetime.

The sport has also stood the test of time, serving as an escape during times of sadness and mayhem, played through the Great Depression, two World Wars, the weekend after the Loma Prieta earthquake and the 9-11 terrorist attacks.

Macaulay remembers Santa Cruz County's earliest football roots — which began with rugby at the outset of the 1900s.

The sport was as dangerous as it was athletic. Santa Cruz rugby player Russell Pease died in 1914 in late November, four days after he was kicked in the head during a victory over Hollister. He suffered a brain hemorrhage. Santa Cruz canceled the remainder of the season.

Many others were injured. Several of the Sentinel's yellow archive clippings featured injury reports at the base of each game story. Players carted off on stretchers and shuttled to hospitals told the story of the battle that had unfolded.

No matter how minor the injury, sidelined players were often labeled "cripples" in headlines.

In the early 1900s, the area had two high schools with teams — Watsonville and Santa Cruz.

"We were really rivals," said 95-year-old ex-Cardinal lineman Hank Leibbrandt. "We fought like hell with them. Those were the good old days."

Rumor has it, the fire between the schools was stoked when a Watsonville coach had an affair with a lady from Santa Cruz. He left his position with the Wildcatz to work for Santa Cruz.

Santa Cruz, with its famed Boardwalk, was an escape for out-of-town football teams.

The now-defunct Santa Cruz Golf and Country Club in Pogonip hosted Fresno State College for fall camp in the mid-'30s, allowing the team to use the first fairway as its practice field.

Santa Cruz High later hosted the Oakland Raiders from 1960-62 for training



Harold Van Gorder, left, with Santa Cruz High teammates after making the trek to Hollister High for a game in 1920.

camp. That durable field wasn't always suitable for practice or games throughout the years.

"If you wanted to play, you showed up to practice with a shovel, rake or hoe and chopped down the weeds and filled the gopher holes," said 105-year-old Harold Van Gorder, an end and tackle on Santa Cruz's 1919 team. "It was a primitive field."

When Van Gorder played, Santa Cruz's field was named Bush League Park. It's now known as Memorial Field, a tribute to Santa Cruz's fallen war veterans.

At the early games, Model-T Fords lined the sideline. Players weren't the monstrosities they are today. They looked like everyday folk. It was hard to tell they were even wearing pads. Their helmets were equally primitive. They looked like leather salad bowls with ear flaps.

A dangerous game

In his playing days, Leibbrandt was 6-foot-1, 195 pounds. Now he weighs 95. He's had two hip replacement surgeries — likely from the beating he took playing sports — and uses a cane to walk. He has no regrets.

In fact, he feels lucky. "I only got knocked out once," he said. "There were no helmets to protect your face. Just a little leather helmet and there wasn't much to it. The shoulder pads, I think they were double the leather on the shoulders. You'd see two to three guys get knocked out a game. Some guys would get a broken nose or get a tooth knocked out. It all depended on how you were tackled. I made a tackle and the guy hit me in the head with his knee. That's what they told me anyway."

Since the inception of the sport, player safety has been a national concern. In 1905, when 18 players died, President Roosevelt summoned representatives from three prestigious East Coast universities to the White House and convinced them that the rules needed to be changed to eliminate the foul play and brutality.

The American Football Rules Committee was formed in 1906.

"Sure, there was pinching and biting that went on in dogpiles, punching too," said '58 Cardinals star John Kirby. "It probably still happens a little bit. The officiating is better. I also think the players nowadays probably police it a little bit too."

In the '30s, a few of local residents had letters to the editor published. They called for the sport to be banned until it became

es Association initiated the First Annual Survey of Football Fatalities. Statistics are still gathered annually. According to the research, 661 high school players — 1,001 for all levels, including professional — have died from injuries directly related to football since the survey began.

The implementation of rules and better equipment has kept football's fatality total in single digits all but one year since 1977.

"There was nothing wrong with the equipment," Kirby said. "It was the rules. The running back could keep going until he was literally stopped. There were more hits and more people piling onto you. You could keep crawling forward. The rules changed by the time I played."

As if games weren't grueling enough, practices were equally difficult.

Macaulay, a senior during the '43 season, likened football practice to boot camp.

And they weren't too far separated. Macaulay believes practice was training for the service and the tail-end of World War II, which forced the cancellation of the '42 season. Local Japanese families were sent to camps.

"It was a forgone conclusion, after you graduated high school, you went to the service," he said. "Our coach got everyone into shape. We all went to the service."

Playing options

In the early 1900s, sandlot or high school rugby were the only forms of organized ball. State-wide American Legion football play evolved in the late 1920s, featuring ex-high school and college standouts. Every major city locally was represented, including Santa Cruz, Watsonville, Monterey and Hollister. Leo Harris, an ex-Cardinal football star who lettered under coach Glenn "Pop" Warner at Stanford in 1925-26, played fullback and guard for the local team.

In 1934, the Watsonville V.F.W. Roughriders were dominant with ex-St. Mary's star Sylvio "Lou" Rimassa at fullback.

After that season, the league was restructured as Watsonville tried to form an alliance with Monterey.

Watsonville High was a power under coach Emmitt Geiser. The school later named its field after him.

The Cal alum coached the Wildcatz from 1930-55, posting a 130-39-6 record and winning eight straight titles from 1949-56.

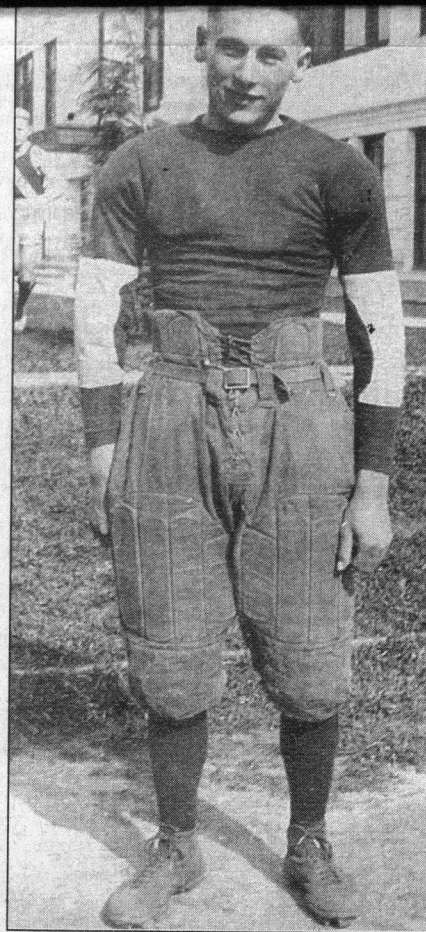
Geiser called tiny Roland Brooks [5-8, 175] the best back he ever coached, said Wildcatz 64-year-old announcer Ed Kelly, a ball boy for Geiser when he was 6. Brooks never played in college.

Brad Lynn, an ex-Santa Cruz star who lettered at Notre Dame in '37, would return to the area and serve briefly as coach of the semi-pro Seahawks. The team existed from 1946-58 and won a national championship in '55. Players were paid between \$5 and \$20, depending on gate receipts.

The team was an impressive assembly of hard-nosed talent. Players like Cal quarterback Paul Larson and lineman Buck Dahlgren, grandfather to ex-49ers star Chris Dahlgren, played spirited contests at Harvey West Park.

During poorly lit night games, Lynn's team used yellow footballs.

"I remember I'd climb the fence to watch," said 66-year-old Santa Cruz resident Angelo



Cardinals team captain and right end Johnnie Costella is suited for a game in 1920.

Ross, a longtime assistant to Norm Costa at Palma in Salinas. "It would be packed. It was quite an outing on the weekend."

Most games, were low-scoring affairs. Offensive playbooks were small and personnel was sometimes limited. In Macaulay's era, it wasn't a complicated game.

"It was not nearly as sophisticated as it is today," Macaulay said. "We could go to the right very well. We only had one play that could get us back to the left, toward the center of the field."

There was no quarterback on Macaulay's team, even though he called the plays.

"We had four set backs, two halfbacks and two fullbacks," he said. "We had just two pass plays, one we'd go over the middle with our left end Elmer Fought. He was 6-4, 200 pounds."

Van Gorder had a slender 6-2 frame. Still, he was a big guy back then. Players just seemed to be shorter, he said.

"I only knew one student who was taller than I was," Van Gorder said. "He was 6-7. He was considered a giant. Nowadays, you look at these fellows and wonder what they're eating."

Today's players are big and strong. And when the Sentinel next features an all-time football team, this generation of players is going to have stories to share. They'll have played a part in history, like Van Gorder, Leibbrandt, Macaulay, and Kirby. Perhaps today's players will talk of a game that — in the year 2006 — seemed so different, so crude, so alive and so memorable.

Contact Jim Seimas at
jseimas@santacruzsentinel.com.

RECEIVING

SEASON (600 YARDS MINIMUM)

Player, School	Year	Yards
Jordan Beck (SLV)	2000	1,063
Dan Barker (Soquel)	1970	957
Daniel Cada (SLV)	1990	899
Matty Kiel (SLV)	2005	882
Shane Aldrete (Wats.)	1990	841
Orion Latin (SLV)	1997	836
Martin Muhoherac (SV)	2003	760
Jeff Blan (SLV)	1994	744
Jeff Van Meter (Aptos)	2003	735
Erich LaFever (SLV)	1986	719
Matty Kiel (SLV)	2004	718
Landon Wells (SLV)	1992	718
Gino Marini (SC)	1993	717
Brian Davilla (SLV)	2002	702
Brian Cosgrove (SV)	2000	680
David Verdusco (Soquel)	1984	673
Gino Marini (SC)	1994	670
Brian Cosgrove (SV)	2001	667
Daniel Cada (SLV)	1989	656
Matt Anderson (SV)	2002	654
Evan Rust (SLV)	1995	654
Mark Saucedo (Wats.)	1980	650
Aaron Glaum (MVC)	2005	645
Tim Chau (Harbor)	2002	645
Jeremy Tortora (Harbor)	1996	618
Santana Noble (Harbor)	1988	616
James Sanders (SLV)	1998	614
O.J. Lynch (Harbor)	1997	610
Martin Muhoherac (SV)	2002	604
Tony Rodman (SLV)	1978	600

SCORING

SEASON (100 MINIMUM)

Player, School	Year	Points
Shawn Benjamin (Wats.)	2003	182
Shawn Benjamin (Wats.)	2002	176
Johnny Johnson (SC)	1985	160
Dwight Lowery (Soquel)	2003	150
Adrian Cordova (Wats.)	1994	148
Matty Kiel (SLV)	2005	142
Calvin Keyser-Allen (Har.)	2000	134
Cameron Weber (Soquel)	2004	128
Mike Allshouse (Aptos)	1991	128
Augie Rose (SLV)	1997	127
Jermaine Robinson (SC)	1993	126
Reggie Stephens (SC)	1993	126
Waylon Prather (SLV)	2002	125
John Kirby (SC)	1958	122
Orion Latin (SLV)	1997	120
Adrian Corcoran (SC)	1993	116
Jermaine Robinson (SC)	1992	116
Jimmy Fox (MVC)	1999	114
Mike Bredy (Aptos)	1989	112
Matty Kiel (SLV)	2004	111
Michael Frye (SC)	2003	102
Jeff Bredy (Aptos)	1990	102
Jesse Walker (MVC)	1995	100

*Playoff games count in totals

— Jim Seimas