

Evangel QBs rewrote state passing records set by Woodlawn stars

Written by Jerry Byrd

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When I wrote a book titled “Louisiana’s Best in High School Football” 10 years ago, the records listed in it included the one-season passing yardage by Evangel’s Brock Berlin in 1998, when he completed 326 of 473 passes (.689) for 4,834 yards and 54 touchdowns.

That broke the state record of 4,656 yards set by another Evangel quarterback, Phillip Deas, in 1996. But the 54 touchdown passes only tied the previous record, set by Berlin in 1997.

Before the Evangel quarterbacks moved to the top of the state list, the top spot in passing yardage belonged to Woodlawn’s Joe Ferguson, who broke national high school records in 1968 when he completed 249 of 448 passes for 3,293 yards and 40 touchdowns. Ferguson later starred at the University of Arkansas, and had a 12-year National Football League career — most of it with the Buffalo Bills.

An earlier Woodlawn quarterback, Terry Bradshaw, had an even longer NFL career (14 years). Bradshaw didn’t match Ferguson’s NFL career yardage, but he threw more touchdown passes (212) and led the Pittsburgh Steelers to four Super Bowl wins. Bradshaw’s only high school record in football (he broke the national record in the javelin throw) was a Class 3A record 22 touchdown passes.

Neither Bradshaw, who didn’t start at Woodlawn until his senior season, nor Ferguson came close to the high school statistics compiled by Berlin, Deas, Josh Booty and John David Booty at Evangel. Bradshaw averaged only 13 passes per game in his senior season at Woodlawn. Ferguson threw a lot more than that, but not as much as the Evangel quarterbacks would throw a few years later.

Berlin’s state record career total of 13,902 yards passing nearly doubled the 6,710 total of Ferguson, which was a state record in 1968.

If you’re wondering about the state record for career rushing, it was 8,048 yards (by Germaine Williams of Ascension Catholic) when the book was published. I don’t recall it being broken in the last 10 years, but it is possible. One thing that hasn’t changed about high school football is that very few people have made much of an effort to keep up with records.

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Shreveport's Byrd High has won seven state football championships, but the last one was in 1949 — when I was a freshman at Byrd (no, I wasn't on the football team). I later spent one year at Bossier High (the last year the Bearkats reached the state finals) and two at Fair Park (including the only time the Indians won a state football title), but I had nothing to do with any of those historic events.

Byrd's 1949 state champs were coached by Jack Rowan, and had three All-Staters: end Dickie Murray, tackle M.K. Woolbert and guard John Trigg. After a season-opening 6-0 loss to Sulphur, the Yellow Jackets won their remaining 12 games — beating Holy Cross (New Orleans) 34-13 in the Class 2A finals.

"They may be bigger than we are," Murray said during a pep rally assembly in the Byrd auditorium on the morning of the championship game, "but we're just as dirty as they are."

Edgar Galloway and Jerry Dykeman alternated at quarterback for the 1949 Yellow Jackets, who averaged only 57 yards passing per game. The offensive leader was halfback Willard Rachal, who had 1,168 yards rushing in regular-season play. Rowan, who had coached a state champion team in West Virginia, led Byrd to the finals again in 1953 before moving into college coaching at Northwestern State and Northeast State (now Louisiana-Monroe).

Byrd fullback Dan Barr ran 18 yards on the first play of the championship game at Shreveport's State Fair Stadium. Barr also caught a 22-yard touchdown pass from Galloway with one second remaining in the first half. It was downhill the rest of the night as the Yellow Jackets won their seventh state title, but the first since 1937. They're still waiting for No. 8.

Jerry Byrd is the former sports editor of the Bossier Press-Tribune and an award-winning columnist. Check out a few hundred of his columns on www.jerrybyrd.com. You can contact him by E-mail at jbsportswriter@comcast.net