

# The Lee County Legend

K E E P I N G   T H E   M E M O R I E S   A L I V E

## ***Football Comes to Lee County!***



### FOOTBALL PIONEERS!

Go back with us to the 1920s, when organized football began in Lee County. Football was controversial. The action of the game from the start was to tackle and block other human beings. Few or no pads existed. Leather helmets with no facemask. And coaches who knew nothing about pain! You had to go beyond tough, willing to risk life and limb to play football. See the pioneers inside!



### LEE COUNTY GRIDIRON WARS

When schools get involved, sports get popular quickly. Read inside about the 1st high school team (1925, page 3) in the county. It may surprise you. In 1927, Lee Baptist Institute and St. Charles High added football and played each other 3 times. (page 5) In 1928, Jonesville joined the football fray. In 1929, Rose Hill and Pennington Highs jumped in. In this issue and next, read the results of the 1920's Lee County Gridiron Wars!

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#### 1st Pennington Gap Football Team

High schools are not always the first in a community to add a sport. See page 4 for a great game report on the first Pennington Gap football team.

*Lee County Legend*

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## THANKS, DAD, YOU CUT ME FROM FOOTBALL

The coach never cut me from a sports team. But, my Dad, Sam Audia, is the reason I am not a Lee County gridiron legend. From the 1960-1961 school years until 1963-1964, I begged, pleaded and cried to get Dad to allow me and Louis to play football. We were good on the playgrounds and backyards. We could run, pass, catch and tackle with the best of them. Why, in 1958, we were on the winning team at the Big Dude Hill Football Challenge up in Bonny Blue. Sammy Sprinkle and Winky Cody will remember that game.

Right through my senior year, I dreamed of running the ball for the Bobcats. More specifically in the dream, I would take the handoff from Larry Smith, get blocks from Claude Allen and King Stacy, dodge defenders, then just run over those I couldn't avoid. The defense of Happy Allen and Danny Carter would make the touchdowns I scored hold up. My stardom in my dream led Pennington High to the Lee County Championship. I could not get my Dad to understand. I never played a down.

My Dad dreamed that his sons would enter their adult years without lifelong scars and physical injuries. In 1964, I went off to Berea College. After graduation, my future took me away from my Dad's advice and decisions. Now, like many other teenage sons who have reached that magical moment of blowing out 65 candles, I want to take a minute to thank my Dad for being a visionary.

Honesty requires that I acknowledge that I have not been the same visionary as my Dad. I allowed, even encouraged our children, Brian, Kelly, Susan, Kent and Dan to play sports, even football for the boys. It has been said that I forced them to play. Wrong, I just did not buy them any other toys. I did not want my decisions to deprive them or us of the glory of the Friday night lights. My daughter, Susan, grew up right in the middle of the boys. She had to be tough and was a good athlete. If it were not for that antiquated thinking that barred her from playing football, Susan may have run that touchdown I never got to run.

Today, all across America, a million boys between the ages of five and eighteen engage in mortal combat in Pee Wee, Youth League, Middle School, Junior Varsity and High School football competition. It is easy to say, "Yes, you can play". However, come with me back to the beginning days of football in the United States. Football was rough in the old days, and the equipment was almost non-existent. The following national news story highlighted many a sports page in 1903:

### Football and Insanity

*During the year 1902, two men in America were killed in prize-fights; and in a season of three months just passed, twenty-one men have been killed playing football.. Fifteen of these died from broken necks or broken backs How many men have been ruptured and permanently injured in various other ways no man can say. I know, says Elbert Hubbard, in the March Cosmopolitan, that two young men with whom I am personally acquainted, are now in lunatic asylums as a result of football, and their ravings are the cries and signals of this game. If you still think that football is manly sport, you might interview the parents of these young men.*

To my father, I want to say, "Thank You, Dad". I went major injury free. To my kids, I want you to know I always tried to do the best I could. You now have five sons that I proudly call my grandsons. You will have to decide whether your father or my father made the best decision. Now its your turn to make the decision. And, don't even think of letting MY 4 granddaughters play football.

Powell Valley News—October 1925

## EWING HIGH SCHOOL (LCI) 1ST HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL TEAM IN LEE COUNTY

(Note) Ewing High School was also known as Lee County Industrial (LCI) in the 1920s. In the early 40s, Ewing High consolidated with Rose Hill High to become Thomas Walker High.

### Lee Co. “Aggies” Win Grid Battle

Lee Co. “aggies” of Ewing defeated Barbourville High here Saturday 20 to 0. The “aggies” outplayed Barbourville the entire game, registered 13 first downs to Barbourville’s 2. The scores were all made on line plunges, the “aggies” weight being too much for their opponents.

A touchdown was made in the first quarter, B. Blessing failing to kick the extra point. The other two touchdowns were made in the third and fourth quarters. B. Blessing was successful on the 2 kicks for goals.

In the third quarter, B. Blessing intercepted a pass and ran 45 yards for a touchdown as he stepped out of bounds about one inch in making the touchdown.

Powell Valley News—November 1926

## 1ST GRID GAME PLAYED IN PENNINGTON GAP SNAPPY GAME PROMISED!

**Ewing Will Meet Barbourville, Ky. In Pennington Thanksgiving Day**  
Lee County’s only football team has not lost a game this season.

The Ewing football team will meet the SE Ky Baptist School of Barbourville, Ky in Pennington Thanksgiving. This will be the 1st football game ever played in Pennington. The Ewing team will be in good shape for the game since they do not have any men on the injured list at the present.

Ewing has not lost a game this season but has tied four games. The game with Evarts, Ky last Saturday was tied 0-0. Most of the Ewing High School students will attend the game and it is hoped that the people of Lee County will attend the game to back the County’s only team. The team will be:

|  |                          |                       |
|--|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| Kincaid, Right End   | Jones, Right Tackle      | Moore, Right Guard    |
| Richmond, Center   | Jenkins, Left Guard      | Robinson, Left Tackle |
| Hoskins, Left End  | Rowlett, Quarterback     | Keyes, Left Halfback  |
| Blessing, Fullback   | McKinney, Right Halfback |                       |
| Reserves: Poore, Freeman, Varner, Chadwell, W Moore, O’Neil, Reasor and W Robinson |                          |                       |

*The Lee County Legend*  
317 Joslyn Avenue  
Pennington Gap, VA  
24277  
LeeCoLegend.com

Dave Audia, Publisher—[dave.audia@gmail.com](mailto:dave.audia@gmail.com)  
Lowell Lawson, Editor—[LowellLawson@windstream.net](mailto:LowellLawson@windstream.net)

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# *FIRST*

## *PENNINGTON GAP FOOTBALL TEAM*

### *The Boy Scouts Make History*

**POWELL VALLEY NEWS**  
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18, 1925

## **BOY SCOUTS PLAY FOOTBALL**

Big Stone-19.

Pennington-6.

The Pennington Boy Scout football team piled in and on an automobile and ran up to Big Stone Gap, Saturday, December 12th, and have the honor of being the first Pennington team to 'hit the line' in the 'Pigskin' game.

The Big Stone Gap team, composed mostly of High School players had the local boys outclassed, as they have been playing the game for the last few years, while some of the Pennington Scouts had never been on the grid before.

Despite the handicaps, Pennington stayed in the game and fought hard until the last gun was fired, holding Big Stone Gap scoreless in the last half.

Captain Red Poore gave the large crowd several thrills with his spunky advances through and around Big Stone's "Brick Wall." R. H. B. Kirk advanced behind interference, in the last half, for a run of 45 yards around left end. This was followed by a plunge resulting in Pennington's touchdown-ball carried by Taylor. Hoot Gibson, local center, provided the comedy with his sensational tackle of Big Stone's Baby Elephant. Baby was built on the same plan of Hoot but was somewhat larger than our fat boy.

The local line included, "Hoot" Gibson, Ted Fry, "Swartz" Quinley, "Dutch" Smith, O. Fawbush, W. Parsons, "Toe" Moore, "Red" Poore, R. Kirk, E. Marsee and C. Taylor.

The boys are trying to arrange a game with the same team on local ball grounds for Saturday, December 19th, Sport.

### 3 HISTORIC FOOTBALL GAMES

1. LBI's First Football Game
2. St. Charles HS First Football Game
3. First Football Game Played in St Charles

(1)

9/30/27 L. B. I.

The first football game in schools history was played at Middlesboro, Saturday. The local team, tho very light and totally inexperienced, made a fine showing. They were outweighed twenty pounds to the man when facing the opponents first team and were scored on freely. In the third quarter alone they faced a team of their own weight, tho much more experienced, whom they would have scored on: The opponents rushed in their heavier squad in the final quarter to hold our boys, 63 to 0.

Golden hair is so much in evidence that a Red Headed club has been organized sponsored by Miss Lee. Strawberry is their favorite color—ice cream.

St. Charles High will face L. B. I. on the local grid for a football game Monday at three o'clock. This is to be St. Charles' first game. A large delegation from the neighboring town will be rooting up the side lines for the visiting team.

R. Skaggs.

(2)

L. B. I. Defeats  
St. Charles 44-0  
10/9/1927

In the first local football game of the season the local team beat St. Charles high school 44 to 0. The visiting team was light and untrained having had their uniforms for only a few days. Many of them were playing their first game, while the L. B. I. boys, heavier and more seasoned were entering their second fray. All of coach M. L. Skaggs' charges played a good game and showed team work which was lacking at the Middlesboro game. Quarterback E. Marsee showed real generalship in his choice of plays, and himself scored the first touch down after three minutes of play. After this it was only a question of how small a score St. Charles boys would be able to hold the opponents. John Gibson got a rise from the fans when he made a sensational tackle off a fast traveling opponent half back in the final quarter. The opposing back-field showed speed and talent, and was a constant treat with forward passing. The game was unmarred by "rough stuff" or injuries to either team. A return game will be played now with St. Charles, October 15.

(3)

(Powell Valley News Service)

10/21/1927

St. Charles—The Lee Baptist Institute eleven opposed the St. Charles Hi eleven last Saturday on St. Charles grid, being the first football game played in St. Charles in its history. Many fans were out and took a great interest in the game.

Lee Baptist Institute scored a touch down in the first quarter St. Charles scored a touch down in the third quarter with a very nice pass from Snapp to Carter who carried it across the line. L. B. I. caught a gap down and scored another in the last quarter making a total score of 12-6 for L. B. I. The game was well appreciated by all the fans and compliments for both teams were strong.

When the game was over all the players on both teams were invited up to the Community Cafe where they were given a lunch by Mr. Kiser. After lunch was served all the boys gathered in the street in front of the restaurant and gave fifteen "raws" for Mr. Kiser. This was an invitation extended the football boys that they have not had the opportunity to accept from anyone else this year. It was highly appreciated by them.

Coach Shanks says the boys are coming out of the kinks now and with still added recruits he expects to have an eleven very soon that can interest most any of them.

The eleven who fought the battle last Saturday were: E. Kirk, R. Kirk, Carter, E. Hilton, O. Hilton, Snapp, Fuller, Parks, Gilliam, R. Parks, Bailey and T. Kirks. For St. Charles.

## 1928 LBI TEAM



L.B.I. Foot Ball Team "1928"  
Front Row left to right.  
Garrison-Kauffman-Stewart-Malone-Moore-Harvey-Culberson.  
Back Row left to right.  
Gibson-Grichton-White-Skaggs-Slusher-Parkey-Sage-Coach Talbott.

*The Lee County Legend*  
317 Joslyn Avenue  
Pennington Gap, VA 24277

TO:

**KEEPING THE MEMORIES ALIVE**