

A.L. versus T.J. - echoes from the past

Council Bluffs has a rich history in public schools with the first graduating class in 1870 and only four graduates.

By DWANE MCFERRIN, Staff Writer, sports@nonpareilonline.com

(712) 325-5756

Published: Saturday, September 27, 2008 2:00 AM CDT

Council Bluffs has a rich history in public schools with the first graduating class in 1870 and only four graduates.

As the city grew, two public high schools emerged, Abraham Lincoln and Thomas Jefferson. Rivalries developed and games were hard fought. Fortunately, helmets were mandated in 1935. Friday night, the rivalry continued with emotions at fever pitch. For seniors, the win adds to the rich history and cements fond high school football memories for a lifetime.

In 1976, both schools produced all-state linebackers. Mike Leaders was a dominant force for the Lynx and Cal Jacobs was the stopper for the Jackets. Thomas Jefferson won the highly anticipated contest of Metro Conference rivals. A year prior, Leader's team won and the game drew great media interest since both teams were state-ranked at the time.

Neither player knew each other until after their high school playing days were over. Leaders and Jacobs were offered football scholarships from Iowa State University and became teammates for life.

"I got to know Mike when we were selected for the Shrine Bowl football game and it took some adjustments by both of us" said Jacobs. "We rode and roomed together and I had great respect for his skills and talent. We became friends and teammates at Iowa State. A bond was formed."

Leaders passed away a few years ago from leukemia and had two sons also play football for Iowa State. Jacobs is now a resident of Elkhorn, Neb.

"I remember when the interest in the A.L. -T.J. game was so high that they put extra bleachers in the end zones. The large crowd made it very special" said Jacobs. "It was a hard hitting contest and a lot of pride on the line. It was the big game of the year for cross-town rivals and there wasn't any extra motivation needed."

In those days, Jacobs reflected on the commitment of the players.

"We played organized football as early as Pop Warner and if there wasn't organized football, we played unorganized in empty lots or school yards. Football was a big part of our lives."

Jacobs added, "these kids will remember the rivalry game the rest of their lives."

And, in case you didn't make it to this year's game, the media was present and yes, there were added bleachers in both end zones. The capacity crowd indeed made it special.

Voices in the crowd

A collection of voices from the crowd at Friday's Abraham Lincoln-Thomas Jefferson prep football game.

Mike Wolff, a Thomas Jefferson graduate in 1983 and five-year head coach for the Iowa Blackhawks. "I'm wearing this A.L. shirt tonight because my girls go to school there. I have three Blackhawks players or coaches on the sideline for each team. I don't really care who wins but I am hoping for a good, competitive football game."

Lavonda Herrick, T.J. graduate 1953. "I've been to quite a few games with three kids and several grandkids all going to T.J. I did have one son go to A.L. so he could play basketball with his friends. I drag my husband of 55 years, Dale to these games but he's pretty easy to drag."

Francis "Bud" Freese. "I live right across the street but this is the first football game I've been to in 30 years. I decided to go tonight, grabbed a funnel cake and plan on having a good evening" he said with a smile just before kickoff.

Rory Vos, an Abraham Lincoln graduate in 1978 and former Shrine Bowl quarterback. "I go to most of these games and A.L.'s Nolan Webster's dad and I played together. I remember how we kicked T.J.'s butt in 1978 with a big interception by Nolan's dad in the end zone. They squeaked by us in 1977."