

HISTORY OF NORWAYNE FOOTBALL

Norwayne High School began Football in the fall of 1954 [57 years ago] the second year of High School, which opened in 1953. The first football team played 4 games – won one and lost 3 – under Head Coach Dean Jones who coached football through the 1955-56 school year.

In 1957 Don McNutt was named Head Football Coach and for the following 6 years directed the Norwayne football fortunes. Their two best years were 1959 (as the team went 6-3) and in 1961 their record was 5-3-1.

In 1963 Russell “Pete” Easterday took over as the Head Coach going 3-16 his first three years but in 1965 Norwayne’s football fortunes changed as they went 8-1-1 winning the WCAL Championship outright. Key players that year included Quarterback Steve Slater, running backs Randy Higgins and Harold Flory and lineman Jerry Adkins and Buddy Vaughn. Coach Easterday left Norwayne at the end of that school year to pursue a career in school administration. He later became the Athletic Director at Medina High School retiring from education in the late 90’s.

Ray Gori, a Kent State University graduate, took over the Norwayne Football Coaching position in 1966 and was the head coach for 4 years before accepting the Head Coaching Position at Norton High School. His best Norwayne team was the 1967 squad that defeated #1 State Ranked Northwestern at Northwestern – final score was 14-0. Quarterback on that team was Bobby Elliston and featured running was Paul Plank---the play of the game to seal the victory was a tackle eligible pass play from Quarter Elliston to 220# #Tackle Jeff Jones

During the late 60’s and mid 70’s Norwayne’s football fortunes in terms of wins and losses were scant but in 1973 under Coach Bob Natherson, the Bobcats finished 6-3 and recorded key wins over Cloverleaf, Doylestown, Dalton, Hillsdale, Northwestern & Rittman.

During the late 70’s and into the mid 80’s under Head Coaches Dave Grimwood, Phil Tipton, Dave Vodika and Sam Hornak, the Cats went 46-26-3. The best seasons were 1979 and 1984, both at 6-3-1. The 1982 squad went 5-4-1 with seniors Perk Jarrett, Doug Reed and Kurt Steiner filling vital roles. The 1983 team went 4-6 led by WCAL All-League running back Doug Zimmerly, who gained 1407 yards, set a school single season record and a school record which stood till Shaun Slater surpassed Doug Zimmerly for the school record in 2004.

The 1984 football team went 6-3-1 and senior Bill Vance was a key lineman as Michelle Franks Vance and Dawn Young Schreiber were leading cheers! In 1985 senior players included Jamie Berger, Rick Studer and John Widmer as that team completed a very successful season compiling a record of 6-4.

From the late 1980’s through to the mid 1990’s, Coaches Mike Schmeltzer, Rich Allen, Ramizi Shepherd and Kurt Boedicker’s teams all struggled, with the best two groups going 4-6 in 1990 and 1992.

Then in 1993 Mike Staggs came to Norwayne as Head Coach and he had a very good run with a second place League finish in 1994 at 8-2 overall and 6-1 in the League. That team was anchored with a large talented senior class including Quarterback Mike Coffey and running backs Matt Frary, Corey Lance and Greg Wolf along with talented tall pass receivers Josh Wolf and Chad Young. Big strong guys up front creating the pathways on offense and tackling on defense included Josh Lance, Kyle Steele, Dwight Shane and Keith Kahl.

Following Mike Staggs in 1997 was Jerry Miller and in 1999, Jeff Schleich, and for four years their teams were 10-29 through the year 2000.

In 2001 Kevin Maltarich, a West Holmes High School and Bowling Green State University graduate came on the scene as Head Coach and things began to change as his 2002 team was 7-3 and through a couple of so-so years, 2003 through 2005, through a dedicated weight training program the players worked to become bigger, faster and stronger. Success surfaced beginning in 2006 where his teams were [8-2], 2007 [7-3], and 2008 [8-3] – A WCAL Championship and a D-5 State Playoff Appearance for the first time in school history! In February of 2009, Kevin Maltarich was named Head Coach at D-1 Mansfield Madison High School in Richland County.

In 2009 Joe Harbour, an Upper Sandusky High School and Baldwin Wallace College graduate (where he was an Academic All-American Football Player for the Yellow Jackets) was hired as Norwayne's Head Coach. Joe had been an Assistant Coach at Northwest High School in tradition rich Stark County. He introduced a spread offense coupled with Norwayne's run orientated system under Maltarich and that continued Norwayne Football on its pathway to success as his teams went 5-5 in 2009 and 9-3 in 2010. The 2010 season included the schools' second ever playoff birth and first ever playoff win via an overtime victory against Crestview Columbiana. In 2011 Harbour's Bobcats were 14-1, WCAL Champs and made a State Playoff run that began week 11 on Saturday Night, November 5th, at Cloverleaf High School on their new turf football field.

The Bobcats met Brookfield from Trumbull County near Warren, Ohio, in this D-IV matchup and Norwayne was victorious 42-7 before a large crowd on the turf at Gene Clark Stadium in neighboring Lodi, Ohio.

Week 2 of the D-IV OHSAA Football Playoffs brought together two Wayne County, Ohio Schools—football tradition rich and 1998 D-IV State Champion Orrville High School who Plays in the Ohio Cardinal Conference against primarily D-1 and D-2 competition, and Norwayne, a member of the Wayne County Athletic League comprised of mostly D-5 and D-6 schools. The game was held at Medina High School "Dukes" Stadium on Saturday, November 12—again on a turf playing surface. The Bobcats again showed their consistency and football prowess by controlling the game from start to finish defeating the Orrville Red Riders by a score of 34-19.

Week 3 of the OHSAA State Playoffs took the Bobcats to Green Stadium over in Summit County to meet the No. 1 Team in Division IV computer rankings in Northeast Ohio which was Girard from Mahoning County who were sporting a record of 11-1 at the time. This game was close throughout and in the closing seconds of the game Norwayne Quarterback Adam Wallace connected with a pass to Brady Berger and the Bobcats were victorious 33-32 to claim their first ever OHSAA Regional Football Championship.

Week 4 of the OHSAA Playoffs placed Norwayne in a State Playoff Semi-Final match-up against undefeated Johnstown Monroe from Licking County near Columbus who had the No. 1 running/yardage gained fullback in the State. The game was played at Woody Hayes Stadium in New Philadelphia, Ohio. The Bobcats took control of the game on a historic goal line stance on the 2 yard line and never looked back, defeating the Johnnies by a final score of 59-28 which qualified them for the State Finals—again a first in the history of the school.

The State Playoff Game on December 3, 2012, at Paul Brown Tiger Stadium in Massillon, Ohio, was verses No. 1 ranked Kenton High School from Hardin County, Western Ohio whose offensive records were at the top of the chart directed by Maty Mauk "Mr. Football" in the State of Ohio. The Bobcats took the lead from the beginning kick-off and held that lead throughout the game until the 3-minute mark when Kenton put on two successive scoring drives to go up 42-41. Norwayne took the ball following Kenton's last score and marched the length of the football field to score the winning touchdown and extra point going ahead 48-42 a score, which held up to end following several unsuccessful attempts by Kenton to score in the closing seconds of the game.

The Norwayne Bobcats became the 2011 D-IV State Football Champions to become the first ever Wayne County Athletic League School to win a State Championship in Football! Congratulations to Head Coach Joe Harbour, Assistant Coaches, Captain/Quarterback Adam Wallace and all of the Bobcat Football Players on a great accomplishment and for doing it with class !!!

Written By
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