

ATHLETICS

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE DOUGLASS PUBLIC SCHOOLS 1870-1983

By B. (Pete) Schreiner/Jim Kelller, editor

The history of Douglass High School would not be complete without a description of the athletic program given to the writer during an interview with Joe M. Guyot, in 1954.

In the early history of the school, there was no organized athletic program, and all activities were organized by the students. The early sports were football, basketball and track. During this period there were no leagues, State Department of Public Instruction control, and no Kansas State High School Activities Association (KSHSAA).

Football games were scheduled with any school that could "gather up" a team. Since most schools were small at this time, a system of recruiting was developed. Men of all ages, whether students or not, were recruited. Many of these men were in their twenties. The remainder of the team was made up of high school students, who were also recruited by the organizer of the event. Schools would then be contacted for the purpose of "matching up" a game. One of these schools "matched up" was Southwestern College of Winfield. The games were played on the present school grounds. Transportation was managed and furnished at the expense of the participants. When participants traveled to the closer towns, transportation was by horse and buggy. The students would start out early in the afternoon, arrive at their destination, play the game and return home after sundown. If they had an activity scheduled with the Chilocco Indian School, the teams would ride on the train to Arkansas City, where they would be met by a representative of the Chilocco School. The method of transportation to the school from Arkansas City was by team and wagon. The students would then participate in the athletic event, spend the night at Chilocco. The next morning the students would be transported by team and wagon to Arkansas City, where they would take the train back to Douglass.

Basketball games were played in a barn called the "chicken coop" located in the present City Park or nearby. This "coop" was later replaced when the "Pavilion" was constructed on the City park grounds. There was a loft in this barn (exact size not known), where the games were played. It was so small that even when the goals of "baskets" were fastened to the ends of the building, it was still a tiny basketball court. Each goal was several feet from the ends of the floor. To remedy this situation, chicken wire was extended on the ends of the floor to each end of the building and fastened just below the baskets. If a participant came too close to the end of the floor during a game and was bumped by another player, he ended up in the chicken wire. Very few participants in these games went home without scratches, abrasions and sometimes more dangerous injuries. During this time, the basketball team played Fairmount College in Wichita, one game (now known as Wichita State University).

The highlight of the year was the track and field meet, held each spring on grounds south of the school building. All schools wishing to participate were welcomed. On the day of the meet, the train would leave from Florence and pick up all of the students along the line who were waiting to board the train. El Dorado, Augusta, and Southwestern College were always invited. Those south of Douglass, provided their own method of travel to the meet. The train was parked on the siding just east of the school grounds. The meet would

be held during the remainder of the day, and then students who lived north of Douglass, would board the train and return to their homes. (At one time there was a turntable in Douglass, which allowed the engineer of the train to turn it around, headed north, for the trip back to Florence.

As stated previously, in 1911 and 1912 the Barnes High School League had been established and Douglass was one of its members. Douglass especially profited by the opportunities offered, for, in 1904, the superintendent (H. I. French) arranged for the first track meet ever held in the County, between the high school and a team from Southwestern College.

For the first sixty or more years, the emphasis in athletics was on boys teams. Not much time was spent on the girls, but there is a record of a girls basketball team in 1922. In the same year a "Physical Culture Class" was organized. The classes consisted of light gymnastics and relaxing exercises, while listening to Edison records and cadence counts by the two instructors. It was not until the 1940's that girls athletics received much attention, and has been an important part of the athletic program to the present time. Girls activities were usually basketball and track. Later, volleyball and softball were introduced into the Jr. High and High School. Since there was very little organization until the Butler County League was organized in 1927, scheduling at times was very difficult. The schools were fortunate to fill their schedules. They could not be too selective, and since there were no designated divisions, they scheduled many that were much larger than Douglass. Football, Basketball, Track and Field, and Baseball were scheduled. During the 1920's wrestling was introduced and it provided more contacts with the schools. Some of the schools with whom Douglass maintained some athletic contacts were: Rose Hill, Leon, Latham, Atlanta, El Dorado, Augusta, Winfield, Wellington, Derby, Mulvane, Burns, Southwestern College, St. John's College, Grenola, Newkirk- Blackwell-Ponca City in Oklahoma, Peabody, Marion, Wichita, Cathedral High (Wichita), Roe Indians (Wichita), Oxford, Belle Plaine, Benton, Chilocco Indian School, Arkansas City, and Haskell Institute located in Topeka.

Because of a lack of time, and a lack of available sources of information it is impossible for the writer to prepare an accurate and comprehensive history of the Douglass athletic Program. Suffice to say that many of our students were out standing in several areas. The Douglass community has always been proud of its teams and has wholeheartedly supported them. Douglass has had its share of champions. Some highlights on record: In 1930, the wrestling team under the coaching of William Doyle, a former Douglass athlete, won the first official State Championship.

In 1960, the wrestling team coached by Darrell Hill, won the State Championship.

In 1978, the football team, coached by Steve Savarese and assisted by Fred Cottrell and Dan Provence, won the title in the 3A class State Playoffs.

In 1979, the football team coached by Jack Crumbliss and assisted by Fred Cottrell and Dan Provence, placed 2nd in the 2A class State Playoffs.