

The 1985 Hillsboro High School Football Team

Even with the lights out, the 1985 Hillsboro High School football team was lights out on the field.

With the school board deciding to play their home games on Saturday to save money, the Toppers went 9-0 in the regular season in 1985, earning the Mid-State Conference championship before bowing out in the IHSAA Class 3A Sweet 16 with a 10-1 record.

Hillsboro would not allow a point until the fifth week of the season and had six shutouts during their undefeated campaign. They would outscore teams 327 to 85 over the 11 game span, allowing just 739 rushing yards the entire season, 75 percent of which came in the final four games of the year.

Members of the team included Stacy Thacker, Ken Lindberg, Steve Claxon, Glenn Blankenship, David Rademacher, Todd Butler, Ryan Hamby, Chris Peters, David Powell, Chad Compton, Kenny Clayton, Danny Logan, Mike Saathoff, Andy Stritzel, Danny Traylor, Eric Lindberg, Aaron Beck, Travis Tefteller, Randy Keiser, Larry Keiser, John Schaake, Brian McCarty, Todd Leitschuh, Roger Kunze, Neil Brinkman, Scott Paden, Mark Rix, John Lentz, Seth Smith, Paul Tomazzoli, Mike Cerutti, Doug Gonzalez, Ed Clearwater, Craig Clark, David Kunze, Matt Jones and Matt Huber.

1985 Season Recap

The Toppers would defeat Staunton 39-0 in their first game, getting three touchdown runs from Todd Leitschuh, who led the team with 87 yards rushing. Todd Butler and Chris Peters also had rushing touchdowns for Hillsboro, while Paul Tomazzoli had a 60-yard interception return for a touchdown as well.

In their second game, Hillsboro defeated Gillespie 41-0, with Todd Leitschuh running for 105

yards and three touchdowns. He would also block a punt, leading to a 15-yard touchdown return by Chad Compton, while Todd Butler and Glenn Blankenship also had touchdown runs.

In their third game, The Toppers rolled up 32 unanswered points on Litchfield to improve to 3-0 with a 32-0 win. Todd Leitschuh ran for 197 yards and three touchdowns on just 18 carries, while Ken Lindberg tacked on a three-yard run and Paul Tomazzoli scored on a 41-yard pass reception from Chris Peters.

In a battle of unbeaten, Hillsboro would defeat Shelbyville 16-0 in week four. Todd Leitschuh would score a 44-yard touchdown to break up a scoreless tie and ran for 113 yards on 20 carries. Paul Tomazzoli had the other score on a 17-yard pass from Chris Peters, Hillsboro's only reception of the night.

The Mater Dei Knights would finally break up Hillsboro's season-long shutout in week five, but the Toppers still picked

up a 13-6 win over the Breese-based parochial power. Chris Peters connected with Paul Tomazzoli in the first quarter on a ten yard pass play to give Hillsboro an early 6-0 lead, but Mater Dei rallied to tie the game just before halftime.

After a scoreless third quarter, Hillsboro would get the ball back with 3:31 to play in the game and would march down the field for the game-winner, a one-yard run by Ken Lindberg. Lindberg led the team on the ground with 180 yards on 23 carries, while Todd Leitschuh carried the ball 24 times for 125 yards.

The Toppers were back to zero in week six as they picked up their fifth shutout of the season with a 46-0 win over Vandalia. Chris Peters threw for 105 yards and three touchdowns, two to Paul Tomazzoli and one to Glenn Blankenship, while Todd Leitschuh (186) and Blankenship (114) each topped the century mark. Leitschuh (twice), Blankenship and David Powell would all have rushing

touchdowns in the game as well.

In week seven, Hillsboro put together a 34-point first half en route to a 47-0 win over Pana. Todd Leitschuh had 109 yards on 19 carries, three of which went for touchdowns, while Ken Lindberg and Steve Claxon also had rushing scores. Chris Peters threw for 80 yards, with touchdown passes to Glenn Blankenship and David Powell.

Greenville would be the second team of the season to score on Hillsboro in week eight, but the Toppers were ahead 26-0 at the time and went on to take a 32-7 homecoming victory, clinching the Mid-State Conference championship and a spot in the playoffs.

Todd Leitschuh scored the first three touchdowns of the game, en route to a 177-yard performance. Glenn Blankenship added 70 yards and another score while Chris Peters found Glenn Blankenship for a 30-yard reception for the final touchdown of the game.

Hillsboro would keep their unblemished regular season intact with a 28-20 win over Triad in week nine at Sawyer Field, marking the first time in 24 years that a Topper football team had finished the season undefeated.

Hillsboro started the game with 13 first quarter points on touchdown runs from Chris Peters and Todd Leitschuh. Triad would come back with a pair of scores to take a 14-13 lead with 2:03 to go in the third quarter.

The Triad lead was short lived though as Leitschuh ran 61 yards three plays later to give Hillsboro a 21-14 advantage. Ken Lindberg would make it 28-14 on a 44-yard run in the fourth quarter as the Toppers hung on for the win. Leitschuh ran for 144 yards on 15 carries, while Lindberg ran for 113 yards on 12 carries.

In the opening round of the playoffs, Hillsboro played host to Carlinville and defeated the Cavaliers 33-14 in the first year of an expanded playoff format that saw 32 teams qualify in each of the four classes.

After falling behind 6-0 in the first quarter, Hillsboro came back with a pair of scores in the second frame on a touchdown run by Todd Leitschuh and a 17-yard pass from Chris Peters to Chad Compton.

The Cavaliers would tie the game at 14 early in the third quarter, but Hillsboro came back with a pair of Leitschuh touchdowns to make it 27-14 in the Toppers' favor. Paul Tomazzoli would put a bow on the win with a 35-yard punt return that knocked Carlinville from the ranks of the unbeaten.

Hillsboro would see their season come to an end in round two as they fell to a talented Pittsfield squad on the Saukees home field by a 38-0 final score.

At the end-of-year banquet held by the sports boosters, Larry Keiser, Ed Clearwater, Kenny Lindberg and Todd Leitschuh were honored at their respective positions as the team's most valuable players.

Rich Stewart, Class of 1969

Inductee Rich Stewart, a member of the class of 1969, was a three-sport football, basketball and baseball athlete while a student at Hillsboro High School, but it was his work outside the lines that cemented his spot in the hall of fame.

Stewart's football career at HHS earned him the opportunity to play in college. He was a four-year starter at center for Southeast Missouri, earning a spot on the all-conference team for three of those years.

He followed fellow hall of fame inductee Dave Ball as Hillsboro High School football coach, winning 70 percent of his games over 12 seasons—an 87-38 record.

His teams won conference championships regularly, in six of the 12 seasons he was at the helm: 1994, 1995, 1999, 2001, 2002 and 2006. The Hiltoppers won eight playoff games under Coach Stewart, advancing to the sweet 16 in 2000, 2001 and 2005, to the elite eight in 1995, and to the final four in 2002.

Stewart spent an incredible 30 years as head coach of the Hillsboro High School baseball team, averaging 14 wins a season over that span—a career 417-311 record. His baseball Hiltoppers won conference championships seven times, in 1986, 1988, 1992, 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003, and regional championships in 1997, 2001, 2005 and 2007.

As a junior high boys basketball coach, his teams earned state runner-up trophies in 2014 and 2015.

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FOOTBALL

1985

We're Behind You Hiltoppers!

Senior and Junior HHS Football Players

The HHS Varsity football team consists of front row, left to right: Chad Compton, Doug Gonzalez, Chris Peters, Todd Leitschuh, Andy Stritzel, Steve Claxon, and Ken Lindbergh. Standing, left to right, Coach Rich Stewart, Glen Blankenship, Paul Tomazzoli, Mike Cerutti, Larry Keiser, and Coach Dave Ball.

Ken Meade Photo

Coach Dave Ball

Whether it was on the gridiron or on the mats, Coach Dave Ball's teams in the 80s and 90s picked up more than their fair share of victories.

As the head coach of the Hillsboro High School football team, Ball led the Toppers to state playoff appearances in 1981, 1985, 1986 and 1988 and is the first of three coaches to help Hillsboro to back-to-back playoff appearances, along with current head coach Aaron Duff and fellow inductee Rich Stewart.

Two of those appearances yielded victories. The Toppers defeated Monticello in 1981 and Carlinville in 1985. Hillsboro was also the Mid-State Conference champions three times under Ball's leadership, taking the crown in 1982, 1985 and 1986.

As good as his football teams were, the wrestling teams under Ball were even better. For a five-year span between 1988 and 1992, the Toppers were nearly unbeatable, going 100-20-3 in those five seasons.

Those years also yielded a lot of hardware for the Hillsboro trophy case as they won five straight regionals (he also picked up a regional title in 1983), four sectional titles and qualified for state five times. In four of those five trips to the state tournament, Hillsboro would bring home a fourth place trophy, making wrestling the most decorated program at the state level for the school.

Individually, Hillsboro had ten medalists under Ball before he retired before the 1994-95 season. That list includes some of the best in the history of the program, like Matt Hughes (first in 1991 and 1992), Mark Hughes (second in 1992), John Clayton (fourth in 1988, 1989 and 1990), Ken Clayton (fourth in 1987 and 1988), Lonnie Hayercraft (third in 1979) and Andy Stritzel (fourth in 1986). Ball also coached Graham Witt, who was a fourth place finisher under Dave Harris in 1995. Prior to his arrival to the program, Hillsboro had qualified just one individual for the state tournament (Steve Hefley in 1974).

For his efforts, Ball was recognized as the *Decatur Herald & Review* Coach of the Year four times, in 1979, 1987, 1991 and 1992. He was also inducted into the Illinois Wrestling Coaches and Officials Association Hall of Fame in 2006.

Friday, September 7, 2018
Hillsboro Hall Of Fame Induction
Hillsboro Football vs. Roxana
at 7 p.m.

4th Grade Girls Softball Tryouts
 Any 4th grade girl interested in playing on a travel/competitive softball team for the 2019 year, tryouts will be held on **Sunday, July 29 from 5-7 p.m. at the Hillsboro Sports Complex.**
 Please contact Billy Christian (217-827-1778) or Joe Chappelle (217-259-9223) for questions.

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