

# WEEKENDER

Never Had A Losing Grid Season

## Jones And The George Clem Wolverines

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It sure is fun to look back at the "good ole days" and this is what J. J. Jones and I have been doing the last few days.

Much is said about the Bear's record win at Alabama Saturday to make him the winningest college coach of all time and for several weeks we have been talking about a First and Fourth for Greenville's Greene Devils in posting their fourth straight winning season for the first time in modern GHS football history.

What many of us had overlooked, was the fact that coach John J. Jones never had a losing season as the football coach of the George Clem High School Wolverines of Greenville.

Although records are very sketchy it is believed that Jones posted 159 victories in his sojourn with the Wolverines from 1949 through 1967. Jones said, "we had two or three break-even seasons but never lost more than we won. I was in a school that gave me more dedication than I have ever seen elsewhere. We never had any depth to speak of and any school we played had a much larger enrollment than us throughout those years."

The best campaign for Jones and his gridders was in 1955 when the Wolverines went through an 11-0-0 worksheet.

Jones is a graduate of Kentucky State University and coached for three years in Kentucky (15-5-0) before taking over the fortunes of the Wolverines.

Jones in answer to a question about his top gladiators hedged for a while before saying, "I would have to say that Keith Knuckles and Guy Hackler had to be the finest I ever coached. They were fine players, both offensively and defensively and were very easily coached. They did what I asked regardless and there were many times that they came up with the right suggestions in the clutch."

Jones, picking at his mustache and scratching hair that has begun featuring grey, emphasized that he had some of the finest offensive players ever to play the game in Upper East Tennessee.

He began extolling the virtues of the likes of Mitchell Dabbs, Cear Gillespie, Bobby Blue, Lacy Jackson, Terry Moore, John Barner, John A. Blair, Bobby Dabbs, Ray Anderson, Jim Stokley and Hezzie Gillespie.

Jones said, "I would hate to say any of them were the best. They all gave me happy days at George Clem. Each may have had an edge, say in blocking, acceleration, speed, power etc. but overall they would have to be blocked together as some of the very best."

Jones says that Langston of Johnson City was always one of the toughest opponents but had high praise for the football programs at Slater of Bristol, Nelson-Merry of Jefferson City, Elizabethton and Kingsport. He added that the series' with Big Stone Gap and some other Virginia schools produced some exciting games at Burley Stadium.

Defensively, Jones praised the play of Don Hamilton, John Gudger, Guy Hackler, Archie Forby, Son Arnold, James "Doughbelly" Gudger, Warren and Wayne Horton, Ronnie Gudger and Roy Hamilton.

However, he was quick to say that "it's unfair of you to hit me with a question as



Coach J.J. Jones  
Never A Losing Season

to who was the best when I don't have time to really think it over. However, these were the ones who stand out as the people who got the job done, when we had to get it done. I hope that anyone I have left out will accept my apology in advance. It was certainly a grand old time for me with the Wolverines."

Jones smiles when he talks about the "hatchet" men of 1955 when the Wolverines rolled through an unbeaten campaign of 11 games.

"We had four of the finest linemen you would ever want to see in Bill and Lonnie Gudger, Bennie Anderson and Dan Huff. They complimented each other with their clutch play," Jones said.

After integration combined George Clem with Greenville, Jones was an assistant on the football staff at GHS for a number of years and served as a trainer as well.

Jones has retired from the sidelines but you can bet he is in the stadium every time the Greene Devils tee it up.

Jones recalls that money was at a premium, especially in the early days at George Clem and he had high praise for coaches Ty Disney and Leonard Coffman in helping him find enough equipment to field a team.

Jones said, "sometimes we had to swap helmets around when we substituted but we always had enough to play every fall even if some of it was substandard and frayed at the edges."

Jones added, "we usually played on either Thursday or Saturday night and the town of Greenville supported us well."

The Wolverines of Jones were usually offensive minded and it was of no great surprise when the Wolverines passed the ball at the shadows of the goal posts and literally hundreds of times George Clem went for it on four down with sizeable yardage to obtain. Jones disdained the punt as much as possible. With a few exceptions, the Wolverines did not have a good punter and the odds were better if as Jones put it, "went for the stakes."

Coach Jones serves as a counselor at Greenville High School and teaches a science class. He is a member of the Tennessee Hall of Fame.



1959 George Clem High School Wolverines

The 1959 George Clem Wolverines. Front row, left to right: Benny Anderson, James Anderson, James Forney, Danny Huff, Roy Anderson, William Dabbs, Jesse Deck, and David Gillespie. Back

row, left to right: Harold Gaines, Leroy Davis, Guy Hackler, James Gudger, Archie Forby, Sammy Jordan and Bobby Moore.



1963 George Clem Wolverines

The 1963 George Clem Wolverines left to right: Jimmy Stokely, Rogers, Jack Carson, James Wooten, Douglas Moore, James Gillespie, Bobby Black, Warren Wooten and Terry Wilson. Second row, left to right: Keith Knuckles, Casper Scruggs, John Barner, Tennyson Wooten, Larry Manuel, George Gillespie, Marco

Ripley, George Anderson and Bobby Blue. Back row, left to right: Michael Glass, Larry Montgomery, Eddie Anderson, Danny Huff, Ronnie Gudger, Bennie Anderson, Wayne Horton, Terry Moore and Lacy Jackson. Coach of the Wolverines, John J. Jones.



1957 George Clem High School Wolverines

Front Row: #22 Unknown, #88 Unknown, #66 Bill Gudger, #40 Unknown, #32 William Dabbs, #77 Unknown, #55 James Gillespie, #24 John Blair, #00 Archie Forby, #26 James Gudger, #99 Leroy Davis

Back Row: Coach J.J. Jones, #23 Richard Pierce, #25 (?) Beard, #33 Guy Hackler, #29 Unknown, #11 Jesse Deck, #44 Unknown, #7 Terry Moore, #30 Richard Montgomery, #28 Roy Anderson, #38 (?) Tugy Moore, #24 Kenny Campbell, #36 Unknown, Coach Robert Blakely



1964 George Clem High School Wolverines

Front Row: #? Walter Rogers, #31 William Rogers, Unknown, #63 Willie Anderson  
Second Row: #42 Tennyson Wooten, #41 James Stokely, #22 Keith Knuckles, #60 Eddie Jordan, #21 Marco Ripley,  
Third Row: #? Douglas Moore, #73 Bobby Blue, #? George Gillespie, #? Shelby Friend, #? Dennis White, #? Roy Vought, #? Warren Horton, #11 Bobby Black, #51 Warren Horton, #11 Bobby Black  
Fourth Row: #? Terry Moore, #? Wayne Horton, Unknown #? Eddie Anderson, #? Larry Manuel, Unknown #? Lacy Jackson, #72 Unknown