

## **HICKSVILLE'S FINE SPORTS REPUTATION**

by Tom Nikitas

Football produced its share of excitement in Hicksville, NY. Names like Rennie, Darmohray, Sabatella, Bergold and Coleman are familiar to those who followed Hicksville High gridiron fortunes. Many colleges across the country gave our graduates football scholarships. Myron Darmohray and Jimmy Hill gained distinction on the Georgetown University team of the late 1930's -- the best team on the East Coast.

Semi-pro football games which attracted from 5 to 9,000 spectators were not uncommon in the 1930 period. The population of Hicksville was under 8,000. But the games did have a drawing power from other communities as well. For one five-year period the Hicksville Field Club was the undisputed champion on Long Island. The enthusiasm of the local townspeople was boundless. Pep rallies, torchlight parades and bonfires were a regular part of victory celebrations.

The Hicksville tradition of championship teams is a long and honored one. Just as the teams of today more than hold their own with local rivals so, too, did the teams of yesterday. Coaches like Kenny, Yutzler, Bergold, and Millevolte did much to make the name of Hicksville respected on the fields of sports.

The fall of 1926 saw the formation of the Hicksville Field Club, a football aggregation which went forward to bring credit and glory to the community by its conquest on the gridiron. William L. Geyer was first manager of the team which played after the high school season ended. In the beginning there was little equipment and helmets were a luxury. Harry Proctor, Joe Donati, Pat Looney, Bellford Hanley, Clarence Heller, Lawrence McGunnigle, Al Shore, Joe Neylon, Al Martin, Ed Marrs, Joe Scott, John Nichols, George Hesse and Francis Anderson were on that first squad which played four games. In a contest with Lynbrook which had only ten players, McGunnigle played for the opposition and got in the way of Pat Rooney. Lawny suffered three broken ribs but didn't know it until after the game.

A few more players were added in 1927 including Alex Proctor, Murray Rosenberg, Abe Isralowitz, Bill Frost, Jimmy McCue and Lawrence Small. Still known as the "Hicksville Team" it ended the season with wins and losses about equally divided.

Joe "Doc" Palmer became coach in 1929 and the squad began to enlarge, being known as the Hicksville Athletic Association with rooms in the Theatre Building. Maroon colored jerseys with white stripes, the first jerseys for the team, were acquired that year and the AA had 120 members. Eleven pair of football shoes were obtained and substitutions were made according to foot size rather than ability.

In 1930 Tom Fitzgerald of Westbury was hired as coach and he brought in a number of Westbury boys. The squad played eight games and won the opener, defeating Baldwin Buccaneers 6-0.

Reorganized in 1931 as the Hicksville Football Club Harold Bergold became coach and Carmen Millevolte, manager. Harry Proctor was captain of the greatly improved team which narrowly missed capturing the North Shore championship. Fully equipped that year, the team jerseys were black with white numerals.

The year 1932 saw the squad beginning to get hot, winning nine and losing two games. Taking the North Shore crown, the club was nosed out by Valley Stream for the county title.

The Semi-Pro Championship for Nassau County was captured in 1933, the first of the five golden years, as the White and Black was undefeated and untied in 11 straight. The distinctive white pants were first worn by the backs and ends. The Chamber of Commerce gave the champs a dinner at Panchard's that year and a football dance was given Thanksgiving night by the Town of Oyster Bay Club "in honor of the team that put the name of Hicksville on the map."

Again Semi-Pro champs in 1934 with 11 wins, no losses, the Field Club played the hardest schedule of any team. The Hicksville BMA and Chamber of Commerce gave a dinner at the Hempstead Elks and 450 attending saw team members presented with gold footballs.

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The Champs still held the crown in 1935 although the L. I. Paragons broke a 23-game victory string, 6-2, while Valley Stream and Oyster Bay tied. The Semi-Pro Conference was organized that year. The team was given a dinner at the Pavalon Royal, Valley Stream, by the Chamber of Commerce.

Still champions in 1936, the Field Club also captured the Long Island title by defeating Patchogue, Suffolk champs, 39-0. There were 11 victories, three tied games and no losses that year.

Louis Millevolte became coach in 1937, the year the pony backfield made its debut. Thirteen more victories were racked up and one tied as the team retained the semi-pro crown. The following year they won 8, lost 5 and tied 2.

Attendance of 1000 or more Hicksville fans at a home or travel date of the Field Club during its championship years was not unusual. During the war years there was a slackening of this activity which has begun to revive since VJ-Day.