

First Four-Sport Letterman

This is the next installment in the series of articles by Br. Neal Golden '57 CJ



1944 St. Aloysius backfield: L-R: **Lloyd Maestri, Carol Prats, Ray Breaux, Roy Hoffmann**

In 1943-44, **Roy Hoffmann '46** became the first Crusader athlete to earn four varsity letters in one school year. And he was only a sophomore! Roy repeated the feat the next two years to complete his St. Aloysius career with 12 letters, three each in football, basketball, baseball, and track.

Yet Roy's tenure on Esplanade Avenue got off to a rocky start. Living uptown, he started his freshman year at Fortier. However, within two weeks, the mischievous youth cut school. When notified of the transgression, Roy's father decided his son needed more discipline and immediately enrolled him in St. Aloysius.

Since football had already started, Hoffmann tried out for the JV basketball team and became a starter. As luck would have it, one of the first opponents was Fortier. Someone recognized him as a former Fortier student and protested to the LHSAA. The rules dictated that Roy wait a year to become eligible at a new school. Not only did Aloysius have to forfeit the games he played in, but both the junior and senior basketball teams were disqualified. They could play their schedule, but no games would count toward district championships. At the end of the season, since the team could not compete in the state playoffs, Brother Ralph entered the varsity cagers in the Southern AAU Tournament in New Orleans. When they won the regional to qualify for the national tournament in Denver, the same players who had given Roy grief earlier now thanked him.

Roy's best sport was football. Only 135 pounds, he used speed and shiftiness to set rushing records. He also excelled as a defensive back in an era when the eleven starters were expected to play both offense and defense.

Hoffmann began his sophomore year in 1943 as the third string tailback for Coach Roy "Chief" Ary, who took over when Harry "Wop" Glover entered the Navy. The starter was quickly injured. The second-stringer got so banged up running behind an inexperienced line that he wanted to quit football. So Ary moved him to end and put Hoffmann at tailback. Like the other two, Roy also took his lumps but gained valuable experience the rest of that 1-7 campaign.

After such an inauspicious start to his football career, Hoffmann surprised everyone with his breakout performance in 1944. His signature game was the third contest of the season against Jesuit. Not only did Roy spark the school's first victory over the Blue Jays 25-12, but he also set a local prep rushing record by gaining 211 yards including touchdown runs of 80 and 72 yards.

He won the city rushing crown with 604 yards and scored 73 points. His performance earned him the Most Valuable Player award on the All-Prep team.

Elected co-captain for his senior season, Hoffmann ran or passed for a TD in every one of the ten games. He also place-kicked extra points and punted. Once again, he saved his best for Jesuit. He amassed 303 all-purpose yards by rushing, returning four pass interceptions (another record), and running back punts. He scored both Crimson TDs, a 98-yard interception return of a John Petibon pass and a 49-yard punt return. However, Jesuit scored on a pass on the last play of the game to gain a 18-13 victory.

In the 25-7 win over Fortier the following week, Hoffmann broke his own one-game rushing record with 218 yards. He tallied three TDs against Terrebonne despite playing only half the game and then repeated that feat against Warren Easton and S. J. Peters. In the final game of the season against Nicholls, he failed to rush for a TD but did throw the game-winning 14-yard pass to "Big John" Cronin in the last two minutes for a 13-12 triumph.

Roy not only made all-prep and all-state but was also named to the All-Southern team compiled by the Orlando *Morning Sentinel*.

In basketball, Hoffmann started at guard as a sophomore but lost that position when Nick Revon joined the team the following year. Roy played second base for three springs. His last year on the diamond, the Crusaders lost to Jesuit in the state finals. He also helped restart the track program, which had been cancelled for several years. Roy won the triple jump, high jump, and broad jump at many meets. Since he simultaneously played baseball, he would ride to City Park on the baseball bus, practice on the diamond across Roosevelt Mall from the stadium, then hurry across the street to join track practice, and ride the track bus back to school.

Roy went to Tulane on a football scholarship in 1946. Since athletes at that time were not eligible for varsity competition until their sophomore year, he played on the Green Wave freshman team. The game against the Ole Miss Baby Rebels at Tulane Stadium proved fateful. With his team comfortably ahead, coach Andy Pilney took Roy out. However, his many friends from uptown New Orleans chanted for his to return. Pilney acceded to his "fan club." Roy's return to the field led to a torn ACL. When his scholarship was not renewed, he joined the Army and never did finish college.

Ironically, Roy served as a football official for 36 years for the LHSAA, the organization that had punished his school so severely in 1942. He has also won hundreds of medals in the Senior Olympics. He has been inducted into the Louisiana Senior Olympics Hall of Fame and the Louisiana High School Hall of Fame.



Roy Hoffmann