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## They're still the 1: Pineville's 1960 team remains parish's lone champion

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Editor's note: First in a four-part series about Pineville High School's 1960 football team that won the Class AA state championship.

Jimmy Keeth's "boys" from that championship season 50 years ago become young again as they recall what Bill Mount, a 270-pound senior tackle that year, says was a "dream year."

Keeth coached Pineville High School's "Ramblin' Rebels" to the Class AA state football championship in 1960. A half century later, the achievement looms larger than it might at places like John Curtis or West Monroe or other Louisiana high schools where state football championships are frequent autumnal house guests.

The 1960 Pineville championship is a rare, sometimes forgotten jewel -- an ancient relic from a time when Kennedy and Nixon made history with the first presidential televised debates, and before Americans even ventured into space. No team before or since in Rapides Parish has won a state championship in football and because of that, it is special and yet, sometimes, lost in the attic of the iPod generation.

As one current student at the school, caught unaware when asked if he knew of the school's football championship in 1960, said, "Not even our parents were born when that happened."

"We're kind of like the (1972) Miami Dolphins," quips Sam Goodwin, a junior guard for the Rebels that season who has enjoyed a distinguished coaching career. "We ought to celebrate every year that no one accomplishes that feat."

"We did not have a single man on the (LHSAA) all-star team that year," says Anna Claire Keeth, coach Keeth's widow, "because in 1960, instead of having one or two stars, they played as a team."

Fullback David Corley was one of four players from the team named to the All-Southwest Class AA team (covering three 2A districts), along with center and LSU scholarship recipient Stanley Tuma, halfback James Aymond and end David McKenzie. Corley, Tuma and halfback Jerry Meredith were the team co-captains.

"We knew after we beat Natchitoches that we were real good," says Corley, who played for Louisiana College and, briefly, for the Toronto Argonauts of the Canadian Football League. The Rebels beat Natchitoches, 21-0, in the eighth game of the regular season.

"Natchitoches," says Corley of the team that won District 3-AA in 1959, "was the measuring tape."

Joining Pineville and Natchitoches (before it became Natchitoches-Central) in District 3-AA that year were Menard, Leesville and Jena, and this was when Class AA was the second largest classification in the state.

Pineville finished the season on a 10-game winning streak after losing two of its first three games to

Class AAA schools Sulphur (34-6) and Lake Charles (12-7). The Rebels, with a 5-2-4 defensive scheme, posted five shutouts and didn't allow any of their defeated foes to score more than one touchdown until a classic state semifinal game against Neville.

Pineville did not have its own stadium at the time and played its home games at Louisiana College's Alumni Stadium.

Corley remembers a blow he absorbed in the team's first loss to Sulphur.

"I got hit in the face and was knocked cold as a cucumber," says Corley. "I had nothin' but blood on my face. I needed seven-eight stitches under my left eye. I couldn't practice for a week or so. Coach Keeth got me a helmet with a big faceguard because I fractured a cheek bone."

Corley and Aymond, two key offensive players, were among a handful of players who missed the Lake Charles game the following week with injuries, but the Rebels played one of their better games, holding a 7-6 lead before faltering late against a strong Lake Charles team.

Danny LeBlanc, a future LSU star running back for Lake Charles, took control of the game late, carrying several times on the Lions' final, 92-yard drive, and he scored the winning touchdown with 55 seconds left.

"Danny LeBlanc was a man among boys," says David Bates, a backup junior quarterback and starting defensive back on that team.

Although the Rebels were 1-2 after their first three games, they were not worried.

"We didn't think about that," said Jimmy Gallent, the starting senior quarterback that season. "Coach Keeth didn't let us think about the past and we couldn't look past tomorrow."

The Rebels stormed through their next four games against Leesville, Ferriday, Jena and Winnfield. Mount remembers that Tuma, who played center on offense and linebacker on defense, played the second half of the Jena game with a broken leg.

Pineville was on a roll heading into a contest against defending league champ Natchitoches, which had whipped the Rebels, 34-7, the previous year. Meredith rushed 11 times for 100 yards, and Aymond rushed for one touchdown and returned a kickoff for another to lead Pineville's 21-0 victory, which moved the Rebels up to No. 2 in the state behind No. 1 Neville of Monroe.

Pineville emptied its bench in a 34-7 rout of Jonesboro-Hodge, and then met cross-town rival Menard for the district championship. Aymond scored three quick touchdowns and the Rebels were on their way to a 63-7 rout, setting school records for the most points in a game and the biggest margin of victory.

The Rebels had a two-week rest before opening the playoffs with a 26-0 shutout of Opelousas -- a win that looked better on the scoreboard than it did to Keeth, who pounced on the Rebels for their mistakes and lackluster play. The Rebels scored just once in the second half, when Gallent was sidelined with a shoulder injury.

Pineville responded with its finest game in a come-from-behind, 20-19 semifinal victory over defending state champion and top-ranked Neville, before 8,000 at cold, wet Bolton Stadium. Corley, despite a sprained ankle, scored three touchdowns and converted twice -- one by kick and one by run. He brought the Rebels twice from behind.

"I don't see any reason Pineville can't go all the way," Neville coach Bill Ruple said afterwards.

That is what the Rebels did with a 19-7 victory over Assumption at Napoleonville in the state championship game. Down 7-6 at the start of the fourth quarter, the Rebels scored two touchdowns in two minutes. A 5-yard pass from Gallent to McKenzie put Pineville ahead, and the clincher was a 74-yard punt return by Aymond, with Meredith delivering the block that enabled Aymond to break free for the run.

"You played like champions," Keeth was quoted in The Town Talk as telling the team afterwards. "You went out to win and did. You did yourself proud and I'm proud of you."

Next: The Coach

## Additional Facts

Pineville football 1960 Results

Cosmopolitan Jamboree

Pineville 6, LaSalle 0

Regular Season

Pineville 27, SFA 0

Sulphur 34, Pineville 6

Lake Charles 12, Pineville 7

Pineville 26, Leesville 6

Pineville 34, Ferriday 0

Pineville 27, Jena 0

Pineville 28, Winnfield 7

Pineville 21, Natchitoches 0

Pineville 37, Jonesboro-Hodge 7

Pineville 63, Menard 7

Playoffs

Pineville 26, Opelousas 0

Pineville 20, Neville 19

Pineville 19, Assumption 7

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