

A Look Back at Ohio's State Poll Titles: 1947-1971

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Introduction

For as long as competitive athletics has been a part of civilized society, it has always been crucial for avid sports enthusiasts to identify which team commands a position above the rest. At any level, albeit at the league level, the state level or the national level, inherently there is always a best team. And this best team must by demand be named. But whatever process is used to determine that, it must be one that is formalized through an accepted institution and confirmed by those who matter the most, the sports fans.

In Ohio, state championships in football have been either claimed or awarded for well over one hundred years. They were first recognized through popular claim and later statewide voting polls. Recently, the procedure has evolved into the present-day post-season playoff system.

Presented here is a look back at the second method, sportswriters polling, which encompassed a timeframe from 1947 through 1971. The narrative below describes the polling process, the justifications behind the selections of the Number 1 teams and the claims of irregularity. But most important of all, it examines whether the polling process was a credible method for determining the state champion.

Part 1 - Popular Acclaim

“Popular Acclaim” state titles were in vogue throughout Ohio beginning in 1895. In principle, any team that compiled an undefeated or near perfect season was poised to declare itself state champion. And that went on for 52 years, through 1946. Thanks to the work of Timothy Hudak, historian for the Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA), those deserving teams were brought together into one publication. Although several in any given year could rightfully make such a claim, Hudak made a grand attempt at screening through the candidates and selecting the one team or several teams for each year that were most deserving. And the OHSAA has recognized each as an official state champion.

The list of champions encompasses a host of schools, none of which displayed any form of annual dominance, until the mid-1930s. That's when, during a 9-year period from 1935 through 1943, Massillon won eight state titles, beginning with six under Head Coach Paul Brown. Aside from that timeframe, Fostoria won eight, Steubenville four, and Massillon, Canton McKinley and Toledo Scott won three each.

But in 1947 the sportswriters in Ohio decided to include a voting poll as part of their publications, similar to what was being used by the NCAA. The system, as a matter of course, was then immediately adopted by OHSAA as the official ranking method.

Part 2 - State Sportswriters Polls

The earliest college football poll, the one generated by The Associated Press (A.P.), dates back to the early 1930s. So, it was only natural that Ohio's sportswriters would follow suit shortly thereafter, in 1947, thereby replacing popular acclaim. The system involved having each scribe award a specified number of points for their selected first place team, a slightly lower number for second, etc., until ten positions were named. A clearing house then compiled all the votes and generated a Top-10. That group along with also-rans were then featured in weekly sports publications listing the teams, their positions in the poll, the total number of votes received and the total number of first place votes received. While participants in the voting process were spread across the state, the total number averaged around 40 and varied from year-to-year, sometimes week-to-week.

The International News Service (INS) conducted a similar poll, and it was in place through 1957. In 1953 the United Press International (UPI) poll was added to mix, utilizing the votes of statewide coaches. That poll remained in place through the end of the polling era. But the A.P. was always considered across the state and by the OHSAA as the official poll.

Sports fans could count on their local newspaper releasing the poll each week on a Tuesday, starting after the third or fourth week of the season. Of course, anticipation would grow throughout the weekend, waiting for the sportswriters to submit their individual polls, the A.P. to compile and release the Top-10s to the media, and then the newspapers to print and deliver the results. Even the radio stations were eager to announce the standings during their morning broadcasts.

Initially, all participating schools were grouped together. In 1950, in order to appease the smaller schools, they were divided into Classes "AA" and "A" and then in 1970 further divided into Classes "AAA", "AA" and "A", with "AAA" comprising the largest schools. Note that this story focuses mostly on the largest Class only.

The voting system had an immediate impact on those schools that strived for state titles. Finishing the season undefeated on its own merit suddenly became insufficient. Now, other factors came into play and schools now needed to impress the sportswriters that participated in the voting process. In essence, there were a number of factors that now influenced the outcome, including:

- Season win-loss record
- Strength of schedule
- Head-to-head competition
- Defending state champion
- Historical reputation

Under the voting process, a team needed to play AND beat the teams that would best help it finish at the top. There is an old adage that goes, "you need to beat the best to be the best." And that was ever so true during the polling era.

By the Numbers

Throughout the 25 years of the polling process, 88 different teams finished the season in the Top-10 one or more times. In addition, eleven different teams were awarded the state championship. The most successful of these was Massillon, which was a dominating force throughout the polling era, having found its way to the Top-10 twenty times, while winning twelve state titles. Here are the teams that were honored the most:

- **Massillon** - 12 titles, 5 runners-up, 20 appearances
- **Upper Arlington** - 3 titles, 8 appearances
- **Canton McKinley** - 2 titles, 2 runners-up, 11 appearances
- **Niles McKinley** - 2 titles, 2 runners-up, 6 appearances
- **Warren Harding** - 1 title, 1 runner-up, 8 appearances
- **Alliance** - 1 title, 1 runner-up, 6 appearances
- **Cleveland Benedictine** - 1 title, 4 appearances
- **Barberton** - 1 title, 3 appearances
- **Toledo Central Catholic** - 1 title, 3 appearances
- **Columbus Watterson** - 1 title, 2 appearances
- **Elyria** - 3 runners-up, 7 appearances
- **Springfield** - 2 runners-up, 7 appearances
- **Sandusky** - 1 runner-up, 8 appearances
- **Steubenville** - 1 runner-up, 7 appearances
- **Middletown** - 6 appearances
- **Toledo DeVilbiss** - 6 appearances

Other interesting numbers:

- **Poll winners that later won playoff state championships:** Division 1: Canton McKinley (3), Warren Harding (2), Upper Arlington (1); below Division 1: Cleveland Benedictine (6), Toledo Central Catholic (4), Columbus Watterson (2)
- **Most Top-10 appearances:** Massillon (20)
- **Most state championships:** Massillon (12)
- **Most consecutive state championships:** Massillon (7)
- **Most total votes received:** 524 – Toledo Central Catholic (1962)
- **Most first place votes received:** 33 – Toledo Central Catholic (1962)
- **Largest percentage of first place votes received:** 96% - Massillon (23 of 24 in 1950)
- **Smallest percentage of first place votes received:** 30% - Massillon (12-1/2 of 42 in 1951)
- **Closest vote total between No. 1 and No. 2:** 5 – No. 1 Columbus Watterson and No. 2 Niles McKinley (1966)
- **Most undefeated, untied teams that appeared in a final Top-10, but failed to win the title (first place votes in parentheses):**
 - 6 – 1955 (No. 1: Canton McKinley (17), followed by East Liverpool (7), Fremont Ross (5), Columbus East (1), Toledo Devilbiss (7), Youngstown East (3) and Upper Sandusky (1))

- 6 – 1964 (No. 1: Massillon (27), followed by Springfield South (7), Louisville (0), Upper Arlington (1), Rossford (0), Cleveland St. Ignatius (0) and Fremont St. Joseph (0))

Barberton won the first title, in 1947, and then Massillon captured the next six, before McKinley ran off a pair, in 1954-55. In the early sixties it was Niles and Massillon, and then Upper Arlington in 1967-69, following a near-miss in 1966. The final one went to Warren Harding.

The state polling process, along with the related influence factors discussed above, also spawned the formation in 1963 of the All-American Conference, a group of highly rated schools that, with inter-league play, assured each would be facing superior competition in order to enhance their opportunities of capturing the ultimate award. The members included Massillon, Canton McKinley, Warren Harding, Niles, Steubenville and Alliance. They certainly had the credentials since during the polling era they captured a combined 16 state titles (two-thirds of the total). And all six are in list of frequent honorees shown above.

Unfortunately, like any subjective system, the polling process had its hypothetical flaws, which spawned various controversies. Some of these are as follows and will be addressed in the next sections:

- There are those that claim that for Massillon to win that many championships there surely must have been some kind of bias within the system, especially since several times the Tigers as No. 1 had less than a perfect record.
- There were claims of bias from schools in southern Ohio, since those schools seemed to lack the necessary votes to finish high in the polls and that there were no state champions from that region.
- There was an apparent lack of parochial schools within the various Top 10s, which contrasts with the current domination of parochial schools evident in the present-day playoff system.
- There were obvious attempts to hijack the process wherein certain sportswriters cast questionable and perhaps undeserving first place votes in order to promote their local teams.

Massillon Dominance

The Tigers won 12 of the 25 state titles during the polling era and finished first in the UPI poll in another one. How could this possibly be? They surely couldn't be that good every year. There had to have been other teams that were more deserving during some of those twelve years.

Blame Paul Brown, if you must. He's the one who started it all at Massillon. Brown was hired as Massillon's head coach in 1932 and during his nine years there he compiled a win-loss record of 80-8-2. He was also 58-1-1 over his last six years, with the one loss coming against an out-of-state team. All six of these teams were named state champion by popular acclaim, while four of them were also named national champions.

Brown brought an innovative coaching system to Massillon and once it took hold it was nearly unstoppable. There was no argument across the state at the time that the Tigers were the best. And other schools knew that if they wanted to de-throne them, they needed to play them. Many did, but all of them failed.

Massillon fans enjoyed those years and elected to continue that success by hiring the best coaches, building the biggest stadium and involving the community in all phases of the program. And, in spite of a down year here or there, Brown's legacy is still very influential today.

Coaching-wise, they hired Coach Chuck Mather (57-3) in 1948, who captured three national titles and left to become the head coach at Kansas. And they hired Leo Strang (54-8-1), who had six strong years with two national crowns and later coached Kent State. And they hired Earl Bruce (20-0), who would become the head coach at Ohio State. And they hired Bob Commings (43-6-2), who fashioned an unbelievable state championship season in 1970 and left a year later to become the head coach at Iowa.

Brown departed Massillon for Ohio State after the 1940 season. Later he would coach the Cleveland Browns and become the head coach and owner of the Cincinnati Bengals. But after Brown, in the final six years of the popular acclaim era, the Tigers did manage to compile a record of 46-6-8, winning two more state titles.

It was a given then that Paul Brown put the Tigers on the map and that, because of their consistent success, the road to the state championship was perceived to run through Massillon. And that perception remained throughout the polling era. Of course, the Tigers didn't win the state championship every year, but more often than not they had significant influence on which team did. Here are how teams other than Massillon won their state titles:

- 1947 – Barberton beat Massillon 26-12.
- 1955 – Canton McKinley beat No. 2 Massillon 13-7.
- 1956 – Canton McKinley beat No. 8 Massillon 34-7.
- 1957 – Cleveland Benedictine beat No. 2 Massillon 13-7.
- 1958 – Alliance tied No. 4 Massillon 8-8, with the Tigers finishing 8-1-1.
- 1961 – Niles was undefeated as was Massillon. But Niles beat Massillon in a pre-season scrimmage and was awarded the state title.
- 1962 – Toledo Central Catholic won the state title. It was the only year of the polling era where Massillon was not a factor in the final selection.
- 1963 – Niles overtook No. 2 Massillon when the Tigers lost to Akron Garfield 13-6.
- 1966 – Columbus Watterson beat 9-1 Upper Arlington, which beat Massillon 20-14.
- 1967 – Upper Arlington beat No. 2 Massillon 7-6. They then used that win as a springboard to the next two state titles.
- 1971 – Warren Harding beat No. 6 Massillon 8-7.

Nothing says that Massillon would have won twelve state championships if there had been playoffs during that time. Even the sportswriters today don't have a great track record in pre-picking the eventual top teams. But they have been right at least a third of time during the playoff era, even

knowing that their polls now carry zero weight. And when it was an obvious selection, they were right 75% of the time. So, it is believed that Massillon would have had more than its fair share of state championships.

But at time of the polling era it was simple. If Massillon was undefeated, then they would be voted state champs. And if another school wanted the title, all they need do was schedule and beat the Tigers and go undefeated. Some did, but most failed. And that's why the Tigers won 12 of the state poll titles.

Fewer Southern Ohio Schools

Were the southern Ohio schools snubbed in the polls? That's a tough question. Of the 88 schools that placed in the Top-10 at least once during the polling era, 53 (60%) were from the north, 14 (16%) were from central Ohio and 21 (24%) were from the south. Eight northern schools won state titles as did two central Ohio schools, but the southern schools failed to break into that elite group.

The problem was that southern Ohio teams didn't often play teams from the north. And when they did, they usually lost. The following are the significant southern Ohio schools that during the polling era scheduled teams from the All-American Conference, which was considered the premier league in the state at that time:

Massillon (7-0)

- 1946 – Dayton Chaminade – won 35-12
- 1951 – Cincinnati Elder – won 42-6
- 1952 – Cincinnati Elder – won 33-0
- 1955 – Cincinnati Elder – won 26-7
- 1956 – Cincinnati Elder – won 27-13
- 1960 – Cincinnati Roger Bacon – won 8-0
- 1961 – Cincinnati Roger Bacon – won 12-0

Canton McKinley (2-0)

- 1954 – Springfield – won 26-7
- 1957 – Springfield – won 13-0

Warren Harding (0-0)

Niles McKinley (1-1)

- 1964 – Cincinnati LaSalle – won 42-0
- 1964 – Cincinnati Roger Bacon – lost 20-16

Steubenville (0-2)

- 1948 – Middletown – lost 40-7
- 1949 – Middletown – lost 21-2

Alliance (3-0)

- 1960 – Springfield – won 25-14
- 1960 – Cincinnati Elder – won 50-26
- 1961 – Springfield South – won 40-8

Three wins in 16 games, and none against either Massillon or McKinley, was just insufficient to impress the sportswriters. The central Ohio teams didn't fare much better, until Upper Arlington came along in 1966. That's the year they beat 4-5-1 Massillon 21-6, vaulting them into first place in the Week 7 poll. Unfortunately, they lost in Week 10 to Columbus Watterson, which ended up winning the title and gaining the distinction of being the first non-northern team to take the crown. But Arlington regrouped the following year, beating a 9-1 Massillon team 7-6, and then ran off 30 consecutive wins, while winning and holding onto the state crown for three consecutive years, giving central Ohio four titles.

Lack of Parochial Schools

There wasn't so much a "lack" of recognition of parochial schools in the polls. It was more that the parochials were just not the dominating powers they are today in the playoff era. Their capabilities on the football field were good enough to post winning records, but they were not much different from other good public schools. However, they were well represented.

Parochial schools comprise approximately 10% of the total number of Ohio schools that participate in football. During the polling era, 19 different parochial schools, or 22% of the total, were represented in the Top-10 rankings. Three, or 20%, won state titles, including Cleveland Benedictine, Toledo Central Catholic and Columbus Watterson. Both of these percentages are well above average.

One of the few parochial teams to really be considered as a state power during the polling era was Cincinnati Roger Bacon in 1967. They had the athletes to compete that year and finished with a perfect 10-0 record, including a 45-0 blowout of fledgling Cincinnati Moeller (a game witnessed by this writer). But it was 10-0 Upper Arlington that finished first, followed by 9-1 Massillon, with Roger Bacon finishing third. As noted above, Roger Bacon had scheduled Massillon twice (1960 and 1961) and lost both games. That surely played into the final voting. The following year Roger Bacon failed to make the Top-10 and didn't even qualify for the playoffs until 1997.

As a whole, the parochial schools were at that time just not up to the level of the top northern schools. But all of that was about to change when Cincinnati Moeller, during the final years of the polling era, began to assemble a powerhouse football program under coach Jerry Faust. They finished No. 3 in 1969 with a 10-0 record, No. 5 in 1970 with a 9-1 record and No. 5 again in 1971 with a 9-1 record. In 1974 they won their computer region and qualified for the playoffs, but lost in the semifinals to eventual champion Warren Harding. The following year they captured their first state championship with a 14-12 victory in the finals over Lakewood St. Edward.

Part 3 - Efficacy of Sportswriter Votes

Hundreds of schools along with thousands of supporting sports fans throughout the state relied on a handful of sportswriters to determine the ultimate state champion. There was simply no other process in place at that time, one that was sanctioned by the OHSAA. The question then is asked whether the polling process had the capacity to produce the desired result; i.e., selecting the realistically best team in Ohio. In that light, a few points warrant discussion:

- **The number of voters** - Place the decision of which team is the best in the hands of humans and a certain element of ambiguity will always exist. That's why it's necessary to employ numerous participants in any polling process. The A.P. state poll used an average of 40 participants, with the count varying from as low as 24 during the initial years to as many as 50 in the peak years (early 1960s), before tapering off again toward the end. It is assumed that as the poll gained more and more acceptance, additional sportswriters wanted to join the process. However, the root cause of the later decline is unknown.
- **The dispersal of voters** – The sportswriters that participated in the process were spread across the state in order to avoid potential bias toward teams in any one specific area. While this provided a good method for canvassing the entire state, it still had its limitations. Chief among these is that the voters obviously don't have the opportunity to witness many games involving the top teams. So, they obviously needed rely on other factors, such as historical reputation, game scores, records of their opponents, and occasional head-to-head competition with local teams. Unfortunately, it is just the nature of the beast.
- **Bias toward local teams** – Newspapers are in the business of making money. So, featuring a local team with a first-place vote, although it functionally helps that team reach the Top-10, that team just might become visible to the readers and that aids the money-making endeavor. But sportswriters also had their reputations at stake and recognized the need to include several legitimate teams. Therefore, it is believed that, although the odd team or two may have received a first-place vote or a high ranking, the sportswriters appeared to do a professional job of rating the remaining teams appropriately. Nevertheless, at the end of the day these odd votes were washed out through the use of (1) a mathematical point system and (2) a high number of voters that were dispersed throughout the state, creating a true Top-10.
- **The point system** – The polling process used the Borda System, in that the highest team was awarded the maximum number of points allocated, the second highest received the next highest, etc., until the last team was selected, the one allocated the fewest number of points. For the A.P. football poll the maximum number was set at ten, with the minimum number at one. That resulted in ten teams being placed within each voter's ranking. All of the participants' rankings were then compiled and the team receiving the most points was the overall Number 1, with nine other teams following in order until a final Top-10 was achieved. The system was intended to select broadly acceptable candidates, rather than those preferred by a majority, and so was often described as a consensus-based voting system rather than a majoritarian one. Two observations are apparent from using this method. First, it removed the bias from voters that favored their local teams. Second, it was not unusual due to that bias for the ultimate Number 1 team to receive fewer than 50% of the Number 1 votes. That was indeed the case in around half of the final A.P. polls.

Part 4 - The Playoff Era

But all things eventually come to an end, and this was true for the polling process. Prior to 1971, the OHSAA voted to introduce the playoffs, apparently (1) in response to several schools that disputed the

results claiming bias, and (2) in order to introduce a playoff system, similar to what other states were doing. But the measure was voted down by the principals, especially after a trial computer run resulted in unranked Parma Senior besting undefeated and poll champion Warren Harding as the Number 1 team in the Northeast region. This would have eliminated Warren from the playoffs given the initial design of qualifying only one team per region. This particularity cast doubt on the Harbin system's accuracy. Interestingly, Massillon's selection as the Number 1 team in its region, although it finished 8-2 with an 8-7 loss to Warren, was apparently not disputed.

Nevertheless, the principals had a change of heart the following year and in 1972 the era of the computer playoffs commenced. The goal for a team is to generate sufficient computer points to qualify based on the number of qualifying positions selected by the OHSAA for that year. Each time a team wins they receive points for the victory (Level 1) and also points from their opponent's victories (Level 2). In the early stages of the playoffs a third level was even used. Losses generate zero points. Scoring differential is not a part of the calculation; it is simply wins and losses.

At the time of this writing, it has been the preferred method for determining the state champion for 51 years. In its current format, given the sufficiently large number of qualifiers, it is nearly impossible now for the best team in the state not to have qualified. In that respect, the current playoff format has been successful. But, although the Harbin computer system can be useful for seeding teams for bracket positioning, it fails somewhat in accurately ranking the teams, given several quirks in the calculation method, as described below:

- **The number of qualifiers** - Initially, only one team from each region qualified for the playoffs. Two were the rule 1980. Finally, in 1985, the OHSAA increased the number of qualifiers per region to four, which is probably the right number. In 1999, the number was increased further to eight. Eight is optimum, since no team seeded below eight has ever won a state title in any division. Using playoff data starting in 1999, the odds of the best team qualifying among all large schools (Divisions 1 and 2) when qualifying four schools was calculated to be 90% (85% among smaller schools). However, with two teams qualifying it was 73% and using single qualifier it was less than half, at 40%. And that's even with giving the Harbin system four opportunities to get it right; i.e., one qualifier per region. This means that when only one or two teams from each region qualified, the Harbin system was extremely limited in its ability to identify and thereby qualify the best team in the state, as was initially demonstrated in 1971 when Parma Senior beat out Warren. So, the first 13 state championships must be considered as being a bit tainted.
- **Opponent schedules** – Ninety percent of the computer points earned by a team are derived from the performances of their opponents. With inter-league play this is not an issue, since there are a given number of wins and losses. But the non-conference games played prior to those are significantly more important and influence a third of final point total (for an 8-team league). If a team is not in a league, that influence grows to 100%. If these non-league opponents don't produce wins, something a team has no control over, then little advantage is gained. As an example, in 1978 Massillon played their traditional All-American Conference schedule, but owing to nearly all of their opponents having down years, they finished in 14th

position with a 9-0-1 record. The following year they finished 10-0 playing nearly the identical schedule and finished first in the region.

- **The number of calculation levels** - The Harbin system initially used a three-level numerical system, which favored independent teams and small leagues, as opposed to leagues that have 7 to 8 teams. That's because inherent losses resulting from league play compound, particularly in Level 3. Later, the OHSAA reduced it to two levels, which is much more appropriate for its intended purpose.
- **Strength-of-schedule** - The Harbin System lacks a strength of schedule attribute. It treats all teams as having equal strength, with the only defining factor being the win-loss record. And it treats a 1-point loss the same as a 30-point loss; i.e., the losing team receives zero points for both the first and second levels. Thus, the numbers are skewed in favor of a team's record without regard to strength of schedule.
- **Separated by regions** – The OHSAA decided to divide each division into four regions. This works well for geographical bracketing. But there have been instances where deserving teams were ranked one position short of the last qualifying spot, but had accumulated sufficient computer points to have qualified if the entire state had been grouped together.
- **Imposed scheduling constraints** - The Harbin system puts great emphasis on wins and the resulting accumulation of computer points. As a result, those schools that are just below the top level are prone not to schedule the top-level schools for fear that a loss will jeopardize their chances of earning enough computer points to qualify for the playoffs. That is completely opposed to the strategies schools during the polling era; i.e., beating the best to be the best. But it has forced the top teams into difficulties when trying to create schedules.

Part 5 - Relevancy of Past Poll Champions

The top public schools from the polling era enjoyed their last hurrah in 1974 when Warren Harding defeated Upper Arlington in the state playoff finals. But it didn't take long for the parochial schools to figure out how to beat the top public schools once they realized the benefits of participating in the playoffs; i.e., gate receipts from additional games and unrestricted marketing of their school as a "winner" to prospective students and athletes. Attracting the best athletes from a wide geographic area was now the primary key to success.

Post-season play got underway in 1972 and by 1974 the parochial schools were right in the mix with Cincinnati Moeller qualifying for the state semifinals. Although they lost to Warren Harding that year, they returned the following year and won the 1975 championship in an all-parochial school finals. In fact, they won the title five times in the next seven years. In 1988 Cleveland St. Ignatius began a similar run using the same formula, winning seven titles in a span of eight years. Then, the remaining large parochial schools, Cleveland St. Edward, Cincinnati Elder and Cincinnati St. Xavier, each took their turns in winning championships. Even mid-sized schools, such as Cincinnati LaSalle, Akron Hoban and Toledo Central Catholic, began to dominate Divisions 2 and 3. To date, the parochial schools have won 67% of

the large-school state championships, in spite of comprising just 10% of all schools. Also, the private schools have won 79% of the head-to-head final four matchups with public schools.

But, in spite of the parochial school dominance throughout the 51-year span of the playoffs, several of those top public schools from the polling era have continued to remain relevant, in spite of the lack of state playoff titles. Here is a look at a few of them:

- Massillon – The Tigers have qualified for the playoffs 29 times and captured 15 regional championships, more than any other large public school. However, their record vs. the parochials in final four games is just 3-11. Six times they advanced to the final game, but they lost each time to a parochial school.
- Upper Arlington – The Golden Bears have qualified for the playoffs 19 times and own 7 regional championships. Their record vs. parochials in the final four is 0-5. But they did win a state title in 2000 in an all-public school final four.
- Canton McKinley – The Bulldogs have qualified for the playoffs 30 times and own 9 regional championships. Their record vs. parochials in the final four is a fine 8-4. They have three state playoff championships (1981, 1997 and 1998), but lost to parochial schools in the final game on three other occasions. McKinley has not advanced to the final four in 16 years.
- Warren Harding – The Raiders have qualified for the playoffs 12 times and have won the regional championship 3 times. They have two state titles (1974 and 1990), but have not been to the final four for quite some time.
- Steubenville – The Big Red have had several successful playoff performances and state titles, although they were earned in divisions below D2.
- Niles McKinley and Alliance – As lower division teams, they have achieved only sporadic playoff success.

Part 6 - Credibility of the State Poll System

Each year there is inevitably one team that is judged the best. For the first 50 some years it was through popular acclaim, a method that certainly created much debate from year-to-year. From 1947 through 1971, the champion was selected by sportswriters, a process that was always subject to some perceived bias. Many complain that these titles were not won “on the field.” The answer to that is that all ten games which were required to win a state title at that time were won “on the field” and the winner was one that usually played some of the best competition in the state. Popular acclaim and the sportswriters poll were the systems blessed by the OHSAA for those times and all of those state titles count.

Now it is the playoff system, a method assuring that the best team in the state has a chance to win it all. It has also been expanded over time so that more than half of the teams in the state have a chance. But

it was also a system that, in its early days, had tremendous restrictions and flaws. Today, it is a pretty good system for identifying the qualifiers, but not so good at ranking them. One issue is that a computer poll treats all regular season games equally and does not take into account the degree of improvement a team may make from beginning to end. In contrast, the sportswriters poll ranks teams as they stand at a point in time. Their final poll, perhaps in conjunction with a computer poll, might be more effective in seeding the teams for the post-season playoffs.

But regardless of the issues surrounding each method, they have all received the stamp of approval from the OHSAA as being the official methods for those time periods.

Anyway, the final question for this story is: did the sportswriters during the polling era get it right? Put humans in charge the process and it becomes subjective, prone to mistakes. Besides, no sportswriter can witness enough games to make an educated guess. He must rely on other factors, such as overall record, head-to-head games and reputation. In addition, the selection of the voters must be such that it covers the entire state, and a sufficient number of voters must participate in the process.

Interestingly, the NCAA's initial Bowl Championship Series (BCS) selection process relied heavily on computer programs. After a few years the NCAA discovered that their process was flawed in that they didn't believe the best teams were being selected (the same argument as with the OHSAA's early-years selection of a limited number of qualifiers and the associated inaccuracy of the Harbin system) and an adequate revision to the algorithm was just not possible. So today, the NCAA utilizes a system whereby two-thirds of the ranking comes from polling and one-third comes from computer programs. It seems that the sportswriters still have their place in the NCAA.

Did the sportswriters during the polling era get it right? It appears that they mostly selected the team that was the best for each year, while effectively considering the influence factors described earlier in this story. The top team was either undefeated or carried extenuating circumstances if 9-1. Nearly every winner defeated one or more Top-10 teams. In a few cases, the top two or three teams were matched up, with the winner receiving the obvious advantage. Defending champions were mostly repeat champs if they went undefeated. Finally, historically strong teams gained a bit of favor. But even when some bias in the voting was present, the Borda system effectively mitigated it.

The readers of this story are invited to review the comments in the Supplement that follows and judge for themselves. The comments attempt to justify why each Number 1 team was selected as the state champion.

Supplement: A Look at Each Year of the Poll Era

1947

A.P. Poll

1. Barberton (10-0)
2. Elyria (10-0)
3. Canton McKinley (8-1)
4. Cleveland Cathedral Latin (8-1)
5. Columbus West (10-0)
6. Hamilton (9-1)
7. Warren Harding (9-1)
8. Salem (10-0)
9. Upper Sandusky (10-0)
10. Toledo Libbey (9-1)

Comments: Barberton captured the first state championship that was determined by a vote of state-wide sportswriters. They were also named INS state champion. No. 2 Elyria, led by future Heisman Trophy winner and OSU running back Vic Janowicz, was also undefeated. But Barberton's 26-12 win over traditional-power Massillon was most likely the deciding factor in the sportswriters selecting the Magics over the Pioneers. No. 3 Canton McKinley defeated Massillon 14-0, but lost to unranked Canton Lincoln (a team Massillon had beaten), eliminating their chances for a state title. No. 4 Cathedral Latin beat Massillon 16-12, but lost to unranked Cleveland Holy Name. Southern Ohio's best candidate was No. 6 Hamilton, but they had a loss to an unranked opponent. They also lost their head coach to Massillon following the season. No. 7 Warren Harding defeated the Tigers 20-13, but had a loss to McKinley 32-7.

1948

A.P. Poll

1. **MASSILLON** (9-1) (272)
2. Canton McKinley (9-1) (250)
3. Hamilton (9-1) (205)
4. Middletown (9-1-1) (199)
5. Newark (8-0-1) (192)
6. Martins Ferry (9-0-1) (191)
7. Alliance (9-1) (176)
8. Lakewood (8-1) (163)
9. Mansfield (7-3) (124)
10. Akron St. Vincent (8-0) (122)

Comments: Massillon was led by new coach Chuck Mather, who was recently hired from No. 3 Hamilton High School. His initial team outscored its opponents 271-95, defeating No. 9 Mansfield 33-7, but lost to

No. 7 Alliance 14-0 in Game 5. The Aviators then proceeded to lose to No. 2 Canton McKinley 46-7. That put the Bulldogs in the driver's seat to win the state title. Only, Massillon knocked them off in the finale 21-12. Each of these three teams finished 9-1. But Alliance's blowout loss to the Bulldogs apparently eliminated them from contention, making the outcome of the Massillon-McKinley game the deciding factor. With no other serious contender having an unblemished record, the obvious choice was Massillon for the title, with McKinley as the runner-up. Immediately following the Saturday game, the Tigers were presumed to be the state champion. Then, when the poll was released with the Tigers having received 20 of 28 first place votes, it became official. Massillon was also named INS state champion. No. 3 Hamilton, the lone southern Ohio representative in the poll, continued their success from the previous year and thereby maintained a high ranking.

1949

A.P. Poll

1. **MASSILLON** (9-1) (350) (16)
2. Mansfield (8-1) (333) (12-1/2)
3. Canton McKinley (9-1) (304) (1)
4. Cincinnati Purcell (10-0) (270) (8)
5. Fremont Ross (9-1) (164)
6. Middletown (8-1) (137)
7. Toledo Libbey (7-1) (99) (1)
8. Circleville (9-0) (67)
9. Springfield (7-2-1) (63)
10. Wooster (9-0-1) (44)

Comment: Massillon outscored its opponents 395-93. The Tigers lost to No. 2 Mansfield 16-12 in Game 6 and finished the season 9-1. But Massillon opened undefeated and top-ranked McKinley 6-0 in the finale and retained the crown for another year, just edging out Mansfield in the voting. Mansfield had lost to Akron South 34-27 in the season opener when the ball was ripped from a Tyger running back in the final minutes of the game and returned to the end zone for the winning score. What might have been for Mansfield. But they were named INS state champion. Meanwhile, undefeated Cincinnati Purcell finished No. 4 and the Cincinnati sportswriters immediately claimed, after just three years of polling, that there was a "generally recognized bias" against Cincinnati-area teams in the voting. Two years later, Massillon played home-and-home with Cincinnati Elder, a regular Purcell opponent, and defeated them both times, by scores of 42-6 and 32-0.

1950

A.P. Poll

1. **MASSILLON** (10-0) (239) (23)
2. Hamilton (9-1) (178)
3. Barberton (8-1) (116)
4. Springfield (8-1-1) (93) (1)
5. Upper Arlington (10-0) (69)

6. Portsmouth (7-2-1) (62)
7. New Philadelphia (9-0-1) (57)
8. Canton McKinley (7-3) (57)
9. Steubenville (8-2) (56)
10. Lakewood (10-0) (34)

Comments: Massillon rolled through an undefeated season, outscoring their opponents 407-37. So dominant were the Tigers that they went unchallenged throughout the year. Included in the 10-0 mark were wins over No. 3 Barberton (35-6), No. 8 Canton McKinley (33-0) and No. 9 Steubenville (35-12), which had a win over the Bulldogs. The Tigers received 23 of 24 first place votes in the A.P. poll. They were named INS state champion and national champion.

1951

A.P. Poll

1. **MASSILLON** (9-1) (366 ½) (12 ½)
2. Steubenville (9-1) (353 ½) (11 ½)
3. Springfield (9-1) (327) (6)
4. Hamilton (9-1) (282) (3)
5. Zanesville (9-1) (208) (6)
6. Barberton (8-1) (172) (1)
7. Warren Harding (7-3) (167)
8. Cleveland Collinwood (9-0-1) (118) (1)
9. Fremont Ross (9-0-1) (103) (1)
10. Lima Central (8-1) (50)

Comments: Chuck Mather's 4th team finished with a 9-1 record with a point margin of 316-65. They defeated No. 2 Steubenville 13-6 (outgaining them 227-105 in total yards) and No. 6 Barberton 6-0. In the latter, the Magics outgained the Tigers, but were stopped five times inside the five yard line. Massillon's lone loss came in Week 7 against No. 7 Warren Harding 19-13. But the following week Warren lost to Steubenville 13-12. With no unblemished teams left in the top group, it perhaps came down to the Tigers being the defending champs. Steubenville certainly deserved it just as much, as both played formidable schedules. Massillon was also named INS state champion.

1952

A.P. Poll

1. **MASSILLON** (10-0) (407) (21)
2. Springfield (10-0) (268) (1)
3. East Liverpool (9-0-1) (264) (4)
4. Cincinnati Purcell (9-0-1) (245) (3)
5. Dayton Chaminade (8-1-1) (225) (5)
6. Washington Court House (9-0) (216) (5)
7. Cleveland Benedictine (10-0) (194)

8. Middletown (8-1-1) (103) (2)
9. Van Wert (10-0) (70)
10. Youngstown Ursuline (8-1) (70)

Comments: Massillon ran the table with a 10-0 record, outscoring its opponents 440-93. They also defeated 9-2 Warren Harding 31-0. Meanwhile, Springfield was knocking on the door, also with a 10-0 record. But Massillon, the 4-time defending state champion, basically defended its crown and was awarded the trophy. They also captured the national championship. Hard to argue with that one.

1953

A.P. Poll

1. **MASSILLON** (10-0) (317) (20)
2. Portsmouth (240) (4)
3. Dayton Chaminade (185) (6)
4. New Philadelphia (116)
5. Warren Harding (8-2) (107) (1)
6. Fremont Ross (58)
7. Toledo DeVilbiss (58) (2)
8. Cincinnati Purcell (55)
9. Cleveland Rhodes (53)
10. Urbana (53)

Comments: Chuck Mather's sixth and final year brought yet another state championship to Massillon. The Tigers outscored their opponents 309-55, while defeating No. 5 Warren Harding 27-6, No. 6 Fremont Ross 40-7 and 7-2-1 Steubenville 35-6. No serious challenge from an opponent was mounted in any game. The Tigers also captured the national championship, for the second straight year.

1954

A.P. Poll

1. **MASSILLON** (9-1) (406) (22)
2. Alliance (9-1) (293)
3. Canton McKinley (8-2) (282) (0)
4. Mansfield (9-1) (243)
5. Youngstown Rayen (9-0) (174)
6. Cleveland Cathedral Latin (10-0) (173)
7. Lancaster (9-0) (109)
8. Jackson (9-0) (99)
9. Springfield (8-2) (88)
10. Cincinnati Elder (9-0) (85)

Comments: New Massillon coach Tom Harp fashioned a 9-1 record, with wins over No. 3 Canton McKinley 26-6 and No. 4 Mansfield 18-0. The lone loss was to No. 2 Alliance 19-7 in Week 5. The

Aviators, however, had a loss to McKinley 26-6 in Week 7, while the Bulldogs dropped a 7-6 decision to unranked Warren Harding. Massillon's season-ending victory over McKinley must have played heavily with the sportswriters and they were voted state champion for the 7th consecutive year. They were also named both UPI and INS state champion. Cathedral Latin was the highest ranked 10-0 team, but their schedule, comprised of mostly Cleveland Senate League teams, was considered mediocre. Incidentally, No. 9 Springfield, which had dented the Top 10 numerous times, finally mounted a challenge against a top team: McKinley. But they succumbed in that one 26-7.

1955

A.P. Poll

1. Canton McKinley (10-0) (359) (17)
2. **MASSILLON** (8-1-1) (301)
3. East Liverpool (10-0) (281) (7)
4. Fremont Ross (10-0) (213) (5)
5. Columbus East (9-0) (191) (1)
6. Toledo Devilbiss (9-0) (183) (7)
7. Mansfield (8-1-1) (160) (1)
8. Youngstown East (9-0) (133) (3)
9. Upper Sandusky (9-0) (92) (1)
10. Jackson (8-1) (97) (7)

Comments: Canton McKinley, under coach Wade Watts, finally captured an A.P. Poll title. The big win came against No. 2 Massillon 13-7 in Week 10 when they scored early on a 3-yard drive and then recovered an errant punt snap in the end zone in the fourth quarter. The Bulldogs were outgained in yards 189-63 and trailed in first downs 11-4. Massillon's tie came against No. 7 Mansfield 12-12. The Bulldogs outscored their opponents 396-40 and only Massillon mounted a serious challenge. McKinley was also named both UPI and INS state champion. In the A.P., the Bulldogs led the Tigers in first place votes 17-0, but strangely the gap was 23-11 in the UPI.

1956

A.P. Poll

1. Canton McKinley (10-0) (432) (16)
2. Fremont Ross (10-0) (280) (11)
3. Mansfield (9-0) (278)
4. Cleveland St. Ignatius (9-1) (181) (10)
5. Youngstown Ursuline (10-0) (172) (5)
6. Cleveland Benedictine (6-2) (138) (2)
7. Lorain (7-1-1) (122)
8. **MASSILLON** (8-2) (120)
9. Troy (9-0) (107)
10. East Liverpool (8-2) (105) (4)

Comments: Canton McKinley repeated as state champion with another 10-0 record, while easily defeating all ten opponents, which they outscored by a combined 490-68. The signature win came against No. 8 Massillon 34-7 in a one-sided affair. The Bulldogs were also named both UPI and INS state champion. Ironically, the Bulldogs received only one-third of the first-place votes. No. 3 Mansfield was undefeated with a 14-6 victory over Massillon, but point differential favored McKinley. No. 2 Fremont Ross was also undefeated; no information on their season could be found.

1957

A.P. Poll

1. Cleveland Benedictine (10-0) (247) (11)
2. **MASSILLON** (8-1) (240) (9)
3. Toledo DeVilbiss (231) (7)
4. Warren Harding (9-1) (170) (2)
5. Youngstown South (9-0) (143) (3)
6. Troy (9-0) (121) (1)
7. Fremont Ross (9-0-1) (99) (1)
8. East Cleveland Shaw (9-1) (70)
9. Toledo Central Catholic (57)
10. Salem (46) (1)

Comments: Cleveland Benedictine, under long-time coach Augie Bossu, recorded a 9-0 record, bolstered by a 13-7 win over No. 2 Massillon. Then, in the City Championship, they bested Cleveland St. Ignatius 27-3 in front of 31,644 fans. They also outscored their opponents by an average of 32-5, while surrendering only six fourth-quarter points. The Bennies were awarded the UPI and INS state championships. In an uncertain twist, eight different teams were awarded at least one first place by the voters. Defending champion 8-2 Canton McKinley did not make the Top 10 due to losses against Massillon 20-14 and No. 4 Warren Harding 31-7. Massillon defeated Warren 20-14.

1958

A.P. Poll

1. Alliance (9-0-1) (388)
2. Marion Harding (9-0) (319)
3. Springfield (9-1) (243)
4. **MASSILLON** (8-1-1) (230)
5. Cleveland Cathedral Latin (8-0-1) (227)
6. Elyria (8-1) (132)
7. Fairmont (9-0) (108)
8. Toledo DeVilbiss (8-2) (94)
9. Youngstown East (9-1) (87)
10. Toledo Libbey (8-1-1) (78)

Comments: Coach Mel Knowlton led his Alliance team to a 9-0-1 record, with the Aviators capturing their first and only A.P. state championship. The season included a 16-0 victory over Canton McKinley and an 8-8 tie against No. 4 Massillon, in spite of being outgained in that one 159-85. Massillon lost to Warren Harding 6-0. No. 2 Marion Harding, coached by future University of Akron legendary mentor Gordon Larson, also finished unbeaten and was awarded the UPI state championship, one of only three times different teams were honored in that manner. Alliance's Walter Zingg always regretted that his team could not meet Marion Harding in a playoff format.

1959

A.P. Poll

1. **MASSILLON** (10-0) (427)
2. Springfield (10-0) (389)
3. Fairmont (9-0) (267)
4. Marion Harding (8-1) (215)
5. Toledo DeVilbiss (8-0-1) (192)
6. Marietta (9-0) (137) (137)
7. Canton Central (9-1) (127)
8. Salem (8-1) (109)
9. Parma (9-0) (72)
10. Elyria (7-1-1) (72)

Comments: Massillon returned to the top spot under second-year head coach Leo Strang. Signature wins came against defending champion Alliance 14-0, 8-2 Steubenville 28-8, 7-2-2 Cleveland Benedictine 30-6, and 9-1 Warren Harding. The Tigers outscored their opponents 431-46 and were never threatened in a game, except for the one against Alliance. Massillon was also named UPI state champion and national champion.

1960

A.P. Poll

1. **MASSILLON** (10-1) (333)
2. Niles (9-0-1) (202)
3. Alliance (9-2) (192)
4. Sandusky (9-1) (182)
5. Dayton Colonel White (10-0) (172)
6. Cincinnati Purcell (9-0) (150)
7. Marion Harding (7-1-1) (139)
8. Toledo Central (9-1) (100)
9. Troy (9-1) (90)
10. Port Clinton (10-0) (52)

Comments: A 19-18 loss to Warren Harding didn't prevent Massillon from winning a consecutive state title. Included in the season were wins over No. 3 Alliance 14-10, 8-1-1 Cleveland Benedictine 36-6 and

7-2 Cincinnati Roger Bacon 8-0. The Tigers were also named UPI state champion and finished No. 7 in the nation. No. 2 Niles, just now bursting onto the state scene, defeated Alliance 16-14. The tie was against Farrell, Pennsylvania.

1961

A.P. Poll

1. Niles (10-0) (469) (26)
2. **MASSILLON** (11-0) (430) (15)
3. Bellevue (9-0) (212) (2)
4. Cincinnati Roger Bacon (9-1) (161)
5. Martins Ferry (10-0) (158) (1)
6. Hamilton Garfield (9-1) (146) (2)
7. Fairmont (9-0-2) (120) (3)
8. Alliance (9-2) (106) (1)
9. Toledo Macomber (7-1-1) (86)
10. Middletown (8-1-1) (83)

Comments: Niles, led by Coach Tony Mason, finished 10-0 and were awarded the A.P. state championship. They outscored their opponents 468-48, with a win over No. 8 Alliance 30-6. No. 2 Massillon also finished unbeaten, with wins over No. 4 Cincinnati Roger Bacon 12-0 (first home loss in three years), Alliance 26-0 and 7-3 Steubenville 38-14, and were named UPI state champion. Ironically, the Tigeres also captured the national championship. This was the second time the A.P. and UPI differed in their selection of the No. 1 team. It's conceivable that the difference was Niles getting the better of Massillon in a pre-season scrimmage.

1962

A.P. Poll

1. Toledo Central (9-0) (524) (33)
2. Warren Harding (9-0-1) (337) (10)
3. Niles (8-0-1) (325) (1)
4. Sandusky (8-0-2) (310) (2)
5. Middletown (9-1) (230) (6)
6. Toledo DeVilbiss (8-1) (203) (1)
7. Steubenville (9-1) (179)
8. Cincinnati Roger Bacon (9-0) (156)
9. Cleveland St. Ignatius (8-0) (131) (5)
10. Alliance (7-2-1) (90) (1)

Comments: Warren Harding tied unranked Mansfield 6-6 and Niles tied No. 10 Alliance 12-12, leaving Toledo Central as the only unblemished top-ranked team. Thus, they were awarded the state championship. Central was also named UPI state champion.

1963

A.P. Poll

1. Niles (9-0-1) (389-½) (17)
2. **MASSILLON** (9-1) (327-½) (8)
3. Sandusky (9-0-1) (294) (8)
4. Cincinnati Roger Bacon (9-0-1) (266) (1)
5. Cleveland St. Ignatius (9-0) (207) (4)
6. Akron Garfield (9-0-1) (159) (2)
7. Springfield South (9-1) (145) (1)
8. Dayton Roth (9-0) (129) (4)
9. Fremont St. Joseph (9-0) (71)
10. Ashland (10-0) (70) (2)

Comments: Niles, coached by Tony Mason, tied No. 4 Roger Bacon 0-0 and defeated defending state champs Toledo Central 20-0. They surrendered just 48 points during the season and extended their unbeaten streak to 47 games. Meanwhile, Massillon lost to No. 6 Akron Garfield 13-6, eliminating them from the race. Niles was also awarded the UPI state championship.

1964

A.P. Poll

1. **MASSILLON** (10-0) (421) (27)
2. Canton McKinley (9-1) (338)
3. Springfield South (10-0) (275-½) (7)
4. Elyria (9-1) (202) (4)
5. Louisville (10-0) 164
6. Upper Arlington (9-0) (149) (1)
7. Sandusky (9-1) (116)
8. Rossford (9-0) (110)
9. Cleveland St. Ignatius (9-0) (106)
10. Fremont St. Joseph (9-0) (63)

Comments: Undefeated and No. 1 Massillon, under new head coach Earl Bruce (Ohio State), faced undefeated and No. 2 Canton McKinley, under new head coach Don Nehlen (West Virginia) in the season finale in what could be considered as the closest thing to a state finals game in the pre-playoff era. The Tigers scored in the final minute of the game to secure a 20-14 victory and capture the state championship. They were also named UPI state champion and finished second in the national poll. During the season, they also defeated defending champs Niles 14-8, breaking their 48-game unbeaten streak, while giving up just 48 points defensively during the season. Unbeaten Springfield South, Upper Arlington and Cleveland St. Ignatius bolstered a strong group of Top-10 teams.

1965

A.P. Poll

1. **MASSILLON** (10-0) (162)
2. Sandusky (10-0) (144)
3. Cincinnati Moeller (10-0) (96)
4. Columbus Watterson (9-0) (76)
5. Warren Harding (8-1-1) (71)
6. Upper Arlington (9-0) (61)
7. Cleveland Benedictine (8-1) (49)
8. Steubenville (8-2) (49)
9. Athens (9-0) (44)
10. Middletown (9-1) (43)

Comments: Massillon defended its A.P. state championship with another undefeated season, which included wins over No. 5 Warren Harding 16-12, No. 7 Cleveland Benedictine 29-12 and No. 8 Steubenville 20-14. Once again, they were ranked second in the national poll. Sandusky also had a fine year, and they were awarded the UPI state championship, the third time these two polls differed on the final champion.

1966

A.P. Poll

1. Columbus Watterson (10-0) (206)
2. Niles (10-0) (201)
3. Sandusky (10-0) (190)
4. Steubenville (9-1) (130)
5. Hamilton Garfield (9-0) (101)
6. Upper Arlington (9-1) (99)
7. Columbus Eastmoor (9-0) (64)
8. Akron Hoban (9-1) (55)
9. Louisville (10-0) (51)
10. East Liverpool (9-1) (44)

Comments: Upper Arlington, which had a 20-6 win over unranked Massillon, was cruising through an undefeated season as the state's No. 1 ranked team. But they stumbled in the final game against unbeaten Columbus Watterson 35-0. As a result, Watterson was named the state champion. With the loss, UA dropped to No. 6. Watterson also captured the UPI state title. It was a pivotal year in that for the first time ever the state championship was awarded to team not from northern Ohio. The crown would remain in Columbus for four years running. No. 4 Steubenville was also poised to capture the title, but they were upended by Massillon 12-0 in Week 9.

1967

A.P. Poll

1. Upper Arlington (10-0) (230)
2. **MASSILLON** (9-1) (203)
3. Cincinnati Roger Bacon (10-0) (185)
4. Steubenville (9-1) (131)
5. Dover (10-0) (106)
6. Shelby (10-0) (96)
7. Sandusky (9-1) (89)
8. Circleville (10-0) (70)
9. Toledo St. Francis (8-1) (42)
10. Cincinnati Princeton (8-1-1) (37)

Comments: Upper Arlington, under head coach Marv Moorehead, finally put it all together to win the state championship. But it took a 7-6 victory over No. 2 Massillon, with the winning points coming late in the game, to make it happen. The Golden Bears were also named UPI state champions and finished No. 4 in the national poll. Massillon defeated No. 4 Steubenville 26-16, diminishing the Big Red's hope for a title. The Tigers were ranked No. 20 in the national poll. A very athletic Roger Bacon squad also had a strong year and recorded a 45-0 victory over unranked Cincinnati Moeller.

1968

A.P. Poll

1. Upper Arlington (10-0) (182)
2. Mentor (10-0) (150)
3. Canton McKinley (9-1) (136)
4. Elyria (10-0) (131)
5. Struthers (9-0) (93)
6. Warren Western Reserve (9-1) (91)
7. Shelby (10-0) (82)
8. Cleveland St. Joseph (10-0) (74)
9. Cincinnati St. Xavier (9-0-1) (55)
10. Warren Harding (8-2) (50)

Comments: Upper Arlington ran the table and captured a consecutive state title. The closest game was won by more than three touchdowns. The Golden Bears were also named UPI state champion. No. 2 Mentor was also undefeated, with a 19-0 victory over unranked Massillon in the season opener. Upper Arlington and Mentor would face each other the following year in Week 1 to play it off, with the Golden Bears winning 7-6. No. 3 Canton McKinley was also strong that year, but they suffered a 16-0 loss unranked to Niles in Week 3, jeopardizing their hopes. The Bulldogs did, however, defeat No. 10 Warren Harding 20-0. No. 6 Warren Western Reserve defeated Harding 14-6, but they lost to McKinley 27-12.

1969

A.P. Poll

1. Upper Arlington (10-0) (226) (13)
2. Elyria (10-0) (198) (3)
3. Cincinnati Moeller (10-0) (196) (5)

4. Canton McKinley (9-1) (173) (2)
5. Warren Western Reserve (9-1) (117) (1)
6. Akron Garfield (8-0) (98) (1)
7. Niles (7-2) (74)
8. Steubenville (7-2-1) (60)
9. Jackson (9-0-1) (41) (1)
10. Shelby (9-0-1) (39)

Comments: The third time was the again the charm for Upper Arlington, capturing both the A.P. and UPI state championships. No. 2 Elyria fashioned an unbeaten season for the second straight year, but it was difficult to unseat an undefeated state champion, especially with a schedule that lacked state powers. No. 3 Cincinnati Moeller finally reared its head and cracked the Top-10 for the first time. Interestingly, they were also ranked No. 3 in the nation. There was a lot of interplay that year among ranked teams. No. 4 Canton McKinley lost to No. 8 Steubenville 20-14. No. 7 Niles lost to McKinley 15-6. They also lost to Warren Harding 14-7. Steubenville lost to Niles 16-0 and tied unranked Massillon. Massillon lost to McKinley 14-7, with the Bulldogs intercepting a pass and then scoring in the final minutes to break a 7-7 tie.

1970

A.P. Poll

1. **MASSILLON** (10-0) (223)
2. Upper Arlington (10-0) (210)
3. Canton McKinley (8-1-1) (119)
4. Sidney (10-0) (116)
5. Cincinnati Moeller (9-1) (115)
6. Lancaster (8-1-1) (104)
7. Sandusky (9-1) (92)
8. Warren Western Reserve (9-1) (84)
9. Columbus Eastmoor (8-1) (50)
10. Troy (10-0) (25)

Comments: Upper Arlington again finished undefeated to extend their winning streak to 40 games. But Massillon, under second year coach Bob Commings, was also unbeaten, which brought strength of schedule into play. The Golden Bears' most impressive win was 24-7 over unranked Cincinnati Princeton, which had lost 13-6 to No. 5 Cincinnati Moeller. But Massillon downed undefeated and No. 3 Canton McKinley (which had a tie with Niles) in the season finale 28-0. They also defeated once-beaten but unranked Cleveland Benedictine 32-7. Although the A.P. final voting was close, the Tigers won out. Massillon was also named UPI state champion and finished second in the national poll, outscoring their opponents 412-29. But controversy was brewing as to who should realistically be No. 1, especially since Upper Arlington was defending state champs. So, the two teams discussed facing each other in a post-season game, with the proceeds benefiting the families of the players lost in the Marshall University plane crash. But the OHSAA nixed the idea. It would have been the first ever Ohio state championship playoff game.

1971

A.P. Poll

1. Warren Harding (10-0) (226)
2. Elyria (10-0) (156)
3. Akron Garfield (9-0) (145)
4. Troy (10-0) (140)
5. Cincinnati Moeller (9-1) (112)
6. **MASSILLON** (8-2) (105)
7. Fremont Ross (9-1) (76)
8. Youngstown Cardinal Mooney (10-0) (73)
9. Columbus Eastmoor (9-1) (67)
10. Toledo Woodward (9-1) (29)

Comments: It was the final year that sportswriters polls were used to determine the state champion, as it was being replaced by the post-season playoff system. Warren Harding emerged on top, on the strength of an 8-7 victory over No. 6 Massillon (the Tigers also lost to unranked Niles 6-7). No. 3 Elyria had a strong team, outscoring its opponents 336-44, with a 15-7 win over No. 7 Fremont Ross. But a close 6-0 victory over unranked Findlay might have had some influence on the final voting. No. 5 Moeller finished 9-1, owing to a 6-3 loss to unranked Cincinnati Princeton.