

## ***ORHS track team continued its winning ways throughout the 1950s***

***(As published in *The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking* column on May 15, 2012)***

As you read in last week's article contributed by Bobby Copeland, Oak Ridge High School won its first ever state championship in any sport when it captured the 1952 state track championship. The "new" ORHS had opened the previous fall and Oak Ridge was proud to host the state meet in May, 1952.

The winning ways continued in 1953, when ORHS traveled to Memphis and beat runner-up Memphis Treadwell by ½ point, the closest finish ever in Tennessee Secondary Schools Athletic Association (TSSAA) history. It was a rainy and dreary day and the Wildcats won the last event of the day, the mile relay, to capture the state title.

Jack Bailey provided the following details about the history of the 1950's and Oak Ridge High School's sports championships.

"Oak Ridge was beginning to develop a formula for winning state track titles---strength in the relay races---that it started in 1952 and continued in 1953. The 1952 team won three of the four relay races, and repeated as relay champions in the 880 yard relay and mile relay in 1953. The 880 relay team was comprised of Lowell Wilson, Frank Blackistone, Fred Carter and Jackie Cornett and set a new state record.

"The mile relay team was made up of Joe Herndon, Fred Carter, Frank Blackistone and Allen Westerdahl. Wilson also had a second place finish in the 220 yard dash and third in the 100 yard dash. Blackistone was fourth in the 440 yard dash.

"Other team members contributing points to the winning effort were Ron Taylor, second in the 880 yard run and Howard Moon, third in the mile run. The two-mile relay captured a second place finish and the sprint medley relay came in third to round out the scoring.

"Ron Taylor later starred at the University of Tennessee where he earned two second places and a fifth place in the 880 yard run during his varsity career. Taylor later served as an Oak Ridge City Council member.

"In an interview for this article, Taylor recalled the 880 yard run at the state meet his senior year at ORHS 'Three of us were really close at the finish line. I broke the tape first, and the tape fluttered across the chest of Max Kirkland of Karns, who had run for Oak Ridge in 1952, and ended up on the torso of the Memphis Treadwell runner. The track officials were on that side of the track and that is what they witnessed---the tape on the chest of the Treadwell runner. After a considerable delay and discussion the Memphis Treadwell runner was declared the winner and I was second.'

"Taylor also noted that the mile relay team wasn't expected to win but they led the whole way and won by a good margin. He also said Coach Martin was his most influential teacher, along with Miss Alice Lyman and had a great impact on his life. 'When his runners would go on to compete in college, Coach Martin would ask what type of workouts we were doing. He wanted the information so he could help his current high school runners.'

"After a two year lapse, ORHS took the state championship in 1956 when they journeyed to Memphis and barely edged runner-up Memphis Central by a score of 16 1/3 to 15. This time they won with individual efforts as none of the relay teams contributed. Wayne Parsons took first place in the pole vault, Mike Simmons tied for first in the high jump, John Spears took seconds in the 220 and 440 yard

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dashes. Also contributing were Don Sadler and George Fowlkes with fourth place finishes in the mile run and broad jump(as it was called then), respectively.

"In 1957, Tennessee Preparatory School in Nashville hosted the state meet and Oak Ridge won again, this time besting the second place team, Knoxville Fulton HS, by a score of 30-21  $\frac{1}{4}$ . Curtis Sanders won the mile in 4:35.7, a school record that would stand until 1963, when Bob Taylor broke it. The mile relay set a new state record, with a winning time of 3:30.7. The team was made up of Herschel Bailey, Jim Rust, Dave Carroll and Jackie Robinson.

"The Wildcats displayed a lot of depth with five other individuals and two relay teams contributing points. Mike Price took a second in the 880 yard dash, as did David Fitchpatrick in the shot put. Mike Simmons collected second place points in the high jump and broad jump, as well as a third place spot in the 180 yard low hurdles. Bill Solomon picked up a fourth in the discus. The 880 yard relay and two mile relay teams took home fourth place finishes.

"In 1958, Oak Ridge High School won an unprecedented third consecutive state championship when the meet was held in Knoxville. They scored 39  $\frac{1}{2}$  points to only 18 for runner-up Knoxville East. It was the most points Oak Ridge ever scored in any of its eventual seven state titles. Oak Ridge was absolutely "loaded" that year with star athletes and dominated the other teams. They won three of the four relay races, setting records in two of them, and picked up two more firsts in the pole vault and broad jump. The 440 yard relay was contested for the first time in a state meet and ORHS won in a time of :44.6, thereby establishing the state record.

"The team was comprised of Bobo Herring, Howard Dunnebacke, Herschel Bailey and Jackie Pope. The same quartet won the 880 yard relay in a new state record time of 1:31.9, breaking its own state record set back in 1953. The mile relay team of Herschel Bailey, Winston Russell, Jackie Pope and David Burkhart also won.

"Since Oak Ridge had set the mile relay state record the previous year, the school now owned three of the four state records in the relay races. It dramatically underscored the value Coach Ben Martin placed on the strong relay teams.

"Sammy Duncan won the pole vault and Howie Moss won the broad jump with a leap of 22'2", a school record that stood for at least twenty five years. Moss also came in second in the high jump. David Fitchpatrick finished second in the shot put for the second straight year.

"Mike Simmons contributed more points by finishing in a tie for third in the high jump. David Burkhart and Mike Price took seconds in the 440 and 880, respectively. Bobo Herring, a football star in the fall, took fourth in the 100 yard dash, as did Howard Dunnebacke in the 220 yard dash.

"Mike Simmons took a fourth in the 180 yard low hurdles. Simmons, who also played football at ORHS, finished his high school career by scoring in two events in the 1958 state meet and three events in the 1957 state meet.

"As mentioned earlier, this team had some superb athletes. Howie Moss played basketball at the University of Tennessee and won the Southeastern Conference (SEC) high jump in 1961. Herschel Bailey and Winston Russell ran track at UT and Russell set a school record in the long jump. Howard

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Dunnebacke played football at the U. of Kentucky and Jackie Pope was a "Little All-America" running back at Middle Tennessee State.

"Pope has legendary status in Oak Ridge because of his fabulous high school exploits, leading the 1958 ORHS team to a state championship and a mythical national championship. Winston Russell has been a long term teacher and coach, serving at Robertsville Jr. HS and ORHS. Pope, Russell and Dunnebacke, as well as Coach Ben Martin, are all in the Oak Ridge Sports Hall of Fame.

"The 1959 season was undoubtedly Coach Martin's most frustrating season. Dropped baton and botched handoffs in two relay races cost ORHS what would have been a fourth straight state championship. Even so, they barely lost to Nashville East.

"David Burkhart won the 440 yard dash, Larry Mason won the broad jump, and Sammy Duncan repeated as state pole vault champ with a new state record height of 12'7" Coach Martin often said he thought the 1959 squad was his best team, even though they didn't have the 'hardware' to prove it.

"And so ended the 1950's, five state championships in an eight year span and probably should have had six. There were other star track athletes during that time. The very first individual state champion was in 1949, when Bob Sanders won the 880 yard run in 2:06.3. He also ran a leg on the winning mile relay that year, along with Al Kuykendall, Bill Reynolds and Jerry Franciskato. In 1954, the 880 yard relay (Fred Carter, Joe Herndon, Sam Hanson, Dick Bowman) took first place in the state meet. Tom Chilton was an Olympic level long jumper and starred at Tennessee Tech, where he was later the Head Track Coach.

Thanks Jack!

Next week we will look at the early 60's, and the end of an era.

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# Vols Rout VPI, Shatter 2 Records



BUBBA BEAL  
Better's own record

## Russell and Beal Better U-T Marks

Rohe's Trackmen  
Take 16 Firsts  
in 109-36 Victory

BLACKSBURG, Va., April 18 (Special) — Tennessee's track team, taking 16 of 17 first places, overpowered Virginia Tech, 109-36, in a dual meet here today.

"It was our finest all-around performance of the season," said Vol Coach Chuck Rohe.

"The boys and I got together before the first event and decided everybody would give 100 per cent. They did just that."

Two U-T records fell as Winston Russell broad jumped 23-11 $\frac{1}{4}$  and Bubba Beal threw the discus 165-6 $\frac{3}{4}$ .

Russell had four straight jumps of 23 feet or more. He went 23-1 on the first try, then followed with leaps of 23-11, 23-8 and 23-11 $\frac{1}{4}$ . The old Vol record was 23-6.

Beal, who topped 161 feet to write a Tennessee discus mark recently against Vanderbilt, not only won with a new record today, he also took the shot put with a 48-10 toss, his personal high.

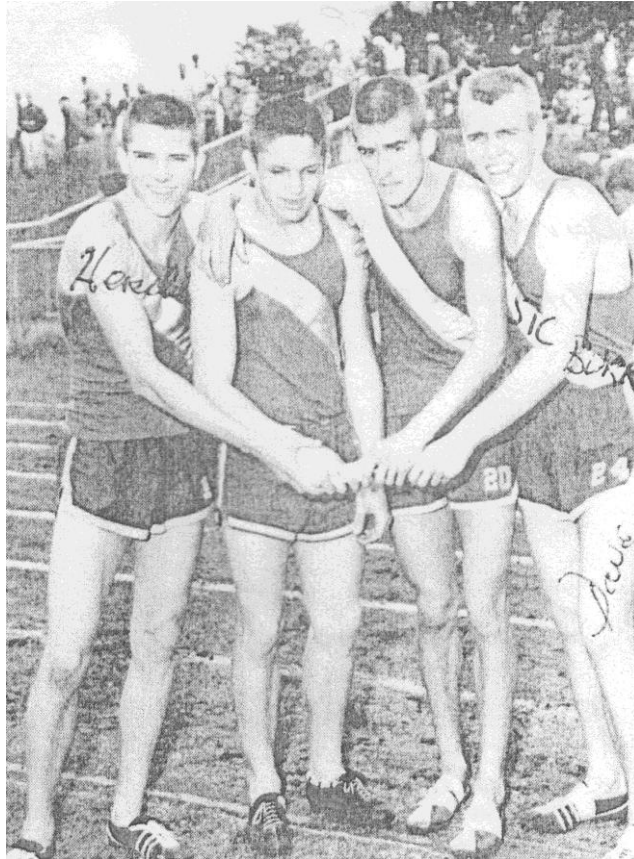
The Vols, though running without distance stars Coppley Vickers (sprained ankle) and



WINSTON RUSSELL  
Tops broad jump mark

A newspaper article featuring Winston Russell when he was a track athlete at The University of Tennessee.

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The 1958 mile relay team that set a state record:  
Herschel Bailey, Jackie Pope, Winston Russell and David Burkhart