

# Ransbury's 1964 JHS Football Team Was One To Remember

Feb 2, 2018



*Former Jamestown High School football coach Terry Ransbury returned to the city in September 2014 for the reunion of his undefeated 1964 team. At left, he enjoys a light moment at Strider Field before a game. P-J file photo by Scott Kindberg*

EDITOR'S NOTE: Terry Ransbury, the very successful high school coach at Silver Creek and Jamestown in the 1950s and 1960s, passed away last month at 89. An inductee of the Chautauqua Sports, Silver Creek High School and SUNY Brockport halls of fame, Ransbury returned to Jamestown in 2014 for a reunion of the 1964 Jamestown High School team he coached to an unbeaten season. Following is an article that appeared in The Post-Journal in advance of that 50th reunion.

It's spring 2013 and Tom Franco and his friends, Bob Pollino and George Spitale, are having a cup of coffee after services at St. James Catholic Church on Allen Street in Jamestown.

Buddies since their days at Jamestown High School, Franco has done his math and suggests to his former teammates on the Red Raiders' 1964 unbeaten and untied football team that the 50th anniversary of that magical season is approaching in 18 months.

“Yeah, yeah, yeah,” is the response from Pollino and Spitale, “but it’s so far off.”

Franco is adamant.

“To me,” he says, “it’s not THAT far off.”

And when Franco leaves the church, he is convinced that a reunion of that team is in order. For affirmation, all he has to do is look to the north as he leaves the church. For it’s in the distance — painted in bright red on the back of the JHS building a couple blocks away — that he sees the letter J.

“That’s what we live for,” Franco says.

Friday night the 2014 edition of the Red Raiders will meet West Seneca West at Strider Field. Kickoff is 7 p.m. In the lead-up to their Class AA South opener, Coach Tom Langworthy and his staff will run their players through pregame warmup, beginning an hour earlier.

The team will have company.

On the sidelines will be 19 members of the 1964 undefeated team, including head coach Terry Ransbury, who now resides in North Carolina. Others are coming from as far away as Vermont, Arizona, South Carolina and California. The reunion idea — broached by Franco all those months ago and embraced by Pollino and Spitale — will finally be a reality.

At 6:45 p.m. the 1964 team will be introduced and will be part of the tunnel that the current squad will run through just before kickoff. The 50th anniversary team will then take part in the coin toss at midfield and then watch the game from a special seating area in the stands.

When the game is over, the “64 team” will have a party at St. James. One can only imagine the stories that will be told at that time. Here are some possibilities:

- Dan Luciano returning the opening kickoff of the season more than 80 yards for a touchdown in what turned out to be a 51-0 victory over Dunkirk.
- Quarterback Phil Trass’ 48-yard touchdown pass to Tim Gill in a 33-0 victory over rival Warren.
- The Red Raiders’ 13-7 victory over Aquinas of Rochester in a game decided in the game’s closing moments.
- Jamestown’s dominance on both sides of the ball, highlighted by posting five shutouts in its eight games and outscoring its opponents, 220-27.
- And, of course, the Red Raiders’ season finale vs. McQuaid, which they won, 28-14.

The JHS yearbook described the postgame this way: “Excited Jamestown citizens, both young and old, swarmed onto the field and tore down the goal posts in a display of feverish joy. A victory parade to the school followed. It was a final, wonderful moment in an autumn made memorable by the hard-fighting, unvanquished Red Raider football team.”

Just below that season recap in the yearbook is a team photo. The caption includes the coaches, players and managers names. They include Ransbury, faculty manager Harold Rubens, line coach Larry Niedzalkoski, line and end coach Charles Shultz, Elmer Swanson, Luciano, Dave Case, Ron Armella, Trass, Jonas Johnson, John Bloomquist, Gary White, Dave Dawson, Russ Cusimano, Tony Marckisotto, John Baglia, Mike Constantino, Roger Leeper, Tom Kittle, Jeff Gisslin, Gill, Jim Stockwell, Bob Halt, Bob Leone, Franco, Dave Dracup, Pollino, Spitale, Len Berglund, Pat Duckett, Bob Stam, Kerry Turner, Randy Sharp, Pete Cala, Charlie Jones, Sam Barressi, Jim Ferraro and Tony Antonuccio.

Franco says he’s happy that 19 players from that team will be able to attend Friday night’s game. Also

in attendance will be three former cheerleaders and even the 1964 homecoming queen, who still has an autographed football from that season. A banner recognizing the accomplishments of a half-century ago will be unveiled and will hang on the Strider Field scoreboard.

“What we’re trying to say with this is it’s more than just honoring us,” Franco said.

From his perspective, it’s about honoring the tradition that is Red Raider football, which he believes has been passed on from one generation to the next. That’s why Franco was so touched when he happened to run into record-setting, all-state quarterback Jake Sisson (Class of 2014) on the sidelines at last Saturday’s season opener at Sweet Home.

“He came right over and hugged me,” Franco said. “He said, ‘I hear this is the 50th year.’”

Sisson, now a freshman quarterback at Edinboro University who was home because the Fighting Scots had opened their season a few days before, knows all about JHS football history.

That’s why it was only appropriate that Franco, Spitale and Pollino signed off their reunion letter with the following six words:

“Once a Raider, always a Raider.”