

While the Turkey Day Classic dominated Jack Yates High School sports history, other athletes and teams, led by outstanding coaches, made historic runs of their own in boys and girls basketball, baseball, track and field, and other sports.

In the early twentieth century, Houston's segregated public schools competed in the Texas Interscholastic League of Colored Schools formed in 1920, which changed its name in 1923 to Prairie View Interscholastic League (PVIL), under the Prairie View State Normal and Industrial College (now Prairie View A&M University). With 500 schools at its peak, the PVIL governed extracurricular activities, including sports, literature, and the arts, just as the University Interscholastic League (UIL) did for white schools. Athletic teams competed for championships in football, basketball, baseball, and track and field.¹

When schools desegregated in 1966, the PVIL merged into the UIL, and it created a playoff system with district, regional, and state competitions for all schools **HH**

Jorge Palomo is a junior history major and member of the Honors College at the University of Houston. He has interned at *Houston History* for two years.

Lions Sports Notes and Highlights

By Jorge Palomo



The 1949 boys basketball team won the Prairie View Interscholastic League (PVIL) city, district, and state championships with just two players returning from the previous year. Coach Andrew "Pat" Patterson (1911-2004), center top row, played Negro League baseball and taught at Yates in the offseason in the 1930s, designing the organizational plan for football under the PVIL. He enlisted in the Army Air Corps in 1942 and returned to teach at Yates from 1945 until 1967. An inaugural member of the PVIL Coaches Hall of Fame in 1980, he was also the first Black coach named to the Texas High School Coaches Association Hall of Honor after leading Yates's teams to over 15 state championships in various sports.²

Photo courtesy of the Jack Yates 1949 yearbook, *The Lion*.

YATES LIONS CHAMPIONSHIPS

State Championships:

- ✦ 3 Baseball, PVIL
- ✦ 10 Boys Basketball, PVIL (5), UIL (5)
- ✦ 1 Girls Basketball, UIL
- ✦ 5 Football, PVIL (4), UIL (1)
- ✦ 3 Boys Track and Field, PVIL

UIL District Championships:

- ✦ 11 Boys Basketball
- ✦ 11 Girls Basketball
- ✦ 30 Football, with 27 in a row (1970-1996)
- ✦ 4 Boys Track and Field
- ✦ 10 Girls Track and Field
- ✦ 2 Golf
- ✦ 3 Tennis
- ✦ 1 Volleyball

Coach Luther Booker (1928-1994) began coaching football at Houston's Booker T. Washington in 1957 and moved to Bellaire for a year before rising to head coach at Yates in 1971. When he retired in 1988 with a record of 168-37-6, he had notched more victories than any other Texas 5A football coach and won 18 district titles. Among his many honors, Booker was named Coach of the Decade by the Houston Chronicle for the 1980s.³

Photo courtesy of Houston History Research Center, Houston Public Library, RGD0006-1989-1838.

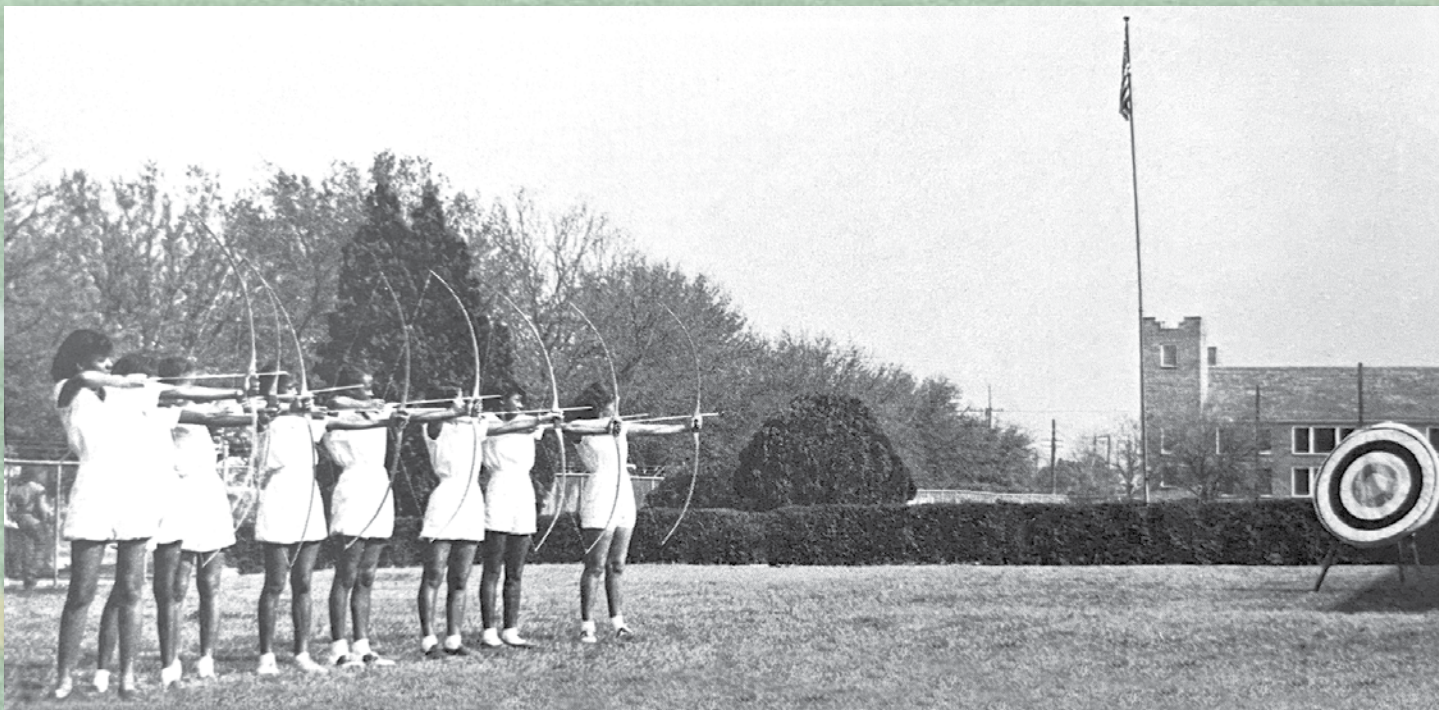


In 1985, Yates became the first Black high school to win the 5A State Championship, defeating Odessa Permian in a 16-0 season with a record eight shutouts. Some sports writers consider the team to be the best Texas high school football team in history. Johnny Bailey ran for 190 yards in the game and 1,101 for the season. An NCAA Division II Hall of Fame and Texas Sports Hall of Fame inductee, he played five seasons in the NFL.⁴



The Yates Lions won three PVIL state championships in Track and Field from 1956 to 1958. Even after joining the UIL, they remained in close competition with Wheatley High School in many sports, including track and field. Here George "Crazy Horse" Jones from Yates and Willie Blackmon from Wheatley compete in the 880-yard race, in which they traded wins during the 1969 season.⁵

Photo courtesy of the Houston History Research Center, Houston Public Library, RGD0006-1969-1967-09.



Prior to the 1960s, opportunities in women's sports were often limited to physical education classes or light competition. Archery was one of those sports in 1949, led by instructor Mrs. A. P. Hackett.

Photo courtesy of *The Lion*, 1949 yearbook.



Both named all-stars, Carven Holcombe, left, and Monica Lamb, right, were standouts in Yates boys and girls basketball in the 1982-83 season. Lamb helped lead Yates to a 5A Girls UIL State Championship.⁶

She went on to play for the University of Houston and University of Southern California and for the WNBA Houston Comets from 1998 to 2000 when the team won consecutive championships.

Photo courtesy of the Houston History Research Center, Houston Public Library, RGD0006-1983-0526.