

Hi there, my name is Tim Grimm and for those of you who don't know me, I run the website www.nhsrecords.com. I have also worked as the statistician for the North football team for the last several seasons and have the good fortune to be the father of Ben Grimm, the two-time winner of the Ben Grimm Manager Award.

I'm here tonight to put the 2009 North football season into historical perspective and at first glance, it would be easy to dismiss a 3 and 7 season as one worth over looking. Nothing could be further from the truth.

For one thing, this was a club that had several members who attained some "career" numbers that are worth citing. For another, this was a club that laid down the foundation for reasons to be very, very optimistic as we all look forward to 2010.

It's worth noting that the 2009 Huskies beat half the city schools in Evansville and led a fourth one until the game's final seconds.

We beat Bosse's best club in a decade in the season opener to extend our winning streak over the Bulldogs to a record setting 13th consecutive season.

These Huskies won their third straight Buehler's North Side Trophy by whuppin' up on the Central Bears again.

Y'know, Coach, I wouldn't expect any Christmas presents from the Owens family this year. You passed Grampa Archie on the All-Time Wins List to knock him out of Evansville's Top 10, you had a winning record against son Mike who you also passed on the All-Time Wins list, and now you're off to a three-and-oh start against the grandson at Central.

You probably ought to have the Bomb Squad check any packages that you get from that family.

Victory was sweet in Week One against Bosse. There'd been a lot of trash talked back and forth by some expatriate Huskies who'd transferred schools and there was a "history" between us and them. Forcing three turnovers and watching the Bulldogs melt down over their own mistakes was a satisfying start to the season.

We opened up strong against Henderson County in week 2 and followed the lead of senior quarterback, Matt Strohmeier. Having spent the offseason improving his game at various college camps and quarterback clinics, Matt looked to be off to a sterling start in his senior season. He won the player of the game award in this game by throwing for 235 yards—the sixth highest total ever in a single game by a North passer.

When the rains came in the second half, however, a series of unfortunate events turned a victory into defeat and the following week, when Strohmeier tore up his knee against Mater Dei another victory slipped from the Huskies' grasp in the games waning seconds. Combined with an injury to Damien Jackson, what had appeared to be a deep Husky team at the beginning of the season was suddenly looking a bit thin at key positions.

Faced with the challenges of a young offensive line and an inexperienced quarterback, it took North a couple games to get back on track and when Harrison came to visit, it wasn't without the local papers calling this "the Warriors best chance" to end their current winless streak.

What no one in the press realized, however, was that this team was beginning to emerge and find itself.

Anyone who had stuck around for the fourth quarter of the Memorial game had realized something—the Huskies had turned a corner that night. Guys that had dropped passes early in the season, started catching them. Blockers that had been inconsistent, started sticking people with their shoulders. Tacklers that had lost their grasp, started hanging on.

And our tailback had come into his own.

Starting with a short pass in the flat that he turned into a 24 yard pick up early in the fourth quarter against Memorial, Richard Compton played like a man who had found his stride. Following the 24 yard gain on a critical third down which led to freshman "Big" Mike Johnson's first North touchdown of his career, Compton took his next handoff and went 51 yards for a score.

So,...

...when Harrison came to play, they were coming up against a team that had weathered the worst part of a storm and had come through the trials and tribulations a better football team because of it.

And Compton, along with seniors Cameron Clements and Marcus Garrett, led the way.

First Compton went 55 yards on North's second play—that gave RC two carries for 106 yards and 2 touchdowns on his last two touches. Then Clements tackled Harrison's fleet footed quarterback for a loss to force a punt and bulled in for a score of his own from the 2 when we got the ball back.

Garrett stymied the Harrison inside running game with two tackles for loss and a sack—all in the first half.

Devon Rios recorded a season-high 3 sacks in the game not counting one that he lost only because the Harrison quarterback chose to intentionally ground the ball in the end zone for a safety.

When the smoke cleared, Compton had his first 100 yard game of his career and the Huskies, who haven't lost to Harrison since Purdue quarterback Joey Elliott wore the red, black, and white, had won their fourth in a row against the Warriors.

We didn't see the North 'juggernaut' offense again until the second half of the McCleure North game. Having gone into halftime trailing 27-6, not much was expected after intermission on a surprisingly cool evening at Central Stadium. An inspired Husky team came out of the break and put on an offensive display that nearly overcame the deficit.

The Huskies drove 74 yards on a 7 play drive early in the third quarter and then DE Chris Davis recovered a fumble at midfield that seemed to break open the flood gates. Three plays later, QB Luke Blankenship

hit Caleb Kinnaird with a 30 yard touchdown pass down the right hand side. Before the game was over, that combination would connect for another long TD pass and only a late fumble prevented the Huskies from overcoming the halftime deficit.

As the regular season headed into its final weekend, it was hard to find any media source that didn't make the Central Bears a favorite in the annual North Side Trophy rivalry. The Sagarin Ratings listed Central as a 9 point favorite. The Evansville Courier's Score Blog listed Central as a touchdown favorite. Local radio shows declared Central a lock.

Of course, that's why they play the games.

What none of the media took into account was the team that had emerged in that fourth quarter against Memorial.

And no one had grown more since that moment than Richard Compton.

31 times he 'toted the rock' versus Central.

And the Bears had no answer for him.

He made long runs. He bulled for tough yards. He took short passes and turned them into long gains. He picked off passes on defense.

And he generated 311 yards in total offense, put 22 points on the board, made three solo tackles, and had two assists.

The return of Day-Day Jackson to 'spot-use' on the offensive line in the "jumbo" package produced a steam-roller affect that cleared the field ahead of Compton and the Huskies put away the Bears for the third straight season.

While the season ended on a muddy field in New Albany the next weekend, it proved to be a season with a number of noteworthy accomplishments.

From an historical perspective, it's fitting to start with Marcus Garrett. Marcus' father Mark had a storied North career in the late '70's and his senior season All-City performance with 1,309 yards gained rushing and 97 points scored are still in the top 10 all time.

Carrying on the family tradition, Marcus just completed a career at defensive tackle with attainments of his own that rate on the all-time top ten list. A three year starter, Marcus' 9 career sacks of the quarterback rank in the top 10 all-time at North and his 84 career solo tackles are the **fifth** highest career total for a defensive lineman and 22nd all-time overall.

We had another "legacy" who made his way up the leader lists this season as well. Senior Cameron Clements traveled in the footsteps of his brother Chris, who graduated from North in 2005. Chris Clements still ranks 2nd all-time in career QB sacks and made All-City his senior season. Further extending the Clements family record book, Cameron just completed his third varsity campaign for the

Huskies with the outstanding total of 110 career Solo Tackles. That number is good for 7th on the all-time list at North.

One of the very, very interesting stats, and perhaps the most telling, regarding Cameron is the next one: Cameron carried the ball 140 times over the last two seasons and was never tackled for a loss once. Not one single time. He gained nearly 800 yards, scored 11 touchdowns, and averaged over 5 yards a carry, but that one single stat is the one that says it all—no one ever stopped him for a loss.

There was another starter on defense worth recalling. For his part, senior Ivan Irvine deserves mention for his 19 career stops for loss and six career quarterback sacks. The big man had games where he simply shut the door and disrupted the opponent's offense.

Amongst the seniors, there is another big man who toiled in the line for years without glory. In his sophomore season, Andrew Kuhlenhoelter, was thrust into a starting job when a senior went down with a knee injury. "Kooley" hardly looked the part of starting offensive lineman at that time—he resembled a basketball player more than a varsity lineman.

Until you saw his technique.

Square shoulders, straight back, driving legs,... these are the hallmarks of an offensive lineman. There are no stats that go with playing center that can be quoted in these sorts of events. What I will say is this—with Andrew at center, the North Huskies produced three of the most productive seasons at the quarterback position in school history.

Quarterbacks can't operate well with people in their face. The center stops the rush up the middle and provides the quarterback with a clear view of the field. Kooley played the center position as well as anyone I've seen in the last decade of watching North football.

Losing these guys to graduation would lead you to believe that North's team is riddled with holes for 2010. Again, nothing could be further from the truth.

Looking at the core of this ball club, Husky fans should be anxiously awaiting "next" season.

Richard Compton put up the 9th highest rushing total in school history with 1,100 yards and put up the third highest total by a junior—ever.

Caleb Kinnaird pulled down 38 passes and that total was good for the fourth highest total in school history and the highest total by a junior—ever.

Quarterback Luke Blankenship threw for 800 yards—fifth highest total for a junior in school history.

We return three starting offensive linemen whose ability to hammer away at defenses emerged in the second half of the season as Compton ran wild against city opponents.

On the defensive front seven, we return two defensive ends who combined for more quarterback sacks than any pair of linemen in the last decade and three linebackers who combined for over 90 tackles including the team's leading tackler in middle linebacker Kyle Holland.

All told, the Huskies return players with starting experience at 15 of the 22 positions on offense and defense. Given the way the Huskies "grew up" over the course of the 2009 season and remembering that next years seniors won the JayVee City Championship as sophomores, 2010 should be a good season indeed for North football.

If this group of players commits themselves to a sense of team, to developing their skills and defining their bonds as a band of brothers, then the 2010 Huskies have a chance to go down as one of the storied teams in a long and successful legacy of North football teams.

And now it is my pleasure to introduce to you the man who holds that task in his hands. The Dean of the Evansville high school coaching fraternity, a man whose 113 victories here at North ranks in the top 8 all-time in Evansville High School Football, architect of five sectional championships, a coach who has produced over 60 All-Metro players in his North career,

My coach, your coach, our coach...

Mr. Mike Wilson.