

Magicians vs. Big Blue-A History

-Dan Rosenburg

As Thanksgiving is coming on the horizon, for many in Marblehead, it's not just a time for family and food; it's a time for football. The Magician's biggest annual game, the Thanksgiving tilt against the Big Blue, is coming up this week. And while there have been some close, memorable games in recent history, not many people can remember some of the earliest games in the series. These two teams have a vaunted and storied rivalry, dating back more than 100 years. And so, on the 102nd anniversary year of Marblehead's High School football program, it's time to look back on the long and exciting history of the Marblehead vs. Swampscott football rivalry.

Interestingly enough, there is some controversy over Marblehead's first coach. There have been no definitive records of who the first coach was, as Marblehead published the team listings starting in 1910. In 1909, however, the first year of their football program, either Raymond Brackett or H.W. Robbins was the head coach of the team. In an interview, a player for that 1909 team, Fred Orne, said that he remembered Brackett as being the coach. Therefore, Brackett is the more widely accepted coach, but there is still some controversy. There is an old legend that the early Swampscott and Marblehead teams chose blue and red as their colors in order to emulate the Yale and Harvard rivalry. It's an interesting old story, but it's impossible to know if it's true. Marblehead's colors were not always red and black however. In 1926, coach Marshall Shearer changed the uniform colors to yellow and white with brown socks. The change did not last, however, and the tradition of red and black was brought back the next season.

Throughout the past 102 years, there have been some great games between the two teams, many of them on Thanksgiving. And while they haven't all gone Marblehead's way, these games have been the highlights of many fans' Turkey Day. They played their last game at Seaside Field, a 19-6 win, on Thanksgiving of 1929. One of the best Thanksgiving games came early in the rivalry, in 1942. The teams were tied for first place in the Northeastern Conference, with the championship coming down to this final game of the season. Marblehead led a great last drive to tie the game 7-7, leading to a split championship between the two teams. In 1955, in one of the best games in Marblehead history, the game came down to the last drive. Marblehead got to the five-yard line, and as the clock hit zero, threw an interception to end the game, 19-18.

They haven't all been close games. In 1961, Swampscott was undefeated and looked like the surefire Northeastern Conference champions going into the Thanksgiving game, but Marblehead stunned them in a 35-14 rout, denying Swampscott the championship. But for 6 years, from 1967-1972, Swampscott dominated Marblehead, including a fourth quarter comeback win on Thanksgiving in 1969 to clinch the Northeastern Conference. But in 1973, Marblehead handed Swampscott a 20-12 defeat, securing a tie for the championship that year.

The tradition of nail biting game continued last year, when the game came down to the last 10 seconds of regulation. Marblehead's failed attempt at a 2 point conversion gave Swampscott a 22-21 win over the Magicians in one of the best games in recent memory.

It's clear that this is a storied and rich history, which has all the trappings of an NFL rivalry. And it's not over yet. The Marblehead squad is taking on Swampscott this Thanksgiving, adding another chapter to this amazing and illustrious story.