

Remembering N8M: 1966

140 Teams played 8-Man football in 1966

DENOTES: 8-Man Hall of Fame Inductee

Conde Sargent took over the World-Herald Prep Sports department from Gregg McBride in 1966. Western Nebraska boasted bragging rights in Sargent's first ever final ratings, placing Indianola, Paxton and Overton in a 1,2,3 slam. Below is his first Final Top Ten:

1966 Eight-Man Football Final Top 10

- 1. Indianola, (10-0)** Coach- Jerry Felker
 - 2. Paxton (9-0)** Coach- Don Byrnes
 - 3. Overton (8-0)** Coach- Dan Moore
 - 4. Elmwood (9-0)** Coach- Gary Anderson
 - 5. Odell (9-0)** Coach- Jerry Rupprecht
 - 6. Talmage (8-0)** Coach- Ron Miller
 - 7. Humphrey High (9-0)** Coach- LeRoy Ditter
 - 8. Sprague-Martel (7-0)** Coach- Larry Horstman
 - 9. Pleasanton (8-1)** Coach- Pat Avey
 - 10. Western (7-1)** Coach- Sam Bell
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1966 was a season to remember for 8-Man and all of Nebraska high school football, as we recorded our state's very first 2,000 yard rusher.

Pleasanton's **Larry Riessland**, exploded for a mind-boggling 2,127 yards and 47 touchdowns on a grueling 247 carries. Averaging 8.6 yards a carry (averaging 31 carries per game). He scored NINE touchdowns in a single game, while rushing for 320 yards in another.

Riessland also completed 7 of 9 passes for 118 yards, caught 22 passes for 425 yards and intercepted 9 passes on defense.

The Pleasanton record setter was part of an impressive All-State backfield in 1966 that included Wilsonville quarterback, 6-1, 195 pound senior **Charles Haag**.

A deadly accurate passer, Haag completed a sizzling 70% of his 116 pass attempts, good for 1,480 yards and 19 touchdowns. Charles was also a fine defender, recording a pair of Pick-6s during the '66 season.

Rounding out an all-state backfield to remember was a well-known name out of Western Nebraska gridiron circles, **Jerry Liess** from State Champion Indianola.

Liess ran for 849 yards on 84 carries, averaging a first down every time he ran the ball Liess also completed 31 of 56 passes for 491 yards and 9 touchdowns.

That means Liess threw a touchdown pass every third time he put the ball in the air. He was also the second leading tackler on his team and added 6 punt returns for scores. Jerry was later inducted into the NEMFCA 8-Man Hall of Fame in 2024.

The top lineman in all of 8-Man football in 1966 had to be Bartlett's 5-10, 190 pound tough guy **Al Childers**. A repeat selection, the athletic Childers was fully capable of chasing down an opposing running back as he ran a :10.9 hundred-yard dash.

And now, let's meet our 1966 8-Man All-State Football team:

1966 8-Man All-State Football Team

End---Ken Gitt-Wilcox, 6-1, 175, Senior

End---Warren Schoenbeck-Western, 5-8, 165 Senior

Guard-Jim Fischer-Elmwood, 5-11, 170, Senior

Guard-Al Childers-Bartlett, 5-10, 190, Senior

Center-Don Wittler-Talmage, 6-3, 215, Senior

Back--Charles Haag-Wilsonville, 6-1, 195, Senior

Back--**Jerry Liess-Indianola**, 5-11, 164, Senior

Back--**Larry Riessland-Pleasanton**, 5-8, 155, Senior