

# CENTRAL DAUPHIN FOOTBALL

## *CELEBRATING 68 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE* *“THEN, NOW, ALWAYS”*

### *THEN.....*

On September 8, 1955, Central Dauphin High School opened its doors to students for the first time. The “new” high school on Locust Lane, born out of a merger between local high schools, was beginning its legacy of excellence. This also meant that the Central Dauphin Rams football team was hitting the gridiron for the first time on Friday nights at Landis Field. The 1955 edition, which was comprised of players from Lower Paxton High and Swatara High, persevered through several challenges to capture the school’s first winning season. They were led by a great, young coach named Joe Yukica. Together they planted the seeds for the proud tradition we all share today.

In four short years, Coach Yukica and his staff were able to build a powerhouse through hard work and a strong spirit of teamwork. In 1958, the Rams, led by the great Don Caum, were a perfect 10-0 followed by a 9-1 campaign in 1959, losing only to a solid Easton squad by merely one point in front of a massive crowd at Landis Field. Along the way, CD enjoyed a 19-game winning streak in those two seasons and established itself as a top-tier program in the Susquehanna Valley. In fact, the 1958 edition was deemed “mythical state champions” by some sports writers.

The success continued under coaches Jim Roe and Ron DeMelfi who carried the torch into the early 1960’s. The undefeated 1961 team is still regarded as one of the all-time greats in school history while the 1963 team scored one of the biggest victories ever witnessed at Landis Field by upsetting the mighty John Harris Pioneers and Coach George Chaump in front of a roaring home crowd.

As the 1960’s turned to the 1970’s, CD fans were entertained by some big-time talent wearing the Green and White such as Jim Heilig, Woody Neighbors and Big 33 selection, Leroy Hughes. The 1972 team, under skipper Gary Sheeler, captured the school’s first league championship with an 8-2 record.

In the ‘80’s, the Rams butted heads with many formidable foes when they joined the newly formed Mid-Penn Division I which was well-known for its powerhouse programs. Despite facing fierce competition every week, CD was very competitive under Coach Bob Holbrook whose tenure spanned the entire decade.

The new decade of the ‘90’s brought a new head coach, Rick Mauck.. In his second season, Coach Mauck – a CD Football alum - led the Rams to a stellar 8-2-1 record in 1991. A few years later, CD earned its first District playoff berth in 1996 under Coach Ron Davis.

1997 saw the return of Harrisburg coaching legend, George Chaump, after he had spent several years in the college and professional ranks. The 1997 Rams put Central Dauphin Football back on the state map by capturing the District 3 AAAA title and making it all the way to the state semi-finals before losing in overtime to Central Bucks

West at Hershey Park stadium. In 1998, the Rams continued their winning ways with the school's first Mid-Penn title and a perfect regular season record before falling in the District championship game. The following year CD won its second Mid-Penn Commonwealth championship in a row with a 9-1 regular season record in 1999. Three years later the Rams took the field with huge expectations as the #1 ranked team in the state. And the Green and White faithful would not be disappointed that season as they captured another district title in a thrilling victory over Wilson and Chad Henne at Hershey Park stadium to improve their record to 12-0.

Two year later with Coach Paul Plott as the head coach, the Rams went undefeated in Mid-Penn play as part of a 10-2 campaign which included a dominating performance over Bishop McDevitt and LeSean McCoy.

Then, on December 17, 2011, the great history and tradition of Central Dauphin Rams football was on display when they collided with the North Penn Knights for the AAAA State Championship. In order to make it to the title game, the Rams first had to upset the defending champs, North Allegheny, with an incredible, last-second 23-20 victory. The magical 2011 season ended with a truly magical evening at Hershey Park Stadium in which the Rams hoisted the championship trophy in front of a huge crowd on a snow-covered turf. This moment would set the stage for the most successful decade in school history and one that was capped off with another trip to the state championship in 2019. Along the way, CD won 103 games, captured 7 Mid-Penn Commonwealth titles, made 5 trips to the District Championship, and 2 trips to the state title game.

### **NOW.....**

Those of us that are fortunate enough to be part of the current Rams football program are fully aware that we are being handed a torch by those who came before us. It is our responsibility to make sure that this torch burns even brighter when we hand it to the next generation of Rams. To truly honor our great history and tradition, we have adopted a program philosophy that is based on the idea that our collective experience must be about *"More Than Just Football!"* It must be an experience that is about more than just Friday Nights and one that helps our players in their lives outside of football. And, most of all, it should be an experience that helps them in their pursuits beyond their high school years. To that end, we have established a variety of programs and initiatives to create such an experience for our players and to enhance the program of which we are all temporary caretakers.

In 2006 the Community Connections Program was created to encourage our football players to participate in community service. Since its inception, our players have amassed over 15,000 hours of community service in over 650 events! We have helped to build playgrounds, assisted in various ways at retirement homes, read to elementary school students, helped with Special Olympics, volunteered at Food Pantries, and have taken part in events to help the Children's Miracle Network. The list goes far beyond this, of course. In fact, in the past decade, our players averaged over 1,100 hours of community service each year.

In 2009, we created the Academic Excellence Program (AEP) to help our football players reach their potential as students. This program is intended to help all our players go beyond merely "passing" or being eligible and to achieve their personal best, whatever

that might be for each individual. At the heart of this program are three Academic Coaches who work hard at monitoring the players' progress, communicating with parents and coaches, and working directly with the players to be the best students they can be. We also have a mandatory study hall each week for all levels of our program along with a variety of incentives and forms of recognition, including a weekly Academic Captain based on nominations from teachers.

In 2009 our weight room doubled in size as a result of a project that was spearheaded by the Rams Club, our Football Booster Club. It was dedicated in August 2009 as the Speed Ebersole Strength and Conditioning Center. Its namesake, Speed Ebersole, was a legendary trainer at Central Dauphin for 50 years (until 2000) and a man who touched countless lives along the way. Since that dedication ceremony, our attendance and achievement in the weight room has been incredible thanks to this state-of-the-art facility and the expertise of many dedicated coaches who have guided our exceptionally committed players.

### **ALWAYS.....**

As we continue in this new decade, we are determined to do our best to ensure that CD Rams football will be even stronger in the coming years. Therefore, we have spent a great deal of time and effort over the past several years with our youth football association which is now the Central Dauphin Youth Rams Football Association (formerly the Linglestown Colts). As a result of these efforts, our midget team is fully aligned with our Mission and our Core Values. They also enjoyed a stellar decade making 5 trips to the Super Bowl and winning the championship in 2011, 2012, and 2013 behind head coach, John Denniston. In 2020, they won it again under Coach Mike Betz. They have not only used much of our offensive and defensive systems and terminology but they have also taught fundamentals the "Ram way". The pony and pee-wee levels of our program are also making strides as they continue to implement our philosophies and systems. We are looking forward to watching all the Youth Rams as they come through the program and eventually play under the Friday Night Lights.

Our facilities and resources provide more reason for optimism as we look to the future. We have seen many wonderful upgrades to our stadium, practice field, weight room, video capabilities, player equipment, and field equipment. These improvements not only enhance our program but also help ensure our continued success into the future. But most of all, these upgrades represent the great community and rich tradition that we have at Central Dauphin.

### **Go Rams!**

***"Tradition means giving everything you have for those who came before you, those who are with you and those who will follow you."***