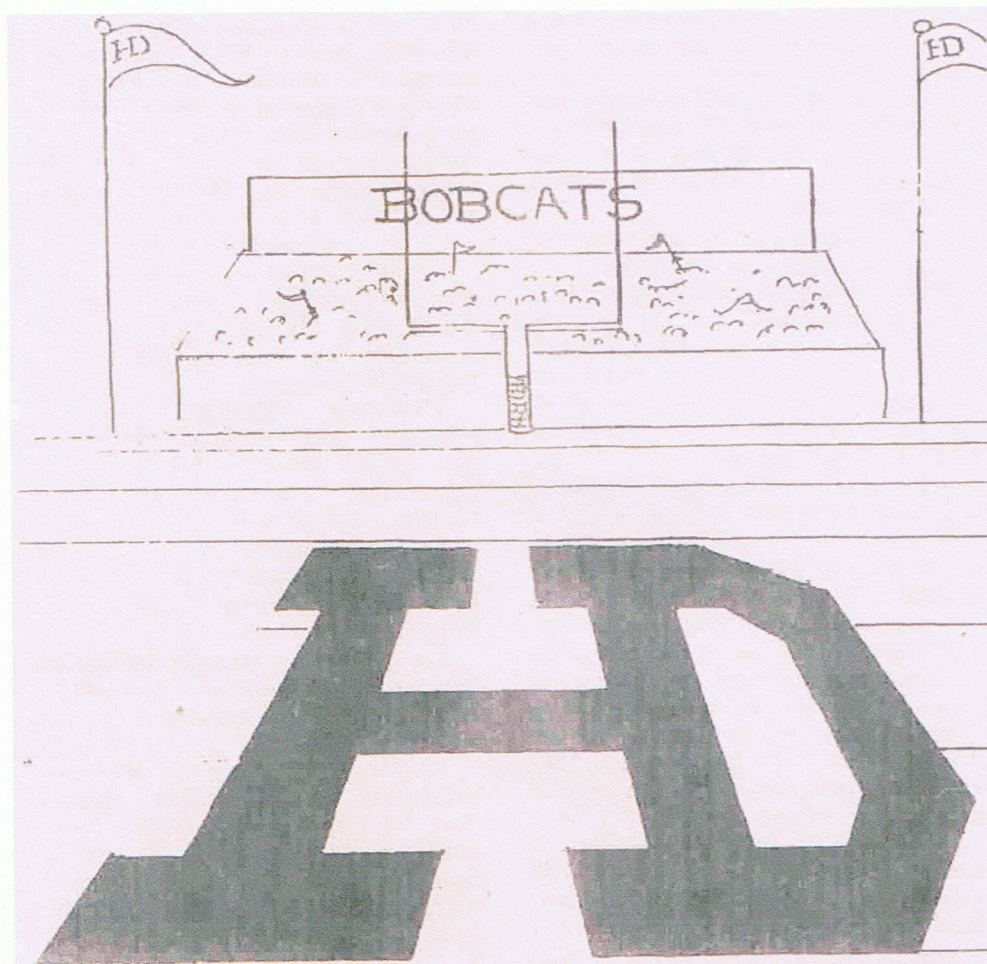


*...THE NIGHT THE SKY FELL DOWN...*

## **HULL-DAISETTA BOBCATS SET NATIONAL RECORD IN 1930'S FOR CONSECUTIVE WINS**

Phil Carrico



**H-D's 'Twelfth Man'**

Illustration By Joe Severino

Hull-Daisetta fans became the famed "Twelfth Man" during the high school varsity football team's win streak of 43 games during the 1930s. The entire community banded together with the gridders to terrorize the opposition until November 24, 1939, when Humble snapped the record-setting string of victories.



## **PREFACE:**

*With football season almost upon us – local folks are beginning to talk high school football. Of course Liberty Countians have the right – because, over the years, this county's high schools have produced some fantastic heroics on the gridiron. This story was published some years ago locally – however, in East Texas, good high school football stories never grow old. Many Liberty Countians concur that the Bobcats of Hull-Daisetta high school has contributed more than its share and still holds more credentials for football greatness than any other school in the county, and much of the State. Read "The Night The Sky Fell Down" and see if you don't agree.*

Hull and Daisetta are two small towns in East Texas that makes up a consolidated school district in Liberty County. Like a noted sports writer from the Beaumont Enterprise once said though, "You don't have to know where it is, just follow a football and you'll get there."

In Hull-Daisetta, football is the lord of lords and the king of kings. It's the top of the mountain, the end of the rainbow and better than a mess of black-eyed peas and turnip greens. Folks from both communities, from babes-in-arms to 95-year-old grandmothers are fanatical fans. As a matter of fact, it's been said that when the Bobcats play away, you could bring in eighteen-wheelers and carry both cities off, because there would be nobody to stop you.

The reason for this fanatical support of a high school football program stemmed back to the mid 1930's. Oil had been discovered in the area in the late teens, and roughnecks had been pouring into these twin cities since that time. The oil field hands were rough, hard-bitten men who had been fighting and scratching for a living all their lives and they expected no less from their sons. Initially, the boys would stay in school only until they were strong enough to do the backbreaking work of a roughneck. However, as the football program evolved, the boys found they liked this rough manly sport and began staying in school so they would be eligible to play.

By the year 1936, bloody battles were fought for each of the 11 starting positions on the team. That year, the Hull-Daisetta Bobcats were so devastating that they romped over 11 foes with only one touchdown being scored against them. Teams like Liberty, Dayton, Cleveland, Crosby, Cedar bayou and Humble could only shake their heads and wonder what truck ran over them.

In Hull-Daisetta during 1936, the social activities, outside what the churches and a small movie house could provide, were practically non-existent. The extra-curricular activities of the high school proved to be the chief social outlet for the entire community. During the season of 1936, as the team kept winning, even the farmers from the far reaches of the district began coming to the games. This team was suddenly much more than just a football squad. These community boys generated community pride and issued out bragging rights to every member of the community. You need not be a member of the team to feel the pride; there was sufficient glory to cover every resident of this small school district.

By the time the season was over, and the Bobcats had not only beaten but demolished all their opponents, the entire community had become the "Twelfth Man." To say a word against the Bobcats within hearing of one of these rabid fans meant a fight, and many bloody battles were fought when an outsider would nonchalantly say the wrong thing in the wrong place. Sports writers for the large newspapers in nearby Beaumont and even Houston had begun to take notice, and said some kind things about those upstart Bobcats. They didn't realize it yet, but this was just the start of a high school winning streak that would shatter all existing records to smithereens.

The players on this 1936 team had made a vow that they would not shave until they lost a game. Before they eventually graduated, most of them had long beards. Can you imagine the plight of the hundreds of young east Texas Football players during those years that had to face these



legendary terrors from Hull-Daisetta? It must have been like David going up against Goliath. As a matter of fact; some schools forfeited their game for fear of having their boys crippled from playing this thundering herd. It was not only players that spread terror into the hearts of opponents, but the "Twelfth Man", who came by the hundreds, and with such arrogance, they would beat up your son, pinch your wife and even burn your city if you make them mad.

Football, however, was the name of the game, and the Bobcats were such a dedicated, well-oiled machine that even the surrounding big schools did not want a part of them. All through 1936, 1937 and 1938 they rampaged. The record of this amazing team through those blazing years were as follows:

#### 1936

Hull-Daisetta 33 – Sour Lake 0  
Hull-Daisetta 52 – Crosby 0  
Hull-Daisetta 31 – Port Neches 0  
Hull-Daisetta 31 – Liberty 0  
Hull-Daisetta 33 – Barbers Hill 0  
Hull-Daisetta 33 – Dayton 0  
Hull-Daisetta 26 – Cleveland 0  
Hull-Daisetta 32 – Cedar Bayou 0  
Hull-Daisetta 41 – Humble 0

#### Bi-District

Hull-Daisetta 34 – Beaumont French 6

#### Regional

Hull-Daisetta 39 – Angleton 0

#### 1937

Hull-Daisetta 2 – Anahuac 0  
Hull-Daisetta 47 – Sour Lake 0  
Hull-Daisetta 34 – Crosby 0  
Hull-Daisetta 26 – Huntsville 0  
Hull-Daisetta 21 – Cleveland 0  
Hull-Daisetta 26 – Liberty 0  
Hull-Daisetta 21 – Dayton 6  
Hull-Daisetta 43 – Barbers Hill 7  
Hull-Daisetta 41 – Cedar Bayou 0  
Hull-Daisetta 39 – Humble 7

#### Bi-District

Hull-Daisetta 6 – Nederland 0

#### Regional

Hull-Daisetta 21 – Pasadena 12

#### 1938

Hull-Daisetta 2 – Anahuac 0  
Hull-Daisetta 29 – Sour Lake 0  
Hull-Daisetta 13 – French 0  
Hull-Daisetta 8 – Dayton 6  
Hull-Daisetta 27 – Crosby 0  
Hull-Daisetta 21 – Liberty 12  
Hull-Daisetta 20 – Barbers Hill 13  
Hull-Daisetta 25 – Cleveland 6  
Hull-Daisetta 27 – Cedar Bayou 2



Hull-Daisetta 34 – Humble 6  
Bi-District  
Hull-Daisetta 20 – Port Neches 12  
Regional  
Hull-Daisetta 13 – Alvin 6

(During this time Texas high school teams could not advance beyond regional, so the winners of each Region in the state shared the Texas State title).

Winning had become a way of life and was expected, the only thing left to doubt was by how much. As the bearded wonders graduated and new blood took their place, that same Bobcat pride and dedication to purpose was still there, by now it was inbred. The total indoctrination to winning began in the first grade or even earlier. I know because my peers and I were in elementary school during those years. The only thing in life that mattered to us, the very essence of life itself, was the hope that with sufficient hard work and proper dedication, we would someday make that Bobcat football team.

The 1939 season began, and the Bobcats juggernaut began rolling again, like Hitler's Panzer Divisions rolling through the Low Countries of Europe. The news media had long ago jumped on the bandwagon because the Bobcats made good copy and now this phenomenal high school team was beginning to get national attention. As opponents, one by one, fell to this irresistible force, the wire services around the country were burning up. This epic unfolding down in East Texas was being watched in Canton, Minneapolis, Richmond and Montgomery. The entire nation was beginning to take note; this was much more interesting than what Hitler was doing to our friends in Europe.

One thing about any Texan, when his back is against the wall he will fight like a tiger, and that's what the coach of the Humble, Texas football team had been telling his talented but thin squad for the entire season. The seniors on the Humble team had been steam-rolled by Hull-Daisetta for the past three years. They were quietly determined that they were gonna put up the fight of their lives this year.

In Hull-Daisetta, with only one team left between them and a fourth consecutive undefeated season, they were dancing in the streets. The Humble team had put together a good season, but were not considered a threat to the "Monsters of the Big Thicket." On Friday November 24<sup>th</sup>, 1939, a huge caravan of Bobcat supporters moved out. They were accompanying the three buses; one carrying the team, a second the band and a third the pep-squad. Every car was painted with signs like "Bobcats Rule" and "Stomp the Wildcats". They were waving red and black banners, screaming and yelling, and all had their car radios turned to the same station. Some were even stopped in the middle of the highway and jitterbugging to "In The Mood" by Glenn Miller. By the time this wild caravan had covered the approximate 40 miles to Humble, many of the "Twelfth Man" was laid out in back seats already - drunk as skunks. The lucky ones were laid out all through the game and did not witness the events that followed.

By 7:30 P.M., the stadium was packed until the seams were beginning to split. The crowd was becoming impatient and unruly. High-kicking cheerleaders were leading them. The chants were alternating between the home and visitor's side and were becoming more and more insulting. By this time agitators from both sides were on the field and shaking fists at each other, some of the drunker ones had started advancing across the field. Just at this time, the gladiators from both teams roared onto the field.

The roar from the crowd was thunderous and as the agitators climbed back into the stands, both teams started their pre-game warm-ups. A short time later the opposing captains met in the center of the field for the coin flip, Humble won the toss and elected to receive. The "Thump" of the kickoff could not be heard for the screaming of five thousand hysterical fans.



The Humble tailback fielded the ball and he, along with the entire team, began running to the right. The over-eager Bobcats slanted to the left to cut him off and hemmed him in on the sideline. The Wildcats could not move the ball and on fourth down, punted. The ball came down into the arms of the Bobcat tailback and he began streaking up the middle with good blocking. The lane opened, and just as he was breaking into the clear, one last Wildcat was in the way. The tailback hit the man and spun. As he was spinning into the open, the ball slipped out of his grasp and was pounced upon by a Wildcat. Again the Wildcats could not move the ball and after three fruitless plays, punted the ball into the end zone.

The play continued in the middle of the field with neither team being able to generate any offense. By the Bobcat's fourth offensive series, each player was aware that something was wrong. This game wasn't going according to the plot. The Wildcats were standing up to the bull-like rushes of the Hull-Daisetta backs. According to the plot, these turkeys were supposed to be on their backsides by now and watching the express go by.

After three straight plunges into the line had netted a total of five yards, the Bobcat captain called time out. The conversation in the huddle went something like this: "Whatsa matter with you linemen, you gonna block these geeks or what?" A big burly lineman, with sweat dripping off his chin, replied, "Listen, Junior, anytime you want me to run with the ball, just say the word, then you can get up there and do the blocking." "Knock off the crap," growled the captain, as he came back into the huddle after a short conference with the coach. "Coach said to punt, then start kicking some butt and get that ball back. We need a score before the quarter ends."

The Bobcats punted, and as the Humble ball team was preparing to kick back, after running three unsuccessful plays, the whistle sounded ending the first quarter. As the players changed ends of the field, the talk in the Humble stands was hushed and nervous. The gut feeling among all the old fans that had watched the Hull-Daisetta machine for so many years was that lightening was about to strike. That feeling like when you are hanging by a thread and the thread is beginning to unravel.

The fans, however faint-hearted, did not effect the stoutheartedness of the team. Led on by the seniors, the underclassmen were gradually getting the bit between their teeth, and the resulting effect was a group of boys who were beginning to battle like Wildcats. All through the second quarter the battle raged. The Bobcats had never met a group who could take as much punishment and still come back for more. The individual battles in the pits were masterpieces in effort, dedication and will to win. The Hull-Daisetta players were not the Monsters of the Big Thicket for nothing. In fact, they were superbly trained athletes whose dedication to winning had been tested by hell's fire over the past 4 years. On the other hand, if there was ever a time in their lives when they played over their heads, on this night, the Humble players did just that.

Their efforts paid off in the waning moments of the second quarter as the Wildcats drove 48 yards to the first touchdown of the game. As they missed the extra point, the Humble fans were rolling in the aisles, slapping each other on the back and spilling their whiskey in the excitement. Although the Humble team was bleeding and bruised, they had answered the call on every play, and by the time the half ended, had earned a kind of respect from the Bobcats. Respect not really for great athletes, but for fellow human beings that were willing to pay the price, to grab the ring, to go above and beyond.

The second half was more of the same, and finally, in the late third quarter, Hull-Daisetta became desperate enough to attempt the forward pass. At that time, the forward pass was something developed by the Devil and copyrighted in hell, just to aggravate coaches. Sure enough, this disciple of the Devil bit the Hull-Daisetta team, whose strong running game had carried them to the pinnacle of high school football. A flat pass was picked off by an opportunist Wildcat and carried into Bobcat territory. After three thrusts into a strong Bobcat defense, the Wildcats punted for the coffin corner. The Bobcat tailback took the punt on his own goal line and ran out to the ten-yard line, when he coughed up the pigskin. A furious battle for the ball ensued, with Humble finally gaining possession in the end zone for their second touchdown.



The final score was thirteen to zero. The Bobcats played the final quarter in a stunned disbelief. The Humble fans stood through the entire fourth quarter and even when the final whistle blew they could hardly believe the scoreboard. The eleven iron men from Humble had defeated the nationally acclaimed Bobcats without using one substitute.

The curtain had fallen, the well was dry, the bucket was empty and the rabid Hull-Daisetta "Twelfth Man," was so dumbstruck, they got passively back into their automobiles and drove back to Hull-Daisetta without even burning the city of Humble. The 1939 schedule ended as follows, and proved to be the first time in four years the Bobcats were not going into post season play:

#### 1939

Hull-Daisetta 32 – Tomball 0  
Hull-Daisetta 50 – Barbers Hill 12  
Hull-Daisetta 18 – Nederland 6  
Hull-Daisetta 31 – Liberty 8  
Hull-Daisetta 45 – Jasper 6  
Hull-Daisetta 26 – Yoakum 0  
Hull-Daisetta 26 – Cleveland 0  
Hull-Daisetta 34 – Dayton 12  
Hull-Daisetta 0 – Humble 13

The entire community walked around for weeks in a state of shock. There was a rash of divorces, fights and kids running away from home. Some say the dogs wouldn't even bark any more. There was such a sense of disbelief that no one could believe that it had really happened. However, life goes on and when the blood finally started pumping again, the yells of "Wait till next year", resounded murderously, especially on the ears of us young Bobcats who were waiting to take our turn in the trenches.

The Hull-Daisetta win streak of 43 consecutive wins (at the time – a NATIONAL record) covering three and nine-tenths years is a phenomenon that, in most quarters, has lost its luster over the years. However, the "Twelfth Man" of Hull-Daisetta still remembers well. They were brought back to prominence like thunder in 1979, when the Bobcats won the Texas State Championship once again. (And this time they didn't have to share the title). This is still the only State Championship in football in Liberty County. Several old Bobcats have told me; through the decade of the '60s the Bobcats produced absolute "War-horse" teams and just missed winning State by the skin of their teeth on several occasions. Nowadays, when the Bobcats start winning, the "Twelfth Man" walks easy and tries to keep a low profile, because they remember well that night in 1939, when the sky fell down.

#### Postscript

To start naming names of the players during those fabulous years was something I didn't want to start, because where do you stop? However, I find that just to mention some of these names brings back a thrill after all these years. Certain names seem to reside in a special Bobcat heaven, and have been immortalized by the "Twelfth Man." Names like Chuffy Duty, Hubert Taylor, Junior Johnston, Fritz Rogers, Clayton Biggs, Bethel Davis, Joe Boothe, Frank Rowell, Ray Pietre, Warren and Willard Clark, Curley Strawn and Curtiss Barrett (Just to name a few), were legends in their time. Many of the Bobcats from this era were killed during World War 2, but I'm sure that dying for their country was roses, compared to losing that football game to Humble on the night when the sky fell down.