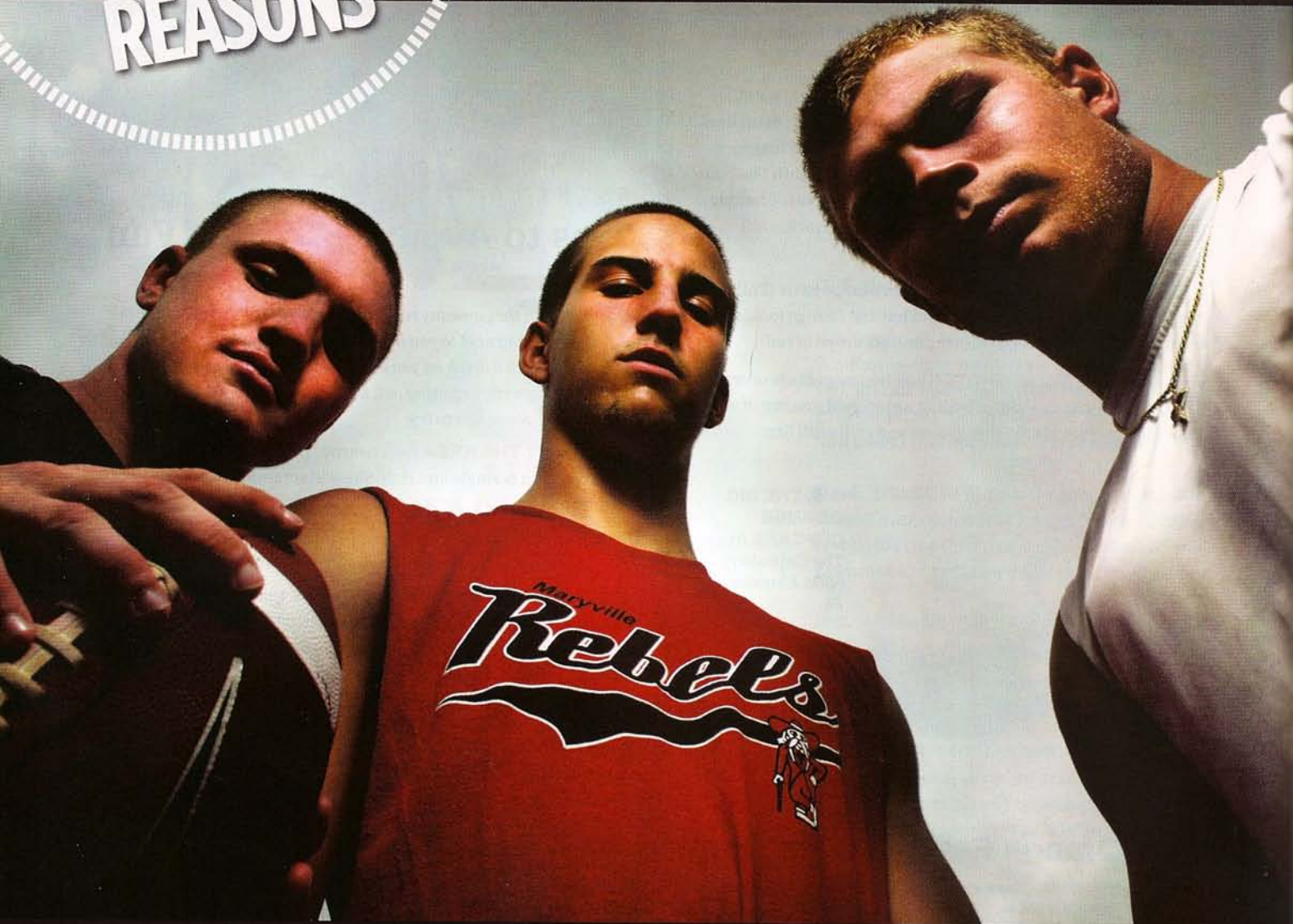


13
REASONS

WHY WE LOVE TO HATE MARYVILLE HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL



FORMER MARYVILLE DAILY TIMES SPORTS EDITOR JOHN BRICE, now a writer for Rivals.com, said something that defined my understanding of the winning culture that surrounds Maryville High School. **"You'll have to forgive me on the year," he says. "They all tend to run together."** Brice covered the team for the last six seasons, between 2001 and 2006, during much of its reign over high school football in Tennessee. As a sports writer, he has interviewed Richard Petty, Peyton Manning and pretty much ran the gamut in SEC sports coverage. But Maryville Football has been the center of his career.



BY BRANDON LOWE ★ PHOTOGRAPHY BY SHAWN POYNTER



JOHN BRICE:

“IT IS THE MOST AMAZING THING I HAVE EVER COME ACROSS IN JOURNALISM.”

As I developed this story, Brice was the wise sage who helped me dissect the program's astounding decade-long reign. During that time, Maryville has won seven of the last eight state football championships and in the process earned a hatred that is characteristic of all great sports dynasties. The general feeling is that they would rather see Maryville lose than their respective teams win.

“There are going to be a 100,000 people who say for the rest of their lives that they were there when Maryville lost,” he says.

And for you 100,000, here is a diabolic list of the reasons it is so easy to despise Maryville High School football.

1 » THE WINNING

WHEN THE RED REBELS make their way to the field on a Friday night, the voice of long-time announcer Greg Judkins rises above the crowd's anxious chatter... “Now welcome onto the field, your back to back to back to back state champions.” More than just a simple nod to the team's success, Judkins' vibrant delivery is a reminder to everyone in attendance that greatness has long been housed at Shields Stadium. The culture of winning in Maryville dates back to the 1970s, when Coach Ted Wilson started the winning tradition by taking three state titles. Many players from that team have kids who have played on the recent championship teams. The team has 644 all-time wins, 11 state titles (1970, 1976, 1978, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2006, and 2007) and has scarcely seen a losing season.

2 » THE MARYVILLE FOOTBALL FACTORY: A FAMILY TRADITION

FOR A TOWN LIKE MARYVILLE, football is a black hole that sucks everyone in. Maryville youngsters dream of Shields Stadium, and everybody's father or uncle played and probably won a state or at least a regional championship. Parents, including those of the band, cheerleaders and majorettes, travel to every away game, even after their kids have graduated. It is nothing for the team to graduate 20 seniors every year and come back with 20 the next year. “Our kids grow up dreaming about being a player,” says Coach George Quarles. “It gets to a point where the program runs itself in a lot of ways.”

DID YOU KNOW

THE FAMILY TREE HAS DEEP ROOTS

There are lots of family connections in Maryville football. Here are two recent examples and the most prominent family links in recent history.

CALEB CLEMENT, a senior from last year's team took his family's combined championship total for Maryville to 10 last year as he won four straight titles as a Rebel. His brothers Russell and Andrew previously won three titles each.

JUSTIN SMITH, a senior on the 2008 team, will have a chance to tie Clement by making it 10 titles for the Smith clan. His brothers, Jeffery and Josh, also have three titles apiece. Their father, also named Jeff, started at tight end for the Vols.

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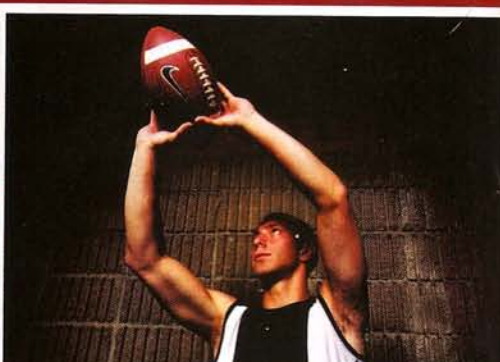
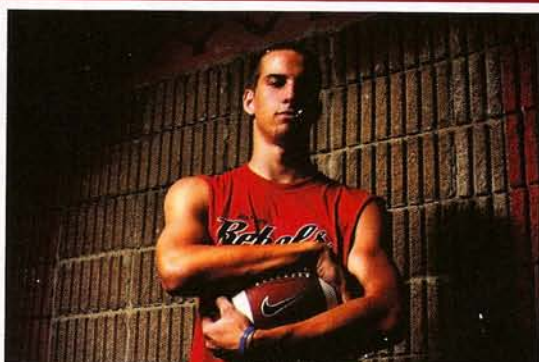
GEORGE QUARLES

HEAD COACH: 1999-2007



IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE that George Quarles (aka "GQ") started off his first 17 games at Maryville with a 10-7 record. Four of those seven losses came at the beginning of the 2000 season, amidst a controversy in which key players were suspended to start the season. By any standard, it was a bad month. But in Maryville, it could have meant the chopping block. GQ himself remembers a lot of parents that "wanted to talk."

"George joked with me that he used to get up after they were 0-4 and look for 'For Sale' signs in his yard," says Brice. "He was lucky to survive." But GQ was Mr. Cool. He and his impressive team of assistant coaches rallied the troops and won the rest of the season, earning his first state championship, a miracle turn around for the second-year head coach. Since then, GQ has turned a program already rich with tradition into a seemingly endless string of Blue Cross Bowl victories. With 113 wins in 115 games, he can't let loose of winning. He is the Godfather of high school football in Tennessee. But for Brice, there's a bigger reason to be jealous of GQ. "George is a ridiculously good golfer," explains Brice. "That is enough to make you despise the guy. He plays golf enough like he's going to be a senior pro."



DID YOU KNOW

"Thanks, but No Thanks."

GQ HAS HAD THE CHANCE to move on from Maryville. Early in his career, when Furman coach Bobby Johnson left to coach at Vanderbilt, GQ was in the mix of candidates to take over the job at his alma mater. Such a transition would have been a huge leap for a high school coach. "Most people don't do that," Brice says. "But Furman is very proud of what GQ has accomplished." After the 2006 season, GQ got a chance to coach at Nashville's Brentwood Academy. The Brentwood area has the highest per capita income in the state and would have afforded Quarles a newfound standard of living, to say the least. But when it was all said and done, GQ stayed put. "He has three or four guys there that could be head coaches," says Brice. "But they have said 'thanks but no thanks.'"

4 » GQ'S ARMY **GQ HATES IT** when critics label Maryville as a "system program." He views it as a slight to his players. Truth is, these kids are empowered workhorses. As in the Army, honor is won through effort and participation, and self-sacrifice is a cornerstone of the program. It is not uncommon for a player see fewer than 10 minutes of playing time in a four-year career. "They are the kids you want to hate for being so good, but how can you possibly hate these kids if you like anything about high school athletics," says Brice.

5 » BRAINS AND BRAWN

WHEN YOU SEE AN AD in the paper for a home in the city, the ad always says "City Schools," reassuring the new resident of their Pleasantville status. Another one-fourth of the students live outside the city and pay tuition to attend Maryville. Over 80% of Maryville High teachers have a master's degree or beyond, and the current staff-to-student ratio is approximately 1 to 15. The standard is higher to say the least, and that is what draws people to the community.

FOR EXAMPLE

CHRIS JORDAN

» Current receiver, defensive back and all-around big play guy Chris Jordan is a senior who scored nine touchdowns for Maryville last year. Meanwhile, he is in the top 3 in his academic class and has a chance to be valedictorian. You want more proof? Jordan had to leave the photo shoot early to meet with Harvard.

6 » DEEP FROM THE TOP, DOWN

"There really isn't ego on that coaching staff," says Brice. "All of their personalities combined make it work."

JIM GAYLOR » Defensive Coordinator, former head coach. (Took Clinton to the title game in the mid 1990s.)

DAVID ELLIS » Another former head coach, he and GQ were finalists for the Maryville job. Though Ellis was already a Maryville coach at the time, after GQ got the job, he stayed on to coach with him.

MIKE WHITE » Mike White Field at William Blount High School is named after White's father. White played at William Blount, one of the Blount County programs facing the Maryville giant. A great offensive mind, he has been offered head coaching jobs by other schools.

JOE PINKERTON » Pinkerton was the defensive coach who was often courted by other schools to become head coach. Another strong leader in the program, he retired at the end of last season to focus on being an assistant principal.

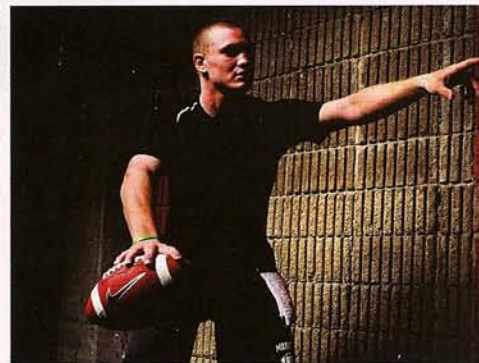
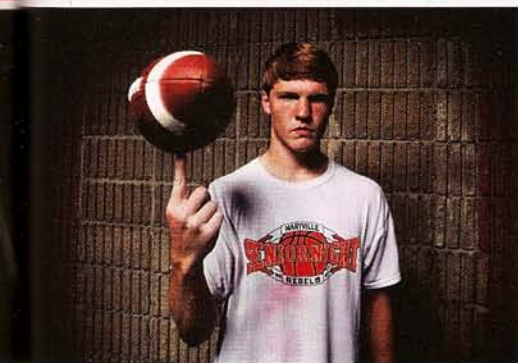
7 » FACILITIES

WHILE THERE HAS BEEN talk of moving the annual Maryville-Alcoa game to Neyland stadium to accommodate the massive number of fans who attend the game, it is hard to imagine the game not being played at Shields Stadium. The field has played host to some of the greatest high school football games played in the state of Tennessee. The Don Story Athletic Center beefs up the football players, making them bigger, faster, and stronger. Fit for a king (or an NFL team), the workout facility is the bling bling of the football program.

DID YOU KNOW

MARYVILLE RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB

» The Red Rebels aren't the only nationally ranked football team from Maryville. The Maryville Rugby Football Club placed fifth recently at the USA Rugby High School National Championship Playoff Series in Pittsburgh. Though it is not an officially sanctioned high school sport, the team has had success. Made up of students from various Blount high schools, the all-women's team, called the Amazons, is the defending Southern Region Champions.



8 » NIKE/NATIONAL RANKINGS

WHEN YOU END UP RANKED sixth in the country in high school football (according to the ESPN High Elite 25 High School Football Rankings), you are bound to get corporate attention. And since East Tennessee is Adidas country, thanks to the University of Tennessee's contract with the sporting goods company, you'd think it'd be logical that the area's second most popular team, the Maryville Rebels, would also join up with Adidas as well. Even GQ agrees. "I really didn't care," he says. "The kids decided for the most part." Adidas did approach Maryville, as did Under Armour, but GQ ultimately branded the Rebels a Nike team. Like college programs, Maryville players will be equipped with uniforms, practice and travel gear designed in Oregon by Nike and will possibly be playing other top high school programs from around the country on national TV. This could pit Maryville against historic national powerhouses like Texas' Southlake Carrol or Cincinnati's St. Xavier.



WATCH THIS

TUBE THE REBELS

For the full Maryville Nike experience, go to YouTube.com and type in **Maryville + Nike**. The Nike SPARQ program (Speed, Power, Agility, Reaction and Quickness).

9 » FANATIC

ON THE AFTERNOON OF A GAME NIGHT, the sights and sounds of the Maryville faithful begin to fill the downtown area. Car horns. Kids yelling at each other. The feeling is one of youth and excitement. "There is a sort of charge that goes through the area," says Brice. "It's the closest thing to big time college football in the South that I've seen on a high school field." Trucks race Confederate flags through the streets of downtown. The senior girls paint their faces and wear t-shirts adorned with jersey numbers. Meanwhile, chicken is deep fried at tailgates near the stadium, all in preparation for a fanatical football experience. When Maryville's 700 season tickets go on sale at the beginning of June each year, they usually sell out in a few days. At Maryville, everyone goes to the games, from the slackers to the bookworms. Can you see Judd Nelson from *The Breakfast Club* going to a football game?



THE Z PLAN

GEORGE QUARLES

knows that a loss for Maryville is inevitable. And the Z-plan might be the nail in the coffin of that belief. The goal of the plan, which consists of a complicated system that includes wildcard berths, is to further localize league play to save on travel expenses because of increasing gas prices. Since the time of the last reclassification before the 2005 football season, Maryville has been one of the largest schools in 4A. The school's projected 1,550 students for the upcoming school year would put them in a 5A group that would theoretically boast tougher competition thanks to larger numbers.

10 » GOING GREEN

ALL OF IT...the fans, Nike, lead to money. People say the Yankees are MLB's money team. Maryville is the high school equivalent. GQ estimates that money brought in from the Alcoa game alone each year is around \$40,000. "That's a pretty big chunk of money for a high school athletic department," says Quarles, who is also athletic director. "No question the money that is brought in helps run the rest of the athletic department."

11 » MUR'VILLE

A VIRTUAL ISLAND, Maryville remains removed from Farragut, while being in proximity to the beauty of the Smokies and the city life of Knoxville. It is a great location to be sure. But as Maryville High School goes, so goes Maryville. "A very successful businessman in the community once said to me, 'You can put a price on what Maryville football has put on the community,'" says Brice. "You could do an economic impact study on how many jobs the school has created." Like a college campus, the town's atmosphere wouldn't be complete without a good football team. "It is woven into the fabric of this community," says Brice.

12 » BLOUNT COUNTY OVERSHADOWED

REBEL ENVY is serious business in Blount County, where the success of the Maryville Rebels can often overshadow some other fantastic high schools in the area. Nearby Alcoa High School has also won four consecutive state titles in their respective division, each year losing to Maryville in the process. The Red Rebels even overshadow their own kind. During the 2007 basketball season, the Rebel basketball team also won the state championship, a future footnote in the school's winning history.

WHO HAS THE BIGGEST MARYVILLE HIGH SCHOOL INFERIORITY COMPLEX?

JOHN BRICE SAYS:

» "I think Knox Central has a really bad inferiority complex to Maryville because they often are way more physically gifted, but Maryville always seems to win."

13 » THE FUTURE

THE FUTURE AT MARYVILLE seems to be just as bright as the past. "This year's 9th grade class is special," says GQ. "They are probably the best class we have had in years." Known for having an abundance of the pigskin Trinity (Size. Speed. Strength.), the team has won middle school city championships and in the process developed some lofty expectations. Luckily, for the fans, at Maryville, players tend to rise to the occasion. ☉