

# High School Baseball in Putnam County

## Introduction

Some abbreviations will be used in this book. As you are reading it, please refer to this list if necessary.

APA	Auglaize, Putnam and Allen
BVC	Blanchard Valley Conference
CG	Columbus Grove
CC	Crawfis College
CNR	Continental News Review
FJ	Fort Jennings
HS	High School
LFP	Leipsic Free Press
MC	Miller City
NWC	North West Conference
OP	Ottawa Public
OG	Ottawa-Glandorf
OHSAA	Ohio High School Athletic Association
PC	Putnam County
PCAA	Putnam County Athletic Association
PCG	Putnam County Gazette
PCL	Putnam County League
PCLT	Putnam County League Tournament
PCT	Putnam County Tournament
PCS	Putnam County Sentinel
PCV	Putnam County Vidette
PG	Pandora-Gilboa
SPPS	Sts. Peter and Paul School
WBL	Western Buckeye League
WCN	Western County News

The information for this document has come from many places such as newspapers, yearbooks, scorebooks, school news letters, personal memories, school board minutes, countless interviews, previously written booklets, old photographs, etc.

The year books, scorebooks, school newsletters, and photographs provided specific information on respective baseball teams. However, the bulk of the information on the previously uncollected data on the early days of Putnam County came from newspapers. Most newspapers in the early days did not have a sport's page as we see today. Short and limited articles were interspersed throughout the paper. They might be on the front page or the last. Schools that had a newspaper in their towns were better covered. Newspapers that have existed in Putnam County are as follows: Putnam County Vidette, Continental News Review, Leipsic Free Press, Putnam County Gazette, Putnam County Sentinel, Pandora Times, The Kalida Record, Gilboa Gazette and the Western County News.

The history of high school baseball in PC has many different and interesting facets. The following areas will be addressed: Schools, statistics, the PCL, the teams, the coaches and the players.

## The Schools of Putnam County

At one time or another there were nineteen different high schools in Putnam County. Eighteen of these schools had high school baseball teams. As schools consolidated through the years, the number gradually declined to the present number of nine. The entire list is as follows: Belmore, Blanchard, Cloverdale, Columbus Grove, Continental, Crawfis College, Fort Jennings, Glandorf, Kalida, Leipsic, Miller City, Ottawa-Glandorf, Ottawa Public, Ottawa SPPS, Ottoville, Palmer, Pandora, Pandora-Gilboa and Vaughnsville.

The current high schools in Putnam County are Columbus Grove, Continental, Fort Jennings, Kalida, Leipsic, Miller City, Ottawa-Glandorf, Ottoville and Pandora-Gilboa.

Crawfis College and the Gilboa district joined to form Blanchard High School in 1940. Crawfis College has scores from 1924-1939.

Blanchard and Pandora consolidated to form Pandora-Gilboa High School in 1952. Blanchard has baseball scores from 1940-1951, Pandora from 1910-1951 and Pandora-Gilboa from 1952 to the present.

Vaughnsville consolidated with Columbus Grove in 1963. Vaughnsville has recorded baseball scores from 1914-1962. Columbus Grove has scores from 1914 to the present.

In the summer of 1941, Palmer High School was dissolved and a new school district was formed. Some of the New Cleveland area was added to the original Palmer district. A portion of the old Palmer district was taken away and put into the Continental school district. Thus, the 'new school' was the 'old school' with a new name. It was renamed the Miller City-New Cleveland School District. It has recorded baseball scores from 1923-1941. Miller City has scores from 1942 to the present.

The consolidation of Ottawa Public, Ottawa SPPS and Glandorf took place over a three year period. Ottawa Public and Ottawa SPPS joined together in 1962 to form one school. Ottawa Public then joined with Glandorf in 1965 to form Ottawa-Glandorf. Ottawa Public has recorded baseball scores from 1910-1964, Ottawa SPPS from 1928-1961 and Glandorf from 1930-1964. Ottawa-Glandorf has recorded baseball scores from 1965 to the present.

Four schools are basically the same since their beginning. Continental has recorded baseball scores from 1912 to the present, Fort Jennings from 1923 to the present, Kalida from 1923 to the present and Leipsic from 1910 to the present.

# High School Baseball in Putnam County

All the schools in Putnam County participate in the PCL except for Ottawa-Glandorf. OG participated in the PCL in baseball for two years, 1965 and 1966. It started to play a full schedule in the WBL in 1967 and has continued to the present. Leipsic, Pandora-Gilboa and Columbus Grove also play in another league. Besides the PCL, Leipsic and Pandora-Gilboa are in the BVC and Columbus Grove plays in the NWC.

## The Beginning of High School Baseball in Putnam County

Details of one of the first high school baseball teams in Putnam County were reported in a Leipsic High School yearbook in 1909. Leipsic's record was 4-3.

A few years later, the Leipsic Free Press had the following advertisement urging fans to come to Temco Field to watch the Alumni and high school athletes play. It was a common practice to place advertisements like this in the county papers during this time for spring and fall games.

### Alumni – High School ANNUAL BASE BALL GAME

Friday, May 21, '15 at 2:30 p.m.  
Temco Athletic Field

#### Lineup:

Alumni – W.E. Edwards, catcher; Fred Perry, "Cy" Maple, O.P. Edwards, pitchers; Harris, 1b; "Nig" Prentiss, 2b; Konst, 3b; Frank Hoffman, ss; Clarence Hoffman, H.L. Hoffman, Homer Whister and Pfister, outfielders.

High School – Tarleton, 3b; Kunert, cf; Berger, 1b; Smith, 2b; Wagner, p; White, ss; Pund, c; Kratzer, rf; Weaver, lf; Parker, Nemire, Hoffman, substitutes.

"Red" Wright will umpire. As has been customary for the past several years, it is assumed that all business houses will close and assist in celebrating the day. Game starts 2:30.

From 1909-1924 high school baseball was sporadically played by most of the schools in Putnam County in the spring, summer and fall. There was no definite plan for advancement to the spring OHSAA tournament in the early years; the games were simply played for the "fun of it".

Things started to change inconspicuously in 1925, when a Sunday School League was formed. The following teams were entered: Gilboa, Continental, Columbus Grove, Pandora, Bethel, Leipsic, Belmore and Grace. This league had two basic rules. Games could not be played

on Sunday and each player must attend Sunday school twice a month.

In 1928, Ottawa SPPS, coached by John Krull, was having a good season with a record of 5-0. The Trojans issued a challenge to the rest of the teams in Putnam County to play them for the championship. If no one would play them, they were going to declare themselves the Putnam County champions. This clearly indicates that there was no organized league or playoff system in place at that time.

During this time period, many teams considered dropping baseball due to the difficulty in playing games because of the cold and wet spring weather. The primitive baseball fields of the day contributed to this fact. A baseball field could take several days to dry out properly whereas today's fields can be ready to play within hours.

Inflexible scheduling didn't help solve the problem of rainouts. It was common for schools to only schedule one game per week. As a result, if it was rained out, no games were played that week. It wasn't until the 1970's that schools started to schedule multiple games per week.

In 1929, two events occurred which lead to the development of the PCL for baseball. The first was the formation of a baseball league in the area for high school teams from Auglaize, Putnam and Allen County (APA). Vaughnsville was the only PC team that played in this league. Other teams that were mentioned are as follows: Gomer, Spencerville, Elida, Lafayette, Waynesfield, Shawnee, and Harrod. The league was divided into two divisions, East and West. A playoff would determine the league winner. Vaughnsville was in the Western Division. In 1929 Vaughnsville defeated Lafayette, the Eastern Champs and in 1930, Vaughnsville defeated Harrod, the Eastern Champs for the APA Championship.

The second event was more of a problem than an event. Previous to 1929, there was no specific way for the baseball teams in Putnam County to advance to the State Tournament. There was no league or tournament play to pick the advancing teams. That spring, the administrators of the PCAA determined that the winner of the Leipsic and Ottawa SPPS game would go. The PCS reported that Ottawa SPPS lost 3-1 to Kunkle in the District Tournament.

## The Beginning of the PCL

It was obvious to the administrators of the Putnam County schools that some method had to be put in place for determining which school or schools should advance in tournament play towards the State Tournament. Basketball had been using a tournament format since 1924, but baseball, due to weather and poor facilities,

# High School Baseball in Putnam County

sometimes played very few games. It was difficult to get the necessary practices and games in to be a formidable force in tournament play. Baseball had not caught on with fans of the communities as basketball had. Baseball was meant to be played in the summer in Northwestern Ohio.

In basketball, the PCAA used a league format for determining its PCL champion and a tournament format for determining its representative to the OHSAA Tournament. Thus, a team could win the PCL but not represent PC in the OHSAA Tournament if it didn't place in the top two or three spots in the PCT.

A combination of methods was used for baseball. From 1931-1964, the OHSAA State Tournament representative from Putnam County was chosen from either a league or a tourney format. Usually the top two teams would advance to the District, sometimes only one. The District winner would advance to the State Tournament. This method of advancement was in place until the late 1940's. In the 1950's, the Regional Tournament was put in place after the District Tournament. In 1964 the county tournaments were ended throughout the state and a Sectional Tournament of play was put in place.

The league format has been used from 1931-1942, 1946-1948, 1953-1955 and 1965 to the present. Previous to 1965, the county was usually split into two divisions, East and West. Teams were geographically assigned to a Division. The two divisional winners would have a playoff to determine the PCL Champion and the District Representative. In most of the years, both divisional winners would advance.

In the earlier years, there were a few times in which the league was not split and the winner was determined by the best winning percentage.

A tournament setup was used for 1943-1945, 1949-1952 and 1956-1964. The number of entered teams ranged from 9-12 teams each year. The schools would draw randomly into the brackets without seeding. The only change from this set up was in 1944 and 1945 when the county was split into four sections and the teams were put into the brackets based on geography.

There was one major difference between basketball and baseball in determining the PCL Champion previous to 1964. Basketball had a PCL champion based only on league play. Its OHSAA representative was determined by the PCT. In baseball, the winner of the league or PCT was the PCL Champion and the OHSAA representative.

In 1965, the OHSAA ended county tournaments and went to the tournament set ups which we still use today.

## The 1<sup>st</sup> PCL Season in 1931

The PC Track and Field Meet had been run by the administrators since 1920, but there was no organized league for baseball or basketball.

The first baseball league that was organized and run by the PCL was formed in 1931. Crawfis College, Pandora, Columbus Grove, Vaughnsville, Ottawa Public, Ottawa SPPS, Palmer and Leipsic were the teams in this inaugural season. Glenn Hilty of Pandora was elected president, Homer G. Jones of Vaughnsville Vice-President, and Supt. Dale Rikard of Crawfis was chosen secretary. A complete schedule was printed in many of the county newspapers. The first rules governing the league were as follows: (1) Each team shall play one round of games in the league. Schools desiring to do so may play additional games but only those listed on the official schedule shall count in league standing. (2) If two teams have tied for first place at the close of the season, the schools concerned shall mutually agree and select a time and a neutral field for an extra game. If more than two teams tie for first place they shall draw for the extra games necessary to decide the league winner. (3) Seven innings shall constitute a complete league game and four innings a complete game in case of rain or otherwise. (4) Each team shall have an official umpire, the visiting umpire being the official umpire for the first inning and alternating from then on. (5) The home team shall notify the visiting team by 12 o'clock noon in the day of the game if for some reason the game cannot be played. If the home team fails to do this, the visiting team shall decide whether the game is to be played or not. The above refers especially to wet grounds and rain. (6) All postponed games shall be played on the following Tuesday at the time and place originally scheduled for. (7) All league games shall be called promptly at 3:30 p.m. (8) The Spalding 1931 official Baseball Rules shall govern all games. (9) In case of a protest game it must be filed with the President not later than forty eight hours after the game and must be written stating the reason. Games may not be protested on decisions involving judgment of umpire. (10) The Repp No. 1 Baseball was adopted as the official ball of all league games. The home team shall furnish two new balls to start the game. (11) The winner of the league is to be presented a trophy by the B.F. Repp Co. (12) All teams shall stand their own expenses.

Vaughnsville, with a 7-0 record, won the first PCL baseball championship in 1931. Vaughnsville's coach that year was Homer G. Jones.

## The PCL from 1932-1952

The 1932 baseball league was split into two divisions, East and West. The four schools in the East, Crawfis College, Leipsic, Ottawa SPPS and Pandora, played a

# High School Baseball in Putnam County

double round. The five schools in the West, Columbus Grove, Fort Jennings and Kalida, Ottawa Public and Vaughnsville, played a single round. The two champions, Ottawa SPPS from the East and Vaughnsville from the West, then had a playoff to determine the PCL Champion. Vaughnsville defeated Ottawa SPPS 9-4 to win its 2<sup>nd</sup> consecutive PCL championship.

The 1933 PCL for baseball was tweaked again. When Ottoville joined the league, it was put in the West division with Fort Jennings, Kalida, Ottawa Public and Vaughnsville. Columbus Grove was removed from the West and put in the East with Crawfis College, Leipsic, Ottawa SPPS and Pandora. With the addition of Ottoville to the league, both divisions played a single round. In the East division, Columbus Grove and Leipsic tied with a 3-1 record. Columbus Grove defeated Leipsic 12-2 in a playoff game. Vaughnsville, the Western division champion, then lost to Columbus Grove 4-2 in the championship game. Columbus Grove, the PCL champion, then went on to lose to Delphos Jefferson, in the District Finals.

The PCL's format was changed again in 1934. Since Crawfis College, Ottawa Public, Ottawa SPPS and Ottoville did not field teams, the six remaining league teams played a single round. Columbus Grove won the PCL with a 5-0 record.

The PCL format for baseball in 1935 was changed again for the 4<sup>th</sup> consecutive year. It was split into two divisions, East and West. Pandora won the East and Vaughnsville won the West. Pandora defeated Vaughnsville in the playoff game 3-2 to win the PCL Championship.

The 1936 PCL format stayed the same as in 1935, two divisions with a playoff. Vaughnsville, the West winner, defeated Columbus Grove, the East winner, in the playoff game 3-1 to win the PCL championship.

The two divisional, playoff format was used again in 1937. However, no divisional winners could be found. Thus, the PCL champion of 1937 has not been determined.

In 1938, 11 county baseball teams participated in the PCL. Kalida, the West winner, defeated Glandorf, the East winner, by a score of 6-4.

The 1939 PCL was split again into two divisions with Crawfis College winning the East and Kalida the West. Kalida won the playoff game over Crawfis College to win its 2<sup>nd</sup> consecutive PCL championship.

In 1940, 12 baseball teams participated in the PCL. The East division consisted of the following 6 teams:

Blanchard, Columbus Grove, Glandorf, Leipsic, Ottawa SPPS and Pandora. Since Glandorf, Columbus Grove and Leipsic were tied, two playoff games were necessary. Leipsic defeated Glandorf and then Columbus Grove to win the East. Kalida, the West winner, defeated Leipsic 8-1, to win the 1940 PCL championship. Kalida also won the District Finals to qualify for the State Tournament. They lost the first game to Colerain 4-2. This was the first Putnam County baseball team to qualify for the State Tournament.

The 1941 PCL was divided into two divisions with Leipsic winning the East division and Vaughnsville the West. Vaughnsville defeated Leipsic 8-1 in the playoff game to win the 1941 PCL championship.

In 1942 12 teams played in the PCL, 6 in each division. In the West division, Kalida and Vaughnsville tied with Vaughnsville winning the West playoff game. In the East division, Blanchard, Leipsic and Ottawa SPPS tied. Ottawa SPPS defeated Leipsic and then lost to Blanchard, the East winner. Vaughnsville defeated Blanchard to win the PCL championship. The Vikings then won four games to win the District Tournament and qualify for the State Tournament. Vaughnsville won one game at the State Tournament, but lost to Cincinnati Reading 10-0. This was the second team from Putnam County to get to the State Tournament.

## PCL Tournament to Decide the Champion

In 1943, a completely new format was put together by the PCAA to determine a baseball PCL champion. It was decided not to play a league schedule and hold a playoff tournament. This was basically a 10 team single-elimination tournament. Vaughnsville defeated Leipsic 4-0 in this PCLT to qualify for the District Tournament. World War II seemed to be the main reason for this dramatic change in format.

The PCLT in 1944 and 1945 was expanded to 12 teams. The county was divided into four districts based on geography rather than a random drawing. Vaughnsville won the 1944 PCLT by defeating Kalida 10-3 to qualify for the District Tournament.

In 1945 Vaughnsville was again in the championship game, but lost the PCLT to Kalida 13-5.

## Divisional Playoffs to be Used Again

From 1946-1948, the PCL went back to the two divisional, playoff system that had been used in the past. In 1946, Columbus Grove, the East winner, defeated Kalida, the West winner, 10-6.

# High School Baseball in Putnam County

In 1947 weather caused havoc with the league schedule and the PCL champions were not determined until the fall of 1947. In the East division, Columbus Grove and Pandora tied. Columbus Grove won the playoff game 5-0 to win the East. The West division could not be determined before the District Tournament was to start so the PCAA decided that Continental and Columbus Grove would go on to the District. Later in the spring, Miller City defeated Continental to win the West division. Since Columbus Grove and Miller City could not play that spring, it was decided by the PCAA that they would share the PCL Championship. This was the first of many shared championships over the years.

In 1948, Blanchard was the East winner and the PCL Champion. The West winner and playoff opponent could not be determined.

## Back to the PCL Tournaments

From 1949-1952, the PCL went back to the tournament format for determining its league baseball champion. The brackets were determined by random drawing again. Miller City defeated Blanchard 2-1 to win the 1949 PCL Championship.

The 1950 PCLT was won by Ottoville when they beat Miller City 13-5. The 1950 PCLT was played at two sites, Kalida and Columbus Grove. A unique feature of the tournament was that the games were played under the lights with double headers starting at 7:00 pm.

Fort Jennings defeated Continental 2-1 to win the 1951 PCL Championship. Continental and Fort Jennings met in the PCLT finals again in 1952. Continental won 1-0.

## Fall Baseball

The first reported fall high school baseball game was in 1913 between Continental and Leipsic. The game ended in an 8-8 tie.

The next recorded teams were in 1919. Continental was coached by Bert Mull and Leipsic by Harry Kerns. Columbus Grove and Vaughnsville also participated.

In 1923, Columbus Grove's entire schedule was found. They finished with a 4-3 record and were coached by Earl Smith.

In 1924, a wild game was played between Kalida and Palmer in which Kalida won 41-11. Palmer was coached by Joe Windle.

From 1925-1936 games are reported every year. The schools would schedule 3-5 games a fall and would play as many as the weather permitted. Schools that had football usually did not participate in fall baseball.

In 1937, eight schools played 3-6 games in Putnam County. They were as follows: Columbus Grove, coached by Willard Schaller; Continental, coached by Harold Fasig; Crawfis College, coached by Ira Benedict; Fort Jennings; Glandorf, coached by H. J. Benning; Kalida, coached by Don Lowell; Vaughnsville, coached by Galen Williams. In the spring of 1938, Leipsic, Pandora and Ottawa SPPS also played. As was the custom at that time, Leipsic and Pandora did not play fall baseball because they were already playing football.

In the 1940's, the schools were playing as many fall baseball games as spring games. As a result, the PCAA decided that it was necessary to organize fall baseball and incorporate it into the PCL.

## Fall PCL Baseball League 1951-1964

During this time period, fall baseball was officially brought into the PCL. Many of the high school teams played baseball in the fall since the early 1900's, but in the fall of 1951 the PCAA formed a fall league. All of the county teams played except for the football schools, Columbus Grove, Leipsic and Pandora-Gilboa. This fall league ran for 14 years from 1951-1964.

The league format was similar to the spring in that there were two divisions and a playoff to determine the champion. Continental and Fort Jennings were the top two teams with Continental winning the playoff game 7-0 to win the 1<sup>st</sup> PCL championship for fall baseball in 1951.

From 1952-1954, the Fall PCL went to a one divisional format. The PCL Champion was determined by the highest winning percent. Kalida, Ottawa SPPS and Fort Jennings won each of these years respectively.

From 1955-1958, the Fall PCL went back to the two divisional format. In the fall of 1955, a PCL champion was not able to be determined due to a five-way tie. After several playoff games, Ottoville was declared a Divisional A winner and was to play Continental, the Divisional B winner. This playoff game did not take place, thus Ottoville and Continental were declared Co-Champions of the fall PCL Championship. Continental won the PCL Championship outright from 1956-1958.

From 1959-1964, the Fall PCL went back once again to the one divisional format. Continental won in 1959, Fort Jennings in years 1960, 1962, 1963, Glandorf in 1961 and Ottoville won the last season's PCL Championship in 1964.

# High School Baseball in Putnam County

## The End of Fall Baseball

The PCAA ended its association with fall baseball in 1965. Fort Jennings, Kalida and Ottoville were the only three PC teams to play fall baseball in 1965.

Some schools continued to play baseball in the fall and in 1971 it seemed to be getting stronger with five PC teams playing. Kalida played 10 games.

In the fall of 1972, six schools were playing baseball. Ottoville had the best record at 4-0 and was coached by Dick Kortokrax.

However, in 1973 only three teams had fall baseball and only a few games were played.

No schools fielded a baseball team in the fall of 1974. Fall baseball ended due to the formation of other teams such as golf, cross country and soccer. Organized high school summer baseball (ACME) was getting stronger and, as a result, the push for fall baseball was over.

In the early 2000's, many fall baseball teams were started up again, but the players came from many different schools. Since it is against OHSAA rules for a school to field a fall baseball team, it is unlikely that this type of baseball will ever be seen again.

## PCL Tries a Combination of League & Tourney Play in 1953

In the spring of 1953 the administrators of the PCAA tried yet another method for determining the PCL champion and District representatives. They devised a combination format of league and tournament play. The 11 PC baseball teams were first put into two divisions. League play would determine the top two teams in each division. The 1<sup>st</sup> place teams would play the 2<sup>nd</sup> place teams in the other division. These two winners would then have a playoff game to determine the PCL Champion. Both teams would also move on to the District Tournament. Columbus Grove and Ottawa SPPS were the top two teams from the East. Kalida and Ottoville were the top two teams from the West. Columbus Grove and Ottawa SPPS defeated both the West teams. Columbus Grove beat Ottawa SPPS 5-1 to win the PCL Championship of 1953.

Ottawa SPPS won the 1953 PCL fall baseball championship with a 5-0 record. The same league format as last year was used to determine a winner, one division and highest winning percentage

The 1954 PCL spring setup was the same as the year before. League play would determine the top two teams in each division. The 1<sup>st</sup> place teams would play the 2<sup>nd</sup>

place teams in the other division. These two winners would then have a playoff game to determine the PCL Champion. Both teams would also move on to the District Tournament. Kalida defeated Ottawa SPPS 2-0 to win the PCL Championship in 1954.

1955 was the last year for the two-divisional setup for the PCL in spring baseball. Columbus Grove defeated Fort Jennings 3-0 to win the PCL.

## PCLT to be Tried Again

1956 was the first year for the tournament format for determining the spring PCL Champion since 1952. This same format would be used from 1956-1964. Columbus Grove and Continental dominated this time period by winning 7 of the 9 PCLT Championships.

“Fred Bremer, Vaughnsville’s coach and the PCAA President, explained that in going back to tournament play it would be easier to determine the district tournament entrants. In past years the coaches felt that league play was a more fair method of determining county champions, but they have always run into trouble with the weather and many of the league games were often missed before the district tournament.

A quote in the PCS from a coach summed up the feeling of many coaches concerning high school baseball at that time. He said “Most coaches are concerned about their pitcher’s arms, they are not expecting much brilliant play in the tournament and some are entering the tournament only as a matter of formality.” This indifferent attitude about high school baseball continued until the mid 1970’s when high school baseball moved to another level of competitiveness.

## Current PCL Change Put in Place

In 1965, the spring baseball league for the PCL was set up in a one-divisional format as is still used today. All the current Putnam County teams participated except for Pandora-Gilboa. Ottawa-Glandorf won the 1965 PCL Championship with a 7-0 record.

Ottawa-Glandorf participated in the PCL in baseball for two years, 1965 and 1966, winning it both years. Pandora-Gilboa, which did not field a baseball team from 1963-1970, rejoined the PCL in 1974.

## What to do about Ties

There was only one tie in the PCL from 1931-1964. When the league was in a two division format, a playoff would determine the champion. When it was in a tournament format, only one winner was possible also. However, a tie occurred in 1947. Columbus Grove and

# High School Baseball in Putnam County

Miller City were divisional winners, but they could not get their playoff game in due to the weather.

When the PCL went to the one divisional format, it did not have a tie breaking system in place. Thus, ties were acceptable.

In 1968 and 1969, the PCL ended in a 4-way and a 2-way tie respectively. In 1968, Columbus Grove, Fort Jennings, Leipsic and Ottoville had 4-2 records. This was the first and only time that four teams have shared the league title in any PCL sport. In 1969, Leipsic and Fort Jennings shared the PCL with a 5-1 record.

The PCAA decided to not allow any ties in the future. Head to head competition was to be used as the tie breaker. In 1970 Columbus Grove and Continental finished league play with identical 5-1 records. However, since Columbus Grove defeated Continental 4-3 in league play, Columbus Grove was declared the PCL winner.

In 1971, the PCL expanded to an eight team league with the addition of Pandora-Gilboa. Pandora-Gilboa had not played high school baseball since 1962. Under this format, Columbus Grove won with a 6-1 record.

In 1972, there was a controversial ending to the PCL. Columbus Grove and Continental tied with a 5-2 record and Ottoville had a 4-2 record with one game remaining with Pandora-Gilboa. Complications made it impossible for Ottoville and Pandora-Gilboa to play so the principals gave Ottoville a forfeit win, thus a 5-2 record also. A playoff system was put in place, but it was already in June. Continental refused to participate since they couldn't get all of their players ready for the game. Columbus Grove then defeated Ottoville 3-2 in the playoff game to win the 'official PCL Championship'. This game took place in late June. Continental added fuel to the fire by claiming themselves the PCL Champions. Continental's championship, however, was not sanctioned by the league.

In the spring of 1973, Leipsic and Columbus Grove tied with a 6-1 PCL record. However, even though Columbus Grove had defeated Leipsic in league play, head to head play did not break ties. A playoff game was played with Leipsic winning 8-3.

In 1975, Kalida and Ottoville tied with a 5-2 record. There was mention of a possible playoff to break the tie, but it didn't take place. Thus this was the first co-championship since 1969. The PCL ties in baseball were causing many headaches for the administrators of the PCAA since they thought that there should not be any ties.

In the fall of 1975, the PCAA changed the rules for ties again. In case of a two-way tie, the winner in head to head competition would be the PCL Champion. A three-way tie would be broken by a playoff system.

In 1976, Leipsic and Miller City tied with a 6-1 record. Since Miller City won in head to head competition, Miller City won the PCL. However, Leipsic went on and posted a 29-1 record to win the State Championship.

In the spring of 1979, the PCAA changed the rules concerning ties once more. There would now be shared championships again. The main reason for this change was that basketball had ties throughout its history. The PCAA was trying to be consistent in all of the team sports in the PCL. Thus, after 15 years of turmoil from 1965-1979, the PCL declared that there would be co-championships in baseball. This rule is still in effect today.

## Started in 1931 and Still Running

The PCL and baseball have coincided from 1931 to the present. It has progressed from an inconsequential number of teams playing baseball in Putnam County to one of the best small school leagues in the state of Ohio. The PCAA has adapted over the years to the many changes in tournament play put in place by the OHSAA. It has had to be very flexible in the league format due to the number of teams participating in the early years when as many as 12 teams played in the PCL. The league has been dominated by four schools, Columbus Grove, Kalida, Leipsic and Miller City, which have won or shared in nearly three-fourths of the PCL Championships.

## Putnam County State Champions 1976, 1977 and 1984

There have been three state championships won by a PCL team since high school baseball games were first played in Putnam County in 1910. Leipsic won the first one in 1976 when they went 29-1. In 1977, the following year, Miller City went undefeated with a 27-0 record to win the PCL's second consecutive State Championship. Miller City came back seven years later to win their second state championship in 1984 when they went 18-4.

## The Leipsic Vikings State Champs of 1976

The first baseball state champion from Putnam County was the 1976 Leipsic Vikings. This was arguably the best team to date to play the game of high school baseball in Putnam County. The Vikings which went 29-1 were coached by the legendary Ted Miller. Two of Putnam County's greatest baseball players on that team were

# High School Baseball in Putnam County

Rueben Gonzales and Denny Maag. Leipsic claimed the state title by defeating Cuyahoga Heights 6-5.

The 1976 Vikings were an amazing team. When Leipsic started tournament play, they were 16-1. They then coasted through the Sectional Tournament with out allowing a run when they defeated Patrick Henry 3-0 and McComb 8-0.

Entering the District Tournament, Leipsic was 21-1. Over the next days, the Vikings defeated Tiffin Calvert 7-1 and Toledo Northwood, 3-0.

After four more regular season victories, Leipsic defeated Columbus Grove 1-0 in the Regional Semi-Finals on a homer by Denny Maag. The next day, the Vikings jumped all over Sandusky St. Marys for three runs in the first and went on to win their first Regional-Final game 8-2.

Both games in the State Tournament were exciting and went down to the excruciating final out. In the State Semi-Finals, Leipsic went into the bottom of the 7<sup>th</sup> with a 3-0 lead, but Chillicothe Flaget scored two runs and had runners on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> with two outs. Denny Maag then struck out the final batter to preserve the win. The State Finals were just as exciting. Leipsic went into the bottom of the 7<sup>th</sup> leading 6-3, but Cuyahoga Heights scored two runs to cut the lead to 6-5. Denny Maag then bore down and retired the last three batters in a row to preserve the victory.

## Coach Ted Miller Looks Back at Magical 1976 Season

In 2001, the State Champs were celebrating their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary and Coach Ted Miller was interviewed by Gary Kreinbrink, Leipsic's current Athletic Director. Here is the entire interview.

**\*Now that 25 years have passed, how does winning the 1976 Class A State Baseball Championship rank in terms of your lifetime athletic achievements?** "Winning the state championship has to rank as #1. I've had teams that have exceeded my expectations, which is always very satisfying. However, nothing can compare to the experience of winning the state title."

**\*Was it a greater personal thrill to win a state title as a high school player in Pennsylvania in 1967 or as a high school coach in Leipsic, Ohio in 1976?** "I've always considered myself a very competitive person. I enjoyed competing as a player and still enjoy the competition as a coach. I would have to say they were very different but equally rewarding experiences."

**\*Going into the 1976 season, what kind of season did you expect in wins and losses?** "The 1976 season was only my third year in coaching. More than setting any particular goals, I was just trying to build a good program. I knew we had won 16 game in 1975 (16-5), and if we could improve on that we could have a pretty darn good year."

**\*Had your team set a goal of winning the state championship, or did it just happen?** "It just happened. Since it was just my third season in coaching, we were just working on establishing a solid foundation on which to build a successful program."

**\*After the 2-1 loss to Miller City, did you think your team was even the best in Putnam County, much less the State of Ohio?** "That's was just one of those games; we pretty much dominated the game, but they were good enough to win. Back then, our diamond had no fence in the outfield, and we hit three or four balls to very deep centerfield that would have normally been homeruns, but they played deep and caught them. I would never take anything away from Miller City, because they were a great team themselves."

**\*Did you have a magical feeling about the 1976 team as you entered the tournament?** "Going into the tournament, I was very worried about a possible district final against Northwood. We had played them in a doubleheader early in the season, and had won both games. I knew they were an excellent team and had the capability to knock us out."

**\*Was there ever a time during the tournament that you felt the Vikings were going to lose?** "In the district final game against Northwood, we were behind 3-0 in the fifth inning, and I could feel the game starting to slip away. We came back to tie the game, then won in the seventh when Denny Maag led off with a triple, the next two batters were given walks to load the bases, and Bruce Meyer ripped a base-hit down the left-field line to win the game."

**\*Leipsic carried some pretty talented players over into the 1977 season. What happened that season to make it different from 1976 and what prevented the Vikes from returning to Columbus?** "In the back of my mind I thought we had an outside chance to repeat with six returning starters. However, in 1976 we had three outstanding pitchers; in 1977 we had just one. When you make the trip to Columbus, especially that early in your coaching career, you always think you will go back again. However, things have to fall just right, everything considered, and it never happened that way for us again."



# High School Baseball in Putnam County

**\*Do you think that the 1976 Class A State title won by Leipsic made it any easier or had any effect on Miller City winning the championship in 1977?** “I don’t know for sure. I would assume, from a confidence factor that it definitely had to help Miller City. After all, they were the only team able to beat the 1976 state champions.

**\*What was the single-most aspect that you remember about the team which won the title in 1976?** “During the tournament four of our eight wins were by one run. You have to be good but you also need to have some breaks go your way and that’s what happened for us in 1976.”

**\*Was the 1976 team your most talented in all your years at Leipsic, or was it just the luckiest, or possibly the hardest-working team you ever had?** “I would have to characterize the 1976 team as a talented team that was hard-working, confident, unselfish, close-knit and they had tremendous desire to succeed. All they cared about was winning.”

**\*When you team got back to Putnam County and particularly the edge of Leipsic, what did you expect and then, comparatively, what did you see?** “I was pretty shocked. The bus ride back to Leipsic was actually pretty quiet, and some of the players even slept. When we got to Leipsic, I never expected the amount of people that were there to greet us. Both sides of the street were lined five or six deep. The reception we received when we got back was just amazing. I couldn’t even begin to estimate the number of people who were in town. The welcome home party in the gym was short and sweet, because all the people were uptown celebrating. It was a wild night, to be sure.”

**\*Since this season will be your last due to retirement, how important is it for you to reach 400 wins, since you now have 390, and what does that say about a coach?** “If it happens, it doesn’t mean that much to me personally, but I do think it’s a compliment to our program, and a compliment to all the kids who have played baseball at Leipsic. I never threw a pitch or hit a ball. I give all the credit to the players.”

## The Miller City Wildcats State Champs of 1977

Miller City, which finished 17-1 in 1976 when Leipsic won the Championship, realized it was possible for them to have the same dream. As a result, Miller City went 27-

0 to win the PCL and the State Championship in 1977. The Wildcats were coached by Dan Kern and led by two Putnam County greats, Dan Hermiller and Mark Niese.

The 1977 Wildcats were a mirror image of the 1976 Leipsic state championship team, great pitching, defense and hitting. In 1976, Miller City finished with a 17-1 record. The Wildcats only loss was to Kalida in the Sectional Tournament and Miller City was the only team to defeat Leipsic. Miller City easily disposed of Riverdale 8-1 in the Sectional Semi-Finals and was to meet Kalida again in the Sectional Finals. The Wildcats defeated Kalida 1-0 when Leo Schroeder singled with the bases loaded in the bottom of the 7<sup>th</sup>.

Miller City defeated Delphos Jefferson in the District Semi-Finals 6-3. Dan Hermiller, Mark Niese and Leo Schroeder hit consecutive homers to grab an early lead. John Lammers also had a bases loaded triple to score three more. The District-Finals was a breeze as Miller City outscored Allen East 13-3.

Miller City defeated Fremont St. Joe 8-6 in the Regional Semi-Finals and Northwood 5-0 to capture the Regional Championship. The Wildcats hitting was kept in check at the state tournament, but the pitching and defense was excellent. Lucasville fell 3-1 in the Regional Semi-Finals with Tim Schroeder getting the win with relief help from Mark Niese. The State Final game was won by Miller City over Versailles by a score of 4-2. In this game, Mark Niese got the win with relief help from Tim Schroeder. There were two big plays in this game. The first one was a three run double by Mark Niese and the second one was a base running mistake by Versailles which ended an inning.

## The Miller City Wildcats State Champs of 1984

1984 was probably the strongest year for high school baseball in the history of Putnam County. Miller City went 18-4, shared the PCL with a 6-1 record, and won the State Championship for the 2<sup>nd</sup> time. This was also their 2<sup>nd</sup> straight trip to State. Ottoville went 16-2 and shared the PCL with Miller City. Ottoville defeated MC in league play 1-0, but lost to them in the District Semi-Finals 2-1. Fort Jennings went 17-4, but lost league games to Columbus Grove, Continental and Miller City to finish 4-3. In tournament play, Miller City defeated Fort Jennings 5-4 in the District Finals. In addition to these three fine teams, Columbus Grove finished with a 16-9 record and a NWC Championship. Leipsic also went 13-7 and lost to Northwood in the District Finals.

Each of these teams had great years and only the ‘whims of the baseball Gods’ decided the winner among these five fine teams.

# High School Baseball in Putnam County

In 1983, Miller City with an 18-3 record had an incredible tournament run and finished as the State Tournament Runner-Up. With Leroy Johnston and Jeff Hermiller returning as two of best pitchers in the area, the Wildcats were again looking for a possible trip to the State Tournament in 1984.

The Wildcats struggled in the first Sectional Tournament game when they defeated Pandora-Gilboa 9-6. The Sectional Final win over Cory Rawson was much easier, 9-0.

The District Tournament was a classic with Fort Jennings 17-3, Ottoville 16-1, Riverdale and Miller City 14-4. Miller City trailed Ottoville 1-0 until Roger Wenzinger hit an opposite field homer to tie the game and Leroy Johnston singled to win it 2-1. In the District Finals, Miller City met the Fort Jennings Musketeers and their ace Keith Norbeck. Fort Jennings. Miller City fell behind early 4-0 but came back to defeat Fort Jennings 5-4.

In the Regional Tournament Miller City defeated North Central 5-1 on a Thursday afternoon. Jeff Hermiller was overpowering as he faced 26 batters, giving up 3 hits, 3 walks and had 9 strike outs. The Wildcats next opponent was Northwood which had a blowout on Thursday. Since Northwood was able to save their ace pitcher for the game on Saturday, the odds were in Northwood's favor. However, the 'baseball gods' sent a rain storm through Findlay and rained out the game. Since the game was moved to Sunday, Jeff Hermiller got the extra rest he needed for another powerful pitching performance, 23 batters faced, 3 hits, 0 walks and 7 strike outs. Miller City won 5-0.

Miller City defeated Bethel 6-2 in the State Semi-Finals. Luck was again in Miller City's favor when Jeff Hermiller, who injured a finger on his pitching hand in a farm accident, was able to struggle through for a tough win. This set up the State Final game with Tuscarawas. It was a classic battle back and forth until the bottom of the 7<sup>th</sup> with a tie score of 3-3. With one out and Jeff Hermiller on first, Bruce Kreinbrink doubled to left field scoring Hermiller. However, something happened to Jeff as he was heading for home. He slipped and fell down as he rounded third. His agonizingly slow and stumbling trip to the plate made it excruciating for the Wildcat fans. But, he eventually got there and the Miller City Wildcats had won their second State Baseball Championship 4-3.

**Putnam County Regional Champs**  
**1940 1942 1976 1977 1979 1983**  
**1984 1985 1994 1995 2006**

## **The Kalida Wildcats**

### **\*District Champs of 1940**

In 1940, Kalida did not win a Regional Championship, but they did go to State. During this time period, the PCL Champion went directly to the District. The District winner would go directly to State. Kalida was coached by James Ferguson who won the West Division of the PCL and then defeated Leipsic, the East Division winner, to win the PCL. Kalida defeated four teams at the District Tournament. They lost to Colerain 4-2 in the first game in the State Tournament.

Thus, even though teams of this era did not play a Sectional or Regional Tournament as is done today, Kalida still had to win five games just to get to State. At the State level, it would have taken at least three more wins to win the State Tournament. This was Putnam County's first team to play at the state tournament.

## **The Vaughnsville Vikings**

### **\*District Champs of 1942**

In 1942, Vaughnsville went to the State Tournament via the same route as Kalida two years earlier. Vaughnsville, the West Division champs, defeated Blanchard, the East winners, 6-0 to win the PCL Championship. They then proceeded to win the District Tournament to qualify for the State Tournament. At the State Tourney, the Vikings lost their second game to Cincinnati Reading, 10-0. Stretch Goedde, the legendary basketball player, was an outstanding pitcher for this team. Vaughnsville's record was at least 11-1. It is not certain how many games they played that season.

## **The Ottawa-Glandorf Titans**

### **Regional Champs of 1979**

In 1979, Ottawa-Glandorf sent its first baseball team to the state tournament and the fifth team from Putnam County. The Titans finished the year at 14-6, losing to Trenton Edgewood 7-1 in the State Semi-Finals. Ottawa-Glandorf was coached by Dale Bruskotter and led by Jaymie Kersh .375, Ron Schmiedebusch .377, Keith Wolke .362 and Dan Selhorst .433 and a 7-2 pitching record.

# High School Baseball in Putnam County

## The Miller City Wildcats Regional Champs of 1983

In 1983, Miller City became the 6th Putnam County baseball team to get to State. The Wildcats won the PCL and finished as the State Runner-Up with an 18-3 record. Miller City won the four games previous to the State Finals by only one run. In the State-Semis, the Wildcats scored four runs in the bottom of the 7<sup>th</sup> to win 10-9. They lost to St. Johns of Cleveland 10-2 in the Finals. Miller City was coached by Dan Kern and led by All-PCL players Jeff Hermiller, Jeff Vennekotter, Jay Meyer and Dale Lammers.

## The Miller City Wildcats Regional Champs of 1985

In 1985, Miller City made it to the State Tournament for the 3<sup>rd</sup> consecutive year. The Wildcats finished as the State Coach's Poll Champion for Division IV with a 27-1 record. This was also the 8<sup>th</sup> Putnam County team to make it. They had three very close games in the District Finals and the Regional Tournament. Bruce Kreinbrink's 3 run homer in the bottom of the 7<sup>th</sup> won their Regional Final game against Edgerton, 5-3. The Wildcats lost their first game at State to Skyvue 9-8. Miller City was coached by Dan Kern and led by All-PCL players Leroy Johnson, Bruce Kreinbrink, Mark Lammers, Dave Warnimont and Tom Lehman.

## The Fort Jennings Musketeers Regional Champs of 1994

In 1994, the Fort Jennings Musketeers made it to the State Tournament for the first time with a 15-11 record. This was the 9<sup>th</sup> Putnam County team to make it to State. Fort Jennings finished the PCL with a 4-3 record. The Musketeers knocked off Miller City, Leipsic and Columbus Grove in their tournament run. They eventually lost to Steubenville in the State Semi-Finals 4-2. Fort Jennings was coached by Dan VonSossan and led by All-PCL players Ryan VonSossan, Dan's son, and Brian Schroeder.

## The Kalida Wildcats Regional Champs of 1995

In 1995, the Kalida Wildcats made it to the State Tournament for the second time with a 17-5 record. This was the 10<sup>th</sup> Putnam County baseball team to make it to State. The Wildcats which shared the PCL with Leipsic, eventually lost to South Central in the State Semi-Finals 5-2. They won two close games in the Regional Tournament by defeating Crestview and Edgerton by identical scores 2-1. Kalida was coached by Jim McBride and led by All-PCL players Chad Ehrnsberger, Kevin Smith and Ross Fortman.

## The Kalida Wildcats Regional Champs of 2006

In 2006, the Kalida Wildcats made it to the State Tournament for the third time with a 19-8 record. This was Kalida's third consecutive trip to the Regional. The Wildcats won the PCL outright with a 7-0 record, but lost to Newark Catholic in the State Semi-Finals 4-2. Kalida was coached again by Jim McBride and led by All-PCL players Ryan Hoffman, Brandon Recker, Aaron VonderEmbse and Player of the Year, Ross Guisinger.

## Dynasties of Putnam County

As the saying goes, "Every dog has its day". This is true is high school sports also. Nearly all of the schools in Putnam County has 'had its day' in being successful over a time period in baseball. Obviously, some of the periods are longer than others. Listed below are some of the outstanding periods of dominance each of these schools have had over the past century in high school baseball in Putnam County.

**Columbus Grove** had a successful 13 year run from 1970-1982. The Bulldog's record was 196-127. During this time frame, they won 3 PCL, 2 NWC, 5 Sectional and 3 District championships.

**Continental** had 2 successful runs. The first one was for 4 years from 1960-1963. During this period, they won 3 consecutive PCLT and 1 Sectional championship. The second one covered 4 years from 1970-1973. During this segment, Continental had an overall record of 46-30. The Pirates won 3 Sectional and 1 District Championship

**Fort Jennings** was one of the best teams in the area from 1980-1984. The Musketeers' record was 71-33 and they captured 5 Sectional and 2 District championships. If a few breaks would have gone their way, Fort Jennings could have made it to State three of those seasons. In 1981, the Musketeers, with Tom Bruskotter pitching, lost a two-run lead and the game to Crestline in the Regional Finals. In 1983, Fort Jennings with Keith Norbeck pitching lost 3-2 to Miller City in the Regional Semi-Finals. In 1984, the Musketeers, with Norbeck pitching again, lost a four-run lead and the game to Miller City in the District Finals.

**Kalida** had a great run from 1991-1998 with a record of 107-43. The Wildcats won 6 PCL Championships and placed 2<sup>nd</sup> twice in the 8 years. Their PCL record was an incredible 49-7. In addition to this, Kalida won 2 Sectional, 1 District and 1 Regional Championship. Kalida was also very successful from 2004-2007. The Wildcats won 76 games, 3 PCL, 4 sectional, 4 district and 1 regional championship. They are currently on another

# High School Baseball in Putnam County

good streak. From 2015-2019, the Wildcats have won 4 PCL, 4 Sectional and 2 District Championships with a record of 88 – 32.

**Leipsic** has had three dominating periods. The first one was from 1975-1978. During this time the Viking's record was 75-19. They won 1 PCL, 3 BVC, 3 Sectional, 2 District, 1 Regional and 1 State Champion.

Another amazing run was from 1995-2001, Coach Ted Miller's last 7 years. The Vikings had a record of 122-43. They won 4 PCL, 6 BVC, 5 Sectional and 2 District Championships.

Leipsic is currently on another good streak under the tutelage of Darren Henry. In the past 13 years, 2009-2019, the Vikings have won 4 PCL, 4 BVC, 10 Sectional and 5 District Championships with a record of 238 – 113.

**Miller City** was a very dominant team in the PCL as well as the state of Ohio from 1976-1993, an 18-year span in which they won 321 games and lost only 77. 85 of these wins were tournament games. From 1983-1985, Miller City won three consecutive PCL, Sectional, District and Regional Championships. Overall, the Wildcats won 10 PCL, 14 Sectional, 11 District, 4 Regional and 2 State Championships. The Wildcats had three undefeated regular seasons in 1976, 1977 and 1985 and they were also the Division IV Coach's Poll Champion in 1985. Miller City was blessed with 26 players that made 1st Team All-PCL and 8 of them were named as the Player of the Year. This was an incredible average record of 18-4 with 5 tournament wins per year for 18 straight years. The Wildcats were coached by Dan Kern during this period.

**Miller City** had another great streak under the tutelage of Dusty Pester. From 2009-2017, the Wildcats won 5 PCL, 8 Sectional and 1 District Championship with a record of 151-60.

**Ottawa-Glandorf** had a nice four year run from 1979-1982 when the Titans went 64-22. They captured one WBL, 3 Sectional, 2 District and 1 Regional Championship. Dale Bruskotter and Willie Selhorst each coached the Titans two years respectively.

**Ottoville** had a successful five-year period from 2000-2004 with an overall record of 85-31. The Big Green's PCL record was an outstanding 28-7. During this time period, Ottoville won 1 PCL and 1 Sectional Championship.

**Vaughnsville** dominated baseball in Putnam County in the earlier years. For 17 years, from 1929-1945, Vaughnsville won 9 league championships, 2 in the AAP and 7 in the PCL. In addition to the 9 1<sup>st</sup> place finishes,

the Vikings placed 2<sup>nd</sup> twice. In 1942, Vaughnsville won the District Tournament and advanced to the State Tournament where they won one game. Season scores and records are very sketchy during these years. Their overall, documented record was 83-23.