

# Stewart, Beverly join Hall of Fame

## Wompie Stewart always brought his ‘A’ Game

BY CHRIS EVANS  
PRESS EDITOR

If he could clone Wompie Stewart and manufacture football players, Pat Gates says he knows plenty of customers.

Gates coached Stewart for three years in high school, including the storied state championship season of 1985.

“Every coach wishes he had a bunch of Wompie Stewarts on the field,” said Gates, who is now officially retired from coaching, but still helping out at his alma mater Christian County.

Stewart and former Rocket David Beverly are being inducted into the Marion-Crittenden County Football Hall of Fame Friday night during a halftime ceremony at the Crittenden-Calloway football game.

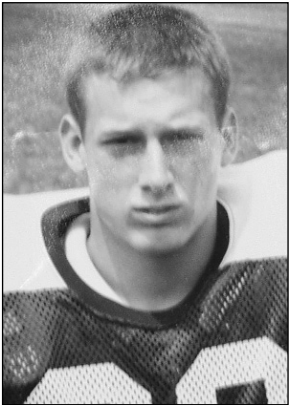
On the field, Stewart brought an immeasurable intensity that made him a brutal defender despite playing at 5-foot-10 and 175 pounds.

“Our high school program always listed me at 190 pounds, but I never was close to that,” said Stewart. “That was another one of those things that Coach Gates was good at.”

Creating a larger-than-life illusion may have been one of the tools in his coach's bag of tricks, but even Stewart admits that his senior year was a magic carpet ride. That season set a new standard for Rocket football which still lives today.

“It's been so long and the program is so different now. It's hard to remember what it felt like playing,” Stewart said. “Back then, Crittenden County was not expected to win. I think we were the first class to come along that believed it could win the game every time we stepped on the field. For 30 years prior to that, it wasn't that way. I think that was our team's and Coach Gates' contribution to the football program. Before 1985 the winning percentage was 22 percent. Since then, it's been 60-something percent. That's a big change.”

He may not have realized it back then, but Stewart was also establishing some personal numbers that would withstand time. He currently holds the single-season record for most tackles – 144 in 1985. Also, his 23 tackles in a single game against McLean County as a sophomore stands as No. 2 on the all-time list. Ironically, Stewart ranks second on the career tackles list although he's widely considered the most prolific defender of all time. Unfortunately, many of the sta-



Stewart in 1985



Stewart was one of the first to get his hands around the state championship trophy as the team celebrated at Louisville's Cardinal Stadium following the Class A victory over Paintsville in 1985.

tistics from his junior season were lost. Missing are about six games. Surely, if those were found he'd make up the three tackles he needs to become the all-time tackling leader in school history.

“Wompie never had the really big body like the college recruiters wanted, but he had the determination, skill and he was a terror on the field,” Gates recalled. “He was the same every time he stepped onto the field whether it was practice or a game. He always came with gas in his tank and ready to go.”

At the end of his senior year, Stewart had one college offer from a small school in Chicago. He didn't accept it, but needed a wheel-barrel to carry his other trophies, including two All-West Kentucky Conference selections, Third-Team Courier-Journal All-State, Associated Press All-State honorable mention and Evansville Courier & Press All-Area Team.

Stewart admits that he took the game very seriously. In fact, it's still a big part of his life. He's a little league football coach, is voice of the Rockets on WMJL-Radio broadcasts and wears his team colors every Friday. In fact, you can see his team pride by the message on his marquee in front of Wompie Stewart Auto Sales. It simply reads: “Go Rockets.”

If anyone ever bled blue, it was Stewart. Maybe that's why his intensity level was so high. He admits to feeling a bit guilty about accepting the hall of fame nomination because he knows so many others who deserve it, too.

“I just wish four or five others would be standing there with me. It's quite an honor that someone still thinks about me 25 years later,” he said.

“That's the kind of guy he was,” Gates said. “Everyone

admired Wompie. He was a coach on the field and a great motivator. He was a leader. His motor never stopped.”

Stewart played both ways and on special teams, virtually every down of every season from 10th grade until graduation. He was a guard on offense and linebacker on defense.

At one point in the 1985 season, injuries prompted the coaching staff to make some defensive adjustments. Because Stewart, the second fastest player on the team with 4.7 speed, could cover from sideline to sideline, the Rockets went to a rare 6-1 defense, making him the only linebacker.

Zac Greenwell, who joins Stewart and Mike Crabtree in the radio booth every week to call the high school games, remembers his former teammate as one of the fiercest players ever. The Rockets allowed just 7.38 points per game in 1985 and Greenwell said that is what made the championship season.

“We had a great year in 1985 because we had a great defense and Wompie Stewart was the heart and soul of that defense,” Greenwell said. “Not taking anything away from anybody else, he just loved to play the game. Heck, Wompie would get out there right now and play if they'd let him.”

### JOIN THE CELEBRATION

Family, friends, former teammates, current hall of fame members and fans are encouraged to join the new members at the hospitality tent set up on the east end of the football field prior to Friday's game and at halftime. The enshrinement ceremony will be conducted at halftime.

### Marion-Crittenden County Football Hall of Fame

Member	Year Inducted
Dwight Little	1998
Carroll Van Hoosier	1998
Frankie Head	1998
Curtis "Gig" Knoth	1998
Deller E. Woodall	1998
Orville "Soupy" Grady	1998
Woodson "Chuck" Rushing	1999
William "Gander" Terry	1999
Charles "Turkey" Hughes	1999
Jim Fred Mills	1999
Bob Swisher	2000
1985 State Champ Team	2000
Roy Conyer	2001
Houston "Hound" Elder	2001
Tom Johnson	2001
Pat Gates	2002
Robert "Hickie" Hicklin	2002
James "Burlap" McChesney	2003
Charles "Bill" Tabor	2003
Ronnie D. Moss	2003
Al Starnes	2004
Jerry Woodall	2004
Jimmy Hopper	2005
Josh Andrews	2005
Clinton Easley	2005
Jamie Champion	2006
Denis Hodge	2006
Chad Mott	2006
Wompie Stewart	2007
David Beverly	2007

## Beverly among greatest on offense & defense

BY CHRIS HARDESTY  
PRESS SPORTS WRITER

At a very early age, David Beverly had star potential written all over him.

As an eighth grader under former middle school coach Vince Clark, he had a pair of first-quarter touchdowns in a 32-8 victory against Ballard Memorial. Later that fall, Beverly tallied four touchdowns during a 32-8 blowout of Webster County.

But surprisingly enough, the modest Beverly was unaware of those statistics from his CCMS playing days.

"I don't even remember much about my eighth-grade season," he said.

Nonetheless, over the next four years, Crittenden County football fans would witness some magical moments from the leading rusher in school history with 3,911 yards and the fourth leading all-time tackler with 247 defensive stops. The CCHS graduate trails only Blake Gardner, Wompie Stewart and Von Summers in the tackling category.

Beverly's long, galloping gait was terribly deceiving. He was faster than he looked and tougher than anyone else on the field. That's why he was successful.

While playing at the JV level his freshman season, Rocket coach Al Starnes began to take note of his talents. Beverly earned MVP honors at that level at the end of the year.

After Beverly and his JV teammates defeated Reidland 30-0, the Rocket coach was quoted in The Press as saying "He was making his presence known all over the field."

Beverly began seeing some varsity playing time at linebacker that same season and was soon the starter.

Prior to the 1994 campaign, a summer storm damaged the lights at Rocket Field and Crittenden had only three home games that season, all of them played on Saturday afternoons. But the freshman linebacker was not about to let the unusual game day or starting time distract him in the first home game of his prep career.

Trailing Fulton County 25-9, he picked off a Pilot interception and returned it for an 86-yard touchdown, marking the first TD of a great varsity career. Despite eventually dropping that contest 25-17, Beverly listed that as the first memorable moment of his high school career.

"It is kind of ironic that my first varsity touchdown came on defense," said the new hall of fame inductee.

During his sophomore season, Beverly was moved from linebacker to safety to help shore up the loss of Nathan Boone, who tore both ligaments in his knee during preseason practice. However, that did not phase him one bit as Beverly intercepted four passes and recorded at least five tackles in every game that fall.

Offensively, his first 100-yard rushing effort at the varsity level occurred that same 1994 season in a 14-6 loss to Lone Oak as he ran for 106 yards. On two different occasions that year, he had a pair of three-game stretches of eclipsing the century mark in rushing yards.

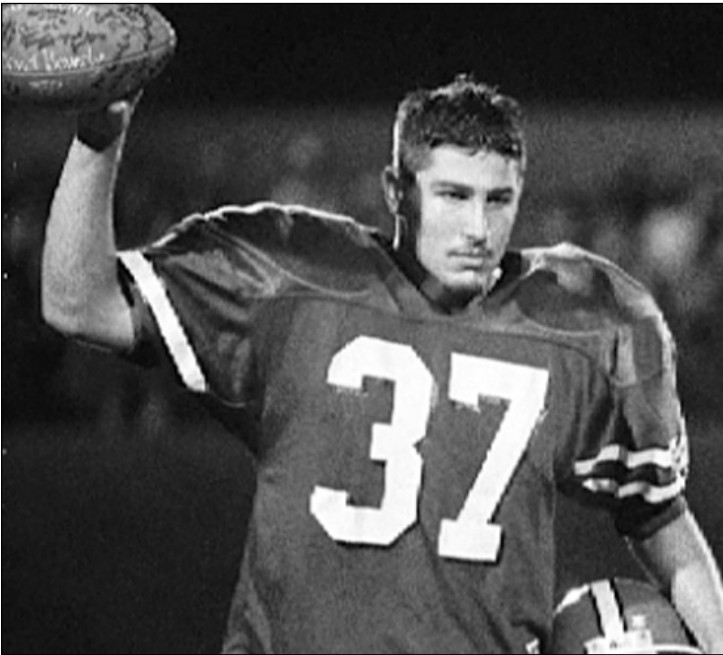
"I would have never gotten where I did if it were not for the guys in front of me," he said.

After finishing 4-6 in the regular season in '95, the Rockets had the large task of battling Class A kingpin Mayfield on the road in the opening round of the playoffs.

Despite coming up short on the scoreboard, losing 35-14 to the eventual Class A state champion, that contest holds fond memories to Beverly for a couple of reasons. Trailing 21-0 entering the second half, Beverly came around the corner on a sweep and took it 80 yards for a TD on the first play



David Beverly was a great runner, but is also among the top tacklers in school history. On offense, he rushed for more than 100 yards in 20 different games.



In the fourth game of his senior season, Beverly broke the all-time Rocket rushing record and was given the game ball during a brief ceremony at midfield.

round win against Ballard Memorial, he had 23 carries for 133 yards, ran for a touchdown and recorded 17 tackles. That team's 10-2 finish is tied for third for the best record in school history.

Unfortunately, Beverly and the Rockets' dreams of making a lengthy postseason run ended in the regional semifinal round the next week at Rocket Field with a loss to Todd Central.

"It was a real disappointment. I think we overlooked them," Beverly said.

Despite the setback, Beverly finished with 1,279 rushing yards while leading the team in tackles, recording 127.

Starting with an easy 56-3 thumping of Reidland his junior year, the Rockets began a stretch of nine consecutive regular season wins which stretched into '97.

Beverly became the leading rusher in school history the fourth game of his senior season by eclipsing Ronnie Moss' former record. A ceremony was held on the field to mark the event. However, Beverly suffered an ankle injury during a 41-12 win at Reidland and things were never really the same for him or the Rockets that season.

After the Reidland triumph improved its record to 5-1, Crittenden recorded only one more win with an unhealthy Beverly.

"It discouraged me quite a bit. It kind of bothered me more after the season," he said.

After the injury, Beverly had just 58 more carries for 195 yards. He was also limited defensively, recording just 10 more tackles after the setback.

The obvious disappointment to him was the fact that he was ineffective in helping the Rockets go after their second straight district championship.

Also an accomplished high school baseball player, Beverly played one year of college baseball at Shawnee Community College. Afterward, he spent four years playing semi-pro baseball for the Tradewater Pirates at Dawson Springs.

The 1998 graduate currently lives in Madisonville and manages Fugate Lumber Store in Eddyville.

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NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the regular meeting of the Crittenden County Fiscal Court will be held September 18, 2007 at 9:00 a.m. The meeting is open to the public.