

# WABASH VALLEY

P R O F I L E S

A series of tributes to hometown people and events that have shaped our history.

## Hezlep "Heze" Clark

**A**n All-Big Ten football player at Indiana University in 1906, Hezlep "Heze" (pronounced "Hez") Clark became a Hoosier legend as a coach and a journalist.

The 225-pound Indianapolis Shortridge product punished opposing tacklers on the gridiron. When he took over as head coach at Rose Polytechnic in 1908, he convinced his young athletes that no foe was invincible. Though rarely victorious, the Fighting Engineers' gridgers consistently performed well against powerful schools like Indiana, Purdue, Vanderbilt and Notre Dame. Clark also established a successful track program at Rose, perpetuating a tradition initiated by legendary Rose Poly athletes Arnold Layman and Paul Turk.



While he was in college, Clark began compiling an annual Indiana high school All-State football team and circulated his selections to newspapers throughout the state with an in-depth analysis. Others like the Associated Press soon followed suit, but Heze Clark All-State teams, usually four units deep, retained prestige. During the nine years he coached in Terre Haute, Clark first released the selections for publication to the *Terre Haute Tribune*. He and *Tribune* sports editor Ralph White developed a close friendship. After leaving Rose the first time in 1912, Clark worked as sports editor of the *Terre Haute Star* and later as sports writer, assistant sports editor and police reporter for the *Indianapolis Star*, *Indianapolis Sun* and *Indianapolis Times*.

In 1923 — after coaching a service team at the Great Lakes Naval Center during and after World War I — Heze returned to Rose for five years, coaching football, basketball and baseball and building the school's first cinder track. During a four-day stretch in 1923-24, Rose Poly's basketball team played Purdue, the Franklin College "Wonder Five" and IU; two of those games were on the road. Over nine years, Clark's career football coaching record was 24-47-2; his three-season basketball record was 23-24. He was succeeded by Phil Brown, another Engineer coaching legend.

Clark returned to journalism in Indianapolis in 1928, establishing a national reputation during Prohibition days and "the Dillinger era" for behind-the-scenes crime reporting. The Indianapolis police claimed he was a "one-man reference library." Yet he loved football, and until 1955 continued to attend games throughout Indiana to pick high school All-State teams.

Lauded as the nation's oldest police reporter while working for the *Indianapolis Times* in the 1950s, Clark died Aug. 31, 1956, at age 74. His wife Eva and son James, athletic director at Marian College and swimming coach at the Indianapolis Athletic Club, survived him. In 1993 Heze was an inaugural inductee in Rose-Hulman's Athletic Hall of Fame.

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