

A “Speedy” Addition to the EHS Hall of Fame

Dick “Speedy” Mayer was a force for Ephrata football in the 1950s and set eight schools records in track as well.

**BY RICHARD BYRD
of the Journal**

EPHRATA — Legend. That term tends to get thrown around a lot in the sports world.

There are a number of different ways the word can be defined, but when thrown around in conversations surrounding athletes it typically relates to the athlete in question leaving a mark on their sport or team/school or having a stellar career.

It doesn’t matter what definition you use when talking about 2022 Ephrata Athletic Hall of Fame inductee Dick Mayer, because he fits them all when it comes to Ephrata athletics.

A storied football player and track and field athlete, Mayer left a mark on Ephrata sports that remains there to this very day.

A humble man to his core, Mayer is honored to be a member of the EHS Hall of Fame and says his induction came as a surprise.

“I wasn’t expecting this at all. I always thought there was a lot more athletes from Ephrata that were better than I was,” he said. “I never gave it a thought really as far as being honored in this way. As far as any of my records from back then, I didn’t even know those were kept by somebody.”

Mayer is truly about as Ephrata as they come. Back in 1901 Mayer’s grandparents homesteaded the Sagebrush Flats property he and his wife Beverly live on today.

As a kid and later as a young man, a lot of Mayer’s time was devoted to the family farm. Chores had to be done before anything else, which helped Mayer develop a strong work ethic before he even entered the world of athletics.

There was no football program for non-high school kids when Mayer was growing up, so that put organized football out of his reach until his freshman year at Ephrata High School.

Sure, sports like basketball and baseball were around, but there was something about football and track that resonated with Mayer.

Back then sports media and the instant access of information wasn’t anywhere near what it is today either, where a TV channel like ESPN or a simple

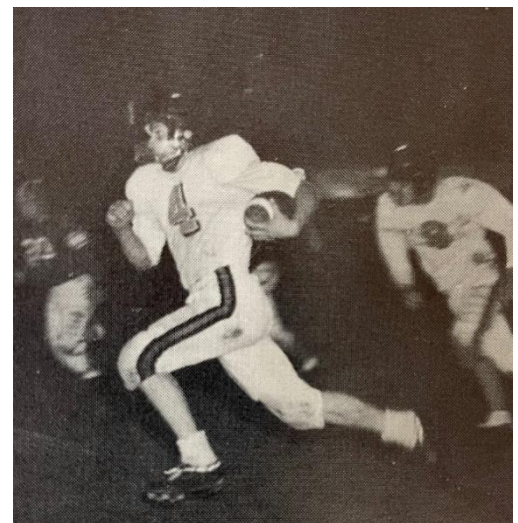
Internet search can bring whatever sort of sports-related information you need in an instant. Mayer didn’t have that.

“We didn’t really have opportunities to watch sports on TV or listen on the radio. The programming was a lot different from what it is today,” he explained. “There were a few sports magazines and I know I read a book on track one time, but that was pretty much it for me.”

When he entered high school Mayer immediately joined the football team and was on the “B” squad his freshman year and the team went 3-3.

He made varsity as a sophomore and the team notched five wins and four losses.

The Tigers went 5-3-1 Mayer’s junior year and 4-4 his senior year (1958), which earned them the title of North Central Washington “A” League champions.



As a wingback, Mayer’s reputation in the area grew due to his speed, which is where the “speedy” nickname comes from.

He is characteristically humble when asked if he was truly a speedster though.

“I guess I was,” he says with sheepish grin. “For a small school I guess I just had the opportunity and evidently had the ability.”

Mayer likes to relay gridiron stories and could go on and on for hours about his playing days if given the opportunity. As much as he likes to recall his football days, it is when he talks about his track and field days that the stories get more in-depth and passion laden.

That is for a good reason too. The record books from that time were no stranger to Mayer, as he set school and meet records in the broad jump, 220/200-meter dash, relays and hurdles when he competed.

That isn’t even mentioning the fact that he placed first in over 20 events.

Track and field athletes weren't limited by the number of events they could compete in and the sport certainly wasn't as popular back then as it is today, and the facilities reflected that.

"Quincy had a little better track than we did. At that time a lot of the tracks were still dirt. I think the only tracks around that weren't dirt were at Moses Lake and Wenatchee High Schools," Mayer said.

Things were just plain different for a track and field athlete in the 1950s.

Mayer said Ephrata would have maybe one or two carloads of kids at most meets and sometimes he had to drive himself to meets due to the school not having available transportation.

"In my senior year I drove to Spokane to the Central Valley Relays. I know I drove to Omak once and Moses Lake a couple times. They didn't use their buses like they do today. They had a couple cars and when those filled -up, you were on your own," Mayer explained. "They let the older guys drive themselves. You wouldn't even hear of something like that today I don't think."

One of the biggest differences between then and now is the training element. Mayer said football was more regimented when it came to training, but track was an entirely different story.

"You went out there by yourself and if you wanted to do calisthenics you did and ran around the track a little bit," he recalls.

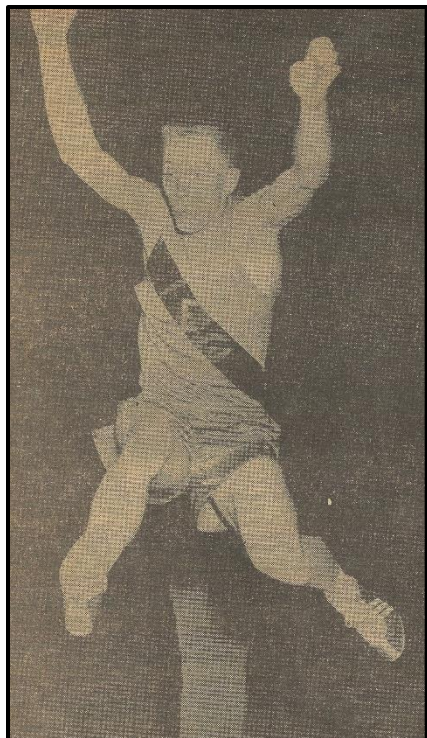
Mayer says he enjoyed his time as an athlete at EHS, but when asked if he ever considered playing in college his answer was quick and clear.

"No," he said with a stern shake of the head. "My interest was always the farm. We had two hired people and when I got out of school, we let them both go and so I pretty much did it all from there out."

Simply put; athletics weren't the end all be all for the young Mayer.

Mayer joined the local unit of the Washington Army National Guard 420th AAA Battalion when he was still a junior in high school.

The requirements for the National Guard were many back then, one of which was attendance at a two-hour training meeting every Wednesday night.



In 1959 Mayer spent time at the Fort Sill United States Armed Forces Training Station in Oklahoma for advanced individual training and vehicle and track maintenance training.

"I spent 10 years in the National Guard when it came down to it and I went to that maintenance school for six to eight months," he said. "Other than that, I have never left the farm."

Because he was the oldest son in his family and his dad and uncle had handicaps that kept them from being able to farm, Mayer was able to avoid battle due to his responsibilities back at home on the farm.

That was a good thing too, because Mrs. Mayer wouldn't have been too happy seeing her husband go off to war.

Dick and Beverly went on their first date Jan. 1, 1958 and have been together ever since, getting married in 1960.

Three kids and five grandkids came into the picture over the years, each of whom played sports in some capacity.

"Not one of them was a football player and not one of them ran track," Beverly said with a chuckle. "They played basketball, baseball, wrestling and mostly tennis."