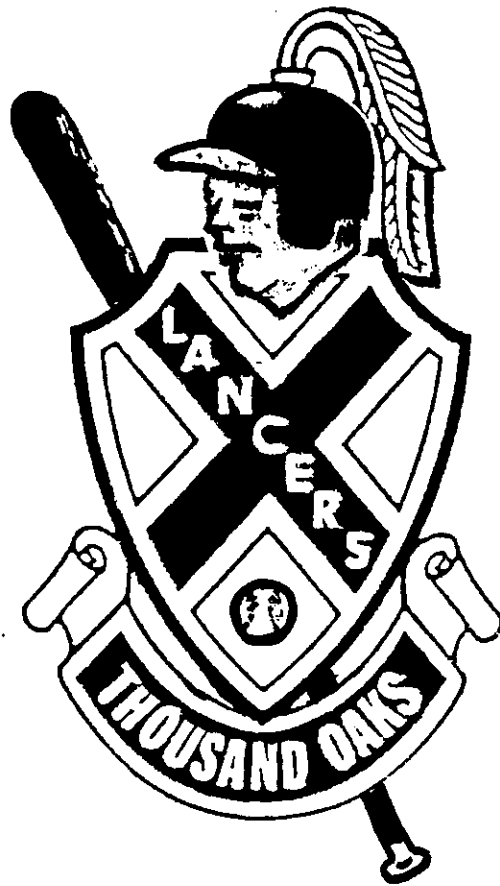


**25 YEARS OF LANCER BASEBALL  
1963-1987**



**BY HILBUR SKEELS**



**TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF LANCER BASEBALL**  
**The Story of Thousand Oaks High School Varsity Baseball**  
**1963-1987**

**By Wilbur Skeels**

**Price \$10.00**

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**1275 Hendrix Avenue, Thousand Oaks, California 91360**

# TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF LANCER BASEBALL

1963-1987

## WARM-UP (PREFACE)

Traditions have their positive uses, and high-school athletes can benefit from knowing that they follow in the honored tradition of the generations who preceded them. Also, old friends should not be forgotten. These are perhaps sufficient reasons to justify this small attempt to recover a piece of history - the first 25 years of varsity baseball at Thousand Oaks High School. Besides, there are some fascinating facts and wonderful memories to be gleaned and enjoyed.

Retrieving history is not an easy task. Trustworthy records are not easy to come by. We have consulted all the school year books, but found them to contain numerous errors. Some score books remain, but not all, and even those which do are not always easy to interpret. It is a real shame that the school's athletic department does not systematically file away scorebooks, newspaper clippings, statistical sheets, and rosters in properly protected archives. We have tried to reconstruct the data wherever possible but there are large gaps. A main source of information has been newspaper records, especially the News Chronicle and its predecessors. But the quality and scope of reporting has varied greatly from period to period. In some years many games went unreported. We have had to supplement by research in libraries at Camarillo, Oxnard, Ventura, Ojai, and Simi Valley, and in some cases, by letters to schools to ask them for details.

Our thanks to the coaches for their help and for allowing us to draw on their recollections. Any errors, however, should not be blamed on them! Corrections will be gratefully noted for future editions. We hope you enjoy the following pages. If you know someone who played varsity baseball at TOHS, please let him know about this modest history.

Thousand Oaks High School opened in the fall of 1962, so the story of Lancer baseball begins with the 1963 season. Twenty-five seasons are summarized in the following pages, finishing with the spring of 1987.

## 1963

Thousand Oaks High School opened its varsity baseball history on Friday, March 1st, 1963 with the team traveling to Camarillo High. Coach Jay Merrill, formerly on the Scorpion faculty, was welcomed back on campus with a 14-4 loss. Mathematics teacher John Davis was the assistant coach. (Ron Barney coached the JV's and Ron Loewe was the frosh leader). With only freshmen, sophomores and juniors enrolled in this first year of the school, it was difficult to field all three teams.

Team members included George Sipla, Bob Blais, Mike Dolan, Dan Nottingham, Roger Meade, Sterling Meade, Bill Fisher, Bob Hendricks, Dave Festerling, Bob Sage, Tom Giallonardo, Steve Hart, Joel Moody, Woody Mason, Steve Walker, Dave Sweet, Steve Neuenschwander, Richard Lopez, David Gates, Bob Greene, Ron Schmidt, Phil Riordan, Doug Quick, Bruce Wolfe, and Kirk Rense.

The varsity schedule for 1963 included Frontier League opponents (shown in capital letters) as well as a number of other schools. Dates are actual play dates as reported in the press, and may differ from schedules printed in the year book.

Mar 1	v. Camarillo	L	4-14
Mar 6	v. Crespi	L	3-9
Mar 8	v. Santa Clara	L	0-4
Mar 9	v. Harvard	W	3-2
Mar 15	v. Camarillo	L	1-15
Mar 19	v. Santa Clara	L	0-23
Mar 21	v. SIMI	L	5-6
Mar 22	v. Bishop Diego	L	1-4
Mar 26	v. NORDHOFF	T	10-10
Mar 29	v. HART	L	5-6
Apr 2	v. FILLMORE	L	5-13
Apr 4	v. BUENA	L	0-14
Apr 12	v. Chaminade	W	9-3
Apr 14	v. SANTA PAULA	L	1-11
Apr 23	v. SIMI	W	9-4
Apr 25	v. NORDHOFF	W	7-4
Apr 30	v. HART	L	4-10
May 2	v. FILLMORE	L	1-3
May 7	v. BUENA	L	0-16
May 10	v. SANTA PAULA	L	3-6

League record	W	2	L	9	T	1
Overall record	W	4	L	15	T	1

### Highlights

The Lancer's first win was against Harvard High (Sherman Oaks), in which Steve Walker was the winning pitcher. The Lancer's first league win was against Simi in which game Nottingham struck out 6, allowed 4 hits and no walks, and Giallonardo hit a 2-run homer. Roger Meade had an inside-the-park homer against Santa Clara. The tie with Nordhoff was in a game called because of darkness. Buena won the Frontier League championship in 1963 only to be eliminated in the first round of

the CIF playoffs. Nobody from the Lancers was named to All-League. Lefty outfielder Roger Meade was named Lancer MVP for the season.

Peter Toll, in an editorial in the CONEJO NEWS when the Lancers were 1 and 6, commented that they were having a predictably tough opening season for a new school, and added: "Baseball in high school is really a step-child. For the Little League and Big League there is much enthusiasm and good crowds. High school baseballers feel they have had a good day when as many as 30 people are sitting in the stands." It hasn't changed much in 25 years!

But baseball at all levels has its less glorious moments. In losing 16-0 to Buena, and assuring Buena of the championship, the Lancers committed a season-high 11 errors, prompting Cuzzin Conejo to ask, "Who do you think you are, the L.A. Dodgers?" The '63 Dodgers had a slow start too!

#### THE PIONEER - JAY MERRILL

Jay Merrill was the varsity baseball coach at Camarillo High School before coming to Thousand Oaks High in 1963 to start the baseball program. He graduated from North Phoenix High School where he played football and ran track, then attended Phoenix College for two years. He completed his BA at Northern Arizona University, where he was named all-conference halfback, also participating in the baseball program. Upon graduation he spent two years in the Navy, then returned to NAU for his MA in Education.

In the fall of 1967, Merrill was transferred to the new Newbury Park High School to coordinate athletic activities and become their new baseball coach. He left a fine record with Lancer baseball, including championships in both the Frontier and Channel leagues, advancing as far as the CIF semifinals in AAA play. Considering the difficulties of starting a new program, his record of 56-54-1 (.505 winning percentage) with the Lancers is remarkable.

Merrill retired from coaching in May, 1979, with a career record of 270 wins and 219 losses, and six league championships.