

MINERAL WATER BOWL HISTORY

The first Mineral Water Bowl was played over 50 years ago, on Thanksgiving Day 1948. A packed house watched Excelsior Springs High School defeat Mexico, Missouri, High School 48-18.

The four high school Mineral Water Bowls were a showcase for the local Excelsior Springs Tigers who appeared in the first three games. The Tigers even travelled to Chattanooga, Tennessee to appear in the Orchid Bowl in addition to their 1948 Mineral Water Bowl appearance. In 1951 the Missouri High School Athletic Association ended such strenuous schedules for high school squads by banning any post-season play that wasn't sanctioned by their organization and that put an end to the prep era of the game.

Heavyweight champion Rocky Marciano vacationed in Excelsior Springs in the fall of 1954 and a few months later the Mineral Water Bowl returned as a small college game. It kicked off a span of twenty two years when the bowl became a midwest institution that attracted great teams and some future stars to Excelsior Springs.

In 1957 the Mineral Water Bowl was one of only 11 sanctioned by the NCAA, in the same company with the Sugar, Rose, Cotton and Orange Bowls. Each fall the bowl was home to championship caliber teams from Michigan to Colorado to Texas and North Dakota. The 1963 Northern Illinois Huskies, led by quarterback George Bork, were voted small college national champions after their Mineral Water Bowl victory over Southwest Missouri State.

The 1959 American League Rookie of the Year, Bob Allison, played for Raytown High School in the 1951 game. Former Nebraska coach Tom Osborne (No. 31) made dozens of bowl appearances but his first was at the Mineral Water Bowl. He played in the bowl in 1955 and 1957 as the quarterback of the Hastings College Broncos and lost both games. All AFL safety, Ron Hall from Missouri Valley and the Boston Patriots played in the 1955 bowl and the first man to ever touch the ball on Monday Night Football, Don Cockroft, signed his first NFL contract on Roosevelt Field following the 1966 bowl. He was a kicker for Adams State and the Cleveland Browns.

Eric Brown of the Broncos is the only Mineral Water Bowl player to have played in the Super Bowl but Bob Allison (above) played in the 1951 bowl for Raytown High School and then appeared in the 1965 World Series when he was a slugging outfielder for the Minnesota Twins.

With more college football available on television by the '70's, crowds at the game began to thin. After the 1975 game the Mineral Water Bowl was cancelled and there was little interest in its return. Then in 1992 a reorganized Quarterback Club received National Junior College Athletic Association sanctioning for the Bowl to return.

The eight junior college games were terrific. The first three were decided by only two points and in 1997 Snow College defeated Coffeyville with a touchdown in the final minutes. In 1996, Blinn College made history by winning their unprecedented second consecutive NJCAA championship. Blinn became the last Junior College Mineral Water Bowl champion in 1999, defeating Fort Scott 29-20 in a cold, steady rain.

The switch to NCAA Division II competition in 2000 only increased the excitement of the game. Winona State and Missouri Western put on a tremendous show as the visitors from the NSIC finally overcame the Griffons in a 43-41 triple overtime classic.

Since its return in 1992 the Mineral Water Bowl has raised over \$90,000 that has been donated to athletic and academic activities for young people in the area.