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Pre-Poll Era State Football Champions Announced

The Associated Press has named state football champions since 1947 and the Ohio High School Athletic Association conducted the first football playoffs in 1972. Until now, however, the year-by-year state football champions prior to 1947 had not been published in one place. The explanation and list below is the work OHSAA historian Timothy Hudak, who combined his own research with that of several other historians.

Ohio High School Football State Champions Popular Acclaim, 1895-1946

There were no polls, and certainly no statewide playoffs, in the earliest days of Ohio high school football. If a sportswriter, newspaper or a group of them said that a team was the state champion, then that team usually was unless someone came along to challenge it. Quite often, too, a school that felt that its team was the “king of the hill” issued an invitation to any team from around the state that wished to challenge it on the gridiron for the state championship. This quite often resulted in some exciting last minute, end of the season games to settle the issue of who was the state’s champion that year. This system of a popularly declared state football champion remained in effect until the era of the AP and UPI polls, which began in 1947.

The following list of state champions from 1895 to 1946 was compiled by various high school football researchers, most notably James Baker. It is the most complete listing of recognized state champions before the advent of the AP Poll in 1947. Listed after each team is at least one of the authorities that declared the team champion. Also noted are teams that are recognized as National Champion.

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Ohio High School Football State Champions Popular Acclaim, 1895-1946

(PD – Cleveland Plain Dealer; JB – James Baker; SL – Simon Lyons; TH-Timothy Hudak; DRS – Dickinson Rating System; NSNS – National Sports News Service; DR – Fostoria Daily Review; BJ – Akron Beacon Journal; BT – Boston Transcript)

YEAR	TEAM	W	L	T	Authority
1895	Cleveland Central	3	2	1	JB, PD, TH
1896	Sandusky	5	0	0	JB
1897	None Named				
1898	None Named				
1899	Oberlin High School	4	1	0	JB
1900	Oberlin High School	5	0	1	JB, TH
	Youngstown Rayen	4	1	1	JB, PD, TH
	Cleveland Central	4	1	1	JB, PD, TH
1901	Youngstown Rayen	12	1	0	JB
	Toledo Central	Unknown			JB
1902	Fostoria	8	0	1	JB, DR
1903	Kenyon Military Academy	Unknown			JB
1904	Toledo Central	Unknown			JB, TH
1905	None Named				
1906	Fostoria	7	1	0	JB, DR
1907	Fostoria	8	0	1	JB, DR
1908	None Named				
1909	Massillon	9	0	1	JB, SL
1910	Fostoria	8	1	0	JB, DR, TH
1911	Fostoria	10	0	0	JB, SL, DR, TH
	Akron Central	8	0	1	JB, BJ, TH
1912	Fostoria	8	0	0	JB, DR, BT - National Champion
1913	None Named				
1914	Fostoria	10	0	0	JB, DR, SL, TH
	Bellaire	9	0	1	JB, SL
	Lisbon	9	0	0	JB, SL
1915	Fostoria	8	0	1	JB, SL, DR, TH
1916	Toledo Scott	10	0	0	JB, SL, TH, NSNS – National Champion
	Massillon Washington	10	0	0	JB, SL
1917	None Named				
1918	Toledo Scott	6	1	0	JB, SL
1919	Toledo Scott	8	0	1	JB, SL
1920	Canton McKinley	8	1	0	JB, SL
	Cleveland East Tech	9	1	0	JB, SL, TH, PD
1921	None Named				
1922	Toledo Scott	9	0	0	JB, SL, TH, NSNS – National Champion
	Massillon Washington	10	0	0	JB, SL
1923	Toledo Scott	10	0	0	JB, SL, TH, NSNS – Co-National Champion
	East Cleveland Shaw	9	1	0	JB, SL, TH, PD, NSNS – Co-National Champion
1924	Toledo Waite	10	0	0	JB, SL, TL, NSNS – National Champion
1925	Findlay	8	0	2	JB, SL, PD
	Steubenville	10	0	0	SL, TH, PD

YEAR	TEAM	W	L	T	Authority
1926	Steubenville	9	0	0	SL, TH, PD
1927	Cleveland Cathedral Latin	10	1	0	JB, SL, TH, PD
	Canton McKinley	9	1	0	JB, SL
1928	None Named				
1929	None Named				
1930	Lorain	10	0	0	JB, SL, TH, PD
	Steubenville	9	0	0	SL
1931	Steubenville Wells	8	1	0	JB, SL
1932	Toledo Waite	12	0	0	JB, SL, NSNS – National Champion
1933	Springfield	11	0	0	JB, SL
	Dover	10	0	0	JB, SL
1934	Canton McKinley	11	0	0	JB, SL, NSNS – National Champion
1935	Massillon Washington	10	0	0	JB, SL, NSNS – National Champion
1936	Massillon Washington	10	0	0	JB, SL, NSNS – National Champion
1937	Massillon Washington	8	1	1	JB, SL
1938	Massillon Washington	10	0	0	JB, SL, DRS
1939	Massillon Washington	10	0	0	JB, SL, NSNS – National Champion
	Toledo Waite	11	0	0	JB, SL
	Hamilton	9	0	0	JB, SL
1940	Massillon Washington	10	0	0	JB, SL, NSNS – National Champion
1941	Massillon Washington	9	0	1	JB, SL
	Martin's Ferry	10	0	1	JB, SL, TH
	Mansfield	8	0	2	JB, SL
1942	Canton McKinley	8	1	1	JB, SL
1943	Massillon Washington	10	0	0	JB, SL
1944	Cleveland Cathedral Latin	10	0	0	JB, SL, TH, PD
	Canton McKinley	9	1	0	JB, SL
1945	Cleveland Cathedral Latin	9	0	1	JB, SL, TH, PD
	Toledo Waite	10	0	1	JB, SL
	Canton Lincoln	7	0	3	JB, SL
1946	Cleveland Cathedral Latin	9	0	1	JB, SL, TH, PD
	Lima Central	10	0	0	JB, SL

1947 – Associated Press state poll begins: <http://www.ohsaa.org/sports/history/FT/FBT.AllTimeAPPolls.pdf>

1972 – OHSAA football playoffs begin:
<http://www.ohsaa.org/sports/history/FT/AllTimeStateTournamentResults.pdf>

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