For every successful program, there is a ruler by which all others are measured. For Placer High football, that would be the 1975 team that went 11-0 and captured the first Sac-Joaquin Section championship. Not only was the team undefeated, but that year the Hillmen manhandled their opposition, outscoring opponents by an average of 30 points per game..

For their exceptional performance, the team will be inducted into the PHS Athletic Hall of Fame on April 25 in a ceremony at the school's iconic Earl Crabbe Gym.

Building on a program that had finished third in the Sierra Foothill League the previous season, co-head coaches Bill Miller and Tom Johnson were anxious for the 1975 season to get underway and truer things around.

One thing they did differently was to make shaved heads a mandate, not an option. The year before, only about half the team got the buzz cut, and the season ended up with a disappointing third place finish in league play.

But they had a strong nucleus of returning players to build upon. There were top players on both sides of the ball led by quarterback Frank Pinguelo, running back Bob Bradley, wide receiver Randy Kennedy, and linebacker Scott Moeller.

By the end of the 1975 season, the offense, coached by Miller, had scored 397 points, an average of 36 per contest. The run-heavy team piled up 50 or more points on four different occasions, and Placer staked claim to the No.1 offense in Superior California.

Bradley and Kennedy finished first and ninth respectively in scoring in Superior California. Those two Hillmen, along with linemen Russ Phillips, Eric Hillebrandt, and Russ Neckles were named to the All-SFL first team offense.

Quarterback Pinguelo said that Miller was a great motivator. "He made average players, good, and made good players, great." Pinguelo had never played football before. "I was a basketball guy," he said. "But my two years of varsity football were the best time I ever had playing a sport."

At the same time, the defense, coached by Johnson, gave up only 70 points throughout the season. The Hillmen posted two shutouts, seven one-score games, and two two-score games. The most points allowed in any one game was 14.

Linebackers Moeller, Rick Priddy, lineman Dave Grayson, and defensive backs John Young and Kennedy made the All-SFL first team defense. Moeller was named the league Defensive Player of the Year.

In all, 17 Hillmen were named to the all-SFL teams including 10 on the first team.

Coming off the final SFL game, a 52-6 shellacking of Nevada Union, Placer faced St. Mary's of Stockton in the their first postseason game and posted an identical score against them.

The team traveled to Manteca for the Section championship and claimed the title with a 20-6 victory. There was no state playoff at that time. The team as a whole was confident all year long. Looking back on the season, Pinguelo said, "We were not even once concerned about losing."

Four members received All-Superior California honors from the Sacramento Bee.

— Bradley, Kennedy, Priddy on the first team with Neckles receiving honorable mention.

To cap the season, Bradley, Kennedy, Moeller, and Hillebrandt were selected for the North team in the annual Optimist All-star game and played key roles as the North won the game 21-14.

That season, players were awarded "Lip" decals attached to their helmets for outstanding hits. Seven players earned enough "Lips" to retire their helmets, led by Grayson's 66.

More than statistics, what the team provided was the standard for Placer football. In the process, Auburn became a Placer High football town.

The coaches introduced weight training, hard hitting, team meals, buzz cuts, and team-building fun skits that became routine for future teams.

Scott Ditty, a member of the 1980 team that is enshrined in the Placer Athletic Hall of Fame said, “We knew the 1975 team was the gold standard, and all we were trying to do was match their level of success and dominance.”

Ditty added, “The impact that the team made on Placer High, the town of Auburn, and the lasting legacy that has shaped Hillmen athletics cannot be overrated.”

The Athletic Hall of Fame ceremony will be held in the Earl Crabbe Gym on April 26. A reception will begin at 6 pm followed by the induction ceremony at 7 pm.

Tickets for the reception cost $25 until April 15, and $35 after, and are available online at placerathletichalloffame.org.

The 7 pm ceremony is free of charge to the public.