



WILLIAM "BILLY" BETHEL
Class of 1946

Voted the "Most Popular Male Student," this multi-talented young man was Captain of the basketball team (1944-1946), Captain of the baseball team (1945-1946), and started as a Defensive End on the football team (1944-1945). He was voted the Most Valuable Player in Basketball and Baseball (1945-1946) and he was elected President of the Physical Education Club. Coached by Edward Adams and Ross Owen, he was the team's highest scorer (1944-1945) in his position as starting guard forward. He led the Tigers to their 1945 SIAC Basketball Championship. This "Best Dressed Male Student" of 1945 - 1946 played on the baseball team as Catcher and Outfielder under the direction of Edward H. Adams.

William "Billy" Bethel continued his athletic career by becoming the first Black Coach hired at a predominantly White school in Tampa, FL. Bethel grew up in Cane City, KY and was accustomed to obstacles and hardships, so this was no big thing to him. He won the acceptance and respect from everyone; he coached eight boys who later made it to the pros and almost every Black Coach in Hillsborough County. While at Middleton for 24 years, Billy earned win-loss records of 551-88 (basketball) and 146-72-4 (football). He had 22 basketball seasons without a loss and 24 in football, and at the same time, he served as Athletics Director, Head Coach and Department Head for Middleton's Physical Education Program. Yes, he did it all!

An accomplished writer, Billy has been a Sports Columnist for the *Florida Sentinel* for seven years; he volunteers for speaking and singing engagements with churches, civic groups and other community organizations. He works with countless youth oriented groups, athletic organizations, and serves as a strong spokesman and advocate for Tuskegee Institute. He has helped more than 150 students secure college scholarships and, he has served as a continuous friend and mentor to some of his former high school athletes.

Considered to be the first high school coach in Florida to coach the T formation in football and the jumpshot in basketball, he was selected twice as the FL Football Coach of the Year, nine times the South West Conference (FIAA) Coach of the Year, and four times the FL Basketball Coach of the Year. He had teams to qualify for State basketball championships for 18 consecutive years, and won six of those. Considered the "Winningest Basketball Coach," his teams also played in nine national championships--runner up (twice), third place (once) and fourth place (once). Additionally, his football team won one State Football Championship, and former players John White (Oilers), James Sorey (Bills), Israel Lang (Eagles) and Carlton Oates (Chiefs) gained tremendously from his coaching. Others excelled to become high school coaches, and leading professionals in the medical, legal, and religious fields.

"William Bethel," says Henry Washington, was innovative and dynamic in the classroom and in his coaching, infusing his students and players with tremendous motivation and instilling in them an appetite to be successful. He aided without reprimand, corrected without disparagement, and taught by example."

Although heralded for his athletic wiles, prowess and wisdom, Bill has a delightful sense of humor; he is graceful and well-polished and a person of moral principal. What most of us do not know is that this man has a singing voice which could have put Placido Domingo and Pavarotti out of business!

Bill Bethel is truly a multi-talented man who is most deserving to be recognized in the Tuskegee Institute Hall of Fame.