

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Dr. J.W. Smith

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Illinois High School Association (IHSA) Oral History project

Interview # SIH-A-L-2017-083

Dr. J.W. Smith, successful football coach and former Director of Chicago Public Schools Sports Administration, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Sports Stories - IHSA Oral History project*.

Interview dates & location:

Date: Aug 19, 2017 Location: Green Line Coffee Shop, Chicago, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Philip Pogue, ALPL volunteer

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Interview being
processed

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 1:09 / 1.15 hrs.

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on September 29, 2017.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Dr. J.W. Smith, *Sports Stories -IHSA*, SIH-A-L-2017-083

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: J. W. Smith was born in Chicago, Illinois in July, 1937, and grew up in Chicago attending both vocational schools and Dunbar High School. While at Dunbar, Smith participated in both football and track. Upon graduating from Dunbar in 1955, he attended Chicago State University and then Northern Illinois University. While at NIU, he played on the school's football team, and saw action in the Mineral Bowl. The Huskies were named the number one college team in the nation in its division. Majoring in physical education, Smith returned to Chicago and taught and coached at three high schools, Harlan from 1963-1969, Kenwood from 1969-1974, and Julian from 1975-1989. J.W. coached football and track for each school. While at Julian, he coached very successful football teams which often competed in the Chicago Prep Bowl. This game, played at Soldier Field each year, was a major sporting event in Chicago prior to the establishment of the IHSA State Football Playoffs. Smith also coached many track athletes who won individual medals at the IHSA State Track Meet in Charleston. In 1989, Dr. Smith became the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) football coordinator. Then in 1995, he became the CPS Director of Sports Administration and served in that capacity until 2003. Dr. Smith earned his masters' degree from Indiana University in 1966 and a doctorate from the University of Illinois-Chicago in 1995.

This interview looks at Chicago Public League sports through the eyes of a former high school athlete (football and track) and successful football and track coach. The former sports administration director covered challenges facing CPS high schools, competition in the Prep Bowl, winning the Shield (an award for best team in that sport), creating a football program at a newly created high school, and developing underclass football programs. As the sports administrator director, he was involved in dividing the Chicago teams into various divisions based on geography and skill level, assigning schools to available stadiums, adding new high school sports, issues of residency/eligibility, and CPS's relations with the Illinois High School Association.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Chicago Public School sports; high school athlete in the Chicago Public League; Central Office Sports Department for Chicago Public League schools; CPS football coordinator; Chicago Public League Prep Bowl; coaching Chicago public school football and track

Note to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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