

## **BRIAN SWISHER - TOO FAST EVEN FOR FRIENDLY**

No wonder Friendly town officials shut down their once-famous speed trap in the late 1970s. They gave up trying to catch Brian Swisher.

After all, no one else in the area could travel 10.9 seconds in a 100-meter zone.

If C.R. Howdyshell brought the durability and tenacity to Sistersville's football turnaround, if Tommy Archer brought the arm, Brian Swisher brought the legs.

Swisher played in 36 games in his high school career for Sistersville, and he caught at least one pass in every one of them. (An Ohio Valley record, by the way.) Most of the time, he caught a lot more than one.

The first Sistersville football player to make first team all-state Class A for three consecutive seasons, he also was the first to win a statewide award - the Hunt Award for the state's outstanding lineman (He was all of 5-foot-7 and 140 pounds, but he was considered an end for voting standards.)

He probably should have won the Kennedy Award (which would have given Sistersville an unprecedented three such winners in a six-year span), but Petersburg High running back John Koontz rode a set of highly suspect statistics to the award instead. (A story for another day.)

He also was the first Sistersville athlete to win an event in the state track meet, the 100-meter dash in 1980. But only by a matter of minutes; teammate Joe Heintzman nosed him out in the 200-meter dash not long afterward. They ran side by side in

practice all spring, then, on a Saturday afternoon in May on the Laidley Field track in Charleston, they ran literally side by side down the stretch for just over 20 seconds to bury the rest of the field. Later that day, they led Sistersville's winning 400-meter relay team.

Swisher was the state's best wide receiver at a time when most teams simply don't throw the ball that much. But his numbers look more like those from the spread offense days.

He caught 26 passes for 582 yards and five touchdowns as a sophomore, when he had a state-leading 22.4 yards per catch average. He also had a punt return touchdown.

As a junior on a 12-1 team, he made a career-high 62 receptions for 947 yards and nine touchdowns. As the leading vote-getter on the all-state team as a senior, he made 59 catches for 1,009 yards and a state-record 15 touchdowns and also scored 12 other touchdowns on kick returns, reverses or planned runs. He scored 162 points and combined with running back Tim Henthorn for 320 points; the second most for a duo in state history (Kerry Marbury and Charley Miller of Monongah had 330).

For his career he made 147 catches for 2,534 yards and 29 touchdowns (just as a receiver).

"He's the best player in the state," coach Lou Nocida said. "He'd be the captain on any team in the state."

Swisher wasn't able to repeat his 100-meter dash crown, finishing second as both a junior and a senior. He was second again in the 200 in 1981 and third in 1982. He was second in the long jump in both 1981 and 1982.

Swisher went on to be a multi-year starter at Marshall University, catching 106 passes for 1,617 yards and 14 touchdowns in three seasons.

And the Friendly speed trap still hasn't caught him.

# Friendly Flash

## Is Brian Swisher For Real?

Is Brian Swisher real, or is he another Marvel Comics creation? At times I wonder. Sure, I know he's a lot like a real person. He walks, talks, uses Close-Up toothpaste in hopes of good-night kisses, attends Sistersville High School and occasionally has to apply pimple cream. The problem is he's also a lot like Spider-Man, The Incredible Hulk and all the other comic book superheroes.



Chuck Landon

Just think about it a moment. Swisher is only a 5-7, 140-pound teenager, yet he does things no one — at any size — has done on a West Virginia football field. He has the infectious grin and tossed brown hair of an urchin combined with the face and bulk of a cherub, yet he's feared throughout the state. He looks more like a member of the Vienna Boys Choir than the Sistersville Tigers, yet he has scored 26 touchdowns.

Does that sound believable to you? It doesn't to me.

I can just as easily believe a radioactive spider could bite a young man and endow him with the ability to stick to walls and spin webs.

And Swisher's home town doesn't do anything to dispel his comic book characteristics, either.

Superman had Metropolis, Batman had Gotham City and Swisher . . . brace yourself . . . has Friendly. That's right, folks, he's from Friendly, W. Va.

Why, he even has an alter-ego. Clark Kent is Superman, Peter Parker is Spider-Man and David Banner is The Hulk. Well, Brian Swisher is . . . The Friendly Flash.

You're starting to see my point, aren't you?

The fact of the matter is, Brian Swisher has become part legend, part person. And that just might be as big of an advantage as hisizzling speed.

The Friendly Flash' brings so much psychological anguish to a defense, it's beleaguered before it begins.

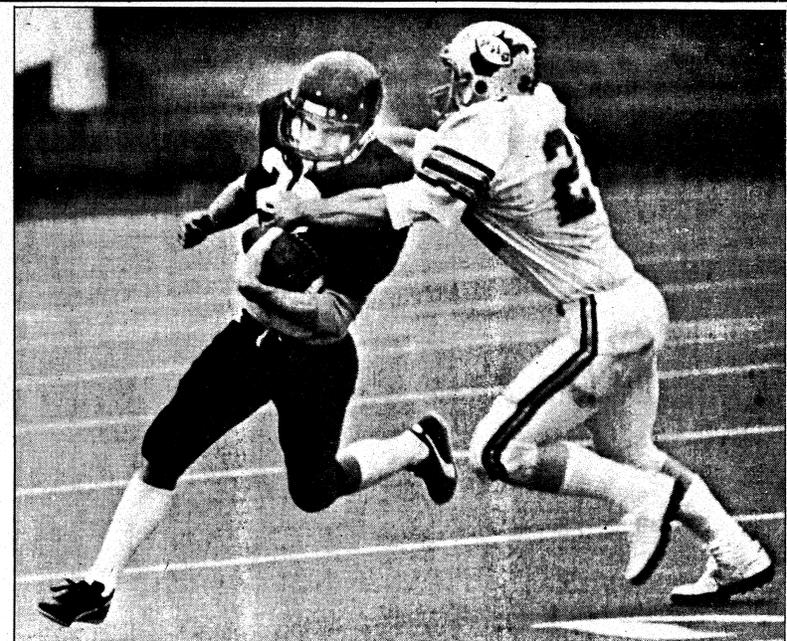
After all, have you ever tried to tackle a legend?

Peterstown will try at 7 p.m. Saturday night at Laidley Field when they battle Swisher and Sistersville for the Class A state championship. But the odds of it happening aren't too great.

Swisher's statistics prove that. In 12 games, The Friendly Flash' has caught 57 passes for 969 yards (37.4 yards per catch) and 15 touchdowns. He has rushed 42 times for 330 yards (7.9 yards per carry) and eight touchdowns. He has returned nine kickoffs for 353 yards (39.2 yards per return) and 35 punts for 510 yards (19.6 yards per return) and a total of three touchdowns. And in his career, he has caught 145 passes for 2,519 yards and 23 touchdowns. He has caught a pass in 35 straight games.

Swisher is beginning to sound like a comic book character again, isn't he? The only difference is The Friendly Flash' has some very real frustrations and yes, even fears.

"Defenses concentrating on me so much is starting to bother me," said Swisher, who runs 100 meters in 10.9 seconds. "It opens things up for everyone else, but it's still frustrating to me. At first I saw a lot of double coverage, but now I'm seeing some triple coverage. Some teams are playing the cornerback about 12 off me and then they're rotating the safety my way. At first they were giving me the short



BRIAN SWISHER . . . Sistersville's "Friendly Flash" Tough To Catch

— DAILY MAIL PHOTO BY KENNY KEMP

stuff, but now they're not giving me anything.

"I know that's a compliment. I guess it's ultimate compliment to have a defense geared to stopping you. And it shows respect when they purposely punt away from you. But it's still frustrating. Like last week, for example, I lined up at wingback, tailback and I-back and carried the ball. We had to do that to get me the ball."

Swisher wants to play split end. Just split end. But his speed makes him too great a weapon to waste as a mere decoy.

"Without my quickness I wouldn't be much," said The Friendly Flash. "My speed has always compensated for what I lacked in size. That's why I don't get hurt. Usually, I'm quick enough to avoid full impact. I have to be. If they get a piece of me, it's okay. But if they get all of me, I'm in trouble."

Nobody gets all of Swisher. Why, he's so fast even the fabled Friendly speed trap couldn't catch him.

"I was always running," he said with a laugh as he recalled boyhood. "Mostly I was running from my mom. But you

know, I wasn't the fastest in school until the eighth grade. Until then Mike Salmons (6-4, 190-pound linebacker) could outrun me. But then I just kept getting quicker."

And The Friendly Flash' legend was born.

"My parents would never let me play football because of my size," he said.

"All the other guys were playing in the fourth and fifth grade, but I didn't get to play until the eighth grade. My parents finally saw I could do it because of my quickness, so they let me play."

Swisher has been proving himself and

that speed ever since.

"All my life I've been overcoming people thinking I couldn't play football because of my size," said Swisher.

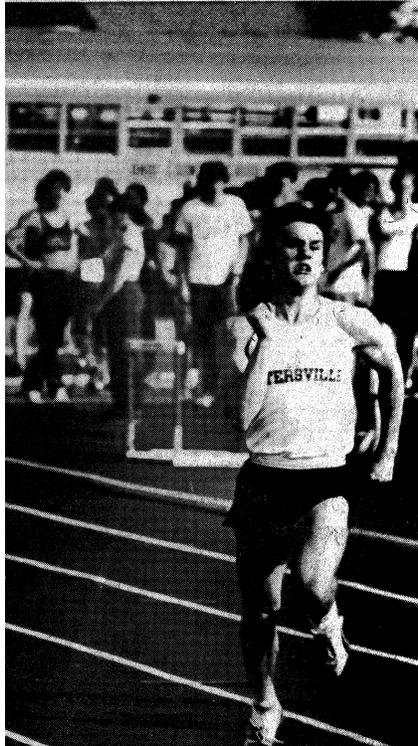
"That's the way it is now with colleges. I think I can play major college ball, but everyone says I'm too small. The only school that is showing interest is Marshall."

But, Brian Swisher shouldn't get too disappointed. After all, if worse comes to worse The Friendly Flash' can always play for Marvel Comics.

Stan Lee would love him.

# Sports

Section  
**B**



## State Track's Best-Kept Secret

# Sistersville Sprinter 'Swishes' Into Spotlight

By **CHUCK LANDON**  
Daily Mail Sports Writer

Usually when the sprinters hurtle past the finish line in the 100-meter dash, you hear a loud "swoosh."

But Friday night was different. Instead of "swoosh," fans heard a loud "Swish."

That was the sound of Sistersville's Brian Swisher blowing away the 100-meter dash competition in the state high school track meet at Laidley Field.

In fact, the other sprinters were so thoroughly blown away there's talk of calling the wind "Swish" instead of "whirl."

And that wasn't supposed to happen. Instead, the 'name' sprinters were supposed to prevail. Speedsters like Ronnie Patterson of Mount Hope, Eddie Hudson of Hurricane and in Triple-A Rocky Hale of East Bank and Fred 'Redbone' Robinson of Beckley.

But when the heats were over it was an unknown, unheralded, unlikely looking 5-4, 135-pound sophomore called "Swish" who had stolen the show with an 11.7 clocking. No one ran any faster, either, as Hale also turned in an 11.2.

"I think Brian is the best-kept secret in West Virginia track," said Randy Campbell, Sistersville track coach. "I

that little workout, Laidley Field wasn't new to me like it was to everyone else. I was familiar with the surface. And psychologically, I didn't feel like I was coming into the unknown."

Instead, "Swish" made himself right at home in lane four. That's the lane he practiced in on May 10, that's the lane he ran in Friday night and that's the lane he'll run in today in the finals.

"I was psyched up to prove myself tonight," admitted Brian, who could become the first Sistersville trackman since 1915 to win a state meet event. "No one knows me down here and I wanted to show them something. I just felt like everyone expected Patterson to win, because he had the best time in the state [11.0]. But you know, the day he ran his 11-flat down here I ran an 11.1 at Shadyalide. At any rate, I hope Ronnie Patterson is thinking about me now. I hope I gave him something to think about."

Of course, the question is can Swisher continue his upset running in today's finals? The answer, my friends is blowing in the wind. And lately the wind has been named "Swish."

In other action Friday night, GW's Debby Lewis upset Huntington East's previously undefeated Mary Hines in the 3,200 meters, Stonewall's Teresa Bandy won the girls' Triple-A shot put with a throw of 35-2 3/4, KVC girl high jumpers slumped as GW's Meredith Walker finished second and St. Albans' Ann Stec fourth, GW's Linda Gribshaw had the fourth best 100-meter time despite a bad foot, Dunbar's Tammy Westfall's 15.2 clocking was the best in the AA 100 low hurdles heats, St. Albans' Chris Amick finished a disappointing third in the high jump with a leap of 6-4, East Bank's Rocky Hale had the best AAA qualifying time in the 200-meter dash with a 22.4 and Mount Hope's Don Patterson had a 22.1 in Double-A, GW's Stan Thomas finished third in the discus and Poca's Bill Legg was third in the AA shot put.

Beckley's state title chance were hurt when Robinson was disqualified in the 100 meters and the Flying Eagles' strong shuttles team was eliminated when a runner fell.

Action resumed at 10 o'clock this morning.



It became a football hound's tooth hat as fans converged on him following the Crimson Tide's 28-17 triumph over state rival Auburn. (UPI Photo)

# Sistersville Again State 'A' Champion

## Tigers Top Peterstown By 28-3 Tally

By NICK BEDWAY  
Associate Sports Editor

CHARLESTON — (Special)—Undefeated Sistersville High completed a three-game sweep by the defending champions in the 1981 "Super Six" Bowl here Saturday night at chilled Laidley Field.

Following victories by Ceredo-Kenova in Class AA and North Marion in triple-A, Coach Lou Nocida's powerhouse Tigers turned back stubborn Peterstown, 28-3, in the championship game of the West Virginia Class A playoffs.

The triumph concluded the first-ever perfect record season for the Tyler County school. The 1978 Tiger squad went undefeated during the regular season but had an 11-game winning streak halted by Duval in the semi-finals of the post-season playoffs.

Last year, Sistersville captured the third state championship in its history by winning 12 of 13 outings. Last night, the Tigers wound up 1981 with a perfect 13-0 record and stretched the Mountain State's longest current winning streak to 19 in a row. Sistersville, which also was the only West Virginia team to post an undefeated record, this season, handed the gutsy Pirates their third loss against nine victories and one tie.

Despite the final margin, this contest was far from the mismatch it was supposed to be. The black-clad Tigers led by only 7-3 at halftime, getting on the board in the opening quarter via a brilliant 56-yard sprint to the end zone on a reverse play by two-time all-star Brian Swisher.

The rank underdog Pirates narrowed the gap to 7-3 early in the second period when quarterback-placemaker Todd Mann was successful on a 26-yard field goal. The Tigers drove 56 yards with the second half kickoff getting into the end zone when Tim Henthorn rambled off left tackle from nine yards out. When Mark Brennenman booted the PAT, the score stood at 14-3.

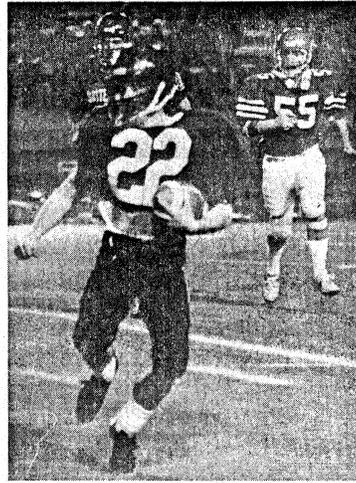
There was no change until the final minutes of the game when Sistersville put the icing on the cake and delighted their rabid rooters with a pair of TDs. Henthorn, the game's leading rusher with 116 yards on 28 carries, went in from a yard out to finish off a 39-yard drive which began when defensive back John Kelly came up with his second interception in the championship game.

The TD came with just 2:38 left. But the Tigers were to score again before the finish. This time it was a defensive lineman doing the honors. Senior tackle Jim Owens stepped in front of a Mann screen pass attempt to intercept the ball at the six and go on in for the tally just 1:49 before the final gun.

It was fitting the Nocida's defensive unit would come up with the last touchdown of the year. The aggressive Tiger defenders gave up only three touchdowns during the entire season and a total of 28 points.

Sistersville shut out nine opponents and had a string of 28 scoreless quarters broken by Mann's field goal during the second round. And with the game on the line, it was the defense which ended Peterstown's hopes for an upset victory. After giving up eight first downs in the opening half, the Tigers allowed Peterstown to move the sticks only one time after the intermission. On that occasion, Mann, to avoid being tackled in the end zone for a safety, hit his favorite receiver, Paul Wells, for a 12-yard gain.

On the night, Sistersville intercepted four passes and recovered one fumble. Mann, a gutsy QB, was his team's leading rusher as he picked up 49 yards on 18 carries. He completed



Sistersville High's electrifying Brian Swisher lost part of his jersey en route but raced 56 yards on a reverse to put the state champion Tigers in front Saturday night in their "A" titular game with Peterstown. (UPI Photo)

offense. The Tigers got 194 on the ground and 105 passing as quarterback Rick Glover, who played all the way despite a sprained ankle he sustained last week, hit on seven of 17 attempts for 105 yards. He was intercepted once.

Peterstown, which upset unbeaten Clear Fork and Clarksburg Notre Dame to reach the finals, had 203 yards in offense. The Pirates picked up 111 yards on the ground.

Penalties saw Sistersville and Peterstown both assessed 35 yards. The punting of senior linebacker Mike Salmons also was a factor for the state champions. Salmons, an all-state choice last year, averaged 43 yards on six kicks. Twice he had 56-yard punts to keep the Pirates in the hole.

Sistersville, which previously won W.Va. Class A titles in 1952 and '84 before starting its two-year run last season, scored at the 2:42 mark of the opening quarter.

The Tigers drove 80 yards in just four plays. The tally came when the 5-7 Swisher took a handoff from Glover on a reverse play and started toward the left sideline. Mark Canterbury, Peterstown's 260-pound all-state tackle, got a hold of Swisher's tearaway jersey and that's all he ended up with on the play.

Swisher, his shoulder pads flapping in the breeze, broke away and reversed his field again, this time breaking down the right sideline and racing the way to the end zone for a 56-yard TD. Brennenman's placement made it 7-0.

Peterstown moved to its field goal from midfield after a 32-yard Salmons punt. The big plays were an 18-yard pass to Kevin Johnson and a 17-yard burst to the outside by Bruce Bales.

But the Tigers stiffened and Mann had to settle for the field goal of 26 yards with 9:30 to go in the half. The second half started with Tom Shepherd returning a short kickoff 17 yards to the Sistersville 44. On third and 13 after a motion penalty, Glover found Salmons on a short pattern for

before being hauled down from behind at the nine by Wickline. On the next play, Henthorn bolted free for the touchdown, which came with 10:23 left in the third round.

Neither team did much the rest of the quarter. Sistersville finally got going behind a punishing ground game at the outset of the fourth quarter. Nocida, anxious to take some time off the clock, ordered the ball given to the durable Henthorn eight times in 11 attempts on this surge.

The Tigers gained a first and goal at the three but Swisher fumbled when he hit solidly this time by Canterbury. Steve Pitzer made the recovery for the Pirates.

Peterstown managed its only first down of the second half before Kelly came up with his interception. A 15-yard pass to Swisher on an outside move put the ball at the five. Henthorn got two yards and two more were tackled on to the one when the Pirates were caught grabbing his face mask.

Henthorn went in on the next play and Owens' big moment a few seconds later wrapped up the scoring.

Nocida, who has been head coach of the Tigers for five years, had little to say immediately in the emotional moments after the contest. He had great praise for his team, however. "They were a fantastic bunch. I think I was just along for the ride the last two years. Brian Swisher is the best player in West Virginia this season in any class."

"He may be the best player in the last 10 years. We are clearly going to miss him and the rest of our seniors." Swisher, who has caught at least one pass in every game the past three seasons, had just two catches last night, but Nocida was quick to point out that "Peterstown must have had at least five men watching him."

Sistersville 28, Peterstown 3. Pitzer 16 run (Brennenman kick). Glover 10 pass (Salmons 26 yard) 17-10-28. Pitzer 10 pass (Brennenman kick) 17-10-28.

## Stagg, Here Comes 'The Bear'

# Becomes Biggest Coach

championship in 11 years. But Bryant did his sights on a bigger goal — his national championship. "We've still got a chance," he said, during, since top-ranked Pitt was dethroned by Penn State Saturday, that Pitt beats Georgia in the Sugar Bowl and Nebraska beats second-

	Alb	Aub
1st downs	25-32	34-19
2nd downs	10-10	12-11
3rd downs	4-12	7-14
4th downs	4-10	8-9
Time of play	34:00	34:00
Penalties	1-10	1-10
Turnovers	1-10	1-10

ranked Clemson in the Orange Bowl it a Cotton Bowl victory over Georgia could vault Alabama back into No. 1 spot in the final rankings. "It hasn't been an easy season for me. I started it only eight weeks shy of Stagg's record and a lot of people figured the Crimson Tide could have won its first nine games give Bryant the record back on 11. But unexpected disciplinary problems that contributed to those two sets delayed the celebration four weeks. Alabama's victory over Mississippi State on Oct. 31 tied Bryant

## rs Score In St. Leo

erkers, Mike King, 14, Donnie Brown, 13, and Diego McCoy, 12. Tom Lovett and Mike Malatestinic led the Monarchs with 13-point performances. West Virginia connected on 71 percent from the free throw line, compared to 59 percent for St. Leo, and Mountaineers won the battle of boards, getting 63 rebounds to 33 for the Monarchs. The Mountaineers' next outing was Dec. 5 in Huntington, against state rival Marshall University.

Alabama then drove 80 yards with quarterback Alan Gray getting 63 of those on a keeper and going the final one to put the Tide ahead at 7-0 midway through the first quarter.

Auburn, after being intercepted at the Alabama 1-yard line and then having Del Greco miss a 43-yard field goal attempt, tied the score with 5:47 left in the first half on a 63-yard run by George Peoples, who tallied 144 yards for the game.

The Tigers had another scoring opportunity when Zac Hardy recovered a Gray fumble at the Alabama 19 but a fumbled snap prevented Del Greco from kicking a 22-yard field goal.

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