The first Bowden cartoon drawn for the Pensacola News Journal: Burly, hard-charging Ed Sears, Pensacola High School fullback voted Florida’s No. 1 Player in 1953. Sears was selected for the high school All-America team for his performance as the backfield star and defensive stalwart for Coach Jim Scoggins’ talented Tigers. The cartoon was published October 4, 1953.
The 1950s: A Hand in Sports

In the 1950s, as sports editor-cartoonist, I portrayed many superstars of a Pensacola decade dominated by high school and junior college athletics. I campaigned for the revival of the Pensacola Open golf tournament, which came in 1956, and the return of professional baseball, which followed in 1957.

I suggested Pensacola resurrect the Professional Golfers Association tournament, which offered a $12,500 purse at Pensacola Country Club, beginning a long tradition of the Pensacola Sports Association and Pensacola on the national tour.

Pensacolians cherished the baseball memories of Wally Dashiell's Pensacola Fliers in the Class B Southeastern League, which had vanished after the Fliers' championship 1950 season. I lamented summers without organized baseball, profiling baseball icons of a passed era, among them Dashiell and former Boston Red Sox outfielder Russell Scarritt, in nostalgic columns and cartoons.

Radio station owner Fred Davis invested in a Pensacola franchise for the Class D Alabama-Florida League; the city built Admiral Mason Park for the Pensacola Dons' first season in 1957. The ball park—now the location of the Vietnam War "Wall South" Memorial—replaced Legion Field, home of the Fliers in the Depression '30s and post-war '40s.

Coach James A. (Jim) Scoggins filled Tiger Stadium with his dynastic Pensacola High School Tigers. Coach Shorty Sneed heeded his winning pace with PHS Tiger basketball champions. Coach Louis Ross' Pensacola Junior College Pirates represented collegiate competition, sharing the matchbox gymnasium at the old Pensacola High School building at Lee Square with Sneed's PHS Tigers.

Football coaches Bryant (Punk) Gorday as Scoggins' PHS assistant and Ralph Chauldron at Tate High School were emerging in a new generation of schoolboy coaches in the 1950s, portending the coming of Escambia, Woodham and Pine Forest high schools. Radio personality Don Griffith, Pensacola's melodic voice of sports, broadcast PHS football games and the Pensacola Dons on WCOA. The climactic event of the fall was the News Journal-sponsored West Florida Sports Banquet that Bodie McCrory, Pensacola News sports editor, and I developed to honor the region's top stars. The first dinner in DeFuniak Springs and others in Pensacola and Fort Walton Beach began a tradition that continued under other sponsorships.

I drew baseball cartoons, including Casey Stengel, manager of the New York Yankees, and many Pensacolians: amateur golf champion Jack Colter, inspiring the Pensacola Sports Association to underwrite the comeback tournament for Pensacola's return to the PGA national tour; witty, inventive Jimmy Hitzman, city athletic director, promoting youth sports and softball tournaments that dominated Pensacola summers; youth baseball coach Bill Bond, revered by generations of youngsters with a long and honored career as community activist before retirement in the 1990s. The Bill Bond Baseball League honors his name; in 1996 his life's work was saluted with the Spirit of Pensacola Award.

Pensacola businessman John Paul Jones, who built PHS an athletic facility for track and field, was honored as the first PSA Sportsman of the Year in 1955, beginning a long PSA tradition.

At the city-built baseball stadium at Ninth Avenue and Romana Street—fronting Pensacola Bay—Tennessean Lou Fitzgerald began the first of his three years as manager of the Dons, competing with Fort Walton Beach, Panama City, Graceville, Dothan and Montgomery. The Dons later became the Angels, honoring the Navy's Blue Angels; then the Senators. The AFL vanished after the 1962 season.

These images symbolize my cartoons of the '50s, a prologue for later decades when Pensacola produced many champions, among them 1976 U.S. Open golf champion Jerry Pate, major league pitcher Don Sutton; Dallas Cowboys superstar Emmitt Smith and boxing champion Roy Jones Jr.
In the Fifties, James A. Scoggins earned his legend at Pensacola High School. A four-sports Vanderbilt University athlete and former assistant to the Commodores' fabled Red Sanders, Scoggins developed a college-quality football program at PHS. The Tigers were among Florida's high school gridiron giants, battling Miami, Jacksonville, New Orleans and Birmingham powerhouses in interstate games before overflow crowds of 9,14,000 people in the PHS stadium that later would be named for one of Florida's winningest coaches. His football record—84 victories, 13 defeats and three ties—remains among Florida's best for ten or more seasons.
LIKE TAKIN' CANDY FROM A BABY!!

Ronnie Williams

QUARTERBACKS
PENSACOLA'S BULLING BENGALS
WITH AN ARRAY OF PASSING FANCY!!

NO WONDER THEY TIGERS MOVE THE BALL WHEN HE'S UP UNDER CENTER

THIS GUY MUS' USE RADAR

Pee Wee Cain

PENSACOLA'S BALL HAWK SUPERB!

HE'S ALWAYS JOHNNY-ON THE-SPOT

THE TIGER LEFT END RECEIVES PASSES LIKE A MOVIE IDOL GETS FAN MAIL!

'S FUNNY, HE MUSTA THREWED IT!
Stephen Russell Mallory Scarritt scrambled from Pensacola sandlots through the minors to play left field three years (1929-31) with the Boston Red Sox. He ended a fifteen-year baseball career in 1937. He was a Muldon Ford manager when I interviewed him for a cartoon-illustrated profile published May 1, 1955.
Pensacola's Mr. Baseball

Wally Dashiell,

FORMER OWNER OF THE DEFUNCT FLIERS, SAYS SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION BALL COULD—UNDER CONDITIONS—BE BROUGHT TO PENSACOLA!

TOO BAD THEYM BONES CAN'T RISE AGAIN!

THE PAIN—

COULDA SWORN I HEARD A RUMBLE!

R.I.P.
PENSACOLA BASEBALL—1950--

ROSE SUGAR ORANGE
COTTON

17
College coaches joined area coaches and athletes to honor the stars at the annual West Florida Football Banquet sponsored by the Pensacola News Journal in the 1950s.
PLAYER OF THE YEAR
Jon Kachin

A TIGER... A SCHOLAR... A GENTLEMAN

Jimmy Hitzman,
City Athletic Director, 1954

COACH OF THE YEAR
THAT'S MARION CRAIG!

Port St. Joe

HE TRULY MADE ME WHAT I AM.

His Sharks Won The Northwest Florida Conference Title!

John Paul Jones,
First Sportsman of the Year, 1955
1956
THE PENNSACOLA OPEN

THE FIRST HOLE (PAR #15,000)

Sixteen Tons

Jack Colter and the Pensacola
Open Association

Earle Bowden

Jack Colter

Earle Bowden
Lou Fitzgerald
First Manager,
Pensacola Dons,
1957
WCOA RADIO'S
DON GRIFFITH

...ENTHUSIATIC
WORD SLINGER
IS PENSACOLA'S
SPORTS
VOICE!

RARE? HE
GOES ON
LIKE THAT
24 HOURS
A DAY!

GRIF'S
IN RARE
VOICE!

55

DOUG-
SANDERS'
CELEBRITY
GOLF
MATCH
TODAY

COACH
PUNK
GORDY
PHS

BOB
HOPE

Earle
Bowden '55
As sports editor of the FSU Florida Flambeau in 1948, I had called for the brash new Florida State University Seminoles to battle the University of Florida Gators. My rival on the Florida Alligator retorted: “How dare that little girls school in Tallahassee, challenging the mighty Gators!” The 1958 cartoon marks the beginning of the long state rivalry. The Gators won 21-7.