

JUSTIN ZWICK

Justin Zwick was already a football hero when he transferred to Massillon late in his sophomore year of high school.

As a freshman he led nearby small school Orville to a state title on Massillon's home field. The experience at Paul Brown Tiger Stadium made a strong impression on Zwick.

"You play in that stadium, it's hard *not* to be impressed," Zwick said. "You saw what it was about. I just thought, 'Wow,

it'd be great to play here.' I was playing Division 4 as a freshman, the next year we moved up to Division 3. I had a lot of success at Orville."



Zwick went deep often during his Massillon career. He threw 40 TD passes his senior season.

What Zwick and his family saw in Massillon was an opportunity for their quarterbacking prodigy to be tested at the Division I level.

"It was something my family and I had talked about," Zwick said. "My brother had played at Youngstown State. He said he wasn't ready for

A CENTURY OF HEROES

all the things they did at Youngstown. So if you're going to play somewhere bigger than Youngstown, you're going to have to get prepared. He's really the one who got it going in my head. As a family we thought it was something that needed to be done.

"I wanted to make myself the best quarterback I could. To prepare myself for the college level. I wanted to play against the best teams in the state, to be in the big game situation with a lot of pressure.

"You hear about the tradition that goes into Massillon football and you really don't understand it until you're actually there. It was a big decision. I spent many nights on the phone with my brother. In the end it was what was what was best for me to test my skills."

While Massillon accepted Zwick with open arms, back in Orrville things got pretty ugly.

"I lost a lot of friends in Orrville," he said. "They weren't too happy with me or my family. I went around to all of my close friends and told them before I left. I went to each of their houses and told them what I was doin' and why I was doin' it. I hoped they'd understand. It didn't go over too well. We had to change our mailbox about every weekend during the season. People were smashing our mailbox. If my car was in the driveway they'd throw eggs at it. If my mom was in the yard planting flowers, people would drive by yelling obscenities. My parents would go to the grocery store and people who were friends wouldn't say hi like they usually would. It was kind of crazy. That's a lot

A CENTURY OF HEROES

to go through as a young guy like that. You really get to know who you can trust and lean on. A lot of those guys have come back and are great friends today. But at the time they didn't want me to leave. I can't blame 'em."

Thirteen miles away, Massillon became Zwick's sanctuary.

"I think they had heard about me through the grapevine," Zwick said, "Since my freshman year there were rumors that I was coming here.

"My first day at Massillon I went to lunch and sat at the table with the guys at lunch. It wasn't awkward. They made me feel like part of

the team from the get-go. I think that here they're going to accept you no matter who you are or where you're from as long as you're willing to go through the same stuff that they do and as long as you're here for the same reason they are. I feel like

I grew up with these guys.

"Jared Frank, Craig Rothoff, Matt Shem, those were the guys I surrounded myself with

at first. They were the guys who kind of took me under their wings a little bit. I started to get close with them.

"The city was great. They took me in. Countless families in Massillon gave me a place to stay. Craig McCo-

"I lost a lot of friends in Orrville...We had to change our mailbox about every weekend during the season."

Justin Zwick