

WILLIAM DEMPSEY "JACK" CORNELIUS

WILLIAM DEMPSEY "JACK" CORNELIUS, NAMED AFTER THE FAMOUS 1920'S WORLD

heavyweight champion, was born in Manchester, Alabama, on June 29, 1921, one of seven children born to Anthony Sylvester Cornelius and Lucille Loggins Cornelius.

Jack graduated from Walker County High School in 1942 where he participated in many activities and sports, was President of the Senior Class, Secretary-Treasurer of the W. Club, and Alternate-Captain of the football team. Jack went to Auburn (then A.P.I.) on a football scholarship, where he was a first-string offensive-defensive lineman, lettering all four years. He distinguished himself by being outstanding in both academics and football. During his football years at Auburn, he was selected as Alternate Captain of the 1943 football team, Man of the Month, and All-Southeastern Nominations, and was a member of ROTC. Jack played guard and tackle at Auburn between 1941 and 1943 and again in 1946 after his discharge from the Army where he served as an artillery officer in Germany, France, and Belgium during World War II.

After World War II, Jack was recruited by his former Auburn football coach, Jack Meagher, who had been named head coach of the Miami Seahawks (franchise that is now the Indianapolis Colts), but a serious knee injury ended Jack's football career before he could play professionally. Jack earned his bachelor's degree in agricultural science in 1947 and his master's degree in 1948 from Auburn University. He was indeed "An Auburn Man."



Former Sports Editor of the Huntsville Times, John Pruett, interviewed Jack for a 2017 feature and posed the following: "The answer to one of the Alabama High School Athletic Association's most intriguing questions: *'Who's the only man to ever coach two quarterbacks who went on to win national champions at two different universities?'*" Mr. Pruett went on to report, "Of all the outstanding high school coaches in the history of Alabama football, and there have been many, only Jack Cornelius can make such a singular claim to fame."

Jack's nine-year coaching career in football, basketball, and baseball began in Walker County. From 1949-1951, Jack coached the Cordova High School Blue Devils and led them to an undefeated, untied Walker County championship, losing only three games in three years. Also, Jack's first basketball team placed 3rd in the state tournament.

From 1952-54, Jack coached the Carbon Hill High School Bulldogs, coaching Lloyd Nix who was later the quarterback of Auburn's undefeated national championship team in 1957. Jack's baseball and basketball teams also had winning seasons.

Jack had three successful seasons with the Scottsboro High School Wildcats from 1955-1957, coaching Pat Trammell who quarterbacked Alabama's national championship team of 1961.

In 1958 Jack was hired as the Ag teacher at Stevenson High School and retired from that position in 1978. In 2000, Jack was inducted into the Walker High School Hall of Fame for Outstanding Achievement.

Jack passed away on May 3, 2008, at the age of 86. He was preceded in death by his wife of 32 years Bettye Wade Cornelius. Jack had one son and four stepchildren.

Sports editor John Pruett called Jack "a coach of distinction" and said that both Alabama and Auburn are thankful Jack Cornelius coached champion quarterbacks.