Hello, Husky fans! My name is Tim Grimm and this is my 21st opportunity to address this group at season's end. I have been North's statistician for football and basketball for over two decades and I run a website at which you can get the results for every season that the Huskies have been in existence. 69 years' worth of football and basketball records are available at www.nhsrecords.com and I write a couple thousand-word essay on every football game the Huskies play.

When I tell you that this football program is historically in one of its best spots in history, I can back that statement up with facts. Certainly, everyone in this room realizes that this could have easily been a NINE-win season.

1. The season opener against Castle saw us needing one yard to win the game with 11 seconds to play.
2. Marching down to win the game with three minutes to play against Memorial, the ball skidded away inside the 10-yard line.
3. The Huskies scored the go-ahead touchdown with a minute-thirty to play in week four against Reitz.
4. North entered the fourth quarter at Jasper leading 17-7 and even after blowing that lead, they had a comeback chance after scoring a TD with under a minute to play but couldn't come up with the on-side kick.

Still, this season marks the EIGHTH consecutive season with five or more wins. Ten years ago, the Huskies were getting beat by every team in the city. This program has recovered and prospered in a way that North hasn't seen in nearly SIXTY years.

That's right. You have to go back 57 seasons—all the way to 1969 to find a streak where North went eight consecutive seasons with five or more wins.

With a little more luck, this 2026 club could have carried the program to more glorious heights. Tonight we look back on the seniors and other significant players who made North's progress possible.

There's an old adage in football and it goes like this: "*Everything starts Up Front*". The last two seasons bear out the truth in that statement. The 2025 Huskies averaged 240 yards rushing the ball and if you ask any coach at any level, that coach will tell you the essential ingredient in success in football is to be able to run the ball consistently.

That 2025 team's success was over 80 yards more per game than it had been the prior season and even more than the 2023 Sectional Champion North team. I mention that because the offensive line from 2025 came back INTACT for 2026.

And guess what? They got even better. Tackles **Ben Smith** and **Jaxon Schmitt**, guards **Jason Bohleber** and **Ike Elmer**, and center **Zerin Wood** formed the nucleus of an offensive line that produced the most rushing yards and the highest average rushing yards per game in 25 seasons at North. The 2026 Huskies AVERAGED nearly 300 yards per game rushing (296 to be exact).

That is a phenomenal number at any level of football. Ask any running back in football how they produced their best numbers and 100% of them will thank their offensive line.

When you can move the opponent off the line of scrimmage, you can control the game. Your team dictates tempo and limits the other squad's opportunities.

These five players were not alone, however. Multiple players lined up at tight end and helped to free up the outside edges. Injuries played a role and required substitutions. I think it would be appropriate as we discuss the 2026 Huskies' season and successes that we ask any player who started a game in the offensive line or at tight end to stand up, be recognized, and receive our applause for a job well done!

[APPLAUSE]

Thank you, *Oh-Line*, for a fabulous season of football.

Tomorrow at the Downtown Quarterback Club All-City Football Banquet, I will have the pleasure of announcing that junior **Ike Elmer** and senior **Jaxon Schmitt** were both named to the 2026 All City Team. For both of them, this will be their second time to receive the honor. **Elmer**, in fact, will return next season and have the potential to be only the fourth football player in North history to ever be named All-City three times in a career.

Most often the benefactor of the success the offensive line generates are the running backs. They streak through holes and head up field. A pair of seniors made the most of limited opportunities this season and produced some electric runs when given the chance. **Braylon Lewis** had only one varsity game under his belt when the season started but played himself into a consistent presence in the backfield. He came through with a two-touchdown game against Bosse and had a 100-yard game against New Albany.

Graden Meredith, on the roster as a receiver, took handoffs in the jet sweep and produced a pair of lllllloooonnnnnggg touchdown runs—the longest of which was a 53-yard scamper against Central.

There were a bevy of underclassmen who ran to daylight this season, however, none of them were more influential than junior **Hunter McKinney**. In his two seasons, **Hunter** has followed this offensive line into the North record books. With 2,100 rushing yards, he ranks 9th All-Time. His 18 rushing touchdowns are in the top 20. His 7.1 average yards per carry is the 7th best in

school history—and he still has a season to go! Tomorrow, I will also have the pleasure of announcing his selection to the All-City football team.

There were many more runners who contributed and when their senior banquet comes around, I intend to cite their career numbers as well. But this night is typically about the seniors and, since I'm limited in my time, there were other SENIOR offensive players who stood out.

Jacob Randolph emerged as a deep threat wide receiver without any prior varsity football playing experience. It took him four games to work himself into a consistent spot in the rotation, but once he did, his blazing speed made him a "go to" target for the offense. He was the premier deep threat for the offense—the guy who took the top off the defense and forced opponents to play with two deep safeties. **Jacob** was a threat to score a touchdown every time he caught the ball. Though he only caught 14 passes on the season, six of them went for touchdowns and he AVERAGED over 23 yards per catch—the eighth best number in school history. His three touchdowns against New Albany tied the school's All-Time record for most in a game.

Another facet of the game that is critical to a club's success is the kicking game, and the Huskies were blessed with not one, but two exceptional place kickers. **Derek Kirsch** kicked for three seasons and finished with 41 points. His kickoffs routinely went long and often found the end zone. **Stuart Land** was the principal placekicker for the last two seasons and finishes his career as one of the most storied kickers in school history. His 77 points is 6th best All-Time. He ranks third in career field goals and his ability to reach the end zone routinely became one of the best **defensive** weapons in the Husky arsenal.

[TRANSITION]

See, I haven't forgotten that defense is an important part of the game. The 2026 Huskies were a club with 10 new starters on the "other" side of the ball and many of those slots were filled with underclassmen who will return next season. **Markell Cayce, Drake Johnson, Tylan Robinson**, and **Landen Peagram** provided solid run support at linebacker. **Cayce** was a significant contributor running the ball on offense as a two-way starter with over 400 yards rushing.

The defensive backfield experienced some growing pains early in the season but matured as the games progressed. Sure tackling **J.P. Leho** at safety could be counted on to drop runners in the open field. **D'Ahjea Futrell** led the team in interceptions and **Chase Ayers** at cornerback was another dual threat who tied for the team lead in receptions. Senior **Elijah Hedgepeth** drew the toughest physical matchups against the opponents' biggest receivers and acquitted himself well.

In the defensive line, juniors **Diesel Skelly** and **Kyson Tutt** were joined in the interior by seniors **Deshawn Steppe** and **Gunner Harp**. These four closed up the middle and forced runners outside.

The outside was where the Husky defensive line shined the brightest. Senior **Ahmad Pullom** recorded 20 tackles of which five were tackles for loss. He received votes from two other schools for the All-City team—but it takes four schools voting for a player to make the team.

Tomorrow I will be announcing that seniors **Jeraden Copeland** and **Carson Conley** were selected to the 2026 All-City Football Team. **Copeland** was the lone returning starter for the defense. He recorded 70 tackles in his career, 17 of which were tackles for loss and five were quarterback sacks. He was explosive off the ball and strong enough to overwhelm blockers when the interior linemen forced a runner outside. Several times this season he blasted off the line of scrimmage so fast that he nearly took the handoff away from the opposing quarterback.

Anyone who was at the Vincennes Lincoln game will likely never forget **Carson Conley's** "One Man Wrecking Crew". The Alices were 7-3 this season and by no means a pushover opponent.

Until **Conley** pushed them over. In that single game he recorded 5.5 sacks, 7 tackles for loss, 9 total tackles and, for good measure, caught a touchdown pass. **Carson** led the team in solo tackles, total tackles, tackles for loss, quarterback sacks, fumbles caused, and blocked kicks. To say he answered the call for a defensive leader would be an understatement.

If **Conley** led the defense, there can only be one name when we discuss leading the offense. Senior **Jayden Jones** completes his career with a huge list of accomplishments.

- #3 in career Passing Touchdowns with 28
- #1 in career Passing Efficiency with an NCAA rating of 157
- #7 in career Passing Yardage with 1,876
- #4 in TD passes in a season with 15
- #14 in career Total Yardage
- Top 10 rankings in passing yardage in a season and completion percentage.
- His 13 wins as a varsity starting quarterback are the most by any single player in 20 seasons.

Those are all impressive numbers, but they only tell a portion of the story. Those of you who watched the games will remember the critical, do-or-die, short yardage situations where **Jayden** simply took the ball and plunged into the line. He literally put the team on his back and time and time again, he came away with the yards the team needed to continue their success.

He was clutch.

He threw 20 more touchdowns than interceptions in his career—no other quarterback in North history can match that statistic. He was fast. He had three touchdown runs longer than 50 yards this season—including a 72 yarder against Castle to start the season.

He made big plays.

He was a leader.

And he will leave some huge shoes for another player to fill next season.

But tonight I have described a team that possesses a huge quantity of underclassmen who will return next season. There is a nucleus of linemen, linebackers, defensive backs, running backs, and receivers who will make the transition simpler. They will be big shoes to fill, but the support group is there to make the 2027 Huskies even more successful than the 2026 edition.

Thank you for this 21st opportunity to recap our team's football season. The continued success of this program rests not just in the hands of the players and the coaches, but also with the adults assembled in this room. Your willingness to sacrifice and assist with fund raising, player care, and support are vital to the program's strength.

And now I would like to turn the program back over to my coach, your coach, our coach—Mr. **Zach Nero.**