

in my dim recollection of the past (1943-44), i remember stopping off at kinsler brothers grocery (a few short steps west of flink's on newkirk avenue) to buy a sour pickle with marty schub, before heading to the schoolyard. we figured that buying and eating this massive garlic-y joyous bit of jewishness we could gain an advantage by breathing in the faces of the rowdy group when they attempted to bring us the ground in herb weinberg's favorite game, St. Looie. this was the next step after touch tackle and mandated that everybody would go after the poor schmuck who caught the football after it was thrown high in the air!

i remember going home and being told by my mother that "...we were poor and if i continued to come home with torn elbows in my sweater or ripped knees in my corduroys, i could go to school in those clothes!" (who knew at that time that we could change from school duds to playground rags???)

somehow, in a conversation with howie (we both lived on the fifth floor of 570 westminster rd.) he told us that there was dirt in the backyard and eventually we moved our games there, and, of course, continued the same mayhem until somebody in the group decided that we should organize. this organization unbelievably liberated a further inspiration: EGO!

what provocative, heroically innovated, individual then proceeded to challenge a group of guys from avenue H to play football at the parade grounds on a given saturday. and so the die was cast; and we played without jerseys, with minimal equipment (herbie brav used to play in house slippers)and we probably resembled "our gang" .

how could we be a team without jerseys? a name was agreed upon (the leopards), captains were decided, a design somehow formulated and off we strode to Davega's on flatbush avenue to buy identity. at \$6.00 per, some of us were flustered.

"what! so much money?" and when we were advised that the spots of black on the gold shoulder would cost \$3.00 more we plotzed. so, damn the leopards! we would become the panthers and walk proud in our stylish splendor. in the days following the delivery everybody wore the jerseys to school, to hebrew school, and most probably to bed.

a second set was ordered for the newly inducted. (we were very egalitarian and voted democratically for each new member) did we vote "aye" for everybody? no way! we were particular (?) and i remember at least 2 chaps who were turned down. needless to say they both had nervous breakdowns.

those wonderful memories of strutting on the field with black and gold and that ridiculous old english "P" on our chest was noteworthy. many of our opponents played into our hands and were conquered by our chutzpah:

others beat the crap out of us! nevertheless, on saturday mornings, usually

at 7 or 8 AM, we gathered in front of flinks. we made a lot of noise throwing the football,etc.;took the coney island avenue trolley and ran to get an unused turf (i think there were 8 football fields with goal posts) before any of the "official" teams came out to play league games.

the one good thing about starting so early was that we finished early and were able to catch the latest double feature at the leader theater.