

# S\*P\*A\*R\*KY

One could list pages and pages of names of players associated with the annual Bellaire/Martins Ferry football rivalry. But one name surpasses them all: **SPARKY**.

During the high school football season of 1963, **Carl Stabile, Jack Terrill, Mike Maistros, Fred Theurich, and Charles Briggs**, all members of the Martins Ferry Jaycees, were on their way to a Martins Ferry Purple Riders football game. During their conversations, they came up with an idea of a revolving award to be presented to the winner of Purple Riders/Big Reds football game. The award was to be passed on to the winner every fall; possession was never to be permanent.

Thus, in the fall of 1963, the **SPARKY** trophy was born. The Bellaire Lions Club quickly became the sponsor for the Big Reds of Bellaire High School. Lions Club members **Jack Farnario, Bill Magellan, and Jim DeBlasis** were the initial committee members from Bellaire.

**SPARKY** had become a reality. The **SPARKY** trophy was presented to the Bellaire Big Reds after the 1964 football season. Every year thereafter, the trophy has been given to the winning team. Next in line, **SPARKY** was given to the winning captains at a formal dinner. Then **SPARKY** was awarded to the winning seniors at the annual **SPARKY** banquet honoring both groups of senior football players and cheerleaders.

In 1981, the Martins Ferry Kiwanis Club became the sponsor of the **SPARKY** trophy. Then, in 1997, Martins Ferry American Legion Post #38 took over sponsorship for the Purple Riders. The Bellaire Lions Club has been the lone sponsor for the Big Reds since 1964.

Due to the expanded Ohio High School Athletic Association football playoffs, the Bellaire Lions Club and the Martins Ferry American Legion Post #38 joint **SPARKY** committee agreed to suspend the annual banquet and present the award immediately following the annual rivalry. This first happened in the fall of 2004.

Here are some interesting facts about the **SPARKY** trophy:

1. There has been only one **SPARKY** trophy.
2. Possession of the trophy is never permanent.
3. **SPARKY** is on display the entire ten-week regular football season. The first five weeks, **SPARKY** is displayed in the visiting town. The home town displays **SPARKY** five weeks before the annual fall classic.
4. **SPARKY** is presented to the winning coach and players immediately following the game in the center of the football field.
5. **SPARKY** is older than the NFL Super Bowl trophy.
6. Legendary Ohio State football coach, Woody Hayes, was a speaker at the **SPARKY** banquet.
7. Every score, from 1964 to the present, is engraved on the **SPARKY** trophy.
8. The first year of **SPARKY** (1964), Martins Ferry and Bellaire played twice (the first and last game of the season).
9. The acronym **SPARKY** stands for: **S**portsmanship, **P**articipation, **A**chievement, **R**ivalry, **K**nowledge, **Y**outh.