*I was asked to pen my thoughts and conjure up a few of those memories prior to the start of the 2013 football season*:

**Moyes Memories**

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**Welcome to the Local Sports Journal 2013 High School Football Preview**

 I always viewed the start of school by reverting to the old standard good news – bad news phrase: The bad being that our seemingly all too short summers is coming to an end, but the good news being that we are ready to embark on another exciting high school football season.

The upcoming campaign will see most coaches from the past season returning to guide their local teams, with one major exception.

How strange it will be this year for the Muskegon Catholic faithful not to see the calming presence of Mike Holmes on the sidelines for the first time in 25 years at Kehren Stadium.

With the opening of the 2013 season now just hours away from kicking off, virtually every team has lofty expectations.

It’s unrealistic for our Muskegon County followers to again expect a season such as we were so fortunate to witness back in 2008, when a county with but two percent of the state’s population won fifty percent of the state titles.

But optimism again reigns supreme with many of our faithful football fanatics here in the Port City.

I don’t believe there is any other locale in this state that loves their high school football as they do here in our proud area.

And how popular is football here on the shoreline? Add up all the attendance figures on a typical Friday night and one will be amazed at how many thousands of fans will be present to root their favorite team on.

Fans won’t have to wait long to see some of those blockbuster match ups as the opening weekend is filled with must see contests.

And what better way to kick off this campaign then having the two teams with the longest history squaring off on Friday, August 30!

 Muskegon and Grand Haven first met on the gridiron way back in 1895. Occupying the White House was Grover Cleveland, but for this sports geek, 1895 was the year that gave us perhaps our countries most recognized sports icon --- the birth of the Sultan of Swat: Babe Ruth.

The Big Reds and the Bucs were very familiar with one another some 118 years ago as they played each other three times during that inaugural season.

With a narrow 8-6 win in their first meeting in 1895, the Big Reds made their rivals from Ottawa County their first of a state all-time best 774 victories.

Will this same Grand Haven institution be victim No. 775?

Area Coaches have been feverishly working during recent practices to fill those holes left by the departing grads from 2013. All have visions on making the playoffs--- but all have major question marks as well.

Can Muskegon again sweep their first four opponents, three of who have combined to win 6 state championships in the last 11 years?

Following the opener against rival Grand Haven, Shane Fairfield’s talent laden squad will play defending D3 state champion Grand Rapids Christian, coached by former Mona Shores head coach and one-time Big Red assistant Don Fellows.

The Big Red secondary will be tested by Christian’s pre-season 1st team USA Today All-American pick in U-M commitment Drake Harris.

Perennial power Montague has a schedule that is extremely top-heavy on the front end: OV, Oakridge, Ravenna, Shelby, and then archrival Whitehall in the battle of the bell. If coach Pat Collins’ 2013 eleven survives this rugged stretch, they could once again be in line to make another long playoff run.

Will Ravenna soon return to the glory days of the Dusty Fairfield era? The Bulldogs have a talented sophomore class that still may be a year or two away from being a top-notch power.

Oakridge will open the season with a blockbuster opponent as the Eagles take to the road to take on Dan Rohn’s West Catholic Falcons, state runner-up in Division 5 last year and a team that took it all in 2010.

The Eagles are hopeful of defeating the Falcons, who ended Oakridge’s season in the first round of last year’s playoffs after they posted a perfect 9-0 regular season record.

 North Muskegon also draws a tough road opponent in Grandville Calvin Christian. The Norse made a nice turnaround a year ago after suffering their first winless season in their 80 years of high school football.

Can Mona Shores, who tantalized their frustrated followers a year ago with a nice start, finally make the playoffs for the first time ever?

Matt Koziak’s Sailors will feature an offense with a veteran quarterback who will be throwing the pigskin to a couple of future Division 1 receivers. I see the Sailors with six winnable games.

MCC plays yet another schedule that is loaded with formidable foes before the Crusaders finally enter a conference affiliation beginning in 2014-15.

Can new head coach Steve Czerwon somehow squeeze out five or six wins this season? If so, beware of those Crusaders, as they could be headed to Ford Field once again.

The Hall of Fame bound Holmes may be retired, but Czerwon can take comfort with knowing that legendary MCC assistant coach Mike Ribecky returns to guide that always tough Crusader forward wall.

Veteran Athletic Director Glenn Metcalf deserves kudos for putting together a competitive schedule for this years’ Muskegon Heights Academy school.

Don’t be surprised if this Tiger team somehow garners six wins out of a schedule that will see an opponent travel to Tiger town all the way from Columbus, Ohio.

Fruitport will have a schedule book ended with their opening battle with long-time rival Reeths Puffer and closing their regular season against traditional powers Muskegon Catholic and Dewitt.

Can 2nd year coach Greg Vargas work that same magic once again that had the Trojans undefeated for their first eight games a year ago?

Reeths Puffer backers are hoping to have their first winning season in six years and will have to look no further than Thursday night’s opener with Fruitport to see where they stand in 2013.

Second year head coach Kyle Jewitt is hopeful of using the momentum from winning last years’ two final games to carry over to this season.

Once mighty Orchard View has fallen on some tough times in recent years but promises to have a team laden with speed. After posting a winning record for 19 straight years, the Cardinals are hopeful of returning to the glory days after three straight losing seasons.

Why Whitehall, with a school loaded with good athletes, has won only two outright Championships in the 80 years of West Michigan Conference football has always been mystery to me. Will this be the year of the Vikings?

Who better to prognosticate this season’s future powerhouses then the knowledgeable former Offensive Coordinator at Oakridge, and now currently serving as a top-notch radio analyst for Clear Channel radio, Joe Coletta.

“Montague, Oakridge, and Shelby should battle it out for the West Michigan Conference title again this year, but my sleeper team is your ole alma mater --- the Norsemen,” said Coletta.

The biggest question mark for coach Mike Belmonte’s Norse is who is going to play quarterback for a team that ended their regular season with an upset victory over previously undefeated Maple City Glen Lake.

Joe added that “Muskegon could make another long run again, but their biggest concern is replacing their offensive line from last year.”

Coletta told me it’s a little premature to say who will make the long playoff run. “I got to believe that is Muskegon Catholic. If they can produce six wins then they will have the best shot.”

“If Muskegon can get in and not have to play Lowell early in the playoffs then they could be in pretty good shape.”

“This could be one of those years where there could be a surprise from a team that we don’t really expect” Coletta concluded.

I invite all our readers to head out to follow your favorite team this season.

For all but a handful of this year’s class of 2014, this will be their swan song for playing a game that they play for just the love of the game.

 Believe me, even fifty---or even more--- years down the road these players will have memories of many of these games that will stay with them forever, those big victories, and unfortunately those crushing defeats that will linger as well.

If you are heading out to historic Hackley Stadium, a nice tip from this ‘ole’ announcer would be to plan your arrival some 20 minutes before kick-off. You don’t won’t want to miss out on the must-see pre-game ritual when the Big Red band marches onto the field from Sanford Street.

Now enjoy reading this special high school football preview edition to see how your favorite team shapes up for the coming season.

And then let the fun begin!

*Joe Coletta’s prophecy was spot on, as Muskegon Catholic Central made another trip to the finals a success, a 35-12 victory over Beal City to capture yet another state title.*

Not in my wildest dreams did I expect the outflowing for support after this story was published in early 2013 by The Local Sports Journal. Mike was only two games removed from taking part in 300 victories as a Crusader mentor. There was an outpouring of recognition for their beloved coach when he hit the 300th win.

**MOYES MEMORIES HONORS LONG TIME CRUSADER ASSISTANT COACH MIKE RIBECKY**

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A major contributor to the success for many of our area high school football programs has been the outstanding work provided by many of those who often remain anonymous in the background --- the assistant coaches.

During my enjoyable tenure as a broadcaster of high school football in this area, I can recall several outstanding assistants who have made major contributions to their school’s success.

Among those that quickly come to mind are coaches like Larry Reuger; Steve Wilson’s long-time right-hand man at Fruitport.

Mike Henry had many productive years while working with several head coaches at Orchard View.

Ed Schroeder at North Muskegon was paired with Dave Cooke for many years when the Norsemen experienced a great deal of success.

Dusty Fairfield would be quick to give plaudits to his longtime defensive coordinator, Randy Helsen, during the glory days at Ravenna.

Oakridge Hall of Fame coach Jack Schugars had a couple of right-hand men that played a major role for the Eagles’ dominance over the years, first with Barney Goodrich and later with Joe Coletta.

But perhaps the one who tops this list of notable assistants would be long-time Muskegon Catholic line coach Mike Ribecky.

Muskegon Catholic has won a whopping total of 8 state championships in football since the advent of the playoffs in 1975.

Two former Crusader coaches are already enshrined in the Muskegon Area Sports Hall of Fame, Roger Chiaverini and Pete Kutches, with recently retired Mike Holmes a sure bet to become the third Hall of Famer with ties to the Crusaders.

However, there is one common denominator during this magnificent Crusader era that leaps out at this ‘ole’ announcer --- Mike Ribecky.

Ribecky has been a fixture on the Crusader sidelines since 1977. Shortly after earning his degree from Western Michigan University, Mike teamed up with his high school mentor Roger Chiaverini, as a volunteer coach, while doing his student teaching at MCC.

Except for but one year, Ribecky has remained on the Crusader staff ever since.

“I did not coach in 1979, and, for whatever reason, I can’t remember why, but in 1980 Pete Kutches was hired as the head coach and I gave Pete a call” recalled Ribecky, “That was also the same year I started work at the Fire Department in Muskegon Heights.”

While in high school Ribecky was a mainstay of an outstanding Crusader team that won their first eight games of the 1972 season before losing their final game to the Muskegon Big Reds, the defending mythical Class A state champs from 1971.

Muskegon’s defeat of the Crusaders created a logjam at the top of the Lake Michigan Athletic Conference, with Muskegon, MCC and Traverse City sharing first place, each with but one defeat.

Ribecky would then take his football skills to WMU, where he was an All-MAC player for the Broncos, before returning home to begin a career where he would help lead the Crusaders to an awesome run of success.

And what a run it has been!

Although not totally surprised, nevertheless I was overwhelmed when I reviewed MCC’s accomplishments since Ribecky climbed aboard the staff.

Including Friday’s Crusader lopsided victory Ribecky has been on the sidelines while MCC has won an imposing total of 298 games. To put this in perspective, only nine head coaches in MHSAA history have won as many as 300 games, a mark Ribecky will surely pass in the next few weeks.

Over the 35 years Ribecky has served on the Crusader staff, his teams have made the playoffs in 23 of those years. Eleven times MCC teams have played for a state championship, winning it all in eight of those encounters.

On six other occasions the Crusaders were but won win away from again advancing to the state final game, all in no small coincidence with Ribecky coaching the very heart of MCC’s trademark to success: their offense and defensive line.

When I prodded Ribecky into naming someone who was especially influential in defining his career Mike was quick to point out Roger Chiaverini.

“Chev was the kind of guy, and Mike Holmes always said it as well, that he influenced the lives of a lot of our coaches over the years,” remarked Ribecky.

 “It was just the way he went about things and how demanding he was, especially emphasizing the small, but very important things, that make things work towards the larger scale.”

When asked what the most satisfying aspect is of being an assistant coach, Ribecky responded: “I just like to watch the kids progress over the years and through each season” added Mike.

“We like to run the ball, (and isn’t that an understatement), and we like to instill in our kids as to how much pride we have in running the ball. We try to break the other team’s will and give our opponents the fear of not be able to stop us.

I get even more satisfaction out of seeing the kids down the road long after they have left MCC to see how they are doing with their lives. “

With the enormous amount of success that Ribecky has incurred over the years there was little doubt he had to have been high on the list to take over a program as a head coach. When I asked Mike if he had any desire to be a head coach, he gave me a firm “nope” before I even came close to finishing my question.

“I know what kind of headaches these coaches go through, and I want no part of that. I just go, and I coach, and it’s enjoyable. I don’t have to deal with equipment, reporters, parents” --- quickly pausing for a moment to clarify, “but our parents have been pretty good.”

Ribecky further added “I’ve always enjoyed the training part in developing our program, I’ve always enjoyed working in the weight room in the off season with the kids, but today’s era really calls for a coach to work nearly 365 days a year.

 Now it’s not only spending your summers in the weight room but it’s the weight room plus the seven on sevens. All in all, it’s just getting crazy,” lamented Ribecky.

Speaking of the weight room, where the muscular Ribecky, who still carries a waistline that I haven’t seen since the Eisenhower administration, is a part of Ribecky’s skills that are legendary.

When I asked him if he’s ever had a player who could lift more than him, Ribecky began to chuckle. But, when I tried to nail him down, Ribecky modestly confessed: “Well not many, and well………. not many, but I have one kid now that is very strong.” However, the robust Ribecky never did fully answer my query.

There has been no question but the emphasis on work in the weight room has multiplied many times over the past few decades. Going back 40 years when Ribecky was playing his prep football, there was very little weight training.

“It wasn’t until about my senior year (1972) that Chev began having us lifting. That was the first time I was even introduced to weights,” said Ribecky.

Ribecky obviously has had numerous opportunities to move on to other schools, but he has remained loyal to his beloved alma mater over the years. “I would have loved to have had him to help me at Muskegon when I was coaching the Big Reds, said Hall of fame coach Dave Taylor. But Mike would never leave Catholic Central.”

It was Taylor who passed along a story that perhaps best typifies the respect Mike has developed with his lineman over the years. “I was once told that there was an incident when one of Ribecky’s players was seen with tears streaking down his cheeks after receiving some very constructive criticism from the popular coach,” remembered Taylor.

“When somebody approached the player and asked him if he was hurt by the admonishment he had just received, the players answered: ‘No, not at all, I just feel really bad that I let Coach Ribecky down.”

When I pressed Ribecky a little further on overtures he may have received from other schools, he was hesitant to respond, but he did ultimately reply: “well maybe a few have asked. But I think people from around town knew that I was firmly committed to MCC.

My Dad and Mom were staunch Catholic Central fans and would not have wanted me to leave, and my sister Pat was the principle. “

When asked for the support he got from his very exuberant wife, Mike, with no hesitancy whatsoever, pointed out: “that without the support from Nancy, this career never would have happened. It certainly helps that she likes football, so much so that she is always at the games and cheering our teams on.”

Mike had initially wanted to work as a teacher following college, but it was in an era where teaching jobs were scarce. Mike made a last moment decision to apply for a job with the local fire department, a position he held for nearly 30 years before his recent retirement.

At the time Mike had little knowledge of what his duties with the Department would entail but after passing all the necessary exams Mike was a member of the Heights Fire Department.

Mike was grateful for the support that he received with the Fire Department over the years, working in the city where he was raised.

“It was a job that allowed me to coach, as well as trade time with my co-workers so I could be free to coach the practices as well as the games, something I was very thankful for.”

When the football season is over Mike and his supportive wife Nancy will take a well-deserved vacation down to South Florida before heading back to Muskegon to watch their son Jason, the 2011 Muskegon Area Student Athlete of the Year play baseball for the Jayhawk baseball team.

Mike and Nancy are also very proud of their daughter Lisa, a former Crusader and MCC Jayhawk basketball whiz, who is now a local pharmacist after earning her degree from Ferris State University.

While on his way to Florida for a well-deserved vacation I caught up with recently retired Crusader head coach Mike Holmes.

“Mike met everything to our program,” exclaimed the MCC coach who has won six state championships under his helm.’’

“Obviously he is a great football coach and tactician who just has a great rapport with the kids,” added Holmes. “He is very dedicated to the game of football and has worked extremely well with all the coaches, dating all the way back to Coach ‘Chev’ to Steve Czerwon.”

Naturally Holmes and Ribecky became very close friends over the years despite, as Holmes pointed out: “Our differences in politics as well as personalities” joshed Holmes.

Before I ended my conversation Holmes added: “I read one of your recent articles saying that I should get my speech ready for the Muskegon Area Sports Hall of Fame. Well, Mike Ribecky belongs in the Hall of Fame,” insisted Holmes, an opinion also shared by this former long-time board member.

For the foreseeable future, Crusader football fans can breathe a sigh of relief.

When I asked Ribecky the obvious question as to ‘How many more years can we see Mike Ribecky on the sidelines, he was quick to respond: “I’m just taking it a year at a time.”

Good news indeed for the MCC faithful and all the aspiring lineman who want to be wearing the green and gold colors of the Crusaders.

*Mike indeed, was justifiably inducted into the Muskegon Area Sports Hall of Fame in June of 2022. An honor well deserved. At the start of the 2025 season Ribecky has now been a part of 375 victories.*

**MOYES MEMORIES - BASKETBALL PREVIEW**

By Jim Moyes

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I was asked to share a memory or two from the editors of The SportstJournal.com as the locals were about embark on the 2013-14 basketball season:

Now that our area has wrapped up another highly successful football season, it is now time for our basketball players to lace up their sneakers and get ready for what promises to be an exciting prep basketball campaign in our area.

My long-time sidekick on the radio, and a true basketball junkie, Gene Young, informs me that Muskegon is going to be loaded this year with D1 prospects, headlined by a galaxy of prep stars visiting the Redmond Potter gymnasium for a basketball lover’s dream of a triple header in early January.

My very demanding boss at the Local Sports Journal asked if I could perhaps share a memory or two of past basketball games, players, teams or coaches that stood out to me over the years.

I could write all day, and into the next year, as there have been so many memories I could share but I will attempt to pare my favorite recollections down to a manageable number.

My earliest memories go way back into the 1940s as a youngster in elementary school. I would rarely miss a home, or even an away game, for my beloved alma mater at North Muskegon High,

As did many of the teams of some 60 years past, the games were often played in cracker box size gymnasiums that are now but a distant memory. To make it even more interesting, a few of our finest cage squads from this era didn’t even have a home gym to call their own.

West Michigan Christian (Muskegon Christian as it was known in this era), and the three parochial schools: St. Mary’s, St. Joseph and St. Jeans would have to scramble to find a place to conduct a practice, let alone host a home game.

Many of the home games for those teams would take place at Nelson Junior High’s gym as well as the old Central Campus auditorium at Muskegon High School.

I well remember following Muskegon St. Mary’s and Muskegon St. Joseph making it all the way to the state finals back in 1953, glued to the radio following the play-by-play coverage from former Muskegon Heights and UM great Jack Weisenberger.

Never in my wildest dreams did I ever imagine that I would be the one calling the action some 25 years later.

Like many of today’s youngsters, I too had prep basketball players that I looked up to in idolization. The first was the late Bill Duplissis, a 3-sport star at North Muskegon whose number I proudly wore when I played basketball on the Norse Junior Varsity team some years later.

The next was my next-door neighbor, Gordy O’Dell. I would often accompany Gordy to the outdoor court in the summer months, as O’Dell would spend hours perfecting his game. In 1955 O’Dell averaged more than 30 points per game, including a school record 53-point outburst at the Norse compact gym in 1955.

I never had a chance to watch that great state Class A championship team from Muskegon Heights in 1954, featuring the great MC Burton and Murt Johnson, but I caught all their games enroute to their state title tuned in on my AM only radio.

Two years later I was dumbfounded at the talent I saw on the floor when the Muskegon Heights Tigers began a two-year run unsurpassed in Muskegon area annals. The Tigers, behind the great play of the late Ed Burton, and his talented teammates like Ronnie Robinson, Kennedy Howell, Lloyd Swelnis, Pete Peloites and the McCarty brothers, Willie and Osie, roared to back-to-back state titles in 1956-57.

That 1957 team remains in this ‘ole’ announcer’s opinion, far and away the most talented team to ever take the floor in our era.

The area didn’t have to wait long to bring back to the Port City yet another state title as the Warriors of Muskegon Christian won it all for their very first time in their school’s proud history in 1958. The Warriors were a very young team that year with only Ken VanDyke lost to the graduation ranks and were top-heavy favorites to repeat the following year.

Coach Elmer Walcott’s 1959 squad again advanced to the state championship title match but was upset in the final game by a team they had defeated twice during the regular season, Kalamazoo Christian.

Walcott would return to the state finals a total of six times, winning four state titles and was a runner-up to a talented Detroit East Catholic team in 1979, his final year as the head mentor at WMC before turning over the reins to a young Jim Goorman.

Goorman’s first love was baseball, where he was an outstanding catcher-first baseman in his younger days, while only a bench sitter in basketball. However, Goorman certainly earned his niche as a basketball coach that was fittingly culminated with his induction into the Muskegon Area Sports Hall of Fame this past summer, joining his former mentor Walcott.

The likeable Goorman made eight trips to the finals, winning five state titles on his own, but my favorite Warrior team under Goorman was his 1992 championship team.

Soon after a convincing semi-final victory, I well remember a conversation I had with another radio announcer who was very bitter about his team’s loss to this great Warrior team. “They should be good because they do a great job of recruiting,” lamented the sour grapes announcer who certainly had not done his homework.

I quickly informed this misinformed gentleman “Maybe you will change your mind when I tell you about three of our star players: one is the head coach’s son (Jeremy Goorman), the Warriors all-state player is the son of the assistant coach (Randy Prince), and the third is the son of the athletic director (Ryan Arkama.)

I first began working local basketball games on the radio with long time broadcaster Bill Trapp, who seemingly had been doing radio work for high school games, along with Jack Roach, for an eternity. Trapp retired following the 1978 season and then I began working basketball games full time the following season.

At what a season it was! Not only did Walcott take his Warriors all the way to the championship game in Class D that year, but also the Heights had a phenomenal team that repeated their state championship from the previous year.

What a great stroke of luck to call two state finals games in my rookie year!

Although area basketball success has been pretty much monopolized by the success of WMC and the Heights, I quickly recall some other outstanding teams as well.

Shelby fans will surely not soon forget their Hall of Fame teams of 1971 and 1972 that posted back-to-back state titles. I was fortunate to have broadcast their semi-final victory in 1971 in a game played in Traverse City.

Even though Gene Young and I often had to traverse many miles over some ice-covered roads over the years to call the games, I am left with so many great memories. Surely one of my favorite teams to cover was that Mark Hughes led Reeths Puffer team that advanced to the state semi-finals back in 1985.

A decade later I was happy to see one of the classiest coaches in this area, Muskegon Orchard View’s Mike Henry win a regional championship in Class B.

Gene and I could always bank on calling games deep into the tournaments because of those talented Muskegon Heights teams, first under Lee Gilbert and more recently under Keith Guy.

It was virtually a given that Gene and I would make our annual trek up to Cadillac to follow those West Michigan Christian teams play their regional games at the Wexford County Civic Center.

I always got the butterflies whenever we would follow one of our great local teams down to the state final four with my favorite of all those venues still being the old Jenison Fieldhouse at MSU.

However, if I could have the power to bring back just one event in local basketball, it would be hosting those incredible Class A and B district and regional tournament games at the LC Walker Arena, or “The WALL-KA” as I used to burst out in one of many excitable moments.

My body will be many miles away from those great memories I have been so fortunate to witness over the many years, but thanks to the outstanding work by my colleagues at the localsportsjournal.com, I will be following closely our area teams with much interest from the Sunshine State.

Good luck to all those teams, players and coaches during the coming season. Take it from the ‘ole’ announcer, these will be times you will cherish forever.

*And what a season it was! Muskegon won the state A tournament, and they did it in convincing fashion, a 91-67 rout over Bloomfield Hills. Deyonta (DD) Davis scored 26 points while Mr. Basketball from that magical season. Deshaun Thrower tallied 21.*

The ‘Ole Announcer’ brings back memories of the 1957-58 basketball season when Ken VanDyke led the Warriors to their first of many state championships:

**Ken VnDyke and the WMC Warriors of 1958**

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Now that this year’s basketball season has begun to heat up, but certainly not the weather, I once again will look back in time and rekindle another favorite Moyes Memory.

Success on the hardwoods in our immediate area has been dominated for more than a half century by teams from Muskegon Heights and West Michigan Christian.

Not since Muskegon St. Mary’s, and eventual Class D Champ Muskegon St. Joseph in 1953, has another team outside those two perennial powers made it to the championship game at the basketball state finals.

It has always been my biased opinion that the Heights team of 1957 was the crème of the crop in our storied high school basketball annals, but the following year would be time for the West Michigan Christian Warriors to shine in the spotlight.

The 1950s was an era thankfully void of the many ‘basketball academies’ that have unfortunately proliferated today’s modern era. It was an age where the word “recruiting” was limited only to future college prospects, and high school teams were comprised of players from their own city or parish.

However, the 1958 West Michigan Christian team took it to the extreme! Not only did several players from that Warrior team live in the same city, but they lived in the same neighborhood!

Only starting forward Larry Weesies, who toiled on his family’s celery farm near Montague, lived outside this tight little area.

And all except Weesies had something else in common--- they were all former Muskegon Chronicle paperboys, something that this former newsboy could also relate to during our schoolboy years.

This was confirmed with a recent conversation I had with Warrior superstar Ken VanDyke.

“Four of the five starters all had paper routes, and I think they all had their routes even during the season, at least I did,” recalled VanDyke. “And I believe Jerry Meyering, who played with us until he graduated in January, who also a paperboy.”

The 1958 team had the perfect recipe for success, five solid starters and a solid backup to form a rotation that was coached to perfection by a coaching legend.

The Warriors had an unselfish point guard in Eddie Heethuis, who cared less about scoring, but only about winning. A guard in Lee Vanderstelt who could light them up when the opponents focus was in stopping the big forward wall down low

They had a team loaded with size, something that has always seemingly been a tradition at WMC.

The Warriors utilized a front line that included three juniors, Norm Vanderwall, Larry Weesies, and super sixth man Dave Mulder. And then they had the go to guy in the middle in their senior leader; 6’6 center Ken VanDyke.

Although VanDyke was the leading scorer on this pioneer team, five of their first six players took a turn during the season as a game leading scorer.

And perhaps most importantly, they had that leadership on the sidelines that would mold the first of nine state championship teams from WMC in coach Elmer Walcott.

While earlier teams from WMC would have to scramble to find a gym to practice, as well as a place to play their home games, the opening of the 1957-58 season saw the Warriors playing in a gym that they could finally call their own.

Always a zealous basketball nut, I well remember going to the dedication of that gym in 1957, not for a scheduled game, but a scrimmage among the varsity players.

After opening their season on the road with easy victories over Hopkins and Montague, the Warriors played their first ever-actual game at the East Muskegon gym on December 17, 1957.

With the WMC pep band pumping up the fan’s enthusiasm from the stage at the end of the court, the packed crowd in attendance was treated to a Warrior 65-49 trouncing of University Christian, with Warrior great Ken Van Dyke pouring in 29 points.

However, when I quizzed Van Dyke for what he most remembered about the gym opening, he modestly never brought up his high scoring output.

“I remember we had a glitch during that first home game as the new scoreboard broke down,” recalled a laughing VanDyke “They brought out a chalk board and they kept score with chalk and an eraser, just like I remember from year’s past when our high school used to play their games at the Nelson Junior High gym.”

I was always envious of the Warriors while in high school during this period as WMC was permitted to play an 18-game schedule, while schools that had a football team were permitted to play but 15 contests.

WMC won 15 of those 18 games, with one of those losses coming at the hands of Muskegon Catholic, 47-45 in overtime. The other two setbacks came against a Holland Christian team that was clearly the best team my Norsemen ever faced that same season.

The Maroons ran roughshod over my NM team at the district finals in 1958 and I thought they were a cinch to win it all in Class B. However, Holland Christian lost in the quarterfinals that year to the eventual state champs from East Lansing, coached by future MSU head coach Gus Ganakas.

The highlight of the regular season for WMC clearly had to be the 44-43 victory over the defending Class C state champions from Lakeview. Lakeview came into the late February contest at the home of the Warriors rated the No. 1 team in Class C.

This contest clearly had to signal to the Warrior nation that this was perhaps going to be a special year. And it was!

The Warriors handed Lakeview their first loss of the season 44-43, giving the locals a huge momentum surge heading into the upcoming tournament.

“We first played Lakeview my junior season in Lakeview, the year they won the state championship,” VanDyke remembered. “They had that little cracker box gym that had a track around the top.

When you were in the corner you couldn’t take the corner shot because you would hit the track,” chuckled Van Dyke.

The Warriors ended their regular season on an eight-game winning streak heading into the district tournament at the sparkling Whitehall gymnasium, opened just the preceding season.

It would be at the district tournament where the Warriors would receive their toughest competition during their nine-game run to the state title.

The Warriors were far from the top of their game at the Whitehall district, beginning with their opener with Hart, where Christian

led the Pirates by a slim 3 points at halftime before eventually pulling away in the second half in the 57-42 victory.

Montague can always boast that they came the closest to denying the Warriors a state championship in the district semi-finals, before bowing out six-point losers in the low scoring 47-41 WMC victory.

After being blown out by the Warriors twice during the regular season, the host Vikings made their third tilt much more interesting. Whitehall trailed Coach Walcott’s squad by only five points midway through the final period before falling by 8 points.

The Warriors would find Central Michigan Universities Rose Fieldhouse much more to their liking the following week at the Class C Regional.

WMC crushed their first two opponents, Edmore and Alcona with ease, in a regional that would showcase the talents of the Warriors star senior center VanDyke.

The opening 64-36 walloping of nearby Edmore saw Van Dyke play the role of a playmaker and rebounder. Although scoring a modest 10 points Van Dyke was content to feed his teammates for easy tallies, with Lee Vanderstelt and Larry Weesies combining for 39 of the Warrior points.

After blasting Alcona 67-48, with VanDyke and Norm Vanderwall each scoring 19 points, the table was set for the Warriors to win their first ever-regional title.

To capture the regional championship WMC would be playing their fourth opponent in the tournament from the West Michigan Conference, 1958 league champion Reed City.

The Warriors took the suspense out of this game early by bolting out to a commanding first half lead, a margin that eventually reached 25 points before Coach Walcott mercifully emptied his bench against the overmatched Reed City five.

Van Dyke was sensational with a game high 25 points and a multitude of rebounds. Among those in attendance at the packed fieldhouse was CMU head coach Ted Kjolhede.

When asked if his performance at CMU might have helped him procure a scholarship to play at Central, VanDyke simply said: “It could have. We also played there at the regional in our junior year and I played well.

The future CMU star did not have fond memories of the Warriors defeat at the hands of Remus back in 1957.

“I think I scored more baskets than their whole team, but we were not at all happy with the officiating. I was the only starter who did not foul out,” replied the hard-nosed WMC player from yesteryear that was never timid about mixing it up with the opposing team.

Christian would next square off much closer to home at the Grand Rapids Civic auditorium against Holt, who eliminated the 1957 state champs from Lakeview to earn a trip to the quarterfinals.

The Warriors deposed of Holt in GR with a convincing 46-35 win. It was Holt who six years earlier denied WMC a shot at copping their first regional championship when they eliminated Walcott’s 1952 squad 50-42.

Interesting enough, the semi-final game played at the Lansing Civic Auditorium was one that would garner national attention.

Interest in this game was not focused on the basketball talents of our local lads from Muskegon but was diverted to the daffy followers of their next opponent from Harbor Springs.

During their 1958 tournament run, an entirely new fad was initiated by many of the fans from Harbor Springs, a craze that has become much more commonplace today.

Many of the gals from the student body, as well as a few Harbor Springs teachers, demonstrated their support for their beloved basketball team by dyeing their hair in the school’s colors of orange and black.

Newspapers throughout the state, and even the entire nation, featured photos of these enthusiasts, who likely set the stage for future student sections such as the Cameron Crazies at Duke or, a little closer to home, the students that make up the wild Izzone at MSU.

The Warriors put a halt to the dream season for the sentimental favorites from Harbor Springs, by defeating the Rams from Northwestern Michigan 50-43 at the semifinals held at the Lansing Civic Center.

“I remember that being a wild game, said VanDyke. I believe we were behind at the end of the 3rd quarter, and we had to rally to pull that game out. We were really cold, and Dave Mulder came off the bench, as well as Dale Poel, to bail us out with some big baskets in the final quarter.”

There would be no fourth quarter rally needed at the Class C state championship game the following afternoon against Highland Park Saint Benedict, played in front of another sellout crowd of more than 12,000 fans at MSU’s Jenison Fieldhouse.

 VanDyke put it bluntly when he quickly stated: “Hey, we killed them. I think at halftime we were up 33-14 before we had a second half letdown and scored only 12 points.”

The 45-35 victory would turn out to be the first of an amazing nine state titles over the next half-century for WMC.

To capture their first of their state titles back in 1958 the Warriors needed to win nine pressure packed tournament games in a row- one more than the maximum amount needed to win a championship with today’s format.

Although the Warriors had several talented players on that pioneer state championship team, Van Dyke was quick to laud his former coach, Elmer Walcott.

“Elmer was a very good coach. Those were the days when coaches were more authoritative and really concentrated on the fundamentals. He was strict and a true disciplinarian, much like Harry Potter was for Muskegon,” praised VanDyke of his former coach.

VanDyke summed up his former coach (still currently residing in the Muskegon area at 88 years of age) by simply stating: “He really knew his stuff and he seemed to always make all the right decisions. And hey --- he was pretty successful” replied one of the Warriors all-time greats in an understating tone.

Walcott would be inducted into the Muskegon Area Hall of Fame in the second class ever to be inducted back in 1988.

While there is seemingly a revolving door for high school basketball coaches of late, that certainly isn’t the case at WMC.

 From 1950 until the end of the 2012 school year, only three coaches had coached the Warriors. Sandwiched between the long-time reigns of Walcott and Hall of Fame coach Jim Goorman, for a brief period, was the star point guard from those 1958 state champs, Eddie Heethuis.

Following his college days at CMU, Van Dyke also went into coaching and teaching before retiring from Fruitport High School.

But not before he had left a legacy at CMU with a record that still exists today.

When I quizzed Ken about his playing days at CMU, he was proud to say: “Hey, I still have the Freshman record at Central, averaging more than 10 rebounds a game. (Actually, it was even better at 11).

While doing some research for this story I checked out the record books at CMU. Even though it has been more than fifty years since VanDyke last laced up his basketball sneakers, he is listed among the top 20 scorers all time at Central.

VanDyke was an even better rebounder for the Chippewas. He is still the 3rd leading rebounder all time for the Chips, just 20 less than his Muskegon area teammate Dave Nelson. For his career VanDyke averaged better than 10 rebounds a game!

And yes, right at the top of the list is his freshman record of pulling down 271 rebounds back in 1959, a whopping 78 more than any other freshman player in CMU’s history.

Even today the Warrior great is still a top-notch athlete who doesn’t look like he is a pound heavier than in his heyday. The 73-year-old Van Dyke has shot his age on the golf course

There are currently two coaches from West Michigan Christian in the Muskegon Area Sports Hall of Fame installed in the MAHOF. With all those basketball trophies sitting in the trophy cases my vote for the first former Warrior to go in, as a player would be Ken Van Dyke.

West Michigan Christian can look back proudly of their 9 state championships, and 14 appearances at the state finals. But only this pioneer group from 1958 can boast that they started it all.

*And yes indeed, VanDyke was inducted in the Muskegon Area Sports Hall of Fame in 2016.*

**Keith Guy and the Muskegon Big Reds**

When my long-time sidekick Gene Young informed me that Keith Guy had been hired to perform double duty at Muskegon High School a couple of years ago, we both were unanimous in our opinion that the Big Reds had hit a home run with Guy.

With his beloved alma mater Muskegon Height hung out to dry, and not knowing if there would even be a Muskegon Heights High School, not to mention a viable sports program, Guy had to do what was best for him and his family.

Certainly, Guy had to have mixed emotions for departing the Heights to take over the same duties at Muskegon, but it has worked out well, not only for him, but what a boost Guy has given the entire Muskegon School system and their student/athletes.

As an athletic director, he has been the Don Canham of the Muskegon area, where large crowds continue to fill up Hackley Stadium in the fall, but now Muskegon’s Redmond Potter gymnasium is seeing packed houses for the first time since this remarkable gymnasium was erected nearly 40 years ago.

Obviously, it’s nice to have such talented players as Deshaun Thrower and Deyonta Davis, but it is the coach that must have all the players buy into a team concept.

One certainly can’t point the finger at Guy and mention that he has put together this incredible winning streak by feasting on a cupcake schedule.

In addition to teams within their own conference that the Big Reds must play twice during the season, Guy, as the Athletic Director, put together a schedule that included some of the toughest competition in the state, and even the country.

Included among the Big Red victories this season was their victory at the start of the New Year over Chicago Curie. Guy, with considerable help from his good friend Larry VanHaitsma, assembled perhaps the toughest triple-header ever formed here in the Port City.

Saving the best, and the toughest for last, Muskegon dealt Curie, currently rated among the top 3 teams in the country, their only defeat, 73-66, before a partisan house that braved another blizzard in packing the Redmond—Potter gymnasium.

Sure, many of the naysayers will point out that Curie was playing without superstar Cliff Alexander, but in the previous years’ matchup between these two Midwest powers, Curie didn’t exactly blow out a Big Red team that is now much improved over last year’s squad.

Included among the Big Red victims this year were perennial powers such as Rockford, Saginaw Arthur Hill, Grand Rapids Christian, and Benton Harbor.

 On February 15th they handed newcomer Mt. Clemens, the state’s 3rd rated team in all classes their only defeat of the season and concluded their regular season Thursday by hosting River Rouge, a school that has been a dynasty in basketball for many years.

Surely many of the kudos for this teams’ success should be showered on Keith Guy.

I first remember Keith has a diminutive left-handed guard on the hardwoods at Muskegon Heights.

Following his graduation from Muskegon Heights back in 1993 where, as the point guard and team leader, he led the Tigers to the state championship game against Saginaw Buena Vista, Guy played basketball at the next level for the Jayhawks at Muskegon Community College.

It was at MCC where I first met Keith Guy.

Undoubtedly Keith is most widely known for his basketball coaching skills, or maybe even his past work as a city councilman for the Heights in his ‘spare time.’

However, I best remember Keith for befriending a foreign student who my wife Mary and I took into our household some 20 years ago.

His name was Marvin Stubbs, a native from the Turks & Calicos Islands, who with a lot of help from Muskegon Community College coach Gene Gifford, was accepted at MCC as a student/athlete.

I must confess I was a little less than honest about Marvin’s physical attributes when attempting to talk (con might be the better word) coach Gifford into offering Stubbs a spot on the Jayhawk basketball team.

Although I was truthful in describing Marvin’s quickness, leaping ability, high academic standards and his defensive prowess on the court, I left out one little factor: Marvin only had 3 fingers on his shooting hand, a handicap I conveniently forgot to mention to Coach Gifford until Stubbs was already enrolled at MCC.

“So, he can’t palm a basketball, nor shoot very well,” I later said to my good friend Gifford, “but he’s a great kid who really deserves a chance at getting an American education.”

Shortly after Marvin arrived on New Years Day, during a typical Muskegon snowstorm, he began classes, as well as playing basketball for the Jayhawks. Marvin asked me if there were any players on the team he should seek out as a friend so he could help himself better understand our culture.

When he mentioned Keith Guy --- I quickly said,” you could find none better than Keith.”

During his two years stay here in Muskegon Marvin did receive an excellent education as well as a great experience, with much of the credit going to his new friend Keith Guy.

Guy followed up his two-year stint on the Jayhawks by finishing up his playing days as the point guard at Ferris State, proudly acquiring his coveted degree in 1998.

Talk about a man who has paid his dues --- Guy has coached at virtually all levels on his way up the ladder.

His first step into the coaching fraternity began at West Michigan Christian as a Freshmen Coach for the Warriors. Hired at WMC on the recommendation of Jim Goorman, the hall of fame coach had nothing but praise for Guy.

“I could see from his playing days when he played with my son Jeremy that he had the fire to play hard, and I could see he understood the game so well,” related Goorman. “We often had Keith over at our house for spaghetti dinners and I quickly liked Keith.

I liked the idea that he came from Muskegon Heights with their great tradition and I knew he would fit in very well with ours,” added Goorman.

Following his apprenticeship under Goorman at WMC, Gene Gifford was so impressed with his coaching acumen with the Warriors that he asked Guy to return to MCC to help with the Jayhawk basketball program.

Guy was ebullient in describing his former coach and mentor at the Jayhawks.

He (Gifford) helped me so much with my career,” said Guy. He gave me my start out of high school, and he taught me so much about the game of basketball. Coach Gifford was one of the most organized coaches I have ever been around, and he had a wealth of knowledge,” replied the appreciative Guy.

“When I came out of high school, I was not a very good shooter. Coach Gifford was a very good shooting coach and by the time I left MCC I was a much better shooter.”

Guy, and the man he credits with being so instrumental with his coaching career, have now come full circle. Still itching to coach in the twilight of his own very successful coaching career, Gifford has taken over the reigns as the head coach at Mona Shores, following a long stint coaching in the collegiate ranks at MCC and Olivet College.

When asked what is was like this year to now compete against his former coach, now the head coach at Mona Shores, Guy said: “It was a different feeling. It was like I was coaching against one of my parents.”

Guy’s primary job at Muskegon Community College was working in the admissions office, but Keith would assist Gifford and his long- time assistant Glen Metcalf at practices whenever he could fit in basketball around his office duties.

“Keith couldn’t make all the practices because of his work schedule but he would make all the games,” recalled Gifford. “He was really helpful in mentoring the kids, especially the freshman, as they could stop by his office where they could receive some helpful advice from him on how to prepare for the college life.”

When asked what it has been like coaching against Guy this past season Gifford responded: “Keith played for me for two years at MCC and I could see right away that he had the makings to be a good coach. He was a natural leader with a very good understanding of the game, extremely coachable and was an outstanding point guard for us.

I’ve followed his career and I’m very proud of Keith, as I am of many of my former players with whatever occupation they went into,” added Guy’s former coach. I’ve always been impressed with how he works with his players and the discipline he instills in his program, and you can see the respect that all his players have for him as a coach and as a person” added Gifford.

“It’s obviously a little different to coach against Keith, but once the whistle blows I quickly forget about all that stuff. It’s a lot different from talking to him before the game to when they toss the ball up to start the game,” chuckled Gifford.

Gifford, however, showed his true colors when he concluded his praise of Guy by saying: “It is different in coaching against him, ---and enjoyable --- and I’m really happy for him for the success he has had, but I sure would like to beat him once this year,” laughed Gifford.

Guy is now 2-0 over his former mentor with a 3rd game a distinct possibility--- if they can both advance to this week’s district championship game in the Big Red Gymnasium.

Following his one year at MCC, Muskegon Heights came calling and Guy returned to his former high school where he would coach for 12 years, the final nine as the Tiger’s head coach.

Guy had a magnificent run at his alma mater, taking the Tigers to the elite final four in five of those 9 years, twice reaching the state championship game.

My last basketball game I broadcast locally in Muskegon was a regional championship game seven years ago between Muskegon Heights and East Grand Rapids.

The game was tied with about 15 seconds left on the clock in regulation. During a timeout Guy diagrammed a play he wanted run in the huddle for the Tigers.

When the star player on that Tiger team failed to follow Guy’s directions, putting up a poor shot that sent the game into overtime, Guy put the player on the bench for the ensuing overtime session.

 Heights would lose that game, but his steadfast decision solidified my opinion, as well as that of my broadcasting partner and legendary basketball guru Gene Young, that Keith Guy was going to be a great coach.

And he has disappointed no one.

When I asked Keith about his remembrances from that game he answered: “I learned that decision from the coaches I played under and the coaches I served with that you must do things the right way. You must hold yourself accountable and you have to hold your student athletes accountable. Your players have to follow directions, and if they don’t, they have to suffer the consequences.”

Today’s players now do it the Guy way, and to say it has worked, is a huge understatement.

His Big Reds opens the tourney against the Grand Haven Buccaneers, a very familiar opponent on Monday March 3rd.

Fortunately, for Big Red fans, this game will not be played at the old Grand Haven Pit, but for the first time in history, the district will be hosted at the Redmond Potter gymnasium, where it’s a certainty a full house of Big Red and Grand Haven supporters will raise the roof.

Guy’s thoughts at this time of the year are not just solely focused on his basketball team, but as the athletic director at Muskegon High he has a multitude of other duties.

First and foremost, amongst his current main concerns is finding on opening day opponent for next year’s season opener in football. “That is definitely one of my top priorities and I’m hopeful that we can find an opponent within the next week or so,” added Guy.

Not surprisingly, Guy’s favorite athlete at Muskegon High isn’t one of his current Big Red players, but a player on the Big Reds varsity girls’ team, his daughter Keirra.

And like a typical proud father, Keith likes to sing the praises about his daughter. “She’s a senior, and it’s a been a joy watching her play the last couple of years…. It will be sad to see her go as she’s my little girl.”

Guy has been able to watch his daughter in action this season up in the stands accompanied by his wife Kesha and younger sons Christian and Cameron.

When I asked if Keirra was left-handed like her dad Keith said “no, she’s right-handed--- but I tell you what--- she can go to her left as well as she can to her right,” boasted Guy the father and not the coach.

The current Big Reds are riding high, one of the top-rated teams in the country, with enormous expectations placed on these youngsters to bring home the first basketball state championship at Muskegon High since 1937.

I did not have to ask Keith his thoughts on his two Division I superstars, Deyonta Davis and Deshaun Thrower, as so much has already been mentioned, and deservedly so, on their incredible contributions to this year’s Big Red Team.

But Keith Guy clearly understands it takes more than two players to make a long run in this year’s upcoming tournament. Guy was quick to praise William Roberson, a lightening quick point guard, a left-handed sharpshooter as was his coach a couple of decades earlier.

“He is really tough, can shoot the ball and he is the quarterback on our team. Roberson is the guy who makes sure the engine in running,” replied Guy.

“Then we have Joeviair Kennedy, who I call the X-factor. He is a 6’3 player who plays on the wing and who I feel is also a Division I player.

Jordan Waire is our defensive stopper, one of the best defensive players that I have ever coached. We put him on the opposing team’s best player, and he also can score as well,” Guy replied.

Sounds like the perfect ‘recipe for success’. But as they often say during those dreaded infomercials on the ‘telly’ (But wait, it gets even better.”) “Jason Loera comes off the bench and does a very nice job for us as a defender.

We also have a couple of very good low post guys that come in and give Davis a rest ---- Michael Dobson and Jamel French. Dobson is a football guy, who gives us a change of pace from what Davis gives us and French is another player I can count on off the bench who can really pass the ball,” concluded Guy.

Guy has done a great job in perfecting a group of players who have bought into their roles; perhaps the toughest challenge a coach faces at any level.

During my conversation with Keith, I asked him if he had any second guesses on leaving his alma mater to take over his pressure packed duo role as a basketball coach and AD at Muskegon. “I have no second thoughts at all. I am really happy I made the move, both for me and my family.”

In making his decision a little easier, Guy was quick to point out that things are not as they once were at the Heights.

“Muskegon Heights as a public school is closed. My alma mater no longer exists in my opinion. This is the right move for me, I’m happy to be here and good things are happening. I am blessed to be in this situation,” said Guy near the close of our conversation.

When I asked Guy about these high expectations placed on his Big Red basketball team from our local basketball zealots, Guy responded: “it’s good to be in that kind of discussion but as you very well know, everything must go just right.

We have to avoid injuries, not have a poor shooting night, and hope that our opponent we’re playing does not have a career night. I realize that on paper we may be as good as anyone, but you have to go out and play hard every night and to prepare to play up to our potential.”

 If it happens, and the Big Reds accept the championship trophy in East Lansing ---- Great! But if there comes a game when the shots don’t fall, or maybe the calls don’t go their way, let’s just remember an old quote from a former British friend of mine: “That it’s just a game, and not a bloody war.”

In the meantime, Muskegon fans are just elated that Keith Guy is now a Big Red.

*Postscript: The Big Reds were the state Class A Champs!*

Muskegon’s Contribution to the 2014 Winter Olympics was next on the docket:

**Muskegon Area’s Amazing Contribution to Winter Olympics**

**By Jim Moyes**

Perhaps I am a little old fashion in my ways, now that I have reached those so-called ‘Golden Years’ of one’s lifespan, but I continue to marvel at what our area has contributed to this wonderful world of sports.

However, I think many of us really don’t fully appreciate, or even recognize the amazing impact our area has contributed to this year’s edition of the Winter Olympics being held in Sochi.

It’s not like Muskegon is conveniently geographically located in the middle of a winter sports wonderland. Muskegon is not Lake Placid, Squaw Valley, or a majestic winter sports complex nestled in the Rocky Mountains.

But what area can boast of contributing more to this year’s Olympics than Muskegon?

Let’s first begin with a sport that has taken these Olympics by storm --- Snowboarding. And to think it all began right here in Muskegon!

This wonderful sport’s origin goes back to Christmas Day in 1965.

 Nearly a foot of snow had fallen on Christmas Eve in the Port City, and the nearby dunes were perfect for the traditional recreational sport of sledding or tobogganing.

 However, the father of two exuberant daughters, with an expectant third on the way, couldn't find a sled or even a popular flying saucer dish.

Muskegon's answer to Thomas Edison just had to come up with something. What in the world could the girls, Wendy and Laurie, use to slide down the all too inviting snow-covered dunes? The father grabbed an old ski outside for the youngsters to slide on but that just wouldn't do. He took another ski and lashed a pair together - still - no dice --- They were too narrow to sit on and too long to control while standing up.

It was a moment later when Muskegon High Grad Sherm Poppen's decision to grab a water ski, coupled with a few refinements, would change the Winter Sports World forever.

Although originally given the name ‘snurfer’, this former ‘scrub on those Big Red football teams in the late 1940s had invented the snowboard.

How proud Sherm Poppen must be to be recognized in 1995 as the first person inducted in the Snowboarding Hall of Fame in Baniff, Alberta, Canada.

My how far this sport has come since the first so-called ‘snowboarding world championship held years ago took place, not on the Olympic Slopes of Lake Placid, Nagano Japan, Salt Lake City, Vancouver or Sochi --- but on Blockhouse Hill in North Muskegon.

Let history books show that only a dozen or, so contestants were on hand --- and the first World Champion was crowned, a bartender at the world-famous Bear Lake Tavern by the name of Ted Slater. Maybe the very likeable Slater should also join Poppen in the snowboarding Hall of Fame.

Never in my wildest imagination did I ever envision, when they were erecting that wooden luge run at this same Blockhouse Hill complex some 30 years ago, the impact a young Muskegon lad. who grew up adjacent to this complex. would contribute to the sport of Luge.

Mark Grimmette has come a long way from his high school days when I first recall him as an end on those Reeths Puffer football teams back in the late 1980s.

A five-time Olympian and winner of a silver, as well as a bronze medalist in his sport, Grimmette is now the face of this wonderful winter sport.

It still brings chills down this now aging body that Mark was picked by his USA teammates to be the flag bearer at the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver.

So respected by his fellow lugers, Grimmette is now the director for this country’s luge operations as well as the head mentor for this sport in Sochi.

How proud I was last night when shortly before I called it a night, there was Lewis Johnson interviewing Mark on NBC.

As improbable as this scenario would eventually play out, I likewise never would have envisioned this area producing a head coach for our USA Olympic Hockey team.

When LC Walker generously donated the money to build our majestic hockey arena back in 1960, hockey in this area was only played on outdoor ponds, as the Old Mart Dock Arena had been closed for hockey for years.

And now the head coach, following in the footsteps of 1960 coach John Riley and hockey coaching icon Herb Brooks, is our own Dan Bylsma.

My first recollection of Bylsma was, not has a hockey player, but as a slugging performer on those West Michigan Christian baseball team from the middle 1980s. To this day, Bylsma is the only player ever to hit three home runs over the fence at historic Marsh Field as a high school player.

Now he is in the spotlight in Sochi as the head coach of our promising 2014 Olympic Hockey team.

All three of these Muskegon headliners are now entrenched in the Muskegon Area Hall of Fame. And their legacy just continues to grow!

Thanks guys, for making us proud and making us feel warm during this bone chilling winter.

Shortly after I received word that former Whitehall grad Tony Jasick was appointed the head coach of Jacksonville University in 2014, I took a short jaunt from my home in nearby Ponte Vedra Beach to interview Tony. Here is my story from May of 2014:

**Moyes Memories with former Whitehall Cage Star Tony Jasick**

What a pleasant surprise I had the other day when I picked up our local paper here in Jacksonville to see a frontpage sport headline announcing that Jacksonville University had hired Whitehall’s Tony Jasick as their head basketball coach.

It had been many years since I had last seen Jasick, but Tony could not have been more accommodating. The very congenial young coach treated this ‘ole announcer’ like royalty during my most enjoyable visit at his new office, located on the picturesque Jacksonville University campus.

As one of his assistants guided me into his office Jasick was already working the phones to build a solid roster for the upcoming basketball season.

Jasick will take over the reins of a program with a storied history that had one great shining moment. Jacksonville University advanced all the way to the National Championship game back in 1970, before losing to John Wooden’s UCLA Bruins who were right in the midst of their unprecedented run of seven straight NCAA championships.

The former Whitehall and Muskegon Community College cage star brings a solid resume to the Sunshine State, including a pair of awards earned during this past season where he directed Indiana Purdue of Fort Wayne to their school’s all-time best record of 25 wins against but 10 defeats.

This achievement propelled Jasick as the winner of the Hugh Durham Award presented annually to the top coach in mid-Major basketball.

His other award earned was for being named the sexiest coach in mid-major basketball, an award that I discreetly didn’t bring up during my conversation with the very happily married Jasick.

Jasick will now take over a program that has struggled over the past few years, a predicament that Jasick is more than familiar with during his basketball-coaching career.

When I brought up a few dour comments that have been accompanying Jacksonville U’s basketball fortunes of late, it was clear to me that Jasick had not lost his sense of humor.

“That why we’re here, to build a program. It’s like my mom said shortly after I took this job when she asked me about the status of our program. I told her mom--- we have a lot of work to do, and she said: why do you always take jobs like this Tony?” said a laughing Jasick.

“I said I don’t know Mom, but we are going to get it going. It may not be tomorrow, and it may not be this year, but we are going to get it going,” said a confident Jasick.

His many friends in the Muskegon/White Lake area can be assured of one thing as Tony climbs the ladder: He has not forgotten the impact his former coaches, teachers, friends and family have had on his career.

When our local paper (Jacksonville-Times Union) displayed a photo from the news conference that included Tony, his wife Melissa and two daughters it quickly became apparent to me that Jasick had not forgotten his roots.

There can be no greater honor than to have your first-born named after ones’self.

 I was mesmerized when I saw that the oldest of his daughters in that photo was named Rowen, who I quickly recognized was the last name of his former basketball coach at Whitehall, the late Mike Rowen, who passed away very unexpectedly in 2000.

The Vikings were an impressive 34-10 in Jasick’s final two seasons under Rowan, where Tony pumped in a hefty 22 points per game in his senior season back in 1996.

The jovial Jasick quickly turned 180 degrees when I asked him the impact Mike Rowen had on his career. A very somber Tony paused a few moments before responding.

“He was extremely influential in my life --- and ----by just playing for a guy who does everything right --- everyday.

There was no difference from day one and the last day of the season. His expectations were still the same, the accountability was the same --- so as a player, who kind of thought that perhaps coaching was an avenue that I might take up later, just seeing him, going through with him, and watching him go through his business was extremely powerful” expressed a very genuine Jasick.

Jasick continued with his reverence for his late coach who left us all too soon in 2000. “Once I graduated from high school he became more of a personal mentor/friend. We played golf together, but now as I look back on it, not as much as I would have liked to. He was a good man.”

When I asked Jasick of others that that played a helpful role in his development, he was quick to point out several mentors from the Muskegon area.

“I was fortunate that when I was growing up at that time there were a lot of guys who were really good, and because our area was so small, you could have relationships with a number of people, and they were really generous people.

“Whether it was rival coaches like Jim Tate at Whitehall or Rick Zoulek at Shelby, all they cared about was helping young people grow in the game. So just to be around those guys and having them work with me --- and just talking about the game--- was so important to me,” added a grateful Jasick.

And how about the run veteran basketball coach Gene Gifford has been on of late with the accomplishment in the coaching ranks?

Former Gifford products include not only current Muskegon Big Red coach Keith Guy, and Tony Jasick, both of whom played their college basketball here at Muskegon Community College for Gifford, but Tennessee has hired another Gifford player from yesterday with the recent hire of Donny Tyndall.

“I talk with Coach Gifford all the time. Gene Gifford may be one of the most undervalued coaches in the area,’ praised his former Jayhawk point guard Jasick.

“There are very few people who get into coaching who don’t have an ulterior motive, but when you talk to coach Gifford, all he cares about is how can I help Tony (Jasick) be successful.

Although still a few years shy of reaching 40 years of age Jasick now has more than a decade of college coaching for his resume.

One certainly cannot question Tony’s relentless work ethic.

When I first contacted Tony down here in Jacksonville, I thought he was putting me on when I asked him where he was temporarily residing here in NE Florida.

“Right here in my office,” replied Jasick instantly.

But one quick glance around his office led me to believe that maybe he wasn’t pulling the ‘ole announcers’ chain.

When I asked him if this office was truly where he lived, Jasick quickly burst out with a big grin: “Yes, --- it’s true.

It was about this time in my interview that Jasick, not wanting to waste valuable time, grabbed a power-bar and a banana out of his desk drawer to consume for his hasty daily lunch.

Although it has been less than a month since Jasick was officially announced as the head coach with the Jacksonville Dolphins, Tony has made several trips back to his now former hometown of Fort Wayne, “I was literally on a plane between here and Fort Wayne for five days.

Before I could get very far into gushing about my new digs here in Jacksonville, Tony was quick to interrupt me by stating that he truly loved his stay in Fort Wayne.

When I asked Jasick if there was one point in his life when he thought that coaching would be in his future he replied: “ I think I always had this infinity towards coaching, and I think it was because of the impact from all these guys that I told you about earlier, as well as others like Jim Heeres, the late Duane Lamiman, and Greg Russell.

Jasick still keeps in touch with many of his former pals, including long time teacher and coach Jim “Red” Heeres.

“When I was in college I would work out every morning with ‘Old Man’ Herres at 6:00 am.

I’m telling you; I learned more about life from just working out with him with our morning talks --- like how to treat other people--- how to deal with adversity ---- I’ll tell yah --- I’m a lucky guy to have to have all the good people around me at that time.”

He (The 79 years young Heeres) still challenges me to get back to Whitehall so they can play some one-on-one basketball.”

I figured there had to be a bigger attraction for Jasick coming to Jacksonville then the great weather.

 When I asked him “why here ---- with Jacksonville University:” Jasick responded: “I realize the program has struggled the last few years, in a number of areas. And unfortunately, or fortunately--- that’s kind of what our reputation has been. We’ve been able to go in, clean it up, fix it, and head things in the right direction.”

I voiced my concern to Jasick on the possibility of losing some of his current players by transferring to other universities.

“My feeling is that if you don’t want to be a part of what we’re doing then I wish them nothing but the best” Jasick replied with the utmost sincerity.

“What we do have here now are four guys, maybe five, that want to be a part of the foundation of what we are doing, and I am excited at what I have seen them doing.

However, we have a lot of work to do and that’s one of the reasons why I’m sleeping here on the couch until Melissa and the kids join me down here.”

I certainly didn’t have to any prompting to find out how important it is to have a supporting wife during these exciting, but stressful times for coaches that spend an inordinate amount of time away from their family.

“It’s a hard deal to be a coaches’ wife, especially with a husband that takes jobs that I take.” Jasick said perhaps only partly in jest.

Jasick spent a great deal of time just raving about how supportive his wife Melissa has been over the years. ‘There is just no way possible that I would be where I am today without her support,” Jasick said repeatedly to me.

The two have known each other since they were about 13 years of age, and both were graduates of Whitehall High School in the class if 1996.

After I completed my great conversation with the new hometown head coach, I had the opportunity to spend a few moments chatting with a few people of his support staff.

They were all so excited to have Jasick on board and were confident that he is the perfect fit to rebuild a once mighty program.

And I couldn’t agree more. Welcome to Jacksonville Tony.

*Jasick was released from his duties at Jacksonville University following the 2020-21 season. With facilities at JU not even comparable to some of the better high school gyms in his native state of Michigan, it became extremely difficult for Jasick to recruit the caliber of players needed to win at the D1 level. Jasick is now an assistant coach at Stephen F. Austin University in Texas.*

The Muskegon Area lost perhaps their number one native son with the passing of former Big Red, MSU, and NFL star Earl Morrall. Here is my tribute to this great man from May of 2014:

**MOYES MEMORIES REMEMBERS THE GREAT EARL MORRALL**

**By Jim Moyes**

When I received the dreaded phone call notifying me of the passing of Earl Morrall, although not totally unexpected, as Earl had been ill for some time, I was still stunned with the news that our proud community had lost perhaps its greatest ambassador.

Tributes have rolled in from across the country, and most deservedly so for Morrall, with most of his incredible accomplishments generally detailing his magnetic career in the NFL.

But for those of us who grew up in the Muskegon area back in the 1950’s, we remember Earl for being more than just a National Football League legend with three championship super bowl rings to his credit.

And my, what a high school career he experienced at Muskegon High!

I was on hand to only witness Earl Morrall star as the Muskegon Big Red quarterback but one time in person, and ironically it was the last time Morrall would ever taste defeat, a loss to the Muskegon Heights Tigers in the final game of his junior season.

As a young gym rat, I was in awe when Earl and his Big Red basketball team made a cross-town journey over to North Muskegon for a basketball scrimmage against my hometown Norseman. Even in grade school I was already convinced that I was watching on the court a man that was clearly going to be a super star.

My first live look at the talented Morrall was not a happy one, however. I looked on in dismay as Earl’s suicide squeeze bunt in the ninth inning brought in the winning run from third base as Muskegon edged a North Muskegon team, coached by my father Paul Moyes, in Earl’s sophomore season back in 1950.

It would be the last time that I ever rooted against the popular Morrall.

I have had the great honor to interview Earl several times during my many years in broadcasting, and I truly mean it when I say it was an honor. We rarely talked about his career in the NFL, but for the most part just would reminisce about his time spent in his hometown of Muskegon.

Until he became ill in recent years, his ability to recall those wonderful, but now long-ago high school years, was uncanny. Although he played in hundreds of football games in the spotlight of the prestigious NFL, I was always amazed at how he fondly remembered those days playing for the Big Reds more than 60 years ago.

I always likened Morrall with a fictitious character portrayed back in the late 1940’s and early 50’s, in books authored by Clair Bee ---- Chip Hilton.

Chip Hilton, to me, was Earl Morrall in disguise: a rare three sport super star that came from humble beginnings that never let success go to his head.

Very few people outside of our own Muskegon area realize how good a baseball player Morrall was, not only at Muskegon High, but also at MSU.

Earl beamed when he recalled those days back in the early 1950s when the Big Reds captured the state baseball and football championships in 1951.

Morrall wasn’t too shabby on the basketball court either. As a high scoring forward on the Big Red basketball team Muskegon made it all the way to the Class A regional finals in his senior season.

Although Earl was clearly the team leader, he would always praise his talented teammates who would remain very close to Earl over the years.

Michigan State has suited up several great quarterbacks over the years, but only Earl was a first team All-American performer at MSU.

As one who cared only about winning, and little about padding his statistics, Earl still finished fourth in the voting for the Heisman Trophy, one spot ahead of the 1956 Heisman winner Paul Hornung.

The San Francisco 49rs selected Morrall as the 2nd pick in the entire 1956 draft where he began his much-traveled NFL career over the next 21 years.

Morrall also excelled in baseball at MSU.

The 60th year reunion of the only MSU baseball team ever to advance to the college World Series will be held in East Lansing from May 9-11th, but now it will be a bittersweet experience with the passing of their beloved shortstop from 1954.

I was in correspondence with Bob Reising yesterday, a teammate of Earl’s on the greatest MSU baseball team in their school’s history.

“Earl was about as modest and even-tempered as an athlete could be,” said Reising. “I never once saw or even heard that he lost his composure or temper at Michigan State. This despite his uncommon multi sports talents and successes.

He may well have been the ideal American college athlete, he was handsome, he made good grades, he was the multi-sport star with obvious professional promise--- and always was a perfect gentleman,’ added Reising, the former Spartan now retired and living in Conway, Arkansas,

The following Reising comment I believe depicts Earl perfectly: “Everyone liked him too. How could anyone not like him—what was there to dislike?

How excited I was when Earl was traded from Pittsburgh to Detroit back in 1958 for long time Lion icon Bobby Layne.

I once was a die-hard Detroit Lion fan, but that all changed when the Lions traded Earl to the New York Giants in 1965.

 Earl had many great games with the Lions but there was one moment that I will long remember.

During a very long interview I had with Earl during one of his trips back to Muskegon, I asked him about that miraculous last play of the great comeback victory in 1960 over Baltimore.

He remembered that play like it was yesterday.

The packed house at Baltimore’s Memorial stadium just went into hysterics as legendary quarterback Johnny Unitas delivered an apparent winning touchdown pass to receiver Lenny Moore with just 15 seconds left to play.

The Lions had but 10-second lefts on the clock with no timeouts remaining when Morrall calmly called the play in the huddle. Instead of throwing a Hail Mary pass as far as he could, Morrall delivered a pass to his tight end Jim Gibbons over the middle.

I can still vividly recall viewing that game on a grainy 21” black & white TV screen at Old Ronan Hall on the campus of CMU. We all went berserk when Gibbons broke a tackle and went into the end zone as the Lions captured their most incredulous win in their storied franchise history.

Earl had many great moments during his athletic career, but I find it unconscionable that many will only remember the one super bowl he didn’t win back in 1969, the year when Earl was the NFL’s MVP.

It has always troubled me as to why Earl has always been snubbed for induction into the NFL Hall of Fame in Canton. There are several pitchers with their plaques on the wall in Cooperstown that were relief pictures, with Mariano Rivera a cinch to be added to that group in five years.

Why not a spot in football for the greatest relief pitcher/quarterback in NFL history than our own Earl Morrall? Three Super Bowls victories, including his relief of an ailing Johnny Unitas in 1970 that atoned for their upset by the Jets from a year earlier.

And, by the way, his relief of Unitas dubs Earl Morrall as still the only quarterback in Super Bowl history to come off the bench and guide his team to a win in football’s biggest annual contest.

Earl’s recent passing however, as kindled a great deal of interest in naming the NFL Comeback Player of the Year in Morrall’s honor, an award he won in 1972.

As one who has delved heavily into the fun filled aspect of sports trivia, I have often heard questions such as: “Who is the only player to play in both a Super Bowl and a World Series” or “who is the only player to play in the Rose Bowl and a World Series?”

But Earl doubles those achievements. No other athlete in our nations’ sports history has played in a Rose Bowl (he played in two and MSU won both), a Super Bowl (Played in four games and was on three winners), the Pro Bowl, and played in the baseball College World Series!

I was in the audience at the inaugural induction ceremony for the Muskegon Area Sports Hall of Fame, a night that will live with me forever. Seven of Muskegon’s greatest all around athletes were honored that evening back in 1987, and now with the passing of Earl Morrall, sadly, none of these greats all still with us.

Hall of Fame coach Don Shula perhaps said it best with his recent quote of his veteran quarterback. “He was someone who was as good a person as he was a player,” said Shula, who coached Morrall in both Baltimore and Miami. “All Earl ever did for me was win games, whether it was as a starter or coming off the bench.

Shula knew a great quarterback when he saw one as he coached some of the best that the game as ever seen. “I’ve always said John Unitas, Bob Griese and Dan Marino are in the Hall of Fame, and Earl is in my own personal Hall of Fame,” said Shula in a Friday interview.

That undefeated 1972 Miami team, ranked by many as the greatest team in NFL history, will etch Earl’s name in NFL lore forever.

“There would not have been a perfect season without Earl Morrall,” said Griese many times over the years.

Earl Morrall will always be in my Hall of Fame, not only as a great athlete, but also as a great man. Thanks for all the great memories, Earl.

Continuing with 2014, the following story on football turnarounds was written for the Football Preview issue for the Local Sports Journal prior to the start of the 2014 season:

**Moyes’ Memories Recalls his Favorite Football Turnarounds**

**By Jim Moyes**

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Keeping with the theme for this years’ Football Preview issue of the Local Sports Journal, I have been asked by my friends at the journal to comply with the spirit and come up with some Moyes’ Memories turnarounds from our storied past on the gridiron.

How fitting it is that this year’s featured story revolves around the amazing turnaround at Shelby High under the tutelage of Tiger head coach Lorenzo Rodriguez.

Many of our readers might be surprised that it was Shelby’s 1977 undefeated team that was the first of our area teams ever to represent our area in the playoffs. The Tigers would then have to wait another quarter of a century before returning to the coveted playoffs in 2001.

Under Rodriguez’s expert guidance the Tigers are now seeking their fifth straight appearance in the late Fall classic, and their second straight championship in the very competitive West Michigan Conference.

Shelby met their rivals from Hart High in the opening year of this now potent football conference on Nov. 11, 1932, to determine who would be the first outright champs in the WMC. Not only was nothing decided on that historic occasion, but no points were even tallied during the afternoon battle that ended in a 0-0 tie and a two-way deadlock for the conference crown.

North Muskegon dominated the early years of the WMC but until Shelby moved to the forefront, this powerhouse conference has been led by state title teams from Ravenna, Oakridge and Montague.

This proud area has witnessed a multitude of turnaround over the years, including as recent of the past season when Reeths Puffer and Mona Shores made huge turnarounds. Once powerful Reeths Puffer brought back memories from decades past by posting their most successful season since the 1990s.

 Under first year coach Kyle Jewitt, RP reached the playoffs for only the 2nd time in the new millennium. It has been quite a playoff drought for the Rockets who are seeking their first playoff victory since winning it all back in 1992.

However, for the Sailors, it is a pandemic, not a drought, for they are seeking their first playoff win in school history after finally breaking the barrier last year.

2013 was the first 6-win season in more than 30 years, while the Sailors can boast of only one year in school history to win as many as 8 games (1968).

Mona Shores and Reeths Puffer fans might want to mark Oct 10th down on their calendar when these two upstarts face off in a contest that could very well determine if one, both or neither of these teams once again earn a berth in the prestigious playoffs.

Shelby, Reeths Puffer, and Mona Shores aren’t the only teams that have experienced a huge turnaround over the many decades of exciting high school football on the local scene.

Even such perennial stalwarts as Muskegon and Muskegon Catholic have experienced a few dips over the course of time.

The early 1960s was a forgettable one for both the Crusaders and the Big Reds.

The Crusaders played for a mythical state class A championship late in the 1959 season, before losing to rival Grand Rapids Catholic 6-0 in freezing temperatures in mid-November.

Just three years later the Crusaders experienced their only winless season when they failed to win a game in 1962.

Except for a few minor hiccups over the ensuing decades, the Crusaders have created a dynasty with, yet another banner season forecast this year for the defending Division 8 Champs.

Muskegon has been a model of consistency in this century, making the playoffs in every season since 2000, winning 3 more state titles as well as a couple of state runner-up finishes.

Ironically, Muskegon’s gloomiest football era closely followed that of Muskegon Catholic. Muskegon had little success on the gridiron from 1958-1963 but there was one common denominator for the resurging turnarounds at Muskegon and MCC —- Roger Chiaverini.

Chiaverini took over the reins of the Big Reds in 1964. So swift was the Big Red turnaround that Chev’s Big Reds were undefeated in just his second and third season as the Big Red Mentor.

The Hall of Fame coached surprised many local followers when he left Muskegon to take over the duties at nearby Muskegon Catholic following the 1970 season.

‘Chev' certainly didn’t leave the cupboard bare for his successor at Muskegon High, longtime JV coach Larry Harp. In his initial season following’s Chiaverini’s move to MCC, Harp guided the Big Reds to a perfect 9-0 campaign and the mythical Class A championship.

After nine very productive years under Harp, the Big Red’s program swiftly reached the depth of despair when Harp’s young replacement, Mike Cieslak, went a woeful 8-19 before then Athletic Director Harp called on (begged might have been a better word) his former assistant Dave Taylor to take command of the Big Reds.

The rest is history, and the Big Reds have since rolled to five state titles and a pair of runner-up finishes over the ensuing years under Taylor, Tony Annese and current head coach Shane Fairfield, with nary a drop-off projected in the foreseeable future.

Cheverini delivered the same magic at MCC as he did for the Big Reds, and, although he failed to win a state playoff state title, his undefeated 1974 Crusaders were a unanimous choice as mythical Class B state Champs, just one year before state champions were earned on the gridiron beginning in 1975.

Will this upcoming 2014 season see another team make a turnaround much like RP and Mona Shores experienced in 2013?

Since winning it all as recently as 2004, Orchard View has seen a huge drop-off in wins.

It has been eight years since once mighty North Muskegon has played a 10th game on their schedule. Fruitport has taken a slight step backwards of late and would love to capture once again a wonderful season as they had in 2001.

However, if ever there is a team that cries out for a turnaround season, it would be the Pirates of once mighty Hart High.

It has been nearly 10 years since the Pirates have won as many as four games over the course of an entire season! Seventeen years have now passed since Pirate fans have even enjoyed a winning season and never has a loyal Hart Booster seen their team even once enter the playoffs in nearly 40 years of playoff competition.

How this ‘old-timer’ would love to see the Pirates be this year’s turnaround team!

Hang tough Pirate faithful, this longtime WMC follower wishes you nothing but the best.

**MOYES MEMORIES LOOKS BACK AT 82 YEARS OF THE WMC**

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Although a few of the typical West Michigan Conference powerhouses of recent vintage have struggled somewhat at the start of this 2014 football season, nevertheless, this venerable conference conjures up many of my favorite Moyes’s Memories.

The 2014-15 season will mark, by my figures, the 82nd year this proud conference has been in existence, dating all the way back to the depression in 1932.

Since the first WMC football game was played on September 23, 1932, this area has seen the coming and goings of several conferences over the years.

The past eight decades have seen a multitude of leagues instituted, and then dropped, including the Southwest Michigan conference that included Muskegon and Muskegon Heights among their constituents from 1930-1958.

I remember the old Ken-Ne-Wa conference, Valley Coast, Lake Michigan Athletic Conference, Tri-River, and the ‘unforgettable’ conglomeration of the Waterways conference, with divisions ranging from all directions—- East, West, South, and Central, but no North division.

And currently there is the OK conference where our locals have played in a variety of colorful divisions, such as Red, White, Green, Black and even Silver.

One of the more durable leagues over the years was the Seaway, running from 1960 until eventually breaking apart in 1997.

Up until just this season, Muskegon Catholic has only been a member of but one conference in football over the years, the LMAC, where MCC was a member from 1966 until the unfortunate breakup of this powerful league in 1984. After 30 years of scratching to find opponents, the Crusaders have joined forces with the Lakes 8, but even this conference is on somewhat shaky grounds as a couple of schools have applied to go elsewhere.

There are many reasons as to why conferences have begun, and then disbanded over the years, but certainly a major explanation would be changes in an area’s population, leading to increases and/or decreases in school enrollment.

It is noteworthy that the enrollment in the eight member West Michigan Conference has seen very few changes in student enrollment for most of the past eight decades. The only shift in population occurred in the early 1960’s, when a housing boom in the Reeths Puffer School district saw North Muskegon’s enrollment grow to such an extent that the Norsemen joined the newly established Seaway Conference at the start of the 1959-60 school year.

However, the enrollment at NM took a huge hit when Laketon Township students were no longer accepted at the northside school beginning in 1966. Fortunately for the Norsemen, all was forgiven, and they were quickly accepted back into the WMC where they have served continually for the past 48 years.

Charter members of this steady and reliable conference formed back in 1932 included Scottville, Hart, Shelby, Montague and Whitehall with North Muskegon, just beginning as a high school, waiting in the wings.

NM, with a team comprised of only 9th and 10th graders, played their 1st Varsity game vs. Ravenna, losing 26-6. Future longtime Northside saloon keeper Joe Witham scored the first TD in NM history to give the Norse a short-lived 6-0 lead.

Norsemen coach Lyle McNitt was never noted for a propensity of throwing a multitude of passes during his career. Perhaps this game was the reason for his conservative future policy as Ravenna intercepted 4 passes, all returned for TDs. Strangely enough, this was the only varsity game played in the inaugural NM season.

Prior to the WMC, Hart, Scottville and Shelby were members of the MASEANNA league, a conference that began in time for the 1929 season while Whitehall and Montague came from the short-lived Muskegon Co. Athletic Association, comprised of Whitehall, Montague, Ravenna, Muskegon St. Mary’s and Holton.

Holton dropped football after playing but two games in the 1929 season. Ravenna would bide their time for decades before entering the WMC in 1969, while a reason never was given why Muskegon St. Mary, the 1929 Muskegon County champs, never joined the WMC.

Whitehall accompanied North Muskegon into the fledgling Seaway Conference at the start of the 1959-60 school year and remained in the Seaway until returning to the WMC in 1985.

Reed City (1957-64) and Manistee (1965-68) each made cameo appearances in the WMC but neither school was able to capture an outright conference championship.

Oakridge High School was formed in the 1960s, joining the WMC in 1966, and the conference has witnessed nary a change the past 30 years.

And what a ride it has been for this highly respected 8 team league over the years! Since the inception of the state football playoffs in 1975 half of the WMC teams have had the experience of playing for a state championship, earning an impressive total of 9 state championships.

So competitive has it been during this era that I think many of our readers will be surprised to know that Ravenna has won more state championships over the years (4), then conference championships (3).

Although I go all the way back to 1948, when I was the ball boy for the North Muskegon Norsemen, and where I began my less than stellar career with the media as a cub reporter for the Muskegon Chronicle in 1956, my memories of this proud conference pale in comparison to one who was a charter performer of this league back in 1932, Whitehall’s Rex Funnell.

And what great memories this still spry near centurion has of this great league. A short time ago I had an enjoyable conversation with this former Whitehall legend who recently celebrated his 98th birthday at his Whitehall residence with numerous friends and relatives in attendance.

Rex Funnell was a starting halfback weighing in at a ‘robust’ 105 pounds for Whitehall in WMC’s inaugural season 82 years ago.

Unfortunately, Whitehall would drop football following Funnell’s senior year in ’32’ and would not field another football team until the early 1940s.

Rex had a very quick response when I asked if he knew why Whitehall suddenly dropped football after the 1932 season: “They didn’t have any money.”

With the country during a deep recession Funnell quickly remembered those years of hardship. “Nobody wanted to donate any money to keep the program going, in fact nobody had any money,” recalled the former Viking running back from more than 80 years back.

When asked what he could recall from those days of yesteryear, Funnell’s initial response was “We were lucky if we had 17 or 18 guys on a team back in that day. Whitehall was a very small school as each class had less than 20 people.

“Practices were not much fun back then as they held our practices at a field next to the high school and the field was full of sand burrs,” reminisced Funnell.

Each of the five original WMC have seen prodigious progress over the years, not only with their many successes earned on the gridiron but have witnessed some stunning developments with their facilities.

“We played our games in the outfield at Funnell Field (named after his father Ray Funnell) back in those days but, since it also served as a baseball field, we sometimes would be playing on the skin part of the infield.”

Whitehall wasn’t alone in playing on multipurpose baseball fields as Hart, Shelby, and Montague did the same, recalled Funnell.

When asked about Scottville, Funnell took little time in remembering the Spartans facilities: “Scottville just had a bad field.”

As shoddy as those fields were back in the 1930’s, interest in football was high as many of those small WMC villages also had independent teams that would share those fields with their high school teams. “And that’s just what they were—-fields, out in the middle of nowhere, recalled Rex.”

All five of the WMC charter members of this durable conference have since moved into their modern-day facilities that are all top-notch.

Ravenna left their former home at Conklin Field following the 1976 season for their current location next to the high school. Oakridge has played all their home games at their current site on Wolf Lake Road since joining the WMC in 1966, while North Muskegon has always played at their current location for the past 80 years.

Fred Jacks Field, the home of the Norsemen, however, as made numerous renovations over the years, including moving the home field stands from the west to the east side for the start of the 1956 season.

It was not until after World War II came to an end before any of the WMC schools played under the arcs, with all games kicking off shortly after school would let out on Friday afternoons.

One of Rex’s teammates on those early Viking teams was his brother Raymond. Interestingly enough, the two brothers, although inseparable friends, never shared the same household during their high school days.

“Raymond was quite sickly at birth, so our grandparents took him in to take care of him, and he stayed with them all through high school. He started school when he was five, but he refused to go to class until I went along,” said Rex. “That’s the reason why I started school when I was only 4 and was just 16 years of age when I graduated in 1933.”

In a long-time rivalry that has encompassed more than 100 games between Whitehall and Montague, this heated enmity took on a unique twist some 80 years back.

When I inquired of Funnell if the rivalry was as intense then as it is now Funnell quickly responded: “Oh yea! I Can remember one time when Don Jeager (Montague football player) who they nicknamed “Sandbag Don” was dating a Whitehall girl.

One of the Whitehall fans took exception with this, and he snuck behind Jeager and hit him over the head with a sandbag, knocking him out, the day before our game with Montague. That’s why they called him Sandbag Don,” chuckled Funnell.

The Vikings won that contest 19-14 with Funnell contributing to the victory by hauling in a TD pass from Red Powell.

Although the Vikings have been very competitive over the years in basketball, baseball, and track, the same cannot be said for the Vikings in football.

The Vikings only two outright WMC football titles over the many years were won in 1998-99 when Whitehall was quarterbacked by current Major League baseball outfielder Nate McLouth.

Although it has been nearly 30 years since the Norse captured their last outrite league crown in 1986, North Muskegon is still the clear leader in conference championships earned with 22 titles and 4 ties.

Oakridge, although only a member since 1966 trails the Norse with 15 titles while sharing another 6. Montague closely follows the Eagles with a mark of 13 and 4. Shelby won the first (1932) and the last (2013) but has only been able to sandwich 4 others first place laurels over more than 8 decades.

Hart has been in sole possession of 6 league titles but must go all that way back to 1951 when they were able to boast of a league crown when both NM and Whitehall were part of the WMC.

Scottville, a charter member since 1932, has only been able to muster conference honors in 1963 & 65, when NM, Whitehall, Oakridge, and Ravenna were not a part of the WMC.

With the Vikings off to a very good start in this current campaign, perhaps there is hope for Rex Funnell’s alma mater to capture their third title.

Following his graduation from Whitehall High in 1933, Funnell served his country in the service in WWII before holding the fort for years in Whitehall as a local barber.

 Funnell continued to stay close to Whitehall athletics over the years by serving as the PA announcer for Viking football for many years before retiring from those duties before the 1980 season.

When Rex first began working in the PA back in the 1950s there were very few, if any, enclosed press boxes. “We would have a long cord hooked up and we would follow the game on the sidelines and announce from the field,” remembered Funnell.

One of the many players Rex called from his press box perch over the many years was his son King. How proud Rex was to see young King inducted into the Whitehall Hall of Fame this year.

There has been considerable growth for this venerable conference over the years, a growth perhaps most evident in the size of the players.

When Hart and Shelby squared off in early November of 1932 to decide who would earn the conference laurels in that inaugural season, coach Jasper Olendorf’s Hart squad ‘boasted’ of a team that averaged a ‘hefty’ 148 pounds per man.

When I asked how many 275-pound tackles played back in his era Funnell was quick to point out: “None! If a player weighed 175 pounds back in my day, he was pretty damm big.”

There were other coaches from that 1932 season other than Olendorf who became well known for their achievements.

North Muskegon’s Lyle McNitt boasted of an undefeated, untied, and unscored upon team in 1941 and would join the 1942 team coached by my father Paul Moyes as the 3rd team in any sport inducted into the Muskegon Area Sports Hall of Fame.

How nice it was that the citizens of Montague had not forgotten Eldred Townsend’s contributions over the years when they named the current football stadium in Townsend’s honor.

Shelby head coach Ivon Tillotson, while a successful coach in his own right, fathered a pair of sons who made sports headlines over the years.

After moving to Ludington, Tillotson’s oldest son Pete was a star for the University of Michigan in basketball in the 1950’s and was a charter member in the Mason County Sports Hall of Fame.

I best remember Pete’s ‘Little’ brother Van for catching the winning touchdown pass against my North Muskegon team in the opening game of the 1961 season. Talk about a matchup nightmare! The 6’6 Tillotson was on the receiving end of a TD pass as time ran out that handed the 1961 Norsemen their only loss of the season.

Matched up with defending the towering Tillotson as a defensive back was my younger brother Tom, who was but 5’4” tall. The joy of earlier seeing Tom score the only Norse TD earlier in the contest quickly dissipated.

So many memories —- may this league never change and provide us another 82 years of fond memories.

The 2014 year saw our area lose another of our former great athletes with the passing of Howie Meloche. With the help from Meloche’s former buddies and teammates, Jim Morse and Jerry Eaton, I posted the following story:

**Moyes Memories Remembers Howie Meloche**

**jimmoyes@aol.com**

The Muskegon area lost another giant in its proud history of sports lore with the recent passing of Howie Meloche.

Meloche passed away last Friday after a long illness, but not before he had established success in sports that will long be remembered from those who witnessed his crowning achievements on the gridiron, the basketball courts, and on the diamond.

Howie was part of what is now turning into a dying breed of sports icons in this current era of specialization, that of a 3-sport star.

And what a career he had while performing, first at Muskegon St. Mary’s, and concluding as a member of the first graduating class at Muskegon Catholic Central in 1954.

As a junior Meloche excelled while playing for what was arguably the greatest collection of athletes that St. Mary’s produced over the years. Meloche was a halfback on an outstanding 1952 St. Mary’s football team. The Irish did drop of pair of tight contests that year during a very tough schedule but capped their season with a solid win over my North Muskegon Norsemen.

The 1952-53 Muskegon St. Mary’s basketball team was the best the downtown Muskegon school produced in school history, advancing all the way to the state final game before they were upset by a scant 2 points by Saginaw St. Mary’s,

That Irish team lost but two games during the 1952-53 season, both to much larger schools in Holland Christian and South Bend Catholic. The Irish would avenge their early season defeat to the Maroons with a 57-56 upset win against a Holland team that was undefeated and ranked No. 1 in the state in Class B.

In the state quarterfinals St. Mary’s had to face an undefeated Remus team that boasted of a 23-game winning streak. It was Howie Meloche who led all scorers in the game, played before an estimated crowd of 6,000 fans packed into the Grand Rapids Civic Auditorium, with 22 points.

Meloche played a huge role in the St. Mary’s semi-final victory over Escanaba St. Joseph to send the Irish into the championship game on Saturday. But not before Meloche had his moments.

Twice Meloche was knocked to the floor late in the heated contest. The first time Howie crashed to the floor he had to be temporarily removed from the game to patch up a bleeding floor burn.

In the second incident Meloche took offense to what he surely felt was an uncalled hard foul. The excited and angry Meloche jumped to his feet and started across the floor toward the rival guard only to be quickly grabbed by his teammate Jim Morse.

“Wait a second Howie,” said Morse, “We still have to win this one.” Meloche calmed down after getting those soothing words from his long-time buddy and calmly sank the pair of free throws. Meloche led the well-balanced St. Mary’s squad with 18 points as the Irish won their hard-fought battle over Escanaba St. Joseph 58-51.

I well remember listening to that game and the next day’s state finals game on my upstairs bedroom radio with Rose Bowl hero Jack Weisenberger calling the play by play on WKNK.

Weisenberger called the Muskegon St. Joseph game that began at 7:30PM on Friday and then made a hasty exit from Lansing Sexton High over to Lansing Vocational for the 9:00 PM start for the Irish semi-final against Escanaba.

Earlier in the season Meloche had singed the nets for 48 points in a game with Muskegon St. Jean to erase a Greater Muskegon scoring record of 42 points set just days earlier by St. Joseph star Mart Mullally.

A recent obituary for Meloche pointed out that Howie once scored a school record 46 points, but Morse was quick to correct that figure. “I always thought it was 48 points,” which was verified in a box score from the game from the Muskegon Chronicle.

Morse had a simple explanation for Meloche’s scoring feat. “We just kept feeding him the ball and he just kept making shots, “recalled the former Notre Dame great who now spends many of his weekends following his two grandson, Riley and Byron Bullough play football for Michigan State.

The Irish played six players in their season’s final pair of games. In addition to Meloche and Morse, the other St. Mary’s stalwarts were Mike Kanitz, Pat Donovan, Bob Kurant and George Liddle, all of whom played on the football team in the Fall.

It’s amazing when I now reflect on my years in sports the close ties I had with many of those Irish stars from yesteryear. Jim Morse would become my boss when I was discharged from the Army in 1965 to work for Wagoner Transportation Co.

While residing in Traverse City for a decade I moved into my first home that was previously occupied by Liddle. I was a basketball teammate with Mike Kanitz, the head football coach at Traverse City St. Francis, who also recommended me to cover the St. Francis Football team for the local paper. Before leaving the Muskegon area for my current digs in Florida I purchased my last automobile from Howie Meloche jr.

“Howie was just a fun guy to be around,” said Morse. “He was always laughing. Howie was a great basketball player, a great pitcher, and a darn good football player” said his lifelong friend from yesteryear. “Howie was just a good all-around kid who had a lot of fun in life. He enjoyed us as much as we enjoyed him.,” replied Morse, a long-ago inductee into the Muskegon Area Sports Hall of Fame.

As good as Meloche was on the gridiron and hardwoods, his best sport was likely baseball.

Summers were spent on the diamond where he would pitch for the local Home Furnace Team, clearly the top baseball team in this area in the mid 1950s. Home Furnace was the dominant team from that era that included such stalwarts as Osie McCarty, Lee David, Bob Soderman, Earl Morrall, Pete Sheldon, North Muskegon football coach Dunc Lectka, Don Murray, Jim Morse and many other local baseball standouts from that era.

After St. Mary’s, along with fellow parochial schools St. Jeans and St. Joseph closed their schools for good in 1953, Meloche and the other parochial students would form the first class at Muskegon Catholic Central.

Meloche would forever have his moments with a few school firsts.

Meloche scored the first touchdown in Muskegon Catholic’s storied football history in early September of 1953. The 13-0 victory over Ludington was also the first game to be played under the lights at what is now known as Kehren Stadium. Meloche also made the game’s biggest play on defense when late in the contest he intercepted a pass headed for 6’6 future UM basketball star Pete Tillotson to preserve the first victory in MCC history.

The game would be the first of 554 victories attained by the Crusaders in more than 60 years of football.

In basketball Meloche was the leading scorer in MCC’s first ever basketball game with 18 game high points.

Now that more than 60 years has passed, we can look back at another Meloche MCC first with a chuckle:

Howie was the first to be expelled from Muskegon Catholic.

Following an early season football practice before the opening of the 1953-54 school year the mischievous Meloche pulled a firm alarm at the recently completed school. Fortunately for the fun-loving Meloche, all was forgiven after a sincere Meloche apology, and he was permitted to return to MCC and be reinstated on the Crusader football team.

A few years back I wrote one of my Moyes’ Memories stories that included my all-time Greater Muskegon baseball team. Howie Meloche was included as part of my five man pitching staff. Also, on that All Time Team was Meloche’s long-time friend Jerry Eaton.

While Meloche was the ace hurler for St. Mary’s, Eaton was be the ace of the staff at Muskegon High, where he was the winning pitcher as a sophomore on the state championship 1951 Muskegon baseball team.

“Howie and I were buddies from age 12 on up,” said Eaton. “We played on the same American Legion team that was coached by my dad, and we were undefeated and went 18-0.

“We played with and against each other while growing up as a kid” recalled the former Big Red flamethrower.

Eaton vividly recalled one shining moment that the two pals experienced some 60 years back.

“The Tigers had an all-star try out at what was then Briggs Stadium (before it was known as Tiger Stadium) where they invited promising players from Michigan, Ohio and Indiana. Howie and I were picked, and we were paired together on the same team. We each pitched three innings in front of the powers to be from the Tiger brass,” Eaton clearly recalled.

“I struck out 8 of the 9 batters I faced, and Howie followed me, and he struck out 7 of 9 —-Honest to God,” said a proud Eaton.

Following the game, we got together with Howie’s high school coach at St. Mary’s, Harold Popp, and needless to say, we really celebrated. Howie and I that day really showed what I call Muskegon Pride.

What a ball we had that weekend in Detroit. My Dad was good enough to let me take his car so Howie and I could make the trip to Detroit. We got there the day before our tryout and the Tigers put us up at the Schuler Hotel. The Tigers got us seats right next to the Tiger’s dugout for the Detroit game that afternoon. We were just 18 years old —— what a thrill” gushed Eaton.

It can be safe to say that it was this performance that prompted the Tigers to sign Eaton and Meloche to minor league contracts.

There were hundreds of minor league teams scattered across the country in the mid 1950’s. How ironic it was that these two near lifelong pals would be teammates on the same team down in backwater Florida in a small town called Palatka.

Unfortunately for the Muskegon duo, both came down with career ending arm injuries.

Eaton recalled their brief get together as teammates in Palatka. (they were teammates for perhaps a month). “I started the season in Panama City before I was sent to Palatka and Howie was already there. My arm was so bad that I knew it was just a matter of time before they let me go because I couldn’t throw.

Howie was having some problems with his arm too, but he was such a good athlete that they also played him in the field because he could hit the ball very well.

There was no Dr. Frank Jobes or Dr. James Andrews to treat sore arm pitchers during Meloche and Eaton’s era.

“The only thing they knew what to do with a sore arm when we played was to give you a cortisone shot.,” lamented Eaton.

Neither Meloche nor Eaton would play organized baseball again.

Before I concluded my conversation with Eaton, Jerry wanted to share one more story that included his longtime buddy.

Eaton, who served for many years as the head baseball coach at Muskegon High, coached Howie’s son, with the same name, on one of Eaton’s Big Red Teams.

“We were playing a game in Grand Rapids and White Sox scout Pete Mallito was in the stands. I had gotten to know Mollito from years past when he was scouting me in Muskegon. I showed him our roster shortly before the game and he perked up when he saw the name Howie Meloche on my roster. With a big grin on his face Mallito blurted out: “Oh No, not Meloche and Eaton together again —- Look Out.

“Jeez, Howie was just a wonderful guy.”

Eaton, Morse, all his past teammates, family, and his numerous friends will very much miss the fun-loving Meloche. Thanks for the Memories Howie!

*And sadly, Howie’s good friend Jerry Eaton is no longer with us.*

Sixty-Four years had passed since the last meeting between Michigan State and Maryland. I might have been just a handful of fans who were on hand that witnessed the last meeting between the Terps and the Spartans from 1950. Here is the significance of that contest from that game from yesteryear written back in November of 2014:

**MOYES’ MEMORIES LOOKS BACK AT THE LAST MSU-MARYLAND GAME**

**By Jim Moyes**

Can it possibly have been 64 years since the Spartans of Michigan State last played the Terrapins of Maryland in a football game?

It’s just unfortunate for many of us loyal Spartans fans to have the importance of this Saturday’s game sullied considerably by MSU’s lost to Ohio State this past weekend.

I know I am quickly advancing in years when I acknowledge that I attended Michigan State’s ‘Macklin Field’ for that clash of long ago, but at the same time I am very excited to be attending this year’s renewal in College Park when these two Big Ten universities meet once again.

For this die-hard Spartan fan, and others who bleed Green & White, let’s hope the results are different then when they met in early October of 1950.

The Spartans were crushed by the Terps 34-7.

And what was significant about that lopsided loss? It would be the last time the Spartans would taste defeat for the next 28 games, until the Spartans were upset by the Purdue ‘Spoilermakers’ 6-0 in 1953, a streak unmatched in MSU football lore.

Very few of the Spartan faithful from that long-ago era saw this coming.

The Spartans entered the Maryland contest with their highest ranking in MSU history. Seven days earlier State defeated No. 3 ranked Michigan 14-7, MSU’s first victory over the Wolverines in 13 years.

Our proud Muskegon area was well represented in that 1950 contest featuring football greats that have long ago been enshrined in the Greater Muskegon Hall of Fame.

The Wolverines started future NFL lineman Tom Johnson at tackle, while his Muskegon Heights high school teammate, Frank Howell, played a major role in the contest witnessed by more than 97,000 fans at the spacious UM stadium, years before it would be known as “The Big House.”

Yet another former Muskegon Heights gridder from that era, Sonny Grandelius, would be on the opposite side of the line of scrimmage as the star running back for the rival Michigan State Spartans.

Representing Muskegon High School for Michigan State was 1951 All-American end Paul Dekker.

Grandelius, who by season’s end had become the first back in MSU’s proud football history to rush for more than 1,000 yards in a season, scored one Spartan touchdown and set up the second tally scored by State captain Leroy Crane in the 14-7 Spartan triumph.

Howell nearly had a TD of his own for the losing Wolverines when he intercepted an Al Dorow pass, returning it more than 40 yards before being tackled at the Spartan 20-yard line.

Later in the 1950 season the Spartans would end another winless drought by edging Notre Dame, the defending 1949 National Champions, 36-33 in South Bend, the first victory over the powerful Irish since way back in 1918. Incidentally, the Spartans victory over Notre Dame would be the first defeat in the legendary career of Irish icon Knute Rockne.

One could easily understand the 1950 Spartans lackluster showing against the Terps.

Following their exhilarating victory the previous week against the highly ranked Wolverines, the Spartans had climbed all the way to No. 2 in the national rankings.

However, that ranking would be short-lived.

And it would be the Terrapins who would be ranked No.2 when they departed East Lansing.

Nowhere, while doing research for this game, did I come across the common excuses one would read heading into a modern-day game —- phrases such as ‘overconfident,’ ‘looking past’ or ‘this could be a trap game.’

All the above may have contributed to the Spartans defeat but what was certainly overlooked by Head Coach Biggie Munn’s 1950 gridders was clear: State was whipped by an outstanding football team!

I well remember my journey to MSC (As it was known at the time) on this crisp October afternoon. I attended the game with the entire North Muskegon football team, coached by my father Paul Moyes.

Dad, a former Spartan from the late 1930’s, had taken his NM teams to a Michigan State home game for the past three seasons, but unfortunately, due to ill health, 1950 would be his last season as the head football coach for his beloved Norsemen.

How lucky was this young grade schooler to have tagged along on each of those memorable trips to East Lansing across old Highway 16.

Following the 1949 high school football season Spartan assistant coach Duffy Daugherty was the guest head speaker at the North Muskegon football banquet. Joining the popular Spartan coach at the head table that evening was future All-American running back, Everett ‘Sonny’ Grandelius.

It’s likely that this was the banquet that my father and Duffy began their longtime friendship until Dad passed away in 1960. I’ll never forget the compassion Duffy exhibited during Dad’s illness, including taking the time off from his busy schedule to visit Dad in the VA hospital and showing him the film of a recent MSU game.

While sitting in the north end zone I was among the 39,000 spectators in the 51,000-seat stadium that had very little to cheer about during the game.

The Terps had caught MSC at a perfect time with the visitors having extra incentive leading up to the kickoff. The 1949 Maryland squad dropped but one game during the previous season - to these same Spartans, losing by the identical 14-7 score that the Spartans posted the previous week in their win against Michigan.

There were three Maryland players from that game whose names stayed with me forever: Jack Scarbath, and a pair of bruising brothers, Big Mo and Little Mo Modzelewski.

But time would tell that Maryland had more firepower than the above-named trio —- much more—- as noted below further down in this story.

The Spartans had but one shining moment in their lopsided loss to Maryland, that being a 67-yard zig-zagging TD run by the electrifying Grandelius.

One of the many Terps who bullied the Spartans during this game was Bob Ward. Ward played on both sides of the ball and would be named a 1st team All-American following the 1950 season. Ward had a game for the ages against the Spartans.

Maryland quarterback, Jack Scarbath. recently spoke of Ward’s feat that afternoon. “I remember one game we had against Michigan State when Bobby (Ward) was at middle guard and went over the top of their center (Dick Tamburo) to make a tackle. Then he went right under the center to make another tackle. A little later he went around the center to the left. Then he went around him to the right. I’ve never seen anybody who could dominate like Bobby” recalled Scarbath.

Ward accomplished a feat that has been unsurpassed to this day. He was named as a 1st team All-American as a defensive lineman in 1950 and then was selected as an All-American guard the following year, the only player in history to be named an offensive and defensive All-American. Ward had much more success as a player at Maryland than as a head coach, posting a disappointing 2-18 record over a brief two-year span.

As good as this young Maryland team was in 1950 the best was yet to come for the Terrapins.

However, it’s unfortunate that this series didn’t continue into the following year. Both teams had undefeated seasons in 1951, but only Maryland was invited to a bowl game. Coach Jim Tatum’s Terps capped their first (and only) undefeated season in school history with an impressive 28-13 victory over then No. 1 ranked Tennessee in the 1952 Sugar Bowl.

Using today’s format of delaying until all the bowl games have been completed before the pollsters could give their final votes, there could be little question that Maryland and Michigan State would have finished 1-2 in the Polls. However, back in 1951, bowl results did not count toward determining the national title holder.

And what talent each team put on the field on this memorable date 64 years ago!

Maryland dressed 60 players for that 1950 battle in East Lansing, with nearly half of those players (26 in all) drafted by an NFL team over the next three years.

In addition to the exploits of Ward as noted above, other Maryland players who would leave a lasting impact on the gridiron included:

Jack Scarbath: The starting quarterback at Maryland for 3 years, Scarbath was 2nd to

 Oklahoma’s Billy Vessels in the Heisman voting in 1952. A member of the College

 Football Hall of Fame and a 1st round draft pick in the NFL by the Washington Redskins.

Dick (‘Little Mo’) Modzelewski: Also, in the College Hall of Fame. Winner of the Outland Trophy as the nation’s outstanding lineman in 1952. Two-time All-American. Played in a then record 180 straight games during his 14-year career in the NFL. Had a nose for the football by recovering 12 fumbles during his career. Served as an assistant coach for several years in the NFL.

Ed (‘Big Mo’) Modzelewski: Ed was named the outstanding player of the 1952 Sugar Bowl victory. Scored 2 TDs vs. MSU. Scored 6 TDs as the starting fullback for the World Champion Cleveland Browns in 1956 before losing his starting job two years later to a rookie running back named Jim Brown.

Stan Jones: A member of the NFL hall of Fame. Cited by many as the first player in the NFL to utilize weight training. Starred for 13 years in the NFL, 12 with the Chicago Bears.

Bob (Shoo Shoo) Shemonski: Held numerous records at Maryland. Drafted by the Bears but entered the military and never did play in the NFL. Shemonski led the 1950 team in scoring with 97 points. Also starred on defense, including a 37-yard interception return for a TD vs. MSU. Tallied five TDs in a single game against Virginia Tech.

John Idzik: Michigan fans will best remember Idzik when he served as the head coach at the University of Detroit. After UD dropped football in the early 1960s, he would serve as an assistant coach in the NFL for a few teams.

Ray Krouse: The captain of the1950 Terps, Ray Krause, who would return to the state of Michigan in 1957 to star as a defensive lineman for the 1957 World Champion Detroit Lions. Krause was a proven winner as he also was a star performer for the 1958 and 1959 World Champion Baltimore Colts. Krause was so impressive during his tenure as a Terrapin that he was the 25th player selected in the 1951 draft. Krause passed away at the age of 39 in 1966.

Head Coach Jim Tatum: Had a spectacular record of 73-15-4 (.815 winning percentage) as the Maryland head coach from 1947-1955. Maryland played in five bowl games during Tatum’s tenure in Maryland. Tatum left Maryland following the 1955 season to become the head coach at his alma mater, North Carolina. Unfortunately, Tatum became ill and passed away in July of 1959 at but 46 years of age.

The Spartans likewise had more than their fair share of football greats that wore the green and white at Michigan State.

Muskegon area fans will well remember the late Sonny Grandelius and all he achieved in football as an All-American at State, a star running back in the NFL and an outstanding head football coach at Colorado. In addition to Grandelius, other notable 1950 Spartans included:

Bob Carey: 1st team All-American in 1951 and a first round NFL draft pick by the LA Rams. The last nine letter winner at Michigan State. A three-year starter on the MSC basketball team and a Big Ten Shot Put champion in track. I can still remember watching in awe the 6’5 Carey catching footballs one-handed in warmups as easily as one would pluck an apple off a tree.

Al Dorow: Although Dorow had by far his worse day as a Spartan in the game vs. Maryland (completing only 3 passes), he would have an outstanding career at MSC and beyond. Dorow was the MVP of the North-South Senior Bowl game in January of 1952. Fittingly, after serving time in the military, Dorow would share QB duties in 1954 for the Redskins with former Maryland rival Jack Scarbath. Dorow, who made the NFL Pro Bowl one year, led the old AFL in TD passes thrown in 1961 with the New York Titans.

Dorne Dibble: An All-American defensive end for the 1950 Spartans, Dibble would excel as a wide receiver for the Detroit Lions. Dibble played a major role in contributing to NFL World championship teams in Detroit in 1953 and again in 1957. Dibble was the 5th leading receiver in the NFL in 1956 and tallied 6 TDs.

Don Coleman: A unanimous All-American in 1951, Coleman would be the first Spartan player to ever have his number retired. Coleman was chosen for the College Football Hall of Fame in 1975. Even though the undersized Coleman played tackle at a mere 180 pounds, he was chosen as the Most Valuable Player for the 1951 undefeated Spartans. A charter member of the Michigan State Hall of Fame.

Frank Kush: Like Coleman, Kush was another undersized but very quick lineman who undoubtably made a bigger impact in football as the head football coach for more than 20 years at Arizona State University. The ASU football field is named in Kush’s honor.

Jesse Thomas: This former Big Ten sprint and hurdles champions in Track & Field was a defensive back in the NFL for 3 years with the Baltimore Colts. However, it wasn’t with the Colts where Thomas would make his biggest impact in Baltimore. It was at nearby Morgan State, where Thomas worked as a coach, teacher and athletic director for more than 40 years before he passed away in 2012. Thomas was a terrific influence in the life of his 2nd cousin, current NFL head coach Marvin Lewis.

Dick Tamburo: Although Maryland’s Bob Ward got the better of Tamburo in East Lansing in 1950, Tamburo would have a notable career at MSU and beyond. The loss to the Terps would be the only loss incurred by Tamburo during his three years as a Spartan from 1950-52. Tamburo was an All-American in 1952 and selected as the MVP on the Spartans National championship team. Tamburo would eventually follow his teammate Frank Kush to Arizona State where we would serve for a period as the universities’ Athletic Director.

Doug Weaver: An outstanding linebacker for the Spartans, Weaver would follow along much of the same path as Tamburo. Weaver would first go into coaching where he would ultimately serve as the head football coach at Southern Illinois and then Kansas State. Weaver would then move into the office where he first served as the Athletic Director at Georgia Tech before returning to East Lansing to become the AD at Michigan State, retiring in 1989.

John Wilson: Wilson lettered on the 1950 Spartan team and was a starting defensive halfback on the MSU undefeated teams of 1951 & 52. Wilson was an Academic All-American as well as the first Spartan athlete to receive a Rhodes Scholarship. It would be in the academic world where Wilson rose to fame. The president of the MSU student body his senior year, Wilson would become the first Provost at Virginia Tech prior to concluding his career as President of Washington & Lee University.

It certainly would be worth noting that three of the Spartan coaches would win national championships during their careers, with Biggie Munn being the first with his 1952 Spartan powerhouse. Munn’s long-time assistant, and successor, Duffy Daugherty would win it all in 1965 and 66. Dan Devine, also an assistant coach at State from 1950-54, would lead Notre Dame to a NCAA championship in 1977.

How befitting can it be that these two schools each began their school’s longest winning streak in that same 1950 season? While the Spartans would taste nary a defeat for 28 consecutive games following their loss to Maryland, the Terps would begin an undefeated streak that would reach 22 games, school records that still stand today at each of these proud universities.

I will be attending this game with my lovely wife (a staunch Wolverine fan) and my youngest daughter Kasey, who will surely have some mixed emotions as who to root for in this game. Kasey received her undergrad degree from MSU and always has been a faithful Spartan supporter.

However, her paycheck is now written in red ink for Maryland as she is now Dr. Kasey Moyes, a professor at the University of Maryland.

The memories from long ago will certainly flow for this lifelong Spartan fan when these two great institutions face one another after 64 long years. I’m just hoping that history from those bygone days does not repeat itself. Regardless of the outcome, you can bet the ‘ole announcer’ will have a great time.

After all, there were no tailgating parties in 1950.

*MSU won this contest on a chilling evening in College Park, Maryland. One of those in attendance at this game was the Maryland quarterback from 1950 Jack Scarbeth.*

Here is my story that included my thoughts on arguably the biggest win in Mona Shores football history, from November of 2014**:**

**Mona Shores Incredible Semi-Final Win**

**By Jim Moyes**

**jimmoyes@aol.com**

This past weekend’s performance by our local gridders in the state semi-finals continues to lay credence to my contention that nothing can top the euphoria of high school sports.

If there is one sure thing you can bank on when it comes to a prep contest, it’s that one can expect the unexpected. But what happened Saturday afternoon on the frozen tundra turf at Howell high school surpassed the surreal.

Thanks to a more than a gritty effort by a team that could have buried their chins in their hands, the Muskegon Area has once again convincingly staked their claim as the best football community in the Wolverine State.

Not only are Muskegon, Mona Shores, and Muskegon Catholic Central schools in the same city, but they all share the same zip code! And let us not forget that three decades back they were all members of the same conference —- The Lake Michigan Athletic Conference.

And how neat it is to recognize that the three head coaches representing our area in the state finals were all products of our local teams. It seems like just days ago this ‘ole announcer’ was calling their names over the airwaves from their prep playing days.

Steve Czerwon and Shane Fairfield each played at Muskegon Catholic, while how proud can Matt Koziak be to lead his alma mater at Mona Shores into the state finals?

It is no surprise that our two traditional Port City powers, the Big Reds and the Crusaders, will make what seemingly is a routine trip to the Motown area —— but the Sailors?

There can be no bigger thrill for a high school player, nor their fans, to reach a state championship game for the first time. I well remember way back in 1981 the shivers that ran up and down my spine when I saw Sam Parkers field goal split the uprights on the icy gridiron at Flint Atwood’s stadium to send my former high school, North Muskegon, to the Pontiac Silverdome the following week.

I’m sure the long-suffering fans at Mona Shores felt the same way when Farmington Hills’ last second desperation pass fell harmlessly to the turf in the Sailor end zone as the clock reached 0:00, giving Mona Shores an improbable victory against seemingly impossible odds.

Sailor fans had to be shocked when arguably, the finest player in Sailor history, quarterback Tyree Jackson, went down with a game ending knee injury with the Sailors trailing 10-9 and the game less than two minutes into the second quarter.

The fans surely were stunned, but the Mona Shores players and coaches were confident that their second-string quarterback, Tyler Trovinger, could step up.

And did he ever! For a moment, while following this game, thanks to the magic of today’s modern technology from my new digs in North Florida, I thought I saw the second coming of former Mona Shores All Star QB Steve DeLong in Trovinger.

Trovinger, after fumbling his initial snap from center that led to Harrison's 2nd TD, and an apparently secure 17-9 lead, would then seemingly get better after every consecutive snap.

However, the Sailors would see their luck then go from bad to worse when Trovinger, after rallying the Sailors to tie up the game at 17-17, was injured with a helmet-to-helmet blow in his own end zone and was carted away on a stretcher to a nearby hospital.

Did Elijah Wilson think for even one-second on the bus ride to Howell earlier in the morning that he would be called upon to be the Sailor savior at quarterback later that afternoon?

The slim junior, a 1st string defensive back, but a 3rd string quarterback, with his team trailing by 24-17, did exactly that with Mona Shores a distant 80 yards away from the goal line with 5 minutes left in the game.

Wilson delivered a perfect strike to wide receiver Kobe Burse, who then gave his best Usain Bolt impersonation when he out raced the heralded Harrison speedy secondary in a dash to the goal line. The Sailors were an extra point from placement from tying up this thrilling game.

But wait! Not only are Jackson and Trovinger the No. 1 and 2 Quarterbacks, but they are also the No. 1 and 2 holders for extra points. It was then that Sailor head coach Matt Koziak called the best play in his coaching career: A play action toss fake to Hunter Boersma, with Deontre Moffit slipping out of the backfield and into a wide -open area in the end zone to receive a perfect pass from the unflustered backup QB.

The slim Harrison crowd looked up in disbelief when they saw that the scoreboard had their Hawks trailing those upstarts from Mona Shores 25-24.

With more than four minutes left following the Sailor TD and two-point conversion, there was plenty of time left on the clock for this talented Harrison team to march down the field.

Over this past season I have read so much about the potent Sailor offense, but I was as equally impressed with the Sailors defense.

The tenacious Sailor defense held not just once, but twice, in the final moments to tuck away the greatest win in Sailor football history. And Wilson, who saw limited snaps at QB during daily practice sessions, was playing the secondary when Harrison’s desperation last second pass fell harmlessly to the turf.

And, the Sailors had help from yet another source —- Their fans! Even though the Hawks had to travel maybe a scant 30 miles from their homes in nearby Farmington, the Sailors and their fans had to travel 130 miles.

But where were the Farmington fans? At best, there might have been 200 Harrison supporters in the near empty Farmington seating section, while close to two thousand fans, as well as the top-notch Mona Shores Marching Band, made the trek from the shoreline of faraway Lake Michigan, ignoring weather prognosticators dire forecast of possible freezing rain.

You can bet that the Sailor players received a much-needed lift from their multitude of rooters who have waited nearly 50 years for this moment.

And what a satisfying victory this was for Matt Koziak. In my final year broadcasting Muskegon Area football games, I had the pleasure of interviewing Matt many times when he had the dubious task of replacing a coaching legend in Tony Annese at Muskegon High.

Koziak was coaching against another legend this past Saturday. Watching this game on my computer, web-streamed beautifully by the Fox Sports Detroit Staff, the Fox crew focused sideline shots of Harrison coach John Herrington 10 to 1 over the much younger Koziak.

And why not? After all, coming into this year playoffs Harrington had coached his Harrison Hawks to 84 playoff victories —- 84 more wins than Mona Shores won over this same period.

My initial reaction, when I saw the heavily bundled up 74-year-old legend with a green cap on his head, was that I was looking at a 1988 version of former Traverse City coach Jim Ooley.

I felt it was imperative that a get a reaction from a Sailor fan who has been a part of Sailor nation since the school opened nearly 50 years ago.

It’s possible that nobody has seen, and up until now, suffered more watching Mona Shores football over the years than former Sailor athlete, and lon- time coach and administrator, my good friend Mike Mack.

And oh, how he was excited during our recent phone conversation!

I asked Mack for his thoughts when he looked up at the scoreboard and knowing that his beloved alma mater was finally headed for the state football finals, a school best known for its golf and hockey teams over the years.

After taking a deep breath, Mack’s first thoughts were: “Oh my God, they really did it? I was in shock. I was just stunned! Each kid found a way to win and all the way home I tried to analyze the game over and over in my mind, “said Mack.

“It started in game one with Saline when we won that game and we just kept getting better,” added the exuberant Mack. The former Sailor Men’s and Women varsity basketball coach heaped special praise for coach Koziak.

“Everything starts with Matt. He’s there 24/7 and puts in the time” with Mack quickly adding that all our area coaches put in an enormous amount of time. “We almost lost our freshman team a few years back. But this year I counted 32 freshmen out for football.

Matt Koziak was a perfect fit for our team,” added the proud lifelong Sailor.

One of the Mona Shores alums who unfortunately will not be at Ford Field Friday is arguably the most well-known of all former Sailor athletes, current Detroit Red Wing star Justin Abdelcader. Tuesday is Justin Abdelcader bobble head night, and Justin will show his support for his hometown by donning a Sailor hat.

Unfortunately, the Red Wings will be out of town on Friday, but Abdelcader will be receiving numerous texts from his friend Mike Mack throughout the course of the game, as they’ve been doing throughout this exciting season.

When I asked Mack as to the reaction from Sailor fans seated nearby at the game Mack gushed: “Our fans are just great. We had fans at this game from all over the state as we have a lot of alumni now. We all are so excited as this is all new to us. This isn’t old hat like it is for the fans from Muskegon and Catholic. This is going to be a fun week.”

The past weekend action rekindled flashbacks of a couple of games played more than two decades back.

Muskegon’s defensive effort over a Zeeland West team sent me back in time to Montague’s shutout of another high scoring outfit at Grand Rapids Housemen Field in 1992. Pennfield had set a state record for the most points scored in a single season only to be shut out by Montague’s Wildcats 7-0.

One of the most underrated coaches in Michigan, former Orchard View head coach John Shillito, brought his Zeeland West Dux offensive machine to Greenville with a prolific offense that churned out points at a rate of nearly 50 per game.

And, just as Montague shut out Pennfield, Muskegon would do the same this past Saturday.

The Big Reds 20-0 shutout victory would prove to be the only game in which Shillito's' Wing T offense would fail to find the end zone in his magnificent 10-year stint as Zeeland’s head coach, a true testament to the strength of the Big Red’s defense.

The Sailors comeback victory, overcoming several difficult obstacles to say the least, reminded me of Reeths Puffer’s last second victory over Walled Lake Central in the state Class AA finals in that same 1992 season.

The Rockets overcame five turnovers to pull out a victory on that unforgettable hail Mary pass from Geoff Ziegler to Stacey Starr.

Yet another near miracle occurred in the state finals in 2008 when Muskegon scored 3 touchdowns in the final five minutes to punch their ticket to Ford Field.

As for Muskegon Catholic —- well, that is just some football team! I don’t think there is one team that will play this weekend at Ford Field, in ANY division, that would be confident in beating this year’s MCC powerhouse.

Munising and the Crusaders each share one interesting note when they face off Friday at 10:00 AM. They each won their first state championship in the same 1980 football season. Munising in Class C and the Crusaders in Class B. However, that’s where the similarities end.

This will be the UP Mustangs first trip back to the state finals since that title earned 34 years ago. Meanwhile, the Crusaders will be seeking their 10th state championship and are top heavy favorites to bring home yet another trophy.

Only a handful of these wonderful athletes that we’ll watch on the big stage at Ford Field this weekend will play the great game of football at the next level but these gallant Warriors, as well as their legion of followers, will share a moment that they will long remember.

Just another reason why I’m so proud to proclaim Muskegon as my old

Hometown

Here is a brief follow up story honoring the Sailors 2014 season with some Moyes’ Memories sprinkled into this story:

**Moyes’ Memories of Sailor Football**

From February of 2014

The turnaround for Sailor football the past couple of years has been a long time coming, and well earned, after suffering through more than three full decades without winning as many as six contests in a single season.

My earliest experiences with Mona Shores football goes’ back more than 40 years when I broadcast my first Sailor’s contest against powerful Traverse City in 1971. In only their second year competing in the Lake Michigan Athletic Conference, the Sailors suffered a lopsided 45-0 defeat at the hands of the Trojans.

Despite that loss to Traverse City the Sailors were certainly nobody’s patsies back in the 1970s. Playing in the brutally competitive LMAC, Mona Shores more then held their own in that decade. Muskegon and Traverse City were at one time rated No. 1 & 2 in all the state polls back in 1971 while Muskegon Catholic was always a formidable foe.

Playing against the toughest of competition Mona Shores would win six or more games in six of the next 10 seasons, a mark they would not attain again until 2013.

Just two years after their embarrassing defeat to Traverse City the Sailors would turn the tables in 1973 and shut out the Trojans 23-0 at Sailor stadium. Unfortunately for Sailor fans, it would be the only victory Mona Shores would earn over Traverse City in school history.

The LMAC was dominated by 3 teams many years ago, Muskegon, TC & Muskegon Catholic.

The Crusaders ran the table in 1974 and would have been odds on favorites to capture the State Class B title, but it would be another year before the MHSAA would inaugurate the state playoffs.

Mona Shores had a very respectable 7-2 record BACK IN 1974, losing only to the Crusaders 14-6 and to once beaten Traverse City.

Muskegon would earn the state Class A mythical championship in 1971 while Muskegon Catholic ran the table in 1974. Coach Roger Chiaverini’s Crusaders would have been odds on favorites to capture the State Class B title, but it would be another year before the MHSAA would begin the state playoffs.

Mona Shores had a very respectable 7-2 record in 1974, losing only to the Crusaders 14-6 and to once beaten Traverse City.

To illustrate how difficult to win in the LMAC during the seventies, Traverse City lost one game in 1978 yet won the State Class A championship. Their lone loss was to MCC.

One could argue that, until this year’s talented team catapulted all the way to the state finals, the 1980 Sailor team was a close second in talent.

And how I well remember the first of their two one-point defeats from that memorable year. The Sailors played flawless football and were leading Traverse City 28-0 with little time left in the 3rd quarter. However, aided by the usual frenzied crowd at Traverse’s City Thirlby Field, the Trojans somehow rallied to defeat the Sailors 29-28.

It was the last Mona Shores football game I would ever broadcast outside of Muskegon County.

The Sailors would then suffer another heartbreaking defeat late in the season to Muskegon Catholic 8-7, a Crusader team that would eventually capture the first of many state championships won by a Muskegon area team in the MHSAA playoffs.

Frustrated with their perceived lack of success in the LMAC, Mona Shores and Grand Haven, who had even less success than the Sailors against conference opponents, stunned the remaining members of the LMAC (Benton Harbor, TC, Muskegon and MCC) by dropping out of the conference following the 1983-84 season.

I was among the many fans who were very disappointed in the departure of Mona Shores and Grand Haven from this very competitive conference. It would prove to be the death-knell blow to the conference. And although the Sailors, as well as the Buccaneers, escaped to the neophyte OK conference, the hoped-for additional victories still didn’t materialize.

My long-time radio partner Gene Young and I always made a concerted attempt to air at least one game a year for each of our Muskegon County teams, a difficult task during a nine-game schedule. We always tried to broadcast the most competitive game possible each week, and hopefully with teams with winning records.

To be perfectly honest, there were many years when we purposely scheduled Mona Shores early in the season, as it was inevitable that the Sailors were headed for another losing season.

Which makes the last couple of years such a heartwarming turnaround for a school that was more renowned for their triumphs in hockey and golf.

Thanks to today’s advanced technology, I was able to watch this year’s thrilling semi-final victory over the state’s most successful playoff era program in state history, Farmington Hills Harrison.

I couldn’t believe the transformation in this team! Just to make it into the championship game was nearly unfathomable to this ‘ole announcer’ who had suffered along with other Sailor followers for the past three decades.

Kudos to head coach Matt Koziak, a Sailor for life, for his outstanding leadership in this 180-degree turnaround.

Let’s hope that the success from the past couple of seasons will be an inspiration to the Sailors of the future.