

Devil's Den

Tirone Quietly Fades Into Record Books

By BRUCE JOHNSON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times



When mentioning in last week's Devil's Den the current WHS coaches with over 400 victories, Mike Tirone was listed as the bowling coach. Well, it seems Mike had retired prior to the 2011-12 season and Ralph Corey was actually the WHS bowling coach this winter. (We thank Faithful Reader Braden Walker, a junior member of the bowling team, for that information.)

Talk about a quiet ending of an era. Tirone began coaching - eighth-grade football and ninth-grade baseball - in Westfield at Roosevelt Junior High School in the fall 1968 (later he would add wrestling to his resume). Tirone and Dick Gralowski's team went 2-2, losing twice to Somerville, while beating Chatham Township and Montclair Academy. The team featured future WHS standouts Fred Boss, John Rochat, Dave LiSoeoy and Chip Danker.

Some perspective on that fall of 1968: Gary Kehler was in the early stages of his legendary WHS coaching career and WHS's football team was about to start its then-state record 48-game unbeaten streak, which wouldn't end until 1973. Woodstock was in the early planning stages.

The Summer of Love was old news. Brian Jones was still in the group he founded, the Rolling Stones.

LBJ was the president, and Martin Luther King Jr. (April 4) and Bobby Kennedy (June 6) had recently been assassinated.

Bell bottom pants and long hair were in.

The NCAA tournament had 23 teams and was won by UCLA over North Carolina at the Sports Arena in Los Angeles. The NIT had 16 teams and was won by Dayton over Kansas at Madison Square Garden.

A WHS graduate (swimmer Dave Perkowski '65) participated in the Olympics (Mexico City) for the third time in five Olympiads (Bob Clotworthy '49 had won diving medals in 1952 and '56).

ABC's Wide World of Sports with Jim McKay was in its seventh year of "spanning the globe to bring you a wide variety of sports" and providing "the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat... the human drama of athletic competition" for all kinds of sporting events. It was ESPN for the Vietnam War/Flower Power generation, but for one hour a week and without the glitz and loud, bombastic, annoying announcers.

Current WHS baseball coach Bob Brewster was the catcher for WHS's "All Glasses" team that won the county championship under first-year coach Dick Zimmer, who called them his "Rabbinical Team." The lineup included Brewster c, Tom Schaible 1b, Rich Papaccio 2b, Larry Inkster ss, Jim Ohaus 3b, Steve Gentino, Bruce Otmann, Bill Van Haren and Rich Rabuck in the outfield (along with non-glasses Pat McCabe), and Frank Tokash on the mound. "And every one of us wore those thick black-rimmed ("Buddy Holly") glasses," Brewster said. (Affordable "soft" contact lenses weren't approved by the Food and Drug Administration until 1971, according to Wikipedia.)

There were no channels for MLB, NFL, NBA or NHL coverage or round-the-clock movies, and no 24-hour sports or news stations; in fact, there were seven

channels on your television: 2-CBS, 4-NBC, 5-NEW, 7-ABC, 9-OR, 11-PIX and 13-NET. Your daily sports intake was provided either by newspapers or during 5-minute sections on the nightly news. (Thankfully 24-hour sports talk radio and TV was still a quarter-century away!)

The Fugitive (David Janssen) was celebrating the first anniversary - "Tuesday, Sept. 5 (1967), the day the running stopped" - of his capture of the one-armed man who had killed his wife four years and 120 episodes earlier. It was the most-watched show (78 million viewers) in TV history at the time, but has slipped behind the final M*A*S*H and the "Who Killed J.R." episode of Dallas.

Mission: Impossible was in its third TV season (and actor Tom Cruise was 6 years old).

The New York Yankees finished fifth in the 10-team American League (it would be divided into East and West the next summer) with an 83-79-2 record. It was their first winning season since 1964; they had finished ninth and 10th the previous two summers.

The New York Jets capped their 1968 season on Jan. 12, 1969 with a 16-7 victory over the Baltimore Colts in the NFL Championship Game (Super Bowl III to some).

By the time Tirone retired from coaching, he had outlasted eight presidents and too-many wars. He coached in six different decades, and yet he didn't look much different in 2011 than he did in 1968, as a 22-year-old coaching rookie out of Evangel College in Springfield, Mo.

A four-sport (football, basketball, baseball, track) athlete at Lyndhurst High School up in Bergen County, Tirone spent 15 years coaching on the junior high level before finally getting a varsity job in 1982 when WHS started a bowling team. Thirty seasons later he finally gave it up with a record of 407 wins and 119 losses. His teams won three county (2002, 2004, 2007), nine sectional (1991, 1997, 1999, 2001-03, 2006-07, 2009) and two state (1994, 2008) championships. (Interestingly, the two state champion squads didn't win county or sectional titles those years.)

There was a Devil's Den about Tirone on Feb. 21, 2008, after his second state championship team (available at www.goleader.com in the archives). It included some stories that could be included in a book titled "Tirone's Tall Tales" or "Right Up My Alley." But knowing Mike it's easy to see all of that stuff happening. His memories of the Masino family - rockabilly brothers Dan and Matt ('94) and younger sister Tracy-Lynn ('98) - are particularly hysterical. (Does anybody have a spare CD of the Masino's Hot Rod Gang?)

Tirone belongs in the list of WHS's all-time coaching greats. He will be joined in a couple of months by soon-to-be-retired cross-country/track coach Jack Martin.

BASEBALL UPDATE

Saturday's all-day rain forced the postponement/cancellation of the season-opener with Jersey City Marist, and made Tuesday's game with archrival Scotch Plains-Fanwood (too late for the Den's deadline) the possible 500th victory for Brewster.

The Devils face a tough early schedule, with games against Union (today), North Hunterdon (Saturday),

Bridgewater-Raritan (Monday), Cranford (Tuesday) and a couple of games in a four-team in North Brunswick (Saturday, April 14).

SWIMMING UPDATE

Fourteen members of the WHS swim teams were in Greensboro, N.C., this past Monday through today for the YMCA National Championships, representing the Westfield and Fanwood-Scotch Plains Y's.

Boys: Aram Barmakian, Alex Bond, Matt Daniel, Brennan Haley, Stephen Husch, Tyler Lessner, Luke McGrory, Max Shin.

Girls: Caroline Baldwin, Loren Ball, Jessica Cronin, Sarah Cronin, Erika Daniel, Ellie Reinhardt.

'3 FOR DINNER' UPDATE

There were a couple of late "3 for dinner" reservations that we didn't get before the deadline for the last Devil's Den. They are:

Jeff Knight (Cranford '92): Thomas Jefferson, Indiana Jones (JK: yeah, he's not real but it'd be cool if he was), super athlete Jim Thorpe.

Kerry McDevitt (WHS '81): my father Charlie, and Carly and Melina McDevitt, his two granddaughters he never met.

DEVIL OF THE MONTH

There is no Devil of the Month for March because there were no events. The Devil of the Month for April will be named in the May 3 Devil's Den.

The Devil's Den appears in *The Westfield Leader* on the first and third Thursday every month during the school year. Contact us with comments, complaints and suggestions at bj1019@aol.com. And remember, win or not, Whs4evr!

Coldwell Banker's Frank Isoldi Earns Multiple Sales Awards

WESTFIELD - Sales Associate Frank D. Isoldi of the Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage Westfield East office has won several prestigious awards from both Coldwell Banker and the New Jersey Association of Realtors for his sales achievements in 2011.

Mr. Isoldi's sales success earned him the Coldwell Banker International President's Premier Award for the 12th consecutive year, placing him within the top 1 percent of 85,000 Coldwell Banker sales associates internationally. Out of more than 3,000 agents at Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage in New Jersey and Rockland County, N.Y., Mr. Isoldi ranked number three in closed sales volume and number nine in units sold for 2011. A perennial top-producing agent in the metropolitan area marketplace, he was recognized as the number one sales associate in listings sold at the Westfield East office for the eighth consecutive year.

Mr. Isoldi also was honored with the New Jersey Association of Realtors (NJAR) Circle of Excellence Award at the Platinum Level for 2011, the ninth consecutive year he has earned the highest level of achievement recognized by NJAR.

In 2011, Mr. Isoldi placed number 198 on The Wall Street Journal/Real Trends Top 1000 list of sales professionals by transaction volume, closing nearly \$40 million in sales in 2010.

"Frank's achievements prove just how exceptional he is on a local, national and international level. The source of that success is the complete dedication he provides his clients," said Hal Maxwell, president of Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage in New Jersey and Rockland County, N.Y.

Mr. Isoldi is a Coldwell Banker Previews Property Specialist, educated in the marketing of luxury homes. A lifelong resident and second-generation native of Westfield,



David B. Corbin for The Westfield Leader and The Times

STRONG DEFENSE AND GOOD POWER...Pictured, left to right, are: Melissa Moreno, Julie Siragusa, Emily Snyder and Allie Verrelli, who are expected to supply strong defense and good offensive punch for the Cougar softball team.

MORENO, SIRAGUSA, BAGNIEWSKI BOOST OFFENSE

Softball Lady Cougars Shift Several Defensive Positions

By DAVID B. CORBIN
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Several shifts in defensive positions have taken place this pre-season with the Cranford High School softball team, but one thing for sure, the Cougars will have a very talented veteran behind the plate and another on the mound.

"We have some returning starters,

except most of the kids are playing new positions. We moved our third baseman to short, and we have a new third baseman in [sophomore] Maggie McKay. The constant for us is Melissa Moreno behind the plate. This will be her fourth year. And on the mound for her third season is Julie Siragusa. Those are our two mainstays," Cougar Head Coach Bob Bruno said.

Last year, Moreno, an All-County selection, was as solid as could be behind the plate.

"She has been a godsend for four years. If she wasn't the best catcher in the county, she was always in the top two or three. She has worked hard all summer, and we expect her to have an exceptional senior season. She has been accepted to Ramapo College, and she will continue playing softball," Coach Bruno said.

Siragusa, a junior, had been the Cougars' ace pitcher since her freshman season, but last year she injured her hip towards the end of the season, which really tossed a wrench in their postseason.

"That was a major injury for us, considering how dominant she is. She is getting stronger every day. She had a great outing in our scrimmage against Woodbridge. Struck out eight kids! When she's healthy, she is going to be someone to contend with in the county," Coach Bruno said.

The left-handed hitting Siragusa was also very dangerous at the plate.

"Julie is a pleasure to watch play. As a softball coach, she is your consummate softball player. She is a very good hitter. If she weren't pitching, she would be the best outfielder in the county. Having college experience, if I were to recruit her, she could play outfield on most teams in the country," Coach Bruno said.

Senior Stephanie Bagniewski has returned to play second base. She is also strong with the metal stick, and she proved it with a colossal home run against Roselle Park in the Union County Tournament quarterfinals last year.

"Steph has the potential to be an outstanding player. She has to be-

lieve in her ability to be that special person. She has shown that so far in the pre-season games. She is hitting that ball very well. She's in the number 4 spot. She's going to get up and there's going to be a lot of runners on in front of her," Coach Bruno said.

Sophomore Allison Verrelli, who started at third base last year, has shifted to shortstop.

"Allison has excellent ability. We moved her to shortstop. She has a little bit more to learn, but she does things correctly," Coach Bruno said.

Senior Emily Snyder has returned to play leftfield, and senior Izzy Acton, a standout on the girls volleyball team, will play first base.

"Izzy played for us as a freshman. She was outstanding and then decided that her first passion was volleyball. That's understandable! She's an excellent volleyball player. I invited her to come back, and she has been doing a great job," Coach Bruno said.

Defensively, Coach Bruno said, "I am pretty sure the infield is going to be the strength of our team, other than pitching and behind the plate. Outfield is a work in progress."

Several underclassmen have been vying for the outfield positions. Sophomore Kerry Wischusen will cover centerfield, and sophomore Jessica Casale will cover right field. Juniors Sara LoBue and Julie Schott will work the outfield also. Sophomore Victoria Mettlin will be a utility player.

Presently, Siragusa is expected to be the leadoff hitter with Snyder batting second. Moreno and Bagniewski will bat in the 3-4 spots, possibly followed by Verrelli, Acton, juniors Jenna Goeller or Jessica Rediger, Wischusen and Casale.

"Everything is going to go through Julie and Melissa. Julie is going to be the catalyst, and Melissa has that big bopper kind of thing, and Stephanie has to do her thing. Jessica Casale has excellent speed, so she will be adding a different dimension," Coach Bruno said.

The Cougars opened their season against Linden on April 3 and will host Union today, Thursday, April 5, at 4 p.m.



SEASON CHAMPIONS...The Westfield 8th Grade travel "A" basketball team captured championships in both the Garden State League and the Central Jersey League. The team also won the Tournament of Champions sponsored by the Hoop Group in Neptune. Pictured, left to right, are: kneeling Michael O'Connor, Sid Douglas and Owen Murray; standing, Head Coach Keith Gabloff, Dondre Garcia, Parker Hess, Andrejs Rumpeters, Tyler Roth, Mitchell Bryk, Nick Mele, Chris Boutsikaris and Assistant Coach Gary Roth.

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