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Editor

## On selecting all-area sports teams

Proud fathers can be a problem. Especially if their son or daughter happens to be a star athlete.

Every so often newspapers get calls from dads who think the apples of their eyes aren't properly recognized when it comes to selection of all-area teams.

Such a call recently arrived on my phone. Only it wasn't a father, rather the school principal who was phoning on behalf of a dad whose youngster didn't earn first team all-star honors.



Young ladies participate in a variety of varsity sports which have all-area honor teams appearing in O&E newspaper.

**THIS IS THE TIME** for a batch of Observer & Eccentric Newspapers all-area squads so it's easy to camouflage the exact sport because I really have no desire to embarrass the dad.

But before I relate that experience, it might be in order to explain the technique used in selection of O&E all-area squads.

First of all, each honorary squad is selected by the vote of coaches.

At the start of a season, coaches are reminded that they will help choose all-area teams for their sports. When the year's schedule is completed, they're asked to vote for the county's top performers, selecting first and second teams.

At our Oakland County papers, this is done by ballot. In Wayne County, coaches are invited to a selection meeting and make all-star choices as a group.

Both methods get the job done — in what we feel is a fair and objective manner.

**AS MY ASSOCIATE** John Bozzo, editor of our Redford Observer and formerly sports editor of the Birmingham-Bloomfield Eccentric, explains, these are really coaches' teams because they do the selecting.

John spent countless hours, while running the sports show in Birmingham, organizing the honor team concept. Those past efforts continue to pay dividends in popularity of O&E sports pages. John admits there are pitfalls in selecting these squads, but he adds on balance they honestly represent the best.

He notes that sometimes coaches neglect to send in their ballots or get them in late, which means some kids might suffer. But that is the exception, not the rule.

**THE LIST** of O&E all-area teams is staggering when you jot them down. For young men there are star squads in football, golf, cross country, basketball, wrestling, swimming, baseball, skiing (Oakland County only), hockey, baseball, track and tennis (Oakland only).

For girls there are area teams in basketball, swimming, volleyball, tennis (Oakland only), gymnastics (Oakland only), skiing (Oakland only), track and softball.

As John points out, that's quite a burden for the sports staffs when it comes to tabulating the all-area votes of coaches. But our sports editors agree it's well worth the effort.

Athletes like the teams, so do coaches, and usually the parents.

**NOW LET'S GET BACK** to the disappointed dad, the one who had his youngster's high school principal call me.

The problem for him began when he learned his child was ranked on the second all-area team. Pop felt the kid was a shoo-in for first.

The call I received, it turns out, was way down the line, actually next to last.

Initially, the father talked to one of our sports editors, who informed him the team had been selected by vote of coaches. That didn't seem to satisfy this fellow, and he called a couple of other O&E sports editors. Same message.

Next he complained to the principal, who phoned me. He said the coach in his school had not been invited to vote — and that he had not voted.

I checked this out. Yes, he had been invited to vote. No, he had not.

To me there is no way our newspapers can force a coach to participate, and besides, this is seldom a problem.

**THE DAD STILL** was not satisfied and so he took the final step, which sort of left me in wonderment.

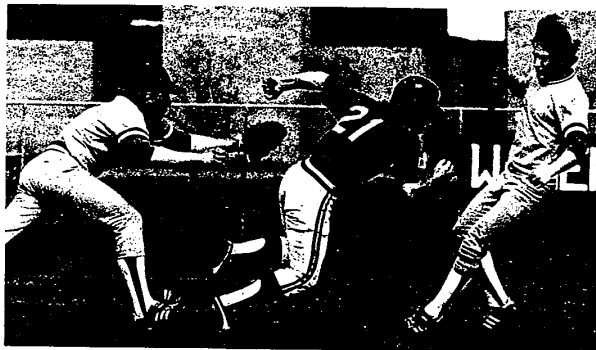
He once more called the sports editor who was handling the story and page layout for that particular all-area team.

"Just forget all about my kid," the father said. "Don't include (him/her) at all. If (he/she) isn't on the first team, I refuse to have (him/her) mentioned. And I want you to know (he/she) agrees with me."

That one left me cold.



High school male athletes compete for spots on all-area squads ranging from basketball through wrestling.



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