

Carli's passing leaves void in Livonia sports

NOT ALL THE CHRISTMAS cheer has been handed out, at least by this scribe.

With 1989 upon us, it's time to reflect on the past and look to the future.

The year 1988 ends with some sadness, but I believe '89 could bring some very good tidings.

It's time to tie up a few loose ends on a variety of subjects:

The passing of Jim Carli I don't know if the shock will ever subside. We lost a good superintendent, a man in the prime of his life who was respected by all the people connected with the Livonia Public Schools.

I'll never forget this man spending nearly two hours with me at lunch, taking time out of his busy schedule to discuss my concerns about middle school sports in Livonia. As you know, I had been highly critical of the administration ... the school board stood about their views on the middle school sports, but after meeting with Carli, much to my surprise, we found common ground.

I believe he was moving in a positive direction on this issue, and I just hope that his successor will carry on his agenda.

What I will miss more than anything ... his warmth and genuine concern for people. He was a class act ... say, and my heart goes out to his family.

Football coaches' graveyards: It's my understanding that several good candidates have applied for the Redford Union job to succeed Jim Gibbons, who has moved upstairs to become the athletic director. The job could be tied in with a teaching position. Could Catholic Central assistant Mike Lewis be a possibility?

As for Bishop Borgess, a rumor has been going around about Dan Henry replacing Coach Orchard. Lake St. Mary's Rob Hager is interested? I doubt that would ever come about. Another rumor has Hager going to a junior college program in California.

As for Dan Henry, I've been told he will probably become Wayne Memorial's defensive coordinator. Wayne head coach Chuck Howton is looking for assistants after he and a number of his staff members parted ways.

Clarenceville has also been quiet about a possible successor to long-time coach Ralph Weddie.

Ray Fracassi, former Clarenceville baseball coach and now head baseball coach at Redford St. Agatha, is believed to be the leading candidate.

NFL parity in Observeland basketball: Pete Ronelle, cat since retired out. We got it in western Wayne County boys hoops.

Farmington Harrison's fast start is remarkable in light of the fact that the team, coming off a championship football season, is 6-0 after only a week of preseason practice. But I'm not yet ready to label the Hawks a top-five team in Class B yet as Livonia Franklin coach Rod Hansen did last week. Harrison's hockey team comes next Friday at Plymouth Salem.

Salem started impressively, hammering Southfield and Monroe before losing to rival Plymouth Canton.

Wayne, on the other hand, is hard to figure. The Zebras got whipped by Monroe, struggled at Garden City, but beat Redford CC.

Most deceiving record? That goes to CC (1-3), which turned in an impressive performance Tuesday, beating Tony Tolbert and Detroit DePores.

Don't count out the Shamrocks in the Central Division.

Biggest disappointments? It has to be winless Farmington, which was expected to contend for the Lakes Division crown in the WLA. The other is Westland John Glenn (5-3), a team that puzzles me to no end.

North Farmington will be good by WLA playoff time, but for the state tournament, quarterfinal berths seem remote for any Observeland teams unless somebody gets a cupcake draw.

I judge the quality of basketball by the number of potential Division I recruits in the area. Right now the number is very low.



Brad Emons

CC vs. Harrison in Kickoff Classic: The 1989 football season is a long way off, but how about these two schools squaring off in the season opener at the Pontiac Silverdome?

Both teams are looking for competition for their first games. Two of Harrison's opponents, Southfield and West Bloomfield, have dropped the Hawks for obvious reasons.

But the word is that Ron Holland, the Farmington Schools AD, will continue to follow school district policy that discourages athletic contests against Catholic schools, especially ones from the same neighborhood.

Although it might seem to be a risky proposition for Harrison, the Class B Hawks, who have been beating Class A schools with regularity for quite some time, could afford a loss or two and still make the state playoffs.

What a game this game could draw. I'd be there.

But if CC and Harrison can't get together, why not Class A champ Traverse City and Harrison? That's a natural.

Harrison coach John Herrington said afterwards, during the press conference at the Class B state finals, that he would prefer to be a coach at a good Class B school. That's fine, but are there any out there willing to play Harrison?

The Hawks may find themselves in the same predicament as CC, looking for opponents outside of Michigan.

Hockey news: Observeland hockey followers can be proud of the fact that three of their own are representing the United States this week at the World Junior Hockey Championships in Anchorage, Alaska.

Mike Modano of Westland, the National Hockey League's No. 1 pick last summer with the Minnesota North Stars, is one member. He is leading the Western Hockey League in scoring for the Prince Albert Raiders.

Another member is Westland native Adam Burt, a defenseman who has taken a leave of absence from the NHL Hartford Whalers.

The other is Neil Carnes of Plymouth, a forward who quit his Junior A club briefly in Verdun, Quebec, but has since returned. He is property of the Montreal Canadiens.

Among those from Observeland currently in the NHL are Al Iafate (Toronto), Mike Donnelly and Mike Hartman (Buffalo), and Rich Kromm (NY Islanders).

In the college ranks, Stevenson High grad Chris Tancill, a member of the Wisconsin hockey team, is sixth in scoring in the Western Collegiate Hockey Association.

Those names speak well of the hockey talent produced from this area.

Modano's contract: I am not among those who feel Howard Gaurwitz, the Southfield attorney, handled things unprofessionally during Modano's lengthy contract hold-out with the North Stars. As far as I'm concerned, Gaurwitz played his cards right.

I am of the opinion that the North Stars' new management team was out of sync during the negotiations. Their handling of the situation reminded me of Rust Thomas and the Lions when they haggled over money with Billy Sims.

Both Modano and Gaurwitz had been unfairly lampooned and harpooned in recent issues of the Hockey News.

Gaurwitz got the contract Modano deserved, and he did his client a favor by giving him another year of Junior A hockey.

The North Stars aren't going anywhere this year, so why sacrifice a player who could help save the struggling franchise?

Gaurwitz may lack experience in dealing with pro teams, but he is a professional all the way.

Borgess product All-MAC

By Steve Kowalski
staff writer

The first question you feel like asking Tim Walton is, "All right, how much money did you bribe your teammates with to reap such an honor?"

When they counted the ballots cast this fall for Ball State University's Most Valuable football player, every slip of paper had Walton's name on it.

The senior linebacker from Redford Bishop Borgess was the unanimous choice among coaches and teammates for MVP, and Walton swears he didn't rig the thing.

Besides, Walton couldn't afford to bribe more than 100 guys.

"Maybe they think I'm supposed to pay them," joked Walton Tuesday from a friend's home in Detroit where he is spending the holidays. "I was shocked at first, and when he said it was a unanimous decision, I was really shocked. I didn't realize my teammates liked me that much."

HOW CAN ANYONE at BSU not like Walton? The 6-foot, 230-pounder probably didn't have many friends line up across from him during his four years of play in the Mid-American Conference.

Walton was a first-team All-MAC choice last

football

fall and an honorable mention Associated Press All-American. He finished his career with 480 tackles, including 140 in 1988.

Walton was one of nine finalists for the Vern Smith Award given to the MAC's MVP, an honor won by Western Michigan quarterback Tony Kimbrough.

He never was red-shirted at BSU, and he played in 43 of 44 games. Walton started 34 games, but never played in a California Bowl. That's his only regret.

THE CARDINALS finished second to WMU in the MAC this fall. Western earned a trip to California when it knocked off BSU Nov. 5 in Miami, Ind.

"It was a feeling that's hard to explain," Walton said. "It's something I wanted so bad. We had all the advantages. We played on our home field. I guess it just wasn't meant for us."

Walton's next goal is to play in the National Football League. He'll know more about his chances in early February when he attends the

NFL's Combine Camp for prospective pros in Indianapolis.

Considered a long shot to make it because of his lack of size, Walton hopes to impress scouts with his speed. Walton runs a 4.6 40-yard dash time and he's running them all the time.

"I've been running 4's and quickness and agility drills," he said. "Sometimes I play basketball, but not that much. I could mess up my ankles playing basketball."

"MY COLLEGE career is over, but I have to look at it a different way. Right now I don't want to think it's over. I'll just wait until the draft. I'm just hoping for a shot. Let me get in there and let them be the judge."

If pro football isn't Walton's calling, he can fall back on a business degree. Walton is about 25 credits shy of graduating in only four years, and he returns to Ball State Jan. 9, to resume his work toward a degree.

Walton remembers a time four years ago when he thought about not returning at all to the Muncie campus.

"When I first got here I wanted to transfer because I wasn't used to being away from home," Walton said. "Indiana is kind of slow. It's quiet down there. When people think of Indiana, they think of Purdue, (University of) Indiana and Indiana State."

Diffanbaugh makes resolution

By Brad Emons
staff writer

Rob Diffanbaugh's trainer, Greg Rice, says his pupil has the "chin, heart and technique" to become a champion boxer.

But the 17-year-old senior at Stevenson High in Livonia realizes he has to keep a New Year's resolution in order to reach another rung on the boxing ladder in 1989.

"I'm going to buy a running journal, run six times a week and log my times to see where I stand every day," said the 132-pounder, who competes in the lightweight division.

"Right now I have the skills to fight everyone in Detroit and now it's just a matter of getting into good shape to go the three full rounds. I want to be in good shape by the first week of January."

Paul Soucy, director of the Livonia Boxing Club where Diffanbaugh trains, says his student about running early before school.

"He doesn't get up too often at 6 a.m.," childer Soucy.

"It's hard sometimes because there's not enough time in the day with working," pleads Diffanbaugh, who holds a job after school working in a coin shop dealing baseball cards.

DIFFANBAUGH has been busy in the ring as well.

boxing

He fought five times during the past month, the most recent being a curfew at a club show in Brownstown Township, an event to benefit handicapped children. In that contest, Diffanbaugh defeated Raymond Keys of Detroit, raising his amateur record to 8-4.

On Dec. 5 card at the Palace of Auburn Hills, featuring the Kronk Team of Detroit against the Jimmy Ellis Boxing Team of Louisville, Ky., Diffanbaugh dropped 23-year-old Fidel Pitts of Crowell Recreation Center of Detroit with a pair of standing eight-counts in the first round.

"He gave that guy (Pitts) a helluva boxing lesson," said Soucy.

In the Diamond Gloves Tournament Nov. 19-21 at the Veterans Memorial Building in Detroit, Diffanbaugh defeated Detroiters Corey King and Quisen Virgil before losing to Warren Kilgore, an older and more experienced boxer, in the final.

"ALL OF ROB'S opponents are older," said Soucy. "It's tough finding him opponents his age."

Diffanbaugh credits Rice, a former boxer, with his improvement through the amateur ranks. He has won 19 of his last 23 after starting out with a 5-4 record.

"Greg has taught me ring generalship and helped my jab 100 percent," Diffanbaugh said. "He's a technician and likes everything perfect. He trains me in the perfect image of Sugar Ray Robinson ... the same moves."

"He's put me up another level." Diffanbaugh plans to continue his amateur career beyond his high school graduation.

"I'll go to a community college and then transfer to a four-year school," he said. "I'm not sure what I want to study, maybe electronics."

"But I'm like anybody in boxing. I'd like to go to the Olympics and fight on our international teams. The only way of doing that is to win here."

Sporting a 5-1 record in the open ranks, Diffanbaugh's first step will be the Detroit-area Golden Gloves Tournament, which starts Feb. 22 at Roma Hall in Livonia. Those preliminary bouts will be hosted by the LBC.

IF HE ADVANCES, Diffanbaugh will qualify for the National Golden Gloves Tournament in Louisville, Ky.

And although he is trained in the image of Sugar Ray Robinson, Diffanbaugh tries to emulate Evander Holyfield, an up and coming fighter in the pro division.

"I like him because he's quick and powerful," said Diffanbaugh of his idol. "I like watching him on TV because you can learn."

But Diffanbaugh realizes that a running diary is the way to win. He knows that as well as his trainers. The tools are there.



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