

Sports Week

- School news
- Calendar
- Classified

From the Pressbox

By Dave Konopki

Weight for Wishes thanks

This job can sometimes be frustrating. Oh, I've been in this business long enough to know deadlines, impatient editors, unreturned phone calls and inflated egos are all part of the territory.

But the frustration begins to set in when you simply don't know what to write - or better yet - not being able to adequately express your feelings to your readers.

This is one of those times. I guess I should be brief and get right to the point. So I will: Thank you!

On January 26, 1994 I began a journey. A journey to lose weight. A journey I wanted to share with my readers. But more importantly, I wanted to raise money for a small group of children - a special group of children who have touched my heart and my life forever.

We take many things for granted in life. Our families. Our jobs. Our homes. But perhaps most of all, we take our health for granted, especially the health of those we love.

But this special group of children and their families will never make that same mistake. To them, life is too precious to take for granted - and unfortunately - it's often too short.

These children live right here in our neighborhoods, maybe even right next door to you, and they lay their heads on their pillows each night knowing they will never live to see their 18th birthday. Just like you and I, they have hopes and dreams and ambitions.

But most of all, they have wishes. And I wanted to help. The Make-A-Wish Foundation of Northeastern Pennsylvania grants the wishes of terminally ill children or children suffering from an illness which creates the probability he or she will not survive beyond their 18th birthday.

Currently, there are 16 children from our area just waiting for their wish to be granted.

Unfortunately, most of these wishes, which include trips to Disney World, come with a hefty price tag. It takes approximately \$3,000 to grant the average wish.

So I asked for your help. I went on a diet and you pledged money. Together, I lost more than 30 pounds and we will raise more than \$1,500 for this great cause.

Again, thank you. But I have to be honest. I experienced a plethora of emotions during the past 10 weeks, ranging from hope to despair to satisfaction to, yes, even anger.

When the diet, dubbed "Weight for Wishes" began, the pledges barely trickled in. No one, it seemed to me, cared. I remember sitting in a roomful of people, talking to them about the fundraiser. A few of them filled out pledge forms, most of them politely refused. But moments later, a man began waving raffle tickets around, a fundraiser for his child's athletic team. He couldn't sell them fast enough. People handed over their money to him like he was Jerry Falwell.

I sat dumbfounded and quiet. I was frustrated and hurt. But most of all, I was absolutely amazed. I never asked anyone for a lot of money, just a small donation. To those who responded, I say "thank you".

Although I'm eternally grateful to everyone who pledged money, from \$50 to \$1, there are a few people, including a person I've never met, I need to thank personally.

Less than two weeks into the campaign, I received a pledge form from a couple in Dallas - Marilyn and Richard Maslow - who pledged a whopping \$10 per pound lost. But Mrs. Maslow's charitable contribution didn't stop there. After reading that pledges were coming in slowly, Mrs. Maslow personally went out and got some more pledges. Mrs. Maslow, words cannot adequately express my sincere appreciation. If you read this, please call me so I can thank you in person. May God truly bless you, your generous husband, and your family.

Also, anyone who follows local girls' high school sports knows the name of Abby Russin. Her name has appeared on this sports page dozens of times during her field hockey career at Dallas. But now, as you will find out, her excellence goes far beyond the boundaries of the athletic field.

I received a phone call from Russin, president of the Dallas High School Student Council, early during the fundraiser, informing me that she, along with the rest of the student council, wanted to help raise money for Make-A-Wish. They came through in a big way, collecting more than 75 pledges totaling more than \$300.

So many negative things are written and said about the youth of today, but if the future of the world is in the hands of people like Abby Russin and her friends, I'm not afraid to grow old.

To my wife, Donna, and my children, Jennifer, Ryan and Sarah, who supported me both physically and emotionally during my weight loss, thank you.

To Ron Bartizek and the staff of the Dallas Post, thank you for the space in your paper to run the pledge forms, the weight updates, my columns about this fundraiser and the handling of my pledges as they came in (aside to graphic artist guru, Paul Rismiller - thanks for being so "generous" on the graphic).

And finally, but most importantly to God, who has proven again that, with His help, all things are indeed possible, thank you.

IT'S NOT TOO LATE FOR YOU TO HELP. Although the diet officially ends on Friday (the final weight loss and amount of money raised will be announced during a charity basketball game featuring the Philadelphia Eagles at Wilkes University on Sunday), it's not too late for you to pledge money.

Anyone interested, especially local businesses, can phone their pledges in to me at 283-5532 anytime day or night or fax a copy of the pledge form below to 675-3650. A complete list of names and businesses who pledged money will appear in next week's Dallas Post.

Let's put the Back Mountain on the map! But more importantly, let's make the wishes of a very special group of children come true.

Baseball preview: Mounts talented, Lehman is top pick

By DAVE KONOPKI Sports Writer

Although less than three miles separate the Dallas and Lake-Lehman high schools, there is a noticeable difference between the two school's baseball teams this season.

Dallas, although very talented, has relatively little experience, especially in its pitching department, while the Knights return a solid core from last year, including the majority of its pitching staff.

No one outside the Back Mountain gives the Mountaineers much of a chance to claim the Wyoming Valley Conference Class AAA title, but the Knights are almost everyone's choice, including their own head coach, as the favorite in the WVC Class AA West Division.

But despite the differences, the two teams have a couple things in common: talent, a successful veteran head coach and a winning attitude.

The Dallas and Lake-Lehman baseball teams will kick off the 1994 regular season next week. Here's a look at both programs in alphabetical order:

DALLAS: Little experience, loads of talent

If there's a Fountain of Youth, Dallas head coach Jack Wolensky must have found it. The 1994 edition of the Mountaineer baseball team is young - both in age and in experience.

Consider this: Dallas returns just three seniors from last year's 8-10 team which finished fourth in the Wyoming Valley Conference Class AAA division. The Mountaineers return just seven lettermen from that team and only four of them were everyday players. And to top things off, the Mountaineers do not have a pitcher on their staff this year who won a game last season.

But while they may be young, they're also very talented, especially offensively, and an air of

cautious optimism surrounds the program.

"I don't think I've ever had a team this young," said Wolensky, who begins his 14th year as head coach of the Mountaineers. "We only have four players who played a lot last year. But we should have a real good offensive team. We have a lot of kids who can hit the ball well."

Senior Brian Brady, juniors Mike Viglone and Rich Butcofski and sophomore Jeff Kunkle were everyday players for the Mountaineers last year and form the nucleus of this year's team. Seniors Pete Waichulis and Jared Cooney, along with sophomore Rich Klick, earned varsity letters last year and will be everyday players this season. Wolensky is also counting on the services of senior Ed Schall (who missed parts of the last two seasons due to injuries), juniors Mike DeFrancesco (1B/DH), Jason Seward (3B/P), Ken Marsola (OF), and sophomore Kevin McDonald, (C).

Brady, Kunkle, Klick, Seward, Waichulis and sophomore Griffin Bicking will share the pitching duties. "We have a number of kids who can pitch," says Wolensky. "We just lack the experience."

The Mountaineers did gain valuable experience recently with a trip to Norfolk, Va. Despite experiencing some bad weather, the Mounts were able to play a doubleheader against Lake Taylor High School of Norfolk, a team which qualified for their regional playoffs in each of the last two seasons.

Despite not being able to practice outside because of the record snowfall our area received this winter, the inexperienced Mountaineers played well, winning the first game of the twinbill, 4-3 and dropping the nightcap, 10-4. Kunkle picked up the mound win in the first game with Brady recording the save.

"It was a great trip, the kids were really excited about it," said

Wolensky, whose team raised all the money themselves in order to pay for the trip. "I really was surprised how well we played, especially since this was our first time outside this year. They (Lake Taylor) had already played four games this year but our kids played hard and were not intimidated."

If the Mountaineers are going to be successful in the WVC Class AAA division this season, they're going to have to get off to a quick start. Dallas begins their WVC regular season April 11 against divisional favorite Wyoming Valley West, followed by games with Berwick and Pittston Area in the opening week.

"There are no easy games in AAA," said Wolensky, who is assisted by former Dallas standout Scott Francis and volunteer assistant Jason Cadwalader of Lake-Lehman. "It's a great league. Like last year, we're not going to be home for quite a while. The younger players are going to have to mature quickly if we're going to be successful."

LAKE-LEHMAN: Odds-on favorite in AA division

Talk to Lehman head coach Dwight Barbacci about the potential of the 1994 Black Knight baseball team and the excitement in his voice builds with every word.

And with good reason. Lehman returns a host of talented players from last year's squad which finished with a 10-4 record and second place in the WVC Class AA.

Returning are seniors Will Woronko (P/IF), Ernie Chamberlain (P/OF), Aaron Yaple (IF/OF), Larry Smith (P/OF), Harry Owens (2B/OF), Bob Sayre (OF), junior Eric Marsh (OF), and sophomore John Oliver (P/IF). Smith, Owens, Yaple and Chamberlain have been starters on the Black Knight baseball team since their sophomore seasons.

In addition, Lehman got a pleasant surprise with the addition of Jamie Patton, a transfer from

Berwick. Barbacci is also counting on the services of juniors Tim Waslick, Chris Olson, John Wood; sophomores Mike Adamshick, Dave Cardwell, Tom Bostock, Mike Pitcaige, Ralph Wasiakowski, Brian Weaver, Brian Wesley, and freshman Geoff Engle.

"We have a lot of kids with experience," said Barbacci, who begins his 10th year at the helm of the Knights. "We also have a number of our pitchers back from last season. Once we get the opportunity to go outside every day for practice, we can evaluate the kids a little closer. I think our main concern is getting the right kids in the right positions."

Returning on the mound for Barbacci are Chamberlain, who finished with a 5-2 record last year, Oliver (1-1), Smith (2-1), and Woronko (2-0). Engle, a big, strong, hard-throwing freshman, should also see time on the mound this season.

The veteran coach is also hoping Waslick's return to baseball will be as successful as his return to football. After not playing since mini-football, Waslick returned to the gridiron last year and was the leading receiver in the conference. The junior hasn't played baseball since his junior high school days.

Because of the bad weather, outside practices for the Knights have been nearly non-existent.

"It's been kind of frustrating, both for the kids and the coaches," said Barbacci, who is assisted by longtime assistant Paul Hildebrand and volunteer assistant Vince Strjzewski. The kids are just itching to get outside. We have exhibition games scheduled for every day next week (week of April 4).

"We want to win our division and qualify for the playoffs," said Barbacci, of his team's goals. "We should be the team to beat in the (AA) West division. Northwest lost a lot of players but Jim Hill always puts a good team on the field. If we play up to our potential, it could be a very good season for us."

BMT Baseball cleanup is Sat., April 9

Back Mountain Baseball, Inc. will hold a field cleanup for all fields at the complex on Church Street on Saturday, April 9 at 9 a.m.

All league volunteers from both baseball and softball are asked to bring rakes, shovels, wheelbarrows, rollers, etc. The field cleanup is necessary to get the fields into playing condition for Opening Day on April 23 and for the first major league baseball game on April 18. If there is not a sufficient number of volunteers present for cleanup and the fields are not ready for play, the beginning of the season may be delayed.

Golf, tennis workshops

Penn State Wilkes-Barre will offer the following workshops on the Lehman campus.

Beginning Golf for Adults is scheduled for Thursdays beginning April 7 and continuing for five weeks.

Beginning Tennis for Adults will begin on Tuesday, April 7 and continue for six weeks ending on May 12.

Tennis for couples will be offered on Saturdays from 10 a.m. to noon, starting April 16.

For information and registration call Damian White at 675-9100 or Jack Monick at 675-5259.



POST PHOTO/GRACE R. DOVE

Karate kids

Students of Barnes Northeast Kenpo Karate in Lehman recently competed in the Coal Kick-in Tournament in Tamaqua. Larry Morris and Ryan McDade earned second place trophies in their respective age groups for fighting, while Kim Sorber earned a second place trophy for forms. Earning runner-up plaques in their respective age groups were Steven Weber, forms and Adam Morris and Brian Wright, fighting. Ryan McDade also earned a fourth-place award for forms. Shown are, front row from left: Steven Weber, Brian Wright, Kim Sorber, Kevin Arnaud and Adam Morris; back row: Larry Morris, Don Wright, Sifu (instructor) Gary Barnes and Ryan McDade.

Metz advances to Eastern Nationals

Mike Metz of Dallas advanced to the MAWA Eastern National Wrestling Tournament in Salisbury, Maryland April 15-17. Metz advanced by winning the district qualifier at 105 lbs. and placing second in the regional qualifier, losing the final match 2-1.

Mahler, Mosca named most valuable

Gary Vanderburg, athletic director at Wyoming Seminary College Preparatory School, Kingston, made Most Valuable Player presentations to students at a recent winter sports assembly. Included were Nick Mahler, Dallas, boys' swimming; and Alan Mosca, Dallas, for wrestling.

Donkey basketball at Lake-Lehman

Join in the fun and come to Lake-Lehman High School for the Donkey Basketball Game rescheduled for Saturday, April 9. A senior girl versus boy "boxing glove" game begins at 6:30 p.m. The main event, featuring the seniors against the faculty will be at 7:30. Tickets are \$3.50 and are available from any senior, in the high school office, or at the door.

Hardball league seeks players

The Phaser Gators of the Bi-County Hard Ball League are looking for baseball players of all ages. League play starts May 17. Call Russ Susko at 696-2933 for information.

Russell Stone scores hole-in-one

Russell Stone of Dallas scored his first hole-in-one in 46 years playing golf March 22 on the 11th hole, a 186 yard par 3, at Pinehurst Plantation Golf Club, Pinehurst, North Carolina. Stone knocked his tee shot into the cup using a #5 wood. Witnesses were Mark Scalzo of New York City and Mike Roehm of Utica, New York.

KT Raiders registration April 16

Kingston Township Raiders Junior Football will be conducting registration for the 1994 season, Saturday, April 16, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Shavertown United Methodist Church (behind Burger King). All players must be 7 years old by August 1, 1994 and may not turn 14 years old before August 1, 1994. *A player 14 years of age and 110 lbs. or less may participate for an additional season as long as he does not turn 15 years of age during the League season.

Fees are \$20 per child and \$10 each additional family member. Cost includes practice shirt.

Any new football players or cheerleaders are required to present a photograph and copy of their Birth Certificate at time of registration.