

THE DALLAS POST

SportsWeek

Section 2



Timothy J. Raub

Former Mountaineer star grinding it out again

Life has not always been a bed of roses for Rich Butcofski.

After a football career that has seen the former Dallas High School standout travel from the Back Mountain to Nassau Community College, to Central Florida University, back to the Wyoming Valley at Luzerne County Community College, to East Stroudsburg University, and finally back in the Wyoming Valley again with the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Pioneers of the AF2, Butcofski is just happy to still be playing football.

"It is very important to me to still be playing," said Butcofski. "I just can't give up on it yet."

A star with the Mountaineers throughout the early 1990s, Butcofski was twice named to the Pennsylvania Little School All-State team, was a Big 33 Classic selection in 1995, and was part of Dallas' state championship team in 1993. He also enjoyed a star-studded career at Nassau Community College, one of the premier junior colleges in the nation.

But when Butcofski signed to play for Division 1AA Central Florida, things began to change drastically. Butcofski broke his foot entering his first year at Central Florida, and was forced to miss the first third of the season, while recovering from the injury. After healing, Butcofski still had to deal with coaches and players the he just didn't seem to get along with.

"I had a terrible time at Central Florida," said Butcofski. "I broke my foot when I first got there, and didn't get along with my linebacker coach at all, among other things. It just wasn't a good situation for me at all."

So the 6-3, 235 pound linebacker/fullback decided to transfer back home, and play for Division II East Stroudsburg University. But first he wanted to take some extra classes at Luzerne County Community College, and get ahead of the game a little.

As good a decision as Butcofski thought going to LCCC was, a little-known NCAA rule once again set him back in his pursuit of a playing career. The NCAA's 2-4-2 rule states that a player who transfers from a two-year school to a four-year and back to a two-year must sit out an entire season before he can play again. So before he could take part in one drill, in one down or in one series at East Stroudsburg, Butcofski had to wait another year.

"No one ever told me about the 2-4-2 rule when I decided to go to East Stroudsburg," said Butcofski. "Sitting out that year was really hard. I just wanted to play football and couldn't."

But the tides changed for Butcofski once he stepped on the gridiron with the Warriors. He made an immediate impact with the team, and the linebacker had 105 tackles in his senior season, playing next to Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference Defensive Player of the Year Kevin Nagle, who had 125.

Now, Butcofski has the chance to take his career the next step, but once again he will have to deal with adversity. After signing with the Pioneers,

See BULLPEN, pg 12



Mike Fulton far right, served as assistant coach of the Dallas boys basketball team for many years. He is shown with this year's squad.

Dallas basketball loses a coach, and friend

Mike Fulton, assistant boys coach, loses battle with cancer

BY TIMOTHY J. RAUB  
Post Staff

The Dallas High School boy's basketball team has lost a key member of its family. Mike Fulton, 42, an assistant and junior varsity coach for the Mountaineers, lost his year-long battle with cancer of the appendix last week.

"Mike was the most loyal coach I have ever worked next to," said Dallas head coach Pat McCue. "We've known each other since eighth grade, and he might have left, but he will never

be forgotten."

Fulton coached the Mountaineers with McCue the last five seasons, and was a key in helping Dallas return to the top of the Wyoming Valley Conference. But as numerous players will tell you, Fulton was not interested in the glory of the win, but more the success of his players, both on and off the court.

"I feel like I'm losing my best friend," said Dallas forward Chuck Suppon, who played for Fulton the last four years. "He was always there for the team when we needed him, and I could talk to him about not just athletics, but life in general."

Fulton took great interest in his team, and with his daughter Morgan, 6, by his side at most practices, continued to coach

with the team up until he left for Washington D.C. for treatment just before Dallas' district semi-final playoff game with Scranton Prep. In his last game as a coach, Fulton was able to leave the court with a win in the Mountaineer's victory over East Stroudsburg North in the first round of the district tournament, and was on the telephone with a spectator in the stands throughout the Mountaineers' loss to Scranton Prep in the semifinals.

"We were in the hotel room in Washington D.C., and Mike kept calling throughout the game to find out the play-by-play, statistics and score of the game," said Mary Jo Fulton, Mike's wife. "He

See FULTON, pg 12



POST PHOTO/TIMOTHY J. RAUB

Butcofski works out with Pioneers

From staff reports

**WILKES-BARRE** — Rich Butcofski, a 1995 Dallas High School graduate, was among 30 hopefuls to begin training camp for the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Pioneers football team March 18 at GAR High School. A prospective fullback/linebacker with the Pioneers, Butcofski took part in drills with the team on the rain-soaked GAR turf with hopes of making the team in their inaugural season in the Arena Football 2 league.

Butcofski was the lone Pioneer to suffer a substantial injury, and head coach Terry Karg said the status of the former East Stroudsburg University player was "day to day."

Pioneer training camp runs until March 30, and the roster must be narrowed to 21 by the afternoon of April 1. Practices will be held March 21, 22 and 23 at GAR, and are free and open to the public.

Former Dallas High School and East Stroudsburg University standout Rich Butcofski (left) runs through lineman drills with former Warrior teammate Kevin Nagle (46) during training camp with the Wilkes-Barre Pioneers. Butcofski is one of 30 hopefuls in training camp hoping to make the AF2 roster.

Back Mountain baseball, softball tryouts March 23

Back Mountain Baseball, Inc. will conduct baseball and softball tryouts this Saturday, March 23 at the playing fields on Church Street in Dallas.

All players ages 8-12 who are not already on a major league baseball or softball team and who wish to play major or minor league baseball or softball must

try out.

American League baseball tryouts are scheduled for 11 a.m. National League baseball tryouts will be conducted at 1 p.m. Softball tryouts for 8- and 9-year-olds are scheduled for 3 p.m. Softball tryouts for 10-, 11- and 12-year-olds will take place at 4 p.m.

Boosters honor Dallas wrestlers

The Dallas Wrestling Booster Club recognized outstanding performance and commitment at its annual Jr-Sr High Wrestling Banquet, held March 7. President Joe Yenason thanked the coaching staffs of both teams for their efforts. Assistant Jr High Coach Gerry Ogurkis made a few remarks regarding what it takes to be a successful wrestler, then handed out several awards:

- Most Improved Wrestler (a tie): Joe Lambert and Sean McMahon;
- Most Takedowns: Christian Gallagher;
- Most Pins: Buddy Kocher
- District Placing awards: Buddy Kocher, 1st 185; Christian Gallagher, 1st 145 and Brian Goeringer, 3rd 138.

Joel Kislin, high school head coach, who is in his 28th year of coaching, thanked the club for their support of him, his assistant, Jason Croghn, and the team. He handed out Coaches Awards to Ben Rother 103, A.J.

Musto 112, Casey Zalinski 125, Brian Parrish 130, Ryan Dimmick 135, Morgan Anderson 140, Todd Jones 145, Perry Coolbaugh 152, Mike Yenason 160, John Walter 171 and Mike Burns Heavyweight. He also presented Senior Awards to Todd Jones and Brad Glatz; and Special Awards to District 2 Champions Todd Jones 145 and Perry Coolbaugh 152, and John Hettes, fourth 119 District 2.

Kislin presented a special award to Todd Jones for his outstanding performance throughout the season.

Yenason provided updates about the school's commitment to a permanently assigned wrestling room for the Back Mountain Elementary Program; a plan for weightlifting through the off-season and the summer meeting schedule for the Wrestling Booster Club. Meetings will be held on the third Sunday of every month at 7 p.m. at the Dallas Township Police Department meeting room.

McDonald named outstanding wrestler

Tyler McDonald (100 pounds) was named outstanding wrestler at the YMCA Tournament held at King's College March 10. Other local wrestlers who placed included: Elementary: PeeWee: Jeff Carter, (46), 1st place; Justin Pelosa, (46), 2nd place. Bantam: T.J. Pearson, (85), 3rd place. Midget: Brandon Peloso, (55), 2nd place; Jake Winter, (60), 2nd place; Shane Stark, (75), 2nd place; Ryan Murphy, (75), 3rd place; Robert Peloso Jr., (90), 3rd place. Jr. High: Scott Carter, (140), 1st place; Pat McHugh, (140), 2nd place; Brandon Brown, (140), 3rd place. High School: Matt Dragon, (132), 1st place; Jon Shutz, (132), 4th place; Jeremy Shutz, (140), 1st place, Willie Weber, (162), 2nd place.



Bearde inducted into L-L Hall

Bill Bearde, a 1985 graduate of Lake-Lehman High School, was recently inducted into the school's Basketball Hall of Fame.

A four-year varsity starter for the Black Knights, Bearde was a three-time all-scholastic selection, poured in a career-high 56 points in a game against Crestwood and was the Wyoming Valley Conference leading scorer in his senior season.

Bearde scored 1,478 points during his career at Lake-Lehman, throughout which his father, the late Rodger Bearde, was head coach of the boys' team.

John Oliver, Lake-Lehman High School principal, left, congratulated Bearde on his admission to the Hall of Fame.

DYB holding annual banquet

Dallas Youth Basketball will hold its annual banquet at 6 p.m. Sunday, April 14 at Genetti's Best Western in Wilkes Barre. All players receive a ticket at no cost with the purchase of an adult ticket. Tickets are \$12 for adults and \$10 for children age 12 and under. There is no admission charge for children under age 4.

The banquet will feature a family-style dinner, and individual and team awards for boys and girls will be presented.

Tickets may be purchased at any DYB game or by calling Peggy Lacey at 696-4603.

L-L Basketball Boosters 'Night at the Races'

The Lake-Lehman Boys and Girls Basketball Booster Clubs are sponsoring a "Night at the Races" on Saturday, April 6 at the Idetown Fire Hall. Doors open at 6:30.