

Sports Week



Former Dallas football standout Jeremiah Van Orden is an assistant coach at Downingtown East High School.

Former Dallas players part of coaching ranks

By DAVE KONOPKI
Post Editor

The season came to an end for the Dallas football team before the postseason began. But when the state playoffs reached the semifinal round, a piece of the Mountaineer program was part of it.

Former Dallas standout Jeremiah Van Orden is a member of the coaching staff at Downingtown East High School, which saw its run toward a state championship end with a loss against powerful North Penn in the Class 4A semifinals last weekend.

Van Orden, who spent the game in the coaches portion of the press box talking to defensive coordinator Josh Woodward, has been part of the Cougar program for the last two seasons. And earlier this week, head coach Mike Matta promoted Van Orden to defensive backs coach.

"It's been a lot of fun," said Van Orden, who began coaching at Downingtown with the program's freshman team. "I always loved football and wanted to stay close to the game."

Working at the high school as Chester County's school-based probation officer, Van Orden got the opportunity.

"The day I was hired I asked (the former probation officer) to introduce me to the head football coach," said Van Orden, who played for three seasons at Mansfield University before a neck injury ended his playing days. "I didn't know a lot about the Downingtown program, but I knew Dan Ellis was the quarterback when the team won a state championship in 1996."

Ellis went on to become a standout quarterback at the University of Virginia. He's now the offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach at Downingtown. That's right. An offensive coordinator and a quarterbacks coach.

Van Orden and Ellis are part of the program's 12-man coaching staff.

Van Orden isn't the only former player under Dallas head coach Ted Jackson who has entered the coaching ranks. In fact, he's not even the only member of his family who's done it.

Clark Van Orden Jr. has been part of the Mountaineer coaching staff for more than five years. The former Dallas standout is one of four Mountaineer coaches who played for Jackson at Dallas. The other coaches are Ted Jackson Jr., Mitch Onzik and Tommy Van Horn. Former Dallas player Dan Natitus coached under Jackson for several seasons before leaving after last season to focus on his duties as the school's wrestling head coach.

"It's great that so many former players have taken an interest in coaching," said Jackson Sr., who recently finished his 20th season at Dallas. "As a coach, you hope to make a positive influence on your players and, hopefully, these guys will do the same thing as coaches."

There are other former players under Jackson who are also coaching - and that includes several who played for Jackson when he was an assistant coach at Coughlin. Dallas assistant coach Bob Mahle and former Mountaineer assistant Ciro Cinti played for Jackson at Coughlin. And Matt Simpson, a 2000 Dallas graduate, is coaching at a high school in Virginia.

"I learned a lot about football and how to be prepared from Coach Jackson," said Jeremiah Van Orden. "I always had a lot of respect for him. As a coach, you begin to see things from a different perspective. It's amazing how much time you put in. I was talking to my brother about it just the other day. For all of the hours, you probably make a few cents an hour. But it's a lot of fun and I'm glad I decided to coach."

Taking a giant step forward

Five Dallas sports teams move from Class 2A to 3A

By DAVE KONOPKI
Post Editor

DALLAS TWP. - When the short-lived rivalry between the Dallas and Berwick football teams ended two years ago, many fans of both schools hoped the two tradition-rich programs would someday renew their acquaintances on the field.

Those fans will get their wish.

Earlier this week, the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association set the size classifications for all sports. The classifications - Class 4A, Class 3A, Class 2A and Class A - are based on each school's enrollment figures. The changes will take place at the start of the 2007 season.

Dallas moved up from Class 2A to 3A in five sports - football, baseball, track and field, cross country and softball - and remained in Class 3A in all others. Lake-Lehman, which is a Class 2A school, did not change classifications in any sport.

The good news for Back Mountain high school football fans is that, despite Dallas' move to 3A and Lake-Lehman remaining at 2A, the annual Old Shoe Game will continue. The teams recently played in the 58th annual edition of the game.

But the move means Dallas will add Berwick to the football schedule for the first time since the 2003 season. The schools played four times in three seasons from 2001-03 and each game was a classic, with neither team winning by more than eight points. Berwick - a program with more than 700 wins - defeated the Mountaineers by scores of 14-6, 15-14 and 20-13.

Dallas posted a thrilling 20-19 overtime win at Crispin Field in Berwick - remember quarterback Ryan Gryskewicz's plunge into the endzone? The loss kept the Dawgs out of a playoff of any kind for only the second time in almost 30 seasons.

"It's going to be a tough transition for our program," said Jackson, who recently finished his 20th season as Mountaineer head coach. "Playing 3A schools week in and week out is physically demanding. Not having depth hurts you. We saw that this season. We lost two linemen and it killed us. And we were only a double-A team."

In addition to playing Berwick and Lake-Lehman, the Mountaineers will face Wyoming Valley West, Pittston Area, Wyoming Area, Coughlin, Crestwood, Tunkhannock, Meyers and Nanticoke Area.

"That's brutal," said Jackson, who is 18 wins away from career victory No. 200. "We held our own the last time we were in 3A. But we



TIMES LEADER FILE PHOTO/S. JOHN WILKIN

The Dallas-Berwick rivalry on the football field - which was short-lived but intense - will be renewed in 2007. Earlier this week, the PIAA set its guidelines for classifications based on enrollment figures. Dallas will move up from Class 2A to play 3A, which means two of the region's most successful programs will play each other for at least two more seasons.



TIMES LEADER FILE PHOTO/DON CAREY

The Dallas softball team will be playing a Class 3A schedule starting with the 2007-08 season. The Mountaineers are making the jump from Class 2A.

WILDLIFE

Regulated deer hunt set for Monday

One-day hunt limited to first 40 hunters who arrive starting at 6 a.m.

The state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources will conduct a regulated deer hunt Monday, Dec. 5 at Frances Slocum State Park in Kingston Township.

The hunt is being held to help control the deer population within the park.

The one-day hunt is for whitetail deer only, and will be conducted in areas not normally open to hunting.

To ensure the safety of all park visitors, the park will be closed to all other activities. To participate, hunters

must hold an unfilled Wildlife Management Area 3B antlerless license.

Only manually operated shotguns 20 gauge or larger, or muzzle loading firearms will be allowed.

The hunt will be limited to the first 40 hunters who arrive at the park starting at 6 a.m.

There will not be a lottery. All hunters entering the park will be checked to ensure they have the proper license and firearm.

They will be asked to fill out a registration and safety orientation form before being assigned a designated parking area.

Roger Fickes, director of

the Bureau of State Parks, says the excessive deer herd is destroying park vegetation and needs to be controlled on a yearly basis. He said that after hunts at other state parks, the park staff usually sees a return of long absent wild flowers, shrubs, and small trees.

Safety zones, no hunting areas, and park boundaries will be posted and strictly enforced.

Extra park rangers and Pennsylvania Game Commission personnel will be stationed throughout the park area during this hunt.

For more details, call 696-3525

GROSSMAN CHOOSES LAFAYETTE

Wyoming Seminary lacrosse standout Sofie Grossman recently signed a letter of intent to attend Lafayette College next fall. The Shavertown resident is expected to play in the midfield for the Division I Leopards, who are coached by Kathy Frick. Lafayette plays in the Patriot League. Grossman has played defensive wing at Wyoming Seminary during the last two seasons and will be co-captain of the team when the season gets under way in the spring. Attending the signing ceremony, from left, first row are Debbie Grossman, mother; Sofie Grossman; and Ira Grossman, father. Second row: Catie Kersey, Wyoming Seminary lacrosse coach.

