

Recruiting Rumors Cloud Sectional Decision

2nd in a Series
By JOHN DOSER

Do Catholic high schools in the Rochester Diocese recruit souls for the army of Christ or athletes for points on the scoreboard?

The question is the hottest subject going these days, especially during the 54th annual Section 5 basketball tournament now going on in the Greater Rochester Area.

A two-year trial period where Catholic and private schools have been permitted to participate in sectional tournaments under the auspices of Section 5 (Rochester area) of the State Public High School Athletic Association, is about to end this spring.

It was reported last week that the method of voting for admitting, or rejecting Catholic schools to Section 5 once and for all, has yet to be determined. It could occur by mail referendum of all 120 public schools in Section 5, or by poll of eight league presidents which make up the section, or by the section's executive committee.

Fairport High basketball coach Jeff Fitch told Channel 10 sportscaster Rich Funke last week that he didn't believe Catholic schools belonged in the sectional tournament(s) at all because parochial schools might recruit for monetary consideration in order to produce a "super team."

Nothing can prevent parochial schools from getting anybody they want from any school district, Fitch also told Times-Union columnist Bruno Sniders.

Fitch quickly succeeded in focusing attention on recruiting and the lack of Catholic school boundaries — the two most important issues of the trial period, according to most observers.

His remarks drew immediate reaction from both Catholic and public school officials.

Cardinal Mooney athletic director and basketball coach Ed Nietopski said he simply didn't

know what else he could say or do to convince people that Catholic school coaches don't recruit — at least not the way Fitch implies they do.

Several players from outside the Town of Greece play for Nietopski at Mooney which is located in Greece on Maiden Lane.

"They come here because they like the school and accept the discipline and controls," he said.

He flatly denies that he or anybody connected with the school recruited or tried to convince these players to attend Mooney.

"I would be crazy to jeopardize my position at the school by recruiting and I despise the thought of it," Nietopski told Sniders.

"Sure, Nietopski recruits," said Paul Fauth, president of the Monroe County League, vice president of Section 5 (and a member of its executive committee) and principal at Greece Arcadia High School.

"Ed Nietopski is a rare person. He has the know-how, the rapport and the personality with people, especially the kids, which is really unique."

"He just very naturally recruits people to him and to his philosophy and to his program. When he talks to a parent at a game or at a banquet or even at his summer camp, he's recruiting in a most effective fashion."

"He's recruiting without any intent at all, — he's recruiting through his own actions and personality, which has nothing to do with the financial aspects of recruiting," Fauth said.

Bill Farrell, New York State high school basketball chairman as well as Section 5 basketball chairman, said Nietopski is one of the strongest disciplinarians in the area.

"If athletes are going to

Adelphi University soccer coach Menahem Less, on criticism of an abundance of foreign players on his squad: "We start seven naturalized citizens. I'm sure they are as American as Henry Kissinger."

Derek Sanderson of the Rangers, after losing three in a row to the Philadelphia Flyers: "They are the Stanley Cup champions. They're not just some pickup team that rented the ice for an hour."

Creighton University priest listening to a delayed broadcast of his school's basketball victory over Bradley: "Why am I so nervous when I know we win this game?" "Now," said a companion padre, "you know how God feels."

Minnesota quarterback Fran Tarkenton, on coaches he has known: "Every one I've played for has taught me something. Even Norm Van Brocklin. He taught me how not to treat people."

Jim Parker, former Baltimore Colt offensive lineman, on the value of pass protection: "The very first time I played with John Unitas, he threw the ball 47 times. We all knew the rules. If we kept the other guys away from John, we all ate well."

Mississippi State football coach Bob Tyler: "The greatest thing that happened to our recruiting program was the suspension of five LSU players for breaking curfew on a trip here. Now the kids know something goes on after dark in Starkville."

The motto of the new Tampa Rowdies of the North American Soccer League: "Soccer is a kick in the grass."

Mooney they're going there because they know they're going to get a disciplined situation and they're going to learn some basketball," Farrell said.

Farrell doesn't believe the record supports the claims that Catholic schools are recruiting.

"If you looked at the basketball seedings you saw three of the four Catholic schools at the bottom of the heap. Now you sure don't recruit and end up there."

Farrell admitted he's heard rumors about the recruiting, but added he has no knowledge or proof of it.

"I don't believe they're doing it. Families move into school areas everyday and they go where they think the school programs are best. I don't call that recruiting — I call that selection."

"If a kid's a good swimmer, and his parents can afford it, he'd probably go to Pittsford. If I were a good basketball player and lived in the city and thought I could make the team, I'd go to East. If I were a football player I'd probably maneuver myself and my family out to Rush-Henrietta," Farrell said.

As far as the sectional basketball tournament is concerned, Farrell thinks the addition of Catholic schools to the games has enhanced the competition.

He explained, however, that it's frustrating to see a parochial school (Aquinas) sell only nine advance tickets to their first sectional game.

Farrell added he was confident that only a very small, few people were accusing the Catholic schools of recruiting — actually or potentially. "And they really are small," he concluded.

Joe Drum, Greece Central School District athletic director and assistant Section 5 basketball

chairman, thought the issue is simply overworked.

"It's really so much bigger than just basketball. It affects all sports including the women's aspect of the thing."

"It almost seems like a lot of monkeyshine to go through with the voting, and even if a referendum turns the Catholic schools down, committees would probably be set up again and the wheels put right back into motion. It's really inevitable, it's going to happen sometime."

Drum, whose son Don is a sophomore basketball player on the Mooney varsity, said he's pleased and satisfied with his son's situation at Mooney.

"If the parochial schools are not voted in, I'm certainly not going to take Don out of Mooney to go to another school just so he can play in the sectionals. I know Mooney will find some competition, which would be equal to or tougher than we we have locally."

Fauth, a member of the original sectional committee which drafted the two-year trial proposal, said at one time he was a pretty strong supporter of keeping the Catholic schools out of the sectionals.

"But as time went by, I've changed my views and I think the Lord I've been able to. I feel they ought to be included and there should always be play among the public and parochial schools."

Fauth said he hasn't received a single written complaint about Catholic school recruitment in his 2 1/2 years as president of the Monroe County League.

"I've heard people say things and I've tried to pin them down, and usually when you get to that point they run out of specifics or you find that somebody is unwilling to put himself or his name

on the line," Fauth explained.

He agreed that there is a degree of unfairness which does exist in the broad range of area which parochial schools can draw from, compared to public schools.

"Technically, I suppose I should be protective of the kids in my district by trying to constrain other schools to equal areas of drawing power."

"But that's an impractical thing. Parochial schools have handicaps that public schools don't have, in the sense that they have come up with money in various ways schools don't have, in the sense that they have to come up with money in various ways public schools don't."

"In this day and age, when you think of individual rights and opportunities, even when compared to 10 and 15 years ago, there is no way parochial schools should be excluded from the sectionals."

St. Michael's Takes Crown

St. Michael's of Newark captured the diocesan elementary championship in the Catholic Youth Organization's Bishop's Tournament after defeating Mt. Carmel of Rochester, 63-52 at the Elmira Free Academy.

The 15 seventh and eight graders, coached by Ron Cervolo, have won the championship for three consecutive years. The victory was the 72nd in St. Michael's winning streak.

The St. Patrick's Invitational Tournament in Seneca Falls also fell to St. Michael's for the second year. The team has triumphed over Our Lady of Lourdes, Syracuse, in two tournaments, the Diocesan Championship of Syracuse and the Auburn Holiday Festival.



George Beahon

Quotable Quotes:

Nick Jemas is a little guy with big clout. He is managing director of the Jockeys' Guild, and he provided some of the best testimony for the National Gambling Commission in Washington. A former jockey himself, Jemas called off-track betting "a political racket and patronage gimmick." He also charged that "selfish, greedy states and local communities are taxing racing to death. The racing industry is paralyzed by fear of reprisals by state legislature. The tracks' weakness is fear. They are afraid that if they speak out against excessive taxation state legislators might revoke their franchises."

Reggie Jackson, Oakland superstar who is trying to vacate the employ of A's owner Charley Finley:

"Mr. Finley owns the team and if he assumes he can win without me that's all right. I'm sure they can find somebody who can hit 30 homers, knock in 100 runs and steal 25 bases. You can find that anyplace, can't you?"

The Hot Seven 'n Cider.

Here's a hot idea for cold days. The hot Seven 'n Cider. A jigger of Seagram's 7 Crown in a mugful of piping hot cider, stirred with a stick of cinnamon.

It has a spicy good taste you'll really warm up to.

Seagram's 7 Crown. It's America's whiskey.

SEAGRAM DISTILLERS CO., N.Y.C. AMERICAN WHISKEY—A BLEND, 80/86 PROOF