

Year of champions at Notre Dame

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

ELMIRA — Notre Dame High School has had a long tradition of sports excellence, but even the most enthusiastic supporters of the school's sports programs could not have predicted this year's successes.

The Catholic school won sectional or divisional team titles in five sports — football, boys' basketball, boys' track, girls' softball and boys' baseball.

In addition, two members of the school's wrestling team captured their weight-class titles, and one swimmer, who competed at another school because Notre Dame does not have a swim team,

claimed a sectional crown. Meanwhile, the basketball, baseball and softball teams all advanced into state competition. The Crusader softball team reached the state Class C semifinals. And Anthony Wisniewski of the track team raced into the state finals in the 400-meter dash, where he finished sixth. "I think overall, it's the best year that Notre Dame ever had," said Mike D'Aloisio, who, in addition to serving as the school's athletic director, coached the football and boys' basketball teams. D'Aloisio cited two reasons for this year's successes. The first, he said, was that ND athletes avoided serious

and nagging injuries in almost every sport.

The second reason, he continued, was the players' work ethic.

"(The athletes) were not afraid of hard work," he said, adding, "We have some good kids, but we also had some good kids who were role players who just worked and worked."

Junior Mike Bennett was one player who was more than a role player for Notre Dame this past year. Bennett, who competed for the football, basketball and baseball teams, led all three to sectional titles. For his achievements, he was named the Elmira Kiwanis' "Male Athlete of the Year."

Bennett said that few people expected much from Notre Dame's sports teams at the beginning of the year.

"A lot of people said we were too young," Bennett observed. "I don't think anyone around here took us seriously at first."

According to Bennett, however, the teams' coaches convinced the players that they could compete against anybody.

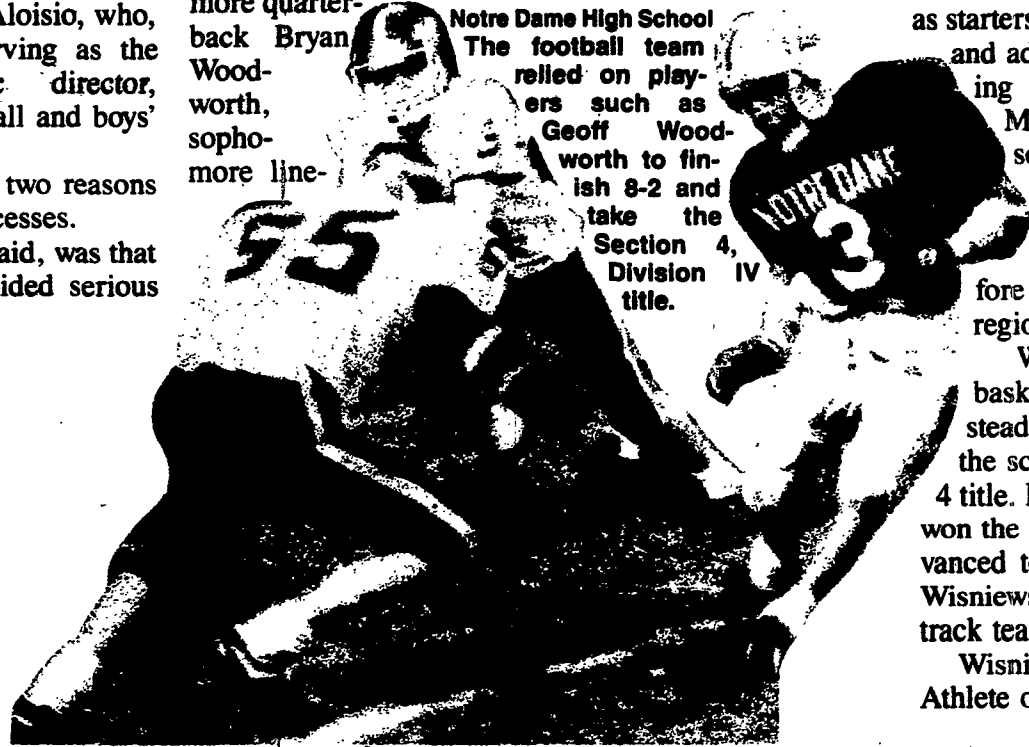
"The coaches were the ones who stood in there," Bennett said. "They made us believe in ourselves."

The players believed so much in themselves, Bennett noted, that they frequently stayed behind after practices for extra workouts. Working together helped them to develop an unselfish attitude, he observed.

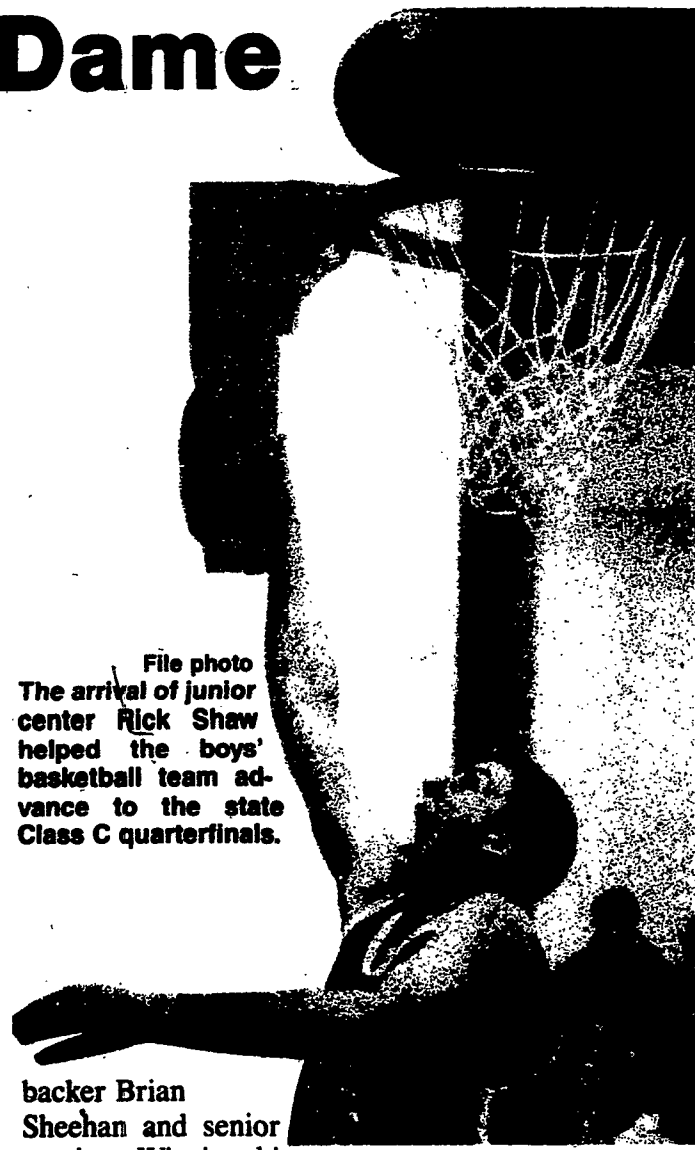
"Everybody knew what their role was and they accepted their role," Bennett said. "That's why we were pretty successful."

The Crusaders soon convinced opponents not to take them lightly, beginning with the football team.

The grid team included a number of underclassmen starters, who were physically smaller than most of the players they faced. But players such as running backs Bennett and Geoff Woodworth (also a junior), sophomore quarter-back Bryan



Notre Dame High School The football team relied on players such as Geoff Woodworth to finish 8-2 and take the Section 4, Division IV title.



File photo The arrival of junior center Rick Shaw helped the boys' basketball team advance to the state Class C quarterfinals.

backer Brian Sheehan and senior receiver Wisniewski combined speed and aggressive play to achieve an 8-2 record, win the Division IV title, and advance to the Section 4, Bowl Game 2, where it lost to Chenango Valley 20-7 last November.

Many of the same cast of characters played for the basketball team, where both Woodworths, Bennett and Sheehan were joined by junior transfer Rich Shaw as starters on a 17-8 squad that won the Class C crown and advanced to the state quarterfinals before losing 70-69 to Syracuse-Westhill (Section 3) in March. All five starters on the hoop team are scheduled to return next season.

When baseball season arrived this spring, the winning continued as the Crusaders finished 15-9 and won the Class C title before losing 8-1 to Falconer in the Western regionals.

While his football teammates were playing basketball and baseball, Wisniewski opted instead to compete in indoor track — where he set the school 300-meter record and won the Section 4 title. He also competed in outdoor track, where he won the sectional title in the 400-meter race and advanced to the state finals at Baldwinsville in June. Wisniewski finished sixth at the states. The Crusader track team also took the Class D sectional title.

Wisniewski went on to win Notre Dame's "Male Athlete of the Year" award.

Continued on page 15

File photo Bobbi Jo McMail's pitching was one of the keys to Notre Dame's softball team reaching the state Class C semifinals.

Correction

The photograph of DeSales baseball coach Frank Pane Sr. in last week's edition of the *Catholic Courier* was incorrectly attributed. The photo actually was taken by freelance photographer Christopher Millette.

LOCKER ROOM SPORTS
(716)863-3119

Hrs. Mon.-Fri. 10am-9pm; Sat. 10am-5pm
TEAM UNIFORMS & EQUIPMENT-NEW & USED ICE SKATES
Soccer • Baseball • Hockey • Lacrosse

We received 6 correct entries identifying *The Harlem Globe Trotters* as the much-traveled team that once posted a 333-8 win-lost record in a single year.

The winner was *Daniel Fisher* of Honeoye Falls.

SPORTS TRIVIA

This week's question:

Who is the oldest PGA player to win the U.S. Open?

A: _____

Rules:

Each week, the *Catholic Courier*, in conjunction with Locker Room Sports will feature a Sports Trivia contest. All you have to do to enter is answer the question, fill in your name and address and the school you attend (if applicable), cut out the coupon and send it to the *Catholic Courier*. If more than one correct entry is received, a drawing will be held and one winning entry will be drawn.

If yours is the winning entry, you will be mailed a certificate redeemable for \$10.00 OFF any purchase of \$25.00 or more at Locker Room Sports, 560 W. Ridge Rd.

All entries must be received within seven days of this paper's issue date. Winning names and answers will be printed the week following each drawing.

The Catholic Courier
Sports Trivia
1150 Buffalo Rd.
Rochester, NY 14624

BK, AQ, DeSales all won sectional titles

Although Notre Dame High School in Elmira enjoyed the most team titles in post-season play this past year, several other diocesan schools claimed sectional championships during the 1989/90 school year.

In the fall, Bishop Kearney's football team — playing an independent schedule and spending much of the season on the road — compiled a 7-1-1 record and nipped Newark, 14-7, in November, to claim the Section 5, Class A title. The Kings relied on a stifling defense that allowed only 74 points in nine games — an average of only 8.2 points per game.

The same day that the football team was winning its first sectional title, the girls' volleyball team at BK was falling to Sweet Home in the Western regional playoffs. The Kings (16-6) had advanced to the regionals by winning their first-ever Section 5, Class A title.

Kearney, which had only six players on the roster, claimed its first-ever Private-Parochial League title earlier in the season as well.

The winter season produced only one champion: the Aquinas hockey team upset Irondequoit, 5-2, in February to win the Section 5, Class A title. The Little Irish (17-7-1) advanced to the state semifinals, where they fell to eventual state runner-up Albany Academy, 6-4, in March.

The spring sports season ended as it has the past three years. The DeSales baseball team claimed yet another Section 5 championship with a 5-3 win over Canaseraga in the Class D title game on June 9.

The Saints (17-0) also finished undefeated for the second consecutive season and extended their winning streak to 40 games dating back to 1988.

— Lee Strong