

Pete Pavia's influence is a constant for many

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — A couple of the banquet's guest speakers referred to him in the present tense, and they may not have been totally mistaken by doing so.

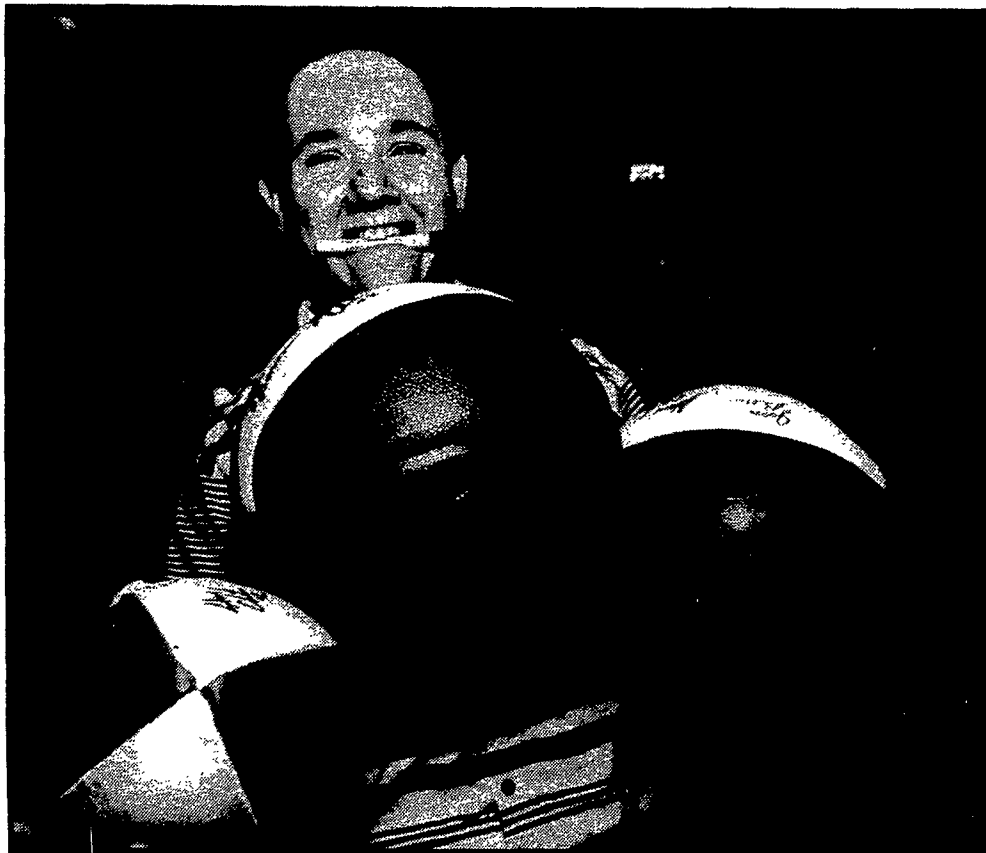
"The thing that strikes me is that we talk about Pete as if he were right here, and that's a true testament to Peter," Jim Boeheim, the Syracuse University head basketball coach, remarked to the audience at the Rochester Riverside Convention Center, 123 E. Main St.

Although Pete Pavia died last fall, his influence remains a constant in the lives of many. That was proven by the emotion that spilled forth from the speakers and other dinner guests attending the fifth — and final — Pete Pavia Sports Celebrity Dinner. The event was held on Monday, June 21.

Mr. Pavia, an Aquinas Institute graduate who was a well-known basketball official at the national level and particularly in the Big East Conference, died on Oct. 9, 1992, at the age of 54. The Rochester native had endured a 13-year battle with cancer.

In his final years, Mr. Pavia called attention to his deadly disease by hosting annual banquets to raise funds for Camp Good Days and Special Times, Inc. The Rochester-based organization provides various types of support for children afflicted with cancer and AIDS-related diseases.

Gary Mervis, chairman and founder of Camp Good Days and Special Times, told the *Catholic Courier* that the



Brian Vittimo, who attends Camp Good Days and Special Times, took advantage of the many sports celebrities on hand to seek autographs at a reception held at the Players Sports Bar before the Pete Pavia dinner June 21.

S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

decision to hold one final dinner was a difficult one following Mr. Pavia's death.

"We really struggled. But Pete had already saved the date," said Mervis. "I also think it's important for Debbie (Mr. Pavia's widow) to get on with her life, but she said we should we have one more dinner."

Because of his many close friendships in the sporting world, Mr. Pavia managed to persuade several big-name celebrities to appear at the banquets free of charge.

"Everyone came for nothing other than their expenses. That's just not done today," commented Mervis.

Last week's souvenir-program cover

featured the recognizable faces of more than 30 guests from previous years — people such as Mark Rypien, Patrick Ewing, Mike Krzyzewski, Rollie Massimino and Frank Layden — surrounding a larger image of Pavia.

Perhaps no celebrities were so closely associated with the dinner as two high-profile Big East basketball coaches. Boeheim and Seton Hall's P.J. Carlesimo attended all five banquets, with Carlesimo serving as master of ceremonies for the last two years.

The June 21 event began on a somber note as the audience was shown video profiles of Mr. Pavia as well as Jim Valvano, the former North Carolina State University coach who also recently died of cancer. The video was followed by a plaque presentation to Debbie Pavia, who received two standing ovations.

Carlesimo then lightened the mood with his good-natured jabs as he introduced the head table. At one point he claimed that Boeheim has spent the last 31 years at Syracuse — "17 as head coach, seven as an assistant and seven as an undergraduate."

Although no more dinners are scheduled, Mervis noted that Camp Good Days and Special Times will continue to perpetuate Mr. Pavia's memory through the construction of the Pete Pavia Pavilion, to be erected at the camp's main facility on Keuka Lake.

Proceeds from all five Pete Pavia dinners will finance the pavilion. Mervis expects construction to begin this fall and be completed in approximately one year.

Red Wings game will benefit Nunda woman

NUNDA — An upcoming Rochester Red Wings baseball game will serve as a fundraiser to assist a resident of the village of Nunda, Livingston County.

The Red Wings-Syracuse Chiefs contest on Monday, July 12, will help defray the medical bills of Nancy Thompson, who recently underwent a liver transplant. Thompson has been active for several years in community

affairs.

Tickets are \$20 and will include bus transportation, reserved box seats and a chance to meet Red Wing players as well as Joe Altobelli, the team's general manager.

Tickets may be purchased at several locations in Nunda or by calling 716/468-2215 or 468-2651.

Cayuga athlete competes in national tennis tournament

UNION SPRINGS — Mike Lowery, a parishioner of St. Michael's Church, recently took part in a national collegiate tennis tournament.

Lowery competed at both singles and doubles positions this season for Cayuga Community College. His team captured the National Junior College

Athletic Association Region III tournament title, thus qualifying for the NJCAA national championships in Corpus Christi, Texas.

At the nationals, held in late May, Lowery (along with partner Nemi Garcia) reached the second round at third doubles and was eliminated in the opening round at sixth singles.

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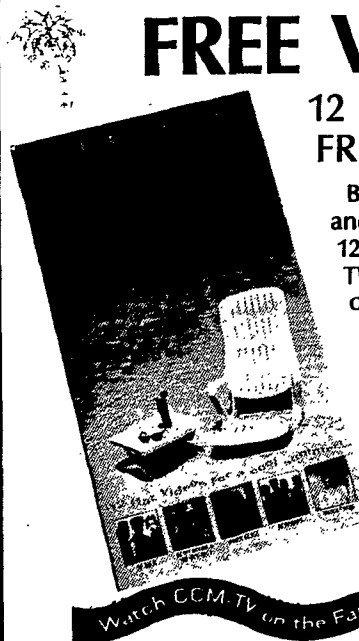
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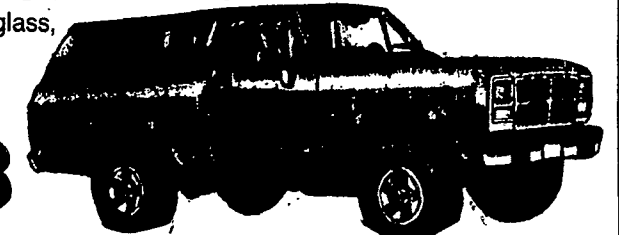
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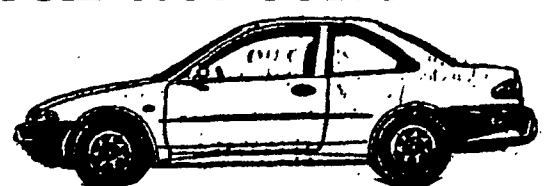
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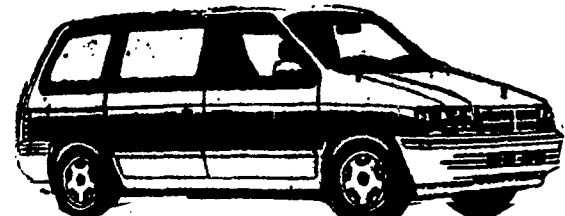


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