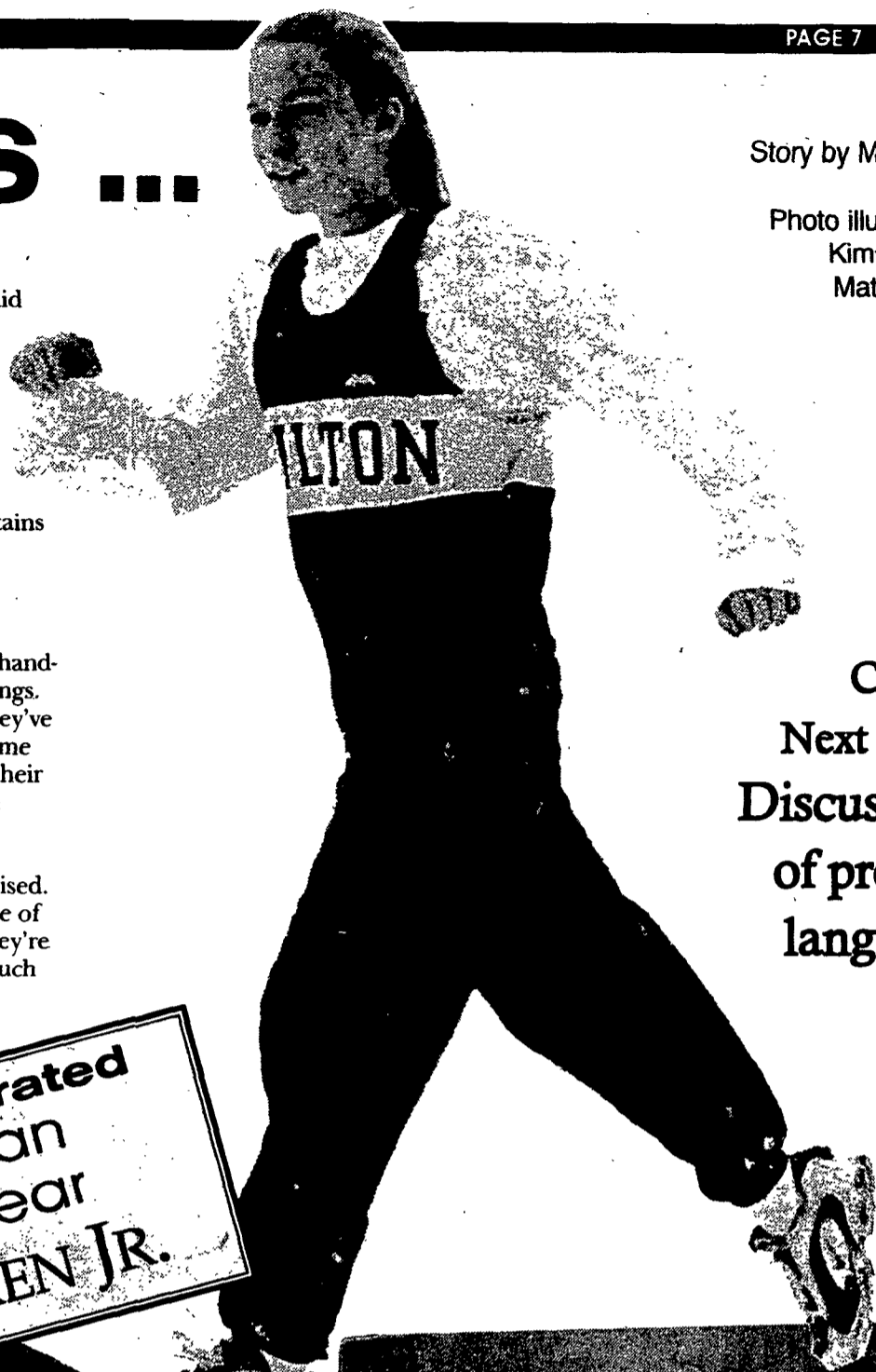


Good sports ...

Story by Mike Latona

Photo illustration by Kim Parks and Matthew Scott



Coming Next Week: Discussions of profane language.

runs a mediocre race, her father offers encouragement rather than criticism. "He says, 'All you have to do is try a little harder,'" said Bethany, 15, from St. Lawrence Church in Greece. She is a sophomore at Hilton High School.

However, Bethany pointed out that it is also a challenge for parents to control their emotions while watching their children compete.

"It's a reflection on them," she remarked. "The parents seem to get more excited than the athletes."

Bethany added that emotion runs especially high in team sports, where if one person makes a mistake, that error could affect the outcome of a game.

Debbie — who takes part in cross-country, swimming and track at Mount Morris High School — agreed that she's not as likely to get singled out for a bad performance as, say, a football player.

"You compete at an individual level. It's not like if you don't do good, the whole thing's lost (for the team)," Debbie said.

A win-at-all-costs attitude would not appeal to Jason Brackley, a football and basketball player at Hilton High.

"I would have to quit the sport, because it just wouldn't be any fun anymore," said Jason, 15, from St. Leo's Church in Hilton.

Jason added that he knows one student who is so serious about athletics that "he takes it like a job. (But) I take it like a sport."

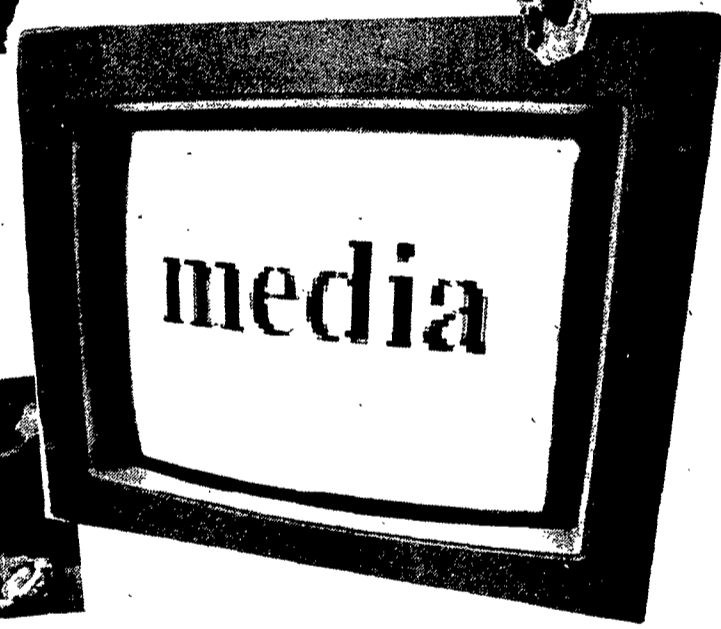
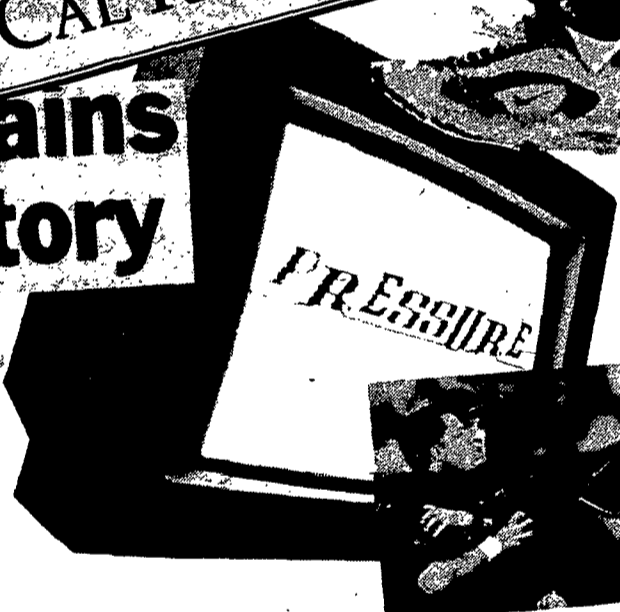
Jason acknowledged that any sport requires a competitive attitude, but that each athlete is responsible for con-

trolling his or her emotions. He said that if his coaches observe any team members fighting, "We're dead right there. We don't play."

Strict rule enforcement by officials also helps athletes maintain self-control, Scott said. He pointed out that during football season, referees warn captains before the game that fighting and taunting will lead to ejections and suspensions.

On the positive side, such longstanding rituals as post-game handshakes help to soften adverse feelings. Jerome and Scott admitted that they've had to bite their tongue during some of these handshakes, but most of their verbal exchanges are friendly. As a result, antagonism from the game quickly disappears.

"It's over. Let it go," Jerome advised. "You know they're the same type of people you are," Scott added. "They're fierce competitors; they care so much about doing their best."



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