

# DIOCESAN NEWS

## Catholic education is key for these veteran coaches

By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

**IRONDEQUOIT** — Long hours are a reality for Catholic-school teachers who also coach sports. And these people don't get very rich — at least monetarily.

Yet Bishop Kearney High School's Ed Nietopski, Paul Forte and Carmen Urzetta have certainly enjoyed a wealth of success with their athletic teams. Among their career achievements:

- Nietopski has logged more than 500 wins in both basketball and baseball, winning nine Section 5 titles in all. He will be inducted into the National High School Coaches Hall of Fame on June 27 in Cromwell, Conn., and is a member of the Section 5 Hall of Fame.

- Forte coached the boys' soccer team at the former Cardinal Mooney High School that won the Section 5 and state Class A championship in 1983. His girls' soccer squads have gone on to win sectional titles at Kearney in 1993 and '95.

- Urzetta's BK baseball team won the 1974 Section 5 title, becoming the first Catholic school to ever cop a sectional crown — Catholic schools weren't allowed in sectionals until the early 1970s.

However, coaching is just one segment of a deeper mission for Nietopski, Forte and Urzetta: to serve in Catholic education, something each man has done continuously since the 1960s.

Nietopski, 74, said he willingly "took a big drop in salary" in 1964 to leave Brockport High School — where he had taught and coached for seven years — after being approached by school officials from Cardinal Mooney. His reasoning was that "if the good Lord wanted me there, I figured he would take care of me," he recalled.

Forte, 54, said he enjoys "the closeness, the atmosphere, the values system, the more cohesive faculty" in Catholic

schools. He said that his wife, Linda, who teaches in public schools, "always tells me how lucky I am, even though I make half the money."

Urzetta, 58, has served Bishop Kearney since 1965, mostly as a teacher and coach and more recently as alumni director. His personal rewards, he remarked, are based "not in the finances. It's in the people you turn out."

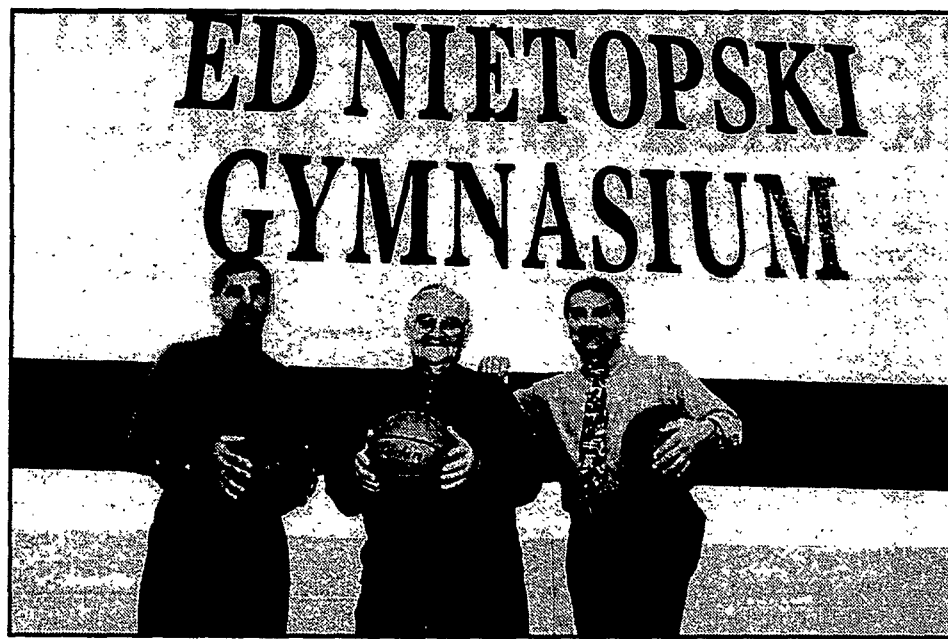
Many such people, for Nietopski and Forte, are owners of Cardinal Mooney diplomas. Nietopski was a jack-of-all-trades at the Greece school, serving as teacher, athletic director, and varsity boys' basketball and baseball coach over a 25-year period. Forte began teaching and coaching at Mooney in 1979, following 10 years of teaching at Greece's St. Lawrence School and coaching at the junior-high level. His highlight was the 1983 state soccer title, which netted him state Coach of the Year honors. He was 134-37-15 in boys' soccer from 1979-89, and also posted a 42-7 mark as girls' softball coach in 1988 and 1989.

Nietopski and Forte's tenures at Mooney came to an abrupt halt in the spring of 1989, when they learned their beloved school would be closing down in just a couple of months.

"That was probably the lowest point of my life as a teacher and coach. Mooney was near and dear to all of us," Nietopski said. Forte added that he'd likely be working at Mooney if it were open today.

Enter Urzetta, who pitched to get Nietopski and Forte on the Kearney team after having coached numerous basketball and baseball games against Mooney.

"It was a rivalry, but not one that was bitter in any way," said Urzetta, who had a 250-110 record in varsity baseball from 1972-88 and went 88-94 in varsity boys' basketball from 1967-76. He is also a long-time high-school and college basketball



James Stein

Carmen Urzetta (from left), Ed Nietopski and Paul Forte have accumulated several hundred coaching wins along with many decades of teaching experience at Catholic high schools.

official.

Urzetta, along with the late Nick Teta — then the school's athletic director and football coach — pleaded successfully with school administrators to hire Nietopski and Forte. Thus, the teacher/coaches transferred to BK along with many Mooney students. Though both men said the adjustment period was initially slow, they became accepted both in the classroom and the locker room.

"Once we established our own system," Forte added, "the kids were incredibly receptive."

Forte, who teaches global studies at BK, owns a 102-69-15 record in girls' varsity soccer and a 195-89 mark in girls' varsity basketball. He is also the former girls' varsity softball coach, having gone 178-96 from 1989-99.

Nietopski has thrived as the varsity boys' coach of both basketball and baseball. His latest title came this past winter, when the Kings won the Section 5 Class B basketball crown and reached the state Final Four. A former professional player with the Rochester Red Wings, Nietopski

stepped down from baseball coaching after the 1999 season with a career record of 705-201. And with 512 wins in boys' basketball, he is only seven victories away from becoming the all-time winningest coach in Section 5.

Despite these achievements and the fact that Bishop Kearney's gym is now named after him, Nietopski refuses to take much credit. "You just have pretty good players. My job has just been to bring out the best in them," he said.

Nietopski has retired from teaching but still loves the Catholic-school environment, stopping at Kearney daily. "One of my jobs is to check on people who need checking on," he quipped, glancing at Forte and Urzetta. He's looking forward to next basketball season and perhaps beyond, saying, "I'll just take it year by year."

Urzetta, for one, expects to see both Nietopski and Forte on the sidelines for a long time to come.

"Coaching, to me, means you've got to have that fire. And once you've lost it, it's time to move on. But they haven't lost it," he said. "The kids see that enthusiasm."

## Courier wins awards at press convention

By Jennifer Ficaglia  
Assistant Editor

The *Catholic Courier* won 10 awards during the Catholic Press Association's annual convention in Minneapolis, Minn., May 27-31 for work published in 2001.

The CPA is a national association representing more than 200 newspapers (primarily diocesan-sponsored) and nearly 250 magazines, as well as newsletters and foreign-language publications. Total readership of CPA publications is nearly 27 million.

Also during the convention, Karen M. Franz, the *Courier's* general manager and editor, turned over the CPA president's gavel to Dennis Heaney, executive publisher of *The Tidings/Vida Nueva* in Los Angeles, Ca. Franz had been the association's president since May 2001.

The *Courier* won awards in the following categories:

**Best Front Page, Tabloid (Less than 4-Color):** The *Courier* tied with *The Catholic Sun* of Syracuse for second place.

"Reader-friendly, easy-on-the-eye layout with one story above the flag and one below," the judges wrote. "Large, compelling photos on the bottom story draw the reader in. Good images."

**Best News Writing National Event:** First place, Staff Writer Rob Cullivan, for his Aug. 9 article about migrant farm workers afraid to attend Mass for fear they would be arrested for being in the United States illegally.

"Imagine people being afraid to go to church!" the judges wrote. "Rob Cullivan's provoking report tells us that is in-

deed the case, and it's happening here in the land of the free. Cullivan boldly explores the hidden world of illegal migrants, cut off from the church because of their status. It is a shocking story."

**Best Investigative News Writing:** Cullivan and fellow Staff Writer Mike Latona earned honorable mentions in this category. Cullivan won for his Sept. 6 article on the confidentiality of confessions, and Latona won for his Aug. 23 article on the rural poor.

**Best Reporting on Senior Citizens:** Latona won first place for his March 15 story about ways in which senior citizens cope when their spouses die.

"This well-written piece puts a human face to a serious problem — widowhood — that doesn't get enough attention," the judges wrote. "The writer starts with a strong anecdote and, through detail in writing, builds up emotion without being sentimental. Nice treatment of coping through faith and learning."

**Best General News Photo:** Third place, former staff photographer Andrea Dixon, for her photo of a candlelight vigil at McQuaid High School three days after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on America. The photo appeared in the Sept. 20 edition.

"The best of many entries that showed Americans at candlelight vigils, this photo focuses on two individuals, while the background shows them as part of something larger," the judges wrote. "Andrea Dixon's photo was technically and thematically strong."

**Best Portrait:** Dixon won an honorable mention for her portrait of Brother Sebastian Maher, OSB, a decorated

World War II veteran and Benedictine monk who lives at Mount Saviour Monastery in Pine City. The photo appeared in the Nov. 15 edition.

**Best Photo Illustration:** A March 22 photo illustration depicting dating and violence earned Dixon a first-place award.

"Andrea Dixon took a tough concept, teen dating and violence, and came up with an effective photo illustration," the judges wrote. "The image clearly suggests a school and the victim is literally and figuratively backed into a corner."

**Best Illustration:** First place, Linda Jeanne Rivers, graphic artist, for her Dec. 20 Christmas cover, "Pathways Toward Peace."

"Both graphics and copy blend together in a very tranquil setting," the judges wrote.

**Best Sports News:** Latona won first place for his Dec. 6 story about Aquinas Institute's football team winning the state Class A championship.

"Mike Latona did an excellent job writing a 'second-day' story by honing in on the plan that won the game," the judges wrote. "He described the game action in direct, simple and restrained terms. The story could have been published in any newspaper in the country."

In addition to the *Courier* awards, Msgr. William H. Shannon, professor emeritus of Nazareth College in Rochester, received a second-place award in the Best Article category for General Interest Newsletters. His article, "How the Spirit Guides the Church," appeared in *Catholic Update* of Cincinnati, Ohio.

### Recognizing

★ Five Girl Scouts in the sixth grade at St. Helen's School in Gates have earned the "Gabby's Way" badge, named for their classmate Gabby Napolitano, who died in April 2001. The purpose of the badge is to help children understand more about childhood illnesses, their impact on families, and the availability of support groups. The girls — Jasmine McGuire, Nicole St. James, Abby Stallworth, Melicent Stossel and Chrissy Teora — wrote letters to five local agencies to learn more about childhood illnesses, and invited speakers to present talks to their troop.

★ Volunteers with Tioga County Rural Ministry Inc., partly supported by the Catholic and Protestant churches in Tioga County, built a ramp at an elderly couple's home in Waverly during month of March, and made home improvements for several other elderly and low-income residents as well as for people with disabilities.

★ Linda Iacelli, a member of the parish council and choir at St. Mary's Church, Rochester, has been named a winner of the National Technical Institute for the Deaf's 2002 Outstanding Service Award. Located at the Rochester Institute of Technology, NTID recognized Iacelli for her role in helping students prepare for post-college employment. As senior employment specialist at NTID, Iacelli also presents a program called "Working Together: Deaf and Hearing People" to companies looking to create strategies to communicate with deaf employees.