



presents the
2019
Inductees



The Helena Sports Hall of Fame class of 2019 includes 12 individuals in four categories, and seven teams. Individuals were selected from a pool of over 100 nominations, voted by an anonymous 20-person selection committee on a points system. Teams are inducted in chronological order based on when their State or National championship was achieved.

The Hall of Fame induction ceremony and banquet will take place July 11, at the Best Western Great Northern Hotel. This is the HSHOF's 10th class of inductees, dating back to 2003. There are now 121 individuals and 52 teams enshrined in the Hall.

The banquet is sold out.

The Independent Record is a proud sponsor of the Helena Sports Hall of Fame.

Golden Athletes

- ▶ Ken Leland
- ▶ Dennis Meyer
- ▶ Jim Walczak

Contemporary Athletes

- ▶ Ann Gilbert
- ▶ J. Daly
- ▶ Karen (Eggan) Jacobson
- ▶ Dan Downs
- ▶ Kyle Samson
- ▶ Taylor (Liz) Meyer

Coaches

- ▶ John Hollow
- ▶ Walt Chancy

Officials

- ▶ Gene McMahon

Golden Team

- ▶ 1968 Helena Senators

Contemporary Teams

- ▶ 1990 Capital High girls cross country
- ▶ 1991 Helena High boys basketball
- ▶ 1992 Helena High boys track & field
 - ▶ 1993 Capital High football
- ▶ 1996 Capital High girls track & field
- ▶ 1997 Capital High girls track & field

Dennis Meyer Golden Athlete

By Curt Synness

Dennis Meyer was the Capital City's first two-time State wrestling champion, for Helena High at 165-pounds in 1961-62.

As a youngster growing up in the Helena Valley, Meyer spent his summers bucking hay bales for the neighboring ranches. And it was this strenuous work, combined with countless wintertime hours doing pushups, that helped develop his incredible physique.

"He was built like a brick outhouse," the late Mike Cloud, longtime wrestling referee and member of the Montana Official's Hall of Fame, once said.

And a lot of his strength was inherited.

"My dad was one of the strongest guys I've ever known," Meyer told this reporter in a 1999 interview.

"And my brother John could bend a 60-penny spike in half with his bare hands."

Denny first served notice he was destined for athletic greatness in 1959, at Helena Junior High, when he established the school's freshman push-up record. But that year was also frustrating, after 9th-grade basketball coach Bernard McGinley, after seeing the muscular Meyer fighting to dribble a basketball, commented that maybe he should try wrestling.

But it turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

"Besides, it gave me a chance to kick butt," Meyer recalled with a grin.

Helena High was a three-year school back then, and it was as a sophomore he met the man who would mold his raw abilities into a complete package – head football and wrestling coach, Jack Cohn.

"Jack made me a champion. He had as much influence on my youth as my parents did ... I owe my success to his direction," Meyer said.

Another influential force was older Bengal teammate Chuck Green, who was later killed in Vietnam.

After a mediocre sophomore campaign as HSHS's varsity 154-pounder – cutting his teeth against more mature and experienced wrestlers – Meyer started his junior year at 165 with a pair of early losses to Bozeman's Myron Amsden.

But he was getting better with every outing, and it turned out to be his only two setbacks of the year. At the 1961 State Mat Tournament in Billings, after his first two wins, it was Amsden waiting in the semifinals.

Early in the contest, Meyer found himself in a pin combination. "I just told myself, Hey this ain't happenin'," and he immediately fought his way off his back.

The two guys battled back-and-forth until the third period, when the Bengal matman put Amsden on his back twice, and pulled away for a 9-5 win.

"This match was the turning point of my career," he related. "I now had the self-confidence to believe that I could win."

In the finals, he beat hometown favorite Bill Kramer of Billings Senior, 2-0 for the championship. "I didn't care where he was from, I was not going to lose. That's what rasslin' taught me," he said.

As a senior, in the first year of the divisional tourney format, he grassed Clay Mecham (Missoula County High) with a cradle for the Western AA crown, avenging his only loss of the season.

Denny then retained his State championship, taking the rubber match with Mecham, 1-0 in the chipper. The contestants were a mirror image of each other, both guys built the same at 5-foot-9, 165 pounds.

Afterwards, legendary Spartan coach Jug Beck – whose matmen were in the early stages of winning 10 successive State championships – told Meyer that, "Pound-for-pound, Mecham and I were the two strongest guys he'd seen on the mat at the same time."

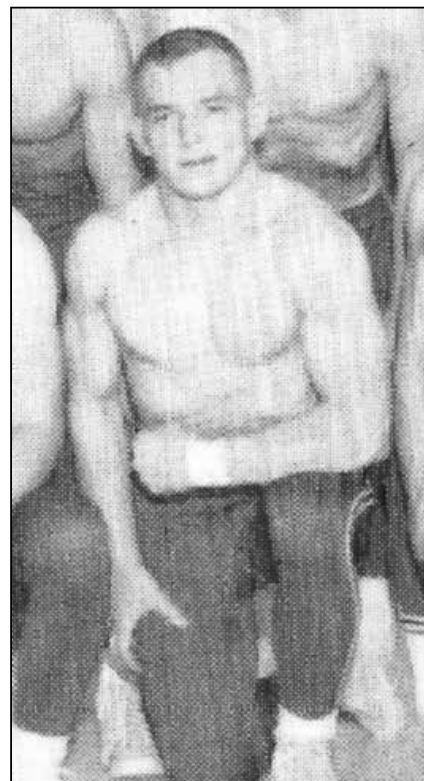
He finished the season at 13-1, for a combined record of 21-3 his final two seasons. During his 3-year Bengal grappling career, he did not miss a single varsity start.

Meyer's other sport was football, where he garnered three letters and started on the line both ways his junior and senior years. In 1961, he served as the Bengals co-captain and was selected first team All-State.

Meyer received a full-ride scholarship to the University of Montana. On the gridiron, he started at offensive guard his final three seasons, and at just 190-pounds, Denny held more than his own, being out-weighted by 30-40 pounds on every play. He also competed for the Griz's mat team, being a two-time third-place finisher at the Big Sky Conference Wrestling Championships.

He then enlisted in the U.S. Air Force, where he performed 31 In-Country parachute jumps with the Green Beret during the Vietnam War, earning a Bronze Star for bravery.

Denny Meyer retired from the military as a full-bird colonel, and among his later athletic endeavors were racquetball and golf, and an exercise regimen consisting of 400 pushups a day.



Ann Gilbert Contemporary Athlete

By Curt Synness

Ann Gilbert, who is a native of Pennsylvania, moved to Helena in 1979 and has never looked back. She has competed in over 40 triathlons, including two Hawaii World Ironmans, and established several state age-group swim records.

Gilbert has also given back to her community, by coaching and organizing several sporting venues, with an emphasis on female activities.

Ann (Simpson) Gilbert started out with Title IX sports in Greenville, Pennsylvania, as a 5-foot-9 post player for the Trojanettes' basketball team. She also took a summer swim program, and became the youngest lifeguard hired by the state of Pennsylvania at Pymatuning State Park.

After graduating high school in 1975, at Syracuse University, she lettered in swimming and served as the Orangewomens' swim team captain.

When Ann arrived in Montana she discovered she could use her swimming skills in a relatively new event called 'triathlon' and a passion was born. She started competing locally at the Spring Meadow Triathlon, before racing throughout Montana, the Pacific Northwest and advancing to the international stage.

In 1997 she celebrated her 40th birthday by running her first marathon in Las Vegas, where she finished third in her age group, and realized that endurance, not speed, is her forte.

She qualified that same year for the World Triathlon Championship, the Hawaii Ironman – placing 10th in her age-group – and went on to compete in five Ironman races.

Her fastest time came in 2002 in Penticton at the Ironman Canada, with a time of 11 hours, 48 minutes, and an age-group runner-up showing. This qualified her again for the Hawaii Ironman eight weeks later. That was a tougher day in Hawaii, but she was delighted to finish.

In 2009 Gilbert was third in her age group in the brutally hilly Ironman in Nice, France. She loved travel just as much as she loved racing, and was the first American woman across the finish line at Pucon Half-Ironman race in Chile.

In the meantime, Ann has garnered several Spring Meadow Lake age-group crowns, while peppering her triathlon career with five marathons and numerous state swimming championships.



When she's not competing, Gilbert enjoys mountain biking, skiing, and rarely touches a basketball.

With the collegiate swimming experience under her belt, she served as the first woman swim coach for the Helena Lion's Swim Team. "I was also a USA swimming official," Gilbert related, "and when my children Metta and Malcolm started to swim, I became an official and also served on the board of the HLST."

Gilbert went on to start the Helena Masters Swim program, which coached for 20 years, establishing a group of strong and successful adult swimmers. She has been co-director for the Spring Meadow Triathlon, as well. Ann also served on the Montana US Masters Swimming Board of Directors, and then she spent 10 years as the Chair of the Pacific Northwest Region Council of USA Triathlon, resigning in 2018.

Gilbert is race director for the Montana Women's Triathlon - a triathlon for everyone. This June she organized and oversaw the fifth Montana Women's Triathlon.

"I love triathlon and I love promoting it," Gilbert said. "I love the training, the mental game and dialing in the nutrition to make it work. Sometimes it doesn't, but either way, the process teaches so much about how to deal and cope with everyday life."

"I believe that sport, along with family and work, is part of that balance."

Dan Downs Contemporary Athlete

By Curt Synness

Dan Downs, who played linebacker for Helena High and the University of Montana in the late 1980s and early 1990s, was a High School All-American and 3-time first team All-Big Sky Conference selection.

After helping HHS to a 4-5 record in 1988, his senior year the Bengals opened the 1989 season with a 21-7 victory over Billings Skyview.

The Bengal defense allowed just 23 yards rushing and five first downs, while registering five quarterback sacks.

Head coach Gary Johnson singled out Chris Tandy, Downs, and Jack Scanlon for their "great defensive play." Also, defensive back Geof Ferguson performed a pick-six of 35 yards.

At his tight end position, Downs caught two passes from quarterback Clarke Warren, for 24 yards.

In a 7-6 loss to No. 2 ranked Great Falls High, Johnson said "the defense played probably its' best game all year," permitting just 203 total yards. Helena forced three fumbles, with Downs, Scanlon and Justin Braun all coming up with recoveries.

After the Bengals beat Bozeman 28-20, the Bengal skipper praised the defensive work of Chris Carlin, Scanlon, Downs and Lutey.

Helena finished the year at 3-6, with three of those losses by a combined six points.

Downs led the Bengals with 82 solo tackles, 24 assists, 106 total tackles (average of 12 tackles per game), 5 sacks, 8 tackles for loss. He also tied for lead with a school record 4 forced fumbles, and 3 fumble recoveries and 3 tipped passes.

The 6-foot-3, 205-pounder was selected the Western AA' Defensive Player of the Year, and first team All-State linebacker.

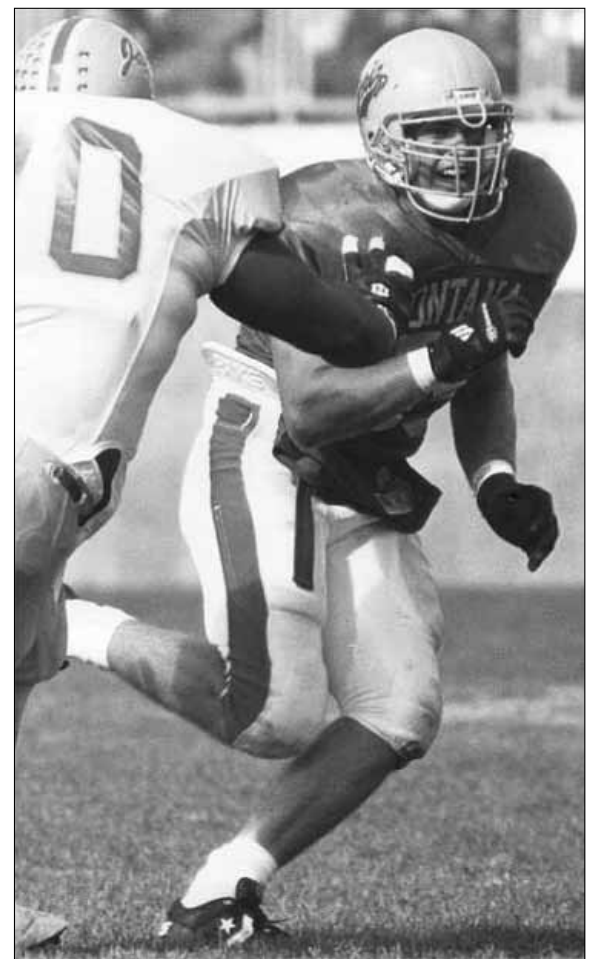
At the red-and-white's awards banquet, Dan was named both the team's Most Valuable Defensive Player, and Most Valuable Special Team's Player. He also garnered a prep All-American selection.

"Dan was a leader, not so much vocally but always by his production on the field," his coach Gary Johnson told the HSHOF. "He was dominating on defense, not only for his ability to find the football, but also the ability to deliver a blow. He was team's defensive captain, and finished runner-up in the state's defensive MVP balloting.

"On kickoffs, Dan was always assigned to block the opposing team's best defensive player, delivering blocks that excited his teammates often, either as a momentum changer or freeing up a big kickoff return."

Downs went on to become a three-year starter for the Montana Grizzlies (1992-94), helping UM to back-to-back Big Sky championships his last two seasons. His senior year, the Griz advanced to the NCAA Div. 1 playoff semi-finals, after beating McNeese State 30-28 in the quarters.

After 8 games his sophomore season, Downs had produced 78 total tackles (34 solo, 34 assisted), four forced fumbles and a sack. Shared the UM's Outstanding Sophomore Award with Scott Gragg, and made the first of three First Team All-Big Sky



linebacker citations.

In 1993, during the Griz's 42-30 triumph over Montana State in the Divide War, Downs pirated one of the team's two interceptions. He repeated as first team All-Conference, and copped UM's Outstanding Linebacker Award.

As a senior, he missed three games due to injuries, but was still good enough to garner his third successive first team All-Conference citation. He also managed to receive three votes in the balloting for Big Sky Defensive MVP.

Heading into the NCAA playoff game with McNeese State, in nine games he had compiled 53 tackles, four sacks, three tackles for loss, one pass deflection and an interception.

Downs finished his career ranked 13th on the Griz's career tackles list, at 241 lifetime stops.

"Dan's demeanor was reserved and quiet, the opposite of what you would expect for a badass linebacker. But he was extremely competitive and could 'turn on the switch' once he got on the field," former UM teammate Andy Larson related. "He chose not to speak to the press instead he wanted his play to do the talking."

"Dan was dependable, tough, and never complained so he was respected through his play ... he always seemed calm and in control – kind of unflappable – another leadership quality. I know he was a mentor to Jason Crebo and Greg Fitzgerald."

Larson recounted an incident that took place in the fall of Downs' senior year, when his mile run was too slow.

"Dan had to run up to the 'M' between our 2-a-day practices for the first few days of camp," Larson recounted. "He was the only one so he took a lot of razzing by the guys. But in true Danny fashion, he just smiled and took his medicine – never complained."

Gene McMahon Official

By Curt Synness

During the 1971 State AA Basketball championship game between Helena High and Billings West, during the final seconds of regulation, the Bengals led by 1-point.

Then referee Gene McMahon – a Helena official – called a foul on Bengal great Pat Donovan, sending a West player to the charity stripe for two free throws. He made the first one to tie the game, but before he shot the second one, a terrifying thought flashed through McMahon's mind.

"I remember thinking, 'Oh boy, if he makes this one, and Billings wins the game, Helena fans are going to crucify me,'" McMahon related. "And the lousy \$28.33 they pay me is in no way worth it."

But as fate would have it, the Bears' player missed his second free throw, the game went into overtime, and Helena went on to win the title. Meaning McMahon could drive home in peace.

Gene McMahon spent a combined total of 52 years as a sports official and director of officials; the first 32 years as a high school, Frontier and Big Sky Conference, football and basketball referee, and the last 20 years as the director of the Frontier's basketball officials.

McMahon was a prep basketball and football player for Anaconda Central. After playing hoops at Carroll College, he began refereeing basketball in 1959, at the request of Zach Murfitt.

McMahon started out working Helena High junior varsity contests for \$5 a game, under the tutelage of Lloyd Skor and Bernard McGinley. After every Bengal freshman game, McGinley would critique his job on his blackboard.

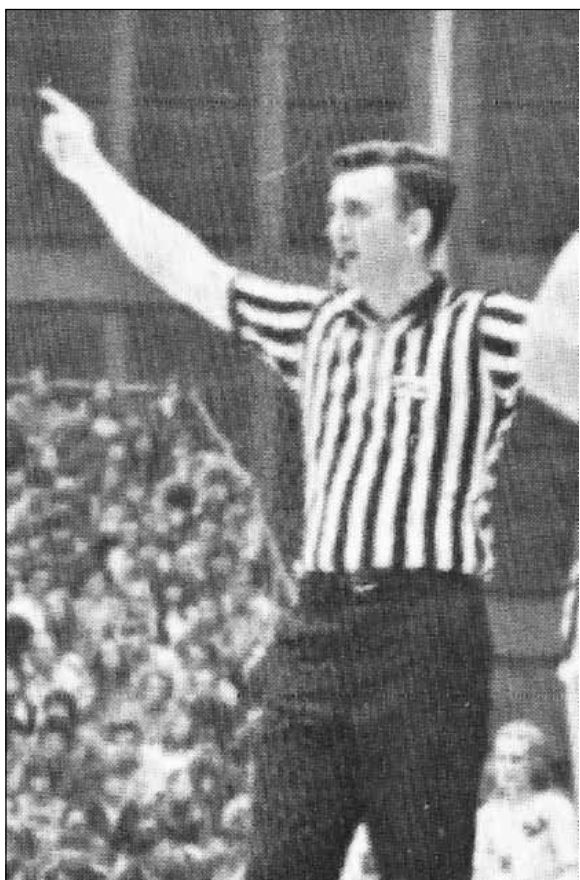
He began officiating Carroll games in the mid-1960s and was later elevated to the Big Sky Conference. Retiring in 1987, he worked most of the games with good friend Dick Muffick.

One of McMahon's funniest stories is about the time he and Muffick were showering after a hoops game, during which the losing coach was really on our case.

"He came into the shower room, threw our checks at us which landed in the water, and said we'd never work in his gym again," related McMahon. "Well, the next year he called, asking me to come down for a game. When I mentioned that he had fired us, he said, 'Awe, come on Gene. Can't ya take a joke?'"

In 1965, at the behest of longtime gridiron official Bob Chilton, Gene took-up officiating football, back when only two or three officials worked a game, as opposed to the five or six they now employ.

He worked at least two games a week during the season for the next 26 years – mostly Helena and Capital High, Carroll, Montana Tech and Rocky Mountain – chiefly as a field judge or a head linesman.



"I had the good fortune of officiating football with Gene for over 20 years," related Gary Mihelish. "We worked a lot of big games together in high school, including multiple Great Falls High-CM Russell contests and several State prep championships, and the Frontier Conference.

"Gene was an excellent and demanding official. Because he is acerbic in nature, he was nicknamed 'The Cobra.'"

In 1986, McMahon was asked to supervise the Frontier's officials by Sonny Holland.

As the director of the Frontier hoops referees for 20 years, some of McMahon's responsibilities included assigning the best officials for the men's and women's seasons, scheduling game assignments, and rating the referee's performances.

McMahon was inducted into the Montana Officials Association Hall of Fame in 1993. In 2003, he was a recipient of the Bob Chilton Award of the Montana Chapter of the National Football Foundation and College Hall of Fame. Presenting the award was the daughter of his former mentor, Casey (Chilton) Molloy.

During the latter part of McMahon's football career, Mihelish worked a lot as the Umpire and had to spot the ball on the foot of the wing official.

"I liked to ask the wing official if they had the right spot, and Gene usually barked, 'Why do you think I'm standing here?'" recounted Mihelish. "So I continued to ask the same question just to irritate him. We had great fun, but you needed to watch out, or The Cobra would strike."

J. Daly Contemporary Athlete

By Curt Synness

J. Daly was one of Capital High's first football super-stars.

When Capital won its' first-ever game, in 1973, J. Daly was there. His brother John Daly was part of Capital's first State championship in 1978. Then 30 years later, the second generation of Daly's – Bobby and Brad – helped the Bruins to State titles, in 2003, and 2006-08, respectively.

And the father and sons didn't stop there, taking their game to next level at Montana State University. All three were NCAA All-Americans; J. in 1978, Bobby in 2008, and Brad in 2013.

J. Daly played both ways for Capital during their initial campaign in 1973; a humbling experience that saw the 2-7 Bruins score a season total of only 30-points.

In the 1974 opener, CHS exceeded the entire previous year's scoring in one game with a resounding 46-0 thrashing of Fort Benton. Halfback Bruce Robertson ran for three touchdowns, and quarterback Jim Hand galloped for two more.

"Coach Dennison praised the work of the defense, which allowed only 56-total yards and three first downs," Pace reported. "He singled out Bob Glueckert, Neil Campbell, Jay Daly and Kelly Kuntz for their outstanding work."

In their second game, Capital dumped the Bozeman Hawks 26-13 behind Robertson's 244-yards rushing and four TDs; and the defense of Campbell and Daly. "Defensive end Jay Daly forced a crucial fumble with a hard tackle in the second quarter as Bozeman was threatening to score and Bill Dolan recovered to stop the Hawk drive," the IR reported.

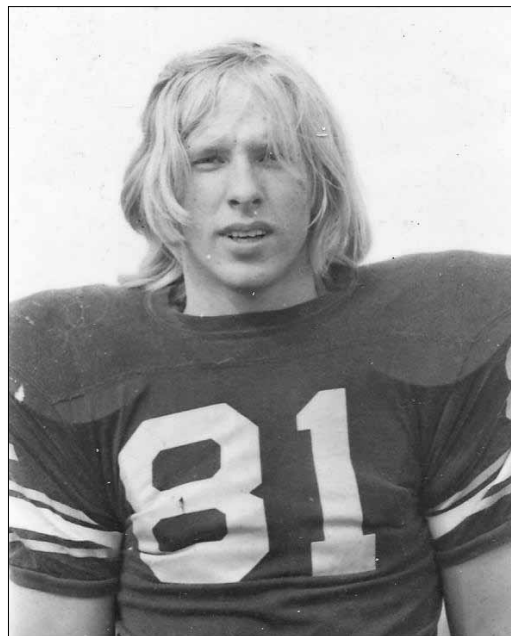
After two close losses, 9-6 to Libby and 14-13 to Billings Senior, the 6-foot-2 195-pound Daly contributed a 32-yard TD reception in a 40-8 win over Havre. Next came a 32-13 loss to powerful CM Russell, and then Capital dropped a tough 24-22 contest to Billings West. When the scrappy Bruins fell to undefeated Great Falls Public, 23-15, it was the closest game the eventual State Champions were involved in all year.

At the crosstown game at Vigilante Stadium, Capital used their version of the 1972 Pittsburgh Steelers' Immaculate Reception to help secure the victory over Helena High.

Deadlocked 6-all late in the second quarter, coach Dennison's gridders were "faced with a third-and-nine on their own 47," according to the IR. The Bruins went to the air and Hand tried to pass to Daly near the Helena 40.

"The tipped pass popped over a pair of defenders and into the hands of an alert Layne Phillips, who raced down the sidelines to complete a 53-yard scoring play with just 56-seconds left in the half," the paper reported.

Then the Bengals tied it up again, forcing a Montana playoff. "We scored in the overtime and



they didn't," remembers Daly. "That (18-12) win had to be the highlight of my high school career."

CHS closed the season with a 17-0 white-washing of Anaconda, compiling a 5-5 record. They outscored the opposition 216-135 on the year; were fourth in the state in team total defense; and permitted only 414-yards passing, which is still a school record.

Daly – who caught 10 passes for 185-yards and two TDs, and made 48 tackles, seven assists and three sacks – was selected first team All-State tight end and second team defensive end.

In basketball, J. was a two-year starter for the Bruins, averaging 8.1 points-per-game as a senior. Midway through the 1975 season, Capital bested number-two ranked CMR 69-60, and head coach Lon Carter said then that his power forward's 13-points and 13-rebounds was "Daly's best overall game of the year."

Led by Mike Manion's 20.3 ppg average, the Bruins entered the playoffs with a 7-13 record. In a loser-out game versus Helena, Manion (19-points) and Daly (career-high 18-points) paced Capital to its first-ever roundball Divisional win, 72-67.

J. went on the play offensive tackle for three years at MSU. Through an intensive weight-lifting program, he bulked up to a powerful 6-3, 245-pounds.

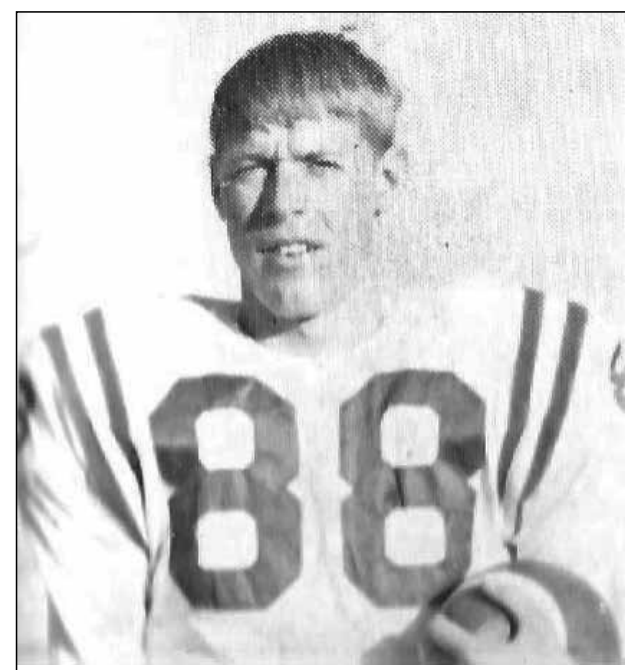
The Bobcats won the 1976 National Championship (Daly's red-shirt season); were ranked number-one in the nation for seven weeks in 1978 before fading late in the year; and copped the Big Sky crown in 1979. Daly was awarded first team All-Conference selections twice, and was named honorable mention Little All-American.

He received a contract to grid professionally for the USFL Los Angeles Express, but returned home instead, where he began coaching at his alma mater in 1983.

For the next 21 seasons, Daly coached the Bruins offensive line, helping the team to 18 playoff appearances, six State championships and a runner-up finish.

Jim Walczak Golden Athlete

By Curt Synness



Jim Walczak was a four-sport athlete at Helena High in the mid-1960s. At 6-foot-6 and 220-pounds – with a complete package of athleticism, speed, strength and jumping ability – Big Jim ranks among the Bengals greatest centers on the basketball court, and football two-way ends.

On the gridiron his junior year in 1965-66, after a 6-all tie with Kalispell, the IR stated that, "The Bengals defense produced several stars, notably linebackers Bob Crawford and Bryan Curry, end Jim Walczak, and tackles Jim Adams and Kraig Kuntz."

Helena then upset Butte 24-19, on Walczak's game-winning touchdown catch, for its' first victory over the Bulldogs in 13 years. Jim caught a pair of TD passes in the contest, from quarterback Tim Cordial, the first a 17-yard strike in the opening quarter.

The Bengals built a 17-7 lead in the third period on Dennis Zandhuisen's 1-yard plunge, only to see Butte rally back with two unanswered touchdowns and pull ahead 19-17 in the fourth. Then with 2½ minutes left, and the ball at the Bulldogs' 31 yard line, Cordial connected with Walczak on a 16-yarder, setting up a 3-yard strike to Big Jim in the end zone with 58 seconds on the clock.

Walczak finished the season with 25 receptions for 273 yards, and was selected first team All-State.

As a senior, Walczak amassed 31 catches for 517 yards, with four long TD receptions. These numbers all ranked a close second to junior stablemate Tim Morrow.

Walczak made the winning TD catches in at least two victories; a 14-7 win over Billings West, and 14-12 over Great Falls Central.

Against the previously unbeaten Mustangs, he was also mentioned as "starring defensively," along with Horne, Bob Curnow, Jim Sims and Joe Spoja.

During Helena's first win over Kalispell in 10-years, 38-14, head coach Ed Anderson described a catch-and-run 50-yard touchdown screen pass from Cordial to Walczak as "perfection."

"Jim followed his blockers perfectly, really stiff-armed one guy, and just flat outran the others," the Bengal skipper recounted. "It was a great run."

When HSHS beat Missoula Hellgate 33-13 for their fourth win, it marked the team's best record since 1958.

Walczak repeated as a first team All-Stater, and was selected for the East-West Shrine Game. He finished his prep grid career with several program records, including 9 receptions and 122 yards in a game, and career marks of 56 catches for 790 yards.

On the hard court, as a sophomore center on HSHS' junior varsity squad, he pulled down an out-of-this-world 33 rebounds versus Whitefish.

His junior season in 1965-66, Big Jim speared 25 rebounds in a win over Butte, which still ranks No. 2 all-time in the school's record books – tied with Pat Donovan (1971) and three behind Stu Kellner (1964).

He wound up the year with Bengal records of 294 boards and an 11.3 rebounds per game average.

In 1966-67, Walczak again had one of his better games versus the Bulldogs, tallying 17 points and 18 rebounds during a 53-50 success over the Mining City crew.

A two-time All-Conference selection, he wrapped up his prep cage career as the Bengals' No. 2 all-time rebounder, with over 600 lifetime boards.

Walczak also ran the hurdles on the Bengal track team, and played first base for the Helena Legion baseball team.

He went on to play college basketball for the College of Great Falls. During the 1972-73 season, in a 92-90 double OT loss to No. 4 ranked Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Big Jim scored 22 points and led the game in rebounding, prompting the GF Tribune to state, "Jim Walczak played one of the greatest all-around games in Argonaut history."

The powerful Walczak took up weight lifting for a while, reaching a maximum 300 pound bench press. He remains active on the golf course, shooting a PR of 34 for nine holes. He has also aced three holes-in-one during his career on the links.

"I refereed some of Jim's basketball games when he was playing for the College of Great Falls," remembered longtime hoops official Gene McMahon. "He was tough in the key on both offense and defense, and a great guy to work for because of his positive attitude."

"He hasn't changed one bit, because I see him at the golf course all the time, and they don't make men like Big Jim these days."

John Hollow Coach

By Curt Symness



John Hollow served as the Helena High boys first soccer coach for 14 years, guiding the Bengals to back-to-back State championships, in 2002 and 2003.

Hollow is generally regarded as one of the Founding Fathers of Helena soccer, having helped institute some of the sports' first organized club events back in the 1970s. He was first introduced to the sport at Colorado University, as offseason training for the Buffaloes ski team.

When he returned to Helena following his tour in Vietnam and after graduating law school, he organized the Capital Independents. Hollow also coached YMCA youth soccer, club teams and an Olympic development club.

When soccer became a sanctioned MHSAA sport in 1991, the IR's season preview noted that 37 boys had turned out for that inaugural season, with 25 making the original roster.

"The team is starting to jell," Hollow told the paper before their curtain-raiser. "Those trying out were starters from five different club teams ... there are some adjustments."

Hollow added that he was "elated" that soccer was finally a high school sports program.

"There's a lot of anxiety associated with starting something. Cutting kids, making sure you're doing things consistent with the educational philosophy of the school system," he said. "But it's great to have it."

Helena's initial contest was 3-3 tie versus Missoula Hellgate, with Jeremy Nigon, scoring the program's very first goal, on a cross from Alex Brown. Their first win came in their third outing, a 2-1 success over Bozeman, on a pair of scores by Brown, with assists from O'Brien Hollow and Nigon.

Coach Hollow's Bengals placed as State runners-up three times before reaching the mountain top, being edged in the championship finals by 1 goal each time; 2-1 to Missoula Sentinel in 1993, in 1995 to Flathead High 2-1, and 1-0 in overtime to Crosstown Capital in 2001. The latter tilt being the first of three successive title appearances by the red-and-white kickers.

In 2002, the Bengals (10-1-4) defeated Bozeman 2-1 in overtime, when Kody Andrew's header rattled the onion bag on a cross from Micah Crowley. HHS fell behind early, but then Matt Nottingham's goal at the 7-minute mark of the second half tied things up at 1-all.

"They have two good strikers that we had to keep out of the net," related the Bengal skipper, whose defense limited Bozeman to just seven shots on goal. "It was a well-earned championship."

HHS – and Andrew – then went back-to-back. Regulation ended deadlocked at 1-all, on a goal by Andrew, and went into the second O.T. knotted at 2s, thanks to teammate Chris Hoang's penalty kick. But then Andrew worked his magic again, piping the game-winner with 2 minutes left on the overtime clock. Helena wound up at 12-3 on the year.

"I'm really proud," said the Bengal skipper, after getting his second championship dousing of ice cold water from the cooler. "They all wanted it real bad, and they played really well."

Hollow retired at the end of the 2004 season, with a career W-L record of 113-59-22, for a .657 winning percentage. In 14 seasons, his teams garnered eight top-4 State Tournament placings, with only two losing seasons.

"The first thing that comes to mind was that Coach Hollow required everyone to beat him in a fitness challenge," said Kody Andrew, when asked to relate his favorite memories of his former coach. "He always was in fantastic shape and put in the work to try and beat all the young guys on the team. By doing this he lead by example and motivated everyone to put in the work."

Andrew, who held the school record for goals (since broken), said that as a coach, Hollow emphasized a team first mentality, spending time on and off the field to build chemistry.

"Coach also went above and beyond his coaching duties and helped promote the seniors that were looking for soccer scholarships in college," Andrew recounted "He even traveled to Gonzaga with me to talk to a few teams. He cared about winning but was focused on coaching successful men on and off the field."

Karen (Eggan) Jacobson Contemporary Athlete

By Curt Symness

Karen (Eggan) Jacobson is one of only four Capital City girls to win a State High School singles tennis championship – and the last to do so – when she turned the trick for Helena High in 1976. She was also a 2-time Montana State Open singles age-group champion.

In the Helena City Tennis Tournaments, Karen garnered a total of 16 Open titles, highlighted by seven successive womens singles championships from 1975-81. She also claimed five doubles crowns and four mixed doubles titles.

Karen later won seven State Open racquetball championships, and most recently, the State Seniors Womens' golf title.

In the summer of 1975, between her junior and senior year at HHS, she earned her first City singles victory. Seeded No. 2 in the Open tournament, Eggan upset top-seed Rita Nason in the finals, 6-3, 6-3.

At the 1976 State MHSAA Tennis Championships in Missoula, Karen did not drop a set in the tourney, while sweeping Jeanne Rogers (Bozeman) 7-5, 6-4 in the chipper. But the highlight of her play came in the quarterfinals, when she upended 2-time defending champion Kris Albrecht (Great Falls Public), 6-4, 7-6.

Prior to the event, she told HHS head coach Frank Aldrich that, "If I can beat Albrecht, I don't care what happens after that."

"It was a tough match, but beating (Albrecht) is the greatest thing that's happened to me since I've been playing tennis," the 18-year old Lady Bengal told the IR. She joined Sue LaSalle (1965), Kerry Meloy (1966) and Sue Leaphart (1972) – also Helena High netters – as the only local girls to win State prep singles titles.

That summer, she retained her City singles crown, shutting out Ruth Lewis 6-0, 6-0 in the chipper.

At the 1976 State Open Championships in Helena, Eggan bested fellow Capital City netter Jane Lamers in the singles 18-21 age-group, 6-3, 6-4. She repeated as State champ the next year, trouncing Colleen Mayer (Missoula), 6-1, 6-0, for the 1977 title.

Later that summer, Karen achieved a sweep in the 1977 City Open tourney. She won the singles championship over Jill O'Hara 6-1, 6-2; the doubles with Sue Leaphart over Kathy Murphy/O'Hara; and the mixed doubles title with Mike Miller, over Kermit Eck/O'Hara, 6-2, 7-5.

The next year, she captured the singles over LaVonne Davis 6-0, 6-0. At the 1978 State Open tourney in Great Falls, Eggan teamed up with Montana State Lady Bobcats' stablemate Jeanne Rogers to win the doubles championship.

In 1979, Karen earned the City singles title over another MSU teammate, LaVonne Davis, 6-2, 6-1.



She also placed runner-up in the womens' doubles at the State Open tourney.

Karen earned her sixth successive City singles the next year, defeating Davis in the chipper, 6-3, 6-3. Eggan captured her seventh (and last) City Open singles championship in 1981, when for the fourth straight year she met Davis in the finals. And for the first it went three sets, 6-3, 3-6, 6-2.

At Montana State, among Karen's highlights were qualifying for the 1980 NCAA national doubles championships.

As Karen Jacobson, she relocated to Havre and took up racquetball, garnering seven State championships in her new sport.

In 1992, she garnered the Womens' Open State singles championship, and was a 3-time State Open singles runner-up as well, in 1990, 1993 and 1996.

Jacobson claimed the Womens' Open Doubles titles in 1993 and 1995, with partner Kim Koski. She also won also four straight Mixed Open Doubles titles, with John Kennis, from 1993-96.

After moving to the Flathead Valley, Jacobson's competitive juices were satisfied on the golf course, where she became a two-time Whitefish city champion.

Next she entered the Montana State Womens Golf Association Seniors state tourneys. where she finished second twice, in 2011 and 2013, before winning the 2015 State title in Missoula.

"Pretty fun to think of three state championships in three sports," Jacobson said recently. "Maybe I'll have to take up pickleball and see what I can do in that."

Ken Leland Golden Athlete

By Curt Symness

Ken Leland was a three-sport prep athlete, with his best games being basketball and baseball.

The starting center for the Helena Bengal cagers his junior and senior years, he led the team in scoring both seasons. In 1961 the 6'4" left-handed shooting Leland was the fourth-leading scorer in the state with a 16.65 points average and was selected first team All-State.

His best game was a 28 point effort versus Butte Central in a close 55-52 loss. In a come-from-behind 65-61 win over Bozeman – Helena was trailing by four points at halftime – Leland fired in 17 points in the second half, to finish with 25 counters.

Against highly regarded Missoula County, Ken canned 22 points in a valiant 52-47 losing effort. The Bengals came all the way back from a 12-point deficit in the second period, taking a 2-point lead mid-way through the fourth, but couldn't hold on.

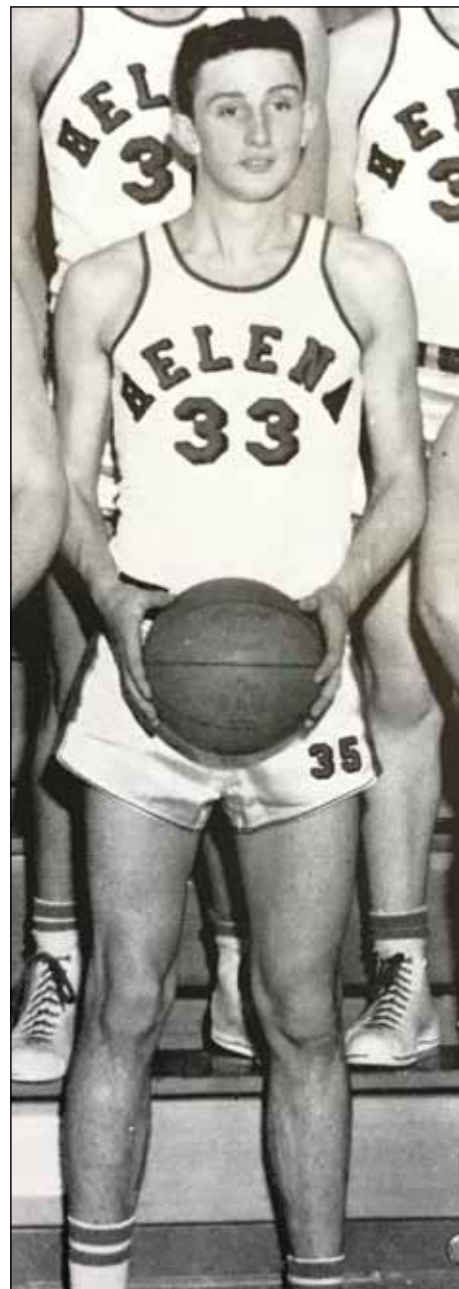
In the regular season finale on the road, Leland fired in 22 points in a 61-54 success over the Braves. Teammate Rod Kovick was next in the scoring column with 16 markers.

Leland was tough under the boards, as well. Although they didn't keep official rebounding stats in those days, the IR reported that he was "pulling down close to 20 rebounds a game."

He was also a two-letterman in football for the red-and-white, where he anchored the line at his end position on both sides of ball the gridiron.

In baseball, Leland was the ace of the Helena Legion's pitching staff in 1958 and 1959, with a two-year combined mark of 17-5. He usually finished what he started, with 16 of those contests being complete games.

Some of the big southpaw's best efforts in 1958 were a 2-hitter in a 5-2 win over Great Falls; a 4-hit, 10-0 shutout versus Bozeman; and a 3-hitter in a 12-1 win over Lewistown.



He finished the year with an 8-1 mark for the Central Division champs, and posted their only win at the State Tournament.

In 1959, Leland set the program's record with 141 season strikeouts, and tied Ken Schneider's season standard of nine pitching victories.

He hurled a one-hitter and a two-hitter, and once fanned 17 batters in a game – including eight whiffs in a row – to go along with four other 14-strikeout contests.

Ken twirled a 2-hitter in a 7-0 shutout over Havre, whiffing 15 batsmen. And he scattered five hits in a 5-2 victory over Great Falls, with 14 strikeouts.

In a 5-1 win over Butte, he fanned 14 and gave up four hits. "Leland exhibited almost perfect control," according to the IR, "walking only two batters and striking out the side with the bases loaded in the third inning."

Leland went on to pitch in the Montana State League, formerly the Copper league. In 1960, with the Helena Cardinals, he fashioned a 4-hit whitewash over the Anaconda Anodes.

The next season, working for the Helena Wranglers, Leland threw a 3-hitter in a 6-3 win over East Helena, striking out 15 Smelterite batsmen in the process. In another stint, he picked up the win in the Helena All-Stars extra inning victory over the Missoula Highlanders, with three innings of scoreless ball, fanning four.

In 1962, Ken helped the East Helena Smelterites to the Montana State League title, posting a spotless 7-0 mark, with a microscopic 1.02 ERA.

Among his top performances was a 1-hit shutout in a 6-0 triumph over the Butte McQueens, with 10 strikeouts. In a 3-hit, 8-1 win over McQueens in seven innings, Leland fanned another 10 Butte hitters.

In the title contest versus Butte, Leland spun a 7-inning 4-hitter, with nine strikeouts, to give East Helena the league crown

Leland went on to play both Division I basketball and baseball at Idaho State University.

Kyle Samson Contemporary Athlete

By Tom Stuber

Kyle Samson not only quarterbacked Capital High to the 2002 AA football championship, but he got to do that with his dad, Mark, serving as the head coach and brother, Marc, starting on the team.

The Bruins would post a 13-0 record with their marquee win coming in the title game against CM Russell. Trailing 21-7 late in the game, “Samson & Company” stormed back with 21 unanswered points for a 28-21 victory and the brown-and-gold’s seventh AA grid crown.

“That senior season was the most special,” said Samson, who wore his uncle Bobby Petrino’s No. 7 in high school and college. “Playing with my brother and having my dad on the sidelines. That’s something not too many people can say.

“We had great leadership on that team. It definitely wasn’t just me. My teammates were outstanding. It was a tremendous honor to play for and with them. We had 7-8 players off that team that went on to play in college.”

The 5-foot-8, 155-pound Samson started the Bruins comeback against the Rustlers with a four-yard touchdown run late in the third quarter, but Capital failed to convert and still trailed 21-13. After getting the ball back on downs near midfield, Samson connected on a 25-yard TD strike to Ryan Turcott. The two would hookup again on the conversion to tie the game at 21.

The Samson-Turcott connection continued on the final drive as the duo contributed 37 yards on three pass plays to set up Todd Nelson’s three-yard TD run with just 48 seconds to play.

Samson finished the season with school records of 3,291 total yards offense (1,279 rushing & 2,012 passing) and a 71 completion percentage. He ranked No. 2 with 34 combined TDs (17 rushing & 17 passing). He also broke the career total yards offense mark with 3,291 yards.

Samson was named first team All-State and the Class AA Offensive Player of the Year, capped off by the 2001 Gatorade Player of the Year selection.

He also played an important role on Capital’s 2001 team as a junior. In his first season under center he led the Bruins to playoffs, but they bowed out in an exciting loss to crosstown rival Helena High, 34-21, in double overtime, despite Samson completing of 12 of 15 passes for 241 yards.

He finished with 1,952 total yards, 1,231 passing and 721 rushing, and was selected second team All-Western AA Conference.

Samson started for two years on CHS’ varsity basketball team, as well, and was part of the Bruins’ 2001 AA Tournament qualification as a sophomore.

After making second team All-Conference guard in 2002, his senior hoops year he was selected to the 2003 All-State team. Samson averaged 13.8 points



and 4.5 assists per game.

As a trackster for the Bru-crew, his sophomore year at the State Meet, he placed sixth in the 300 hurdles. The next season, Samson took fourth in the intermediate hurdles (38.87) at State, fourth in the 200 dash (22.71) and was part of the State runner-up 400 relay team, which got the stick around in 43.07 seconds.

As a senior at State, he posted a PR of 38.77 in the 300 hurdles while collecting the second-place medal.

Samson capped off his prep career of achieving the premier feat of making All-State in three sports in the same school year. He wound up with 10 varsity letters (four in track, three each in football and basketball) and was CHS’ 2003 Bob Bean Award recipient.

Samson played for his dad all four years with the Bruins, then after a one-year at the University of Montana, he rejoined him at MSU-Northern for three more seasons to make it seven of eight years gridding for Mark.

While playing quarterback at MSU-Northern, he brought the Lights from a 2-9 mark in his sophomore season, to a 9-2 record as a senior. In 2006, MSUN defeated Carroll College along the way to earning the Lights’ first trip to the NAIA playoffs.

Samson established several school records, was named the Frontier’s Offensive Player of the Year, and was selected an NAIA All-American.

Kyle went on to serve as an assistant coach under his father for several years. From there he’s been the head coach at Flathead High and is currently the offensive coordinator at Montana Tech.

Walt Chancy Coach

By Curt Symmess

After a Hall of Fame football career at Carroll College, Walt Chancy coached three different sports at Capital High for 25 years, winning four State championships at two sports as head coach, and being part of four other State titles as an assistant.

In football, he was a Bruin assistant from 1975-94, coaching the receivers and defensive backs, before moving up to defensive coordinator, where he focused on the DBs. Those teams won three State crowns, in 1978 and 1987.

In 1993, Chancy served as CHS’ interim head coach while Jim Tuss was recovering from surgery. Capital faced Billings Skyview in the playoff semi-finals, and advanced to the championship with an impressive 27-3 victory.

CHS went on to win the program’s third State grid title, with a 34-7 trouncing of Missoula Big Sky, to finish at 11-1. Scoring for the Bru-crew were Alec Larson on a KOR, touchdown passes from Byron Molynieux to Brian Mellen and Larson; and runs by Treavor Smith and Mike Berry.

The defense posted three interceptions held the Eagles to 163 total yards.

Coach Tuss was on the sidelines, and commented that along with assistants Chance Ferlicka, Chris Kanthack and Jim Abrahamson, Chancy’s staff had created “the most improved defense we’ve had in the history of the school.”

As head coach in 1996, Chancy directed CHS to an undefeated State crown, capped off in dramatic fashion. In the semis, the Bruins edged Billings West 33-27.

In the chipper versus CM Russell, a J.D. Emmert to Lucas Nelson strike, gave the brown-and-gold an early lead. But CMR moved ahead with two scores. Then with 3:35 left, Emmert connected with Nick Carrell on a 15-yard TD, to close to within 14-13.

But instead of going for the tie, Chancy called for a 2-point conversion, and a successful pass to Nelson in the corner of the end zone put CHS up 15-14. The defense held, as the Bruins finished at 13-0.

“It goes back to when I was playing for coach (Bob) Petrino at Carroll,” Chancy told the paper, when asked about the decision to go for the win. “He was always the guy who said ‘Believe in your players.’ There was never a question.”

Matt Kuntz, an All-State lineman on the ‘93 team, said that Chancy “quietly expected you to do your absolute best” on game day, in practice, and at school.

“While some of other coaches knock you over with yelling, coach Chancy commanded such respect that all it took was a hard look to get his point across,” related Kuntz. “For me, coach Chancy has continued to be a role model. I’ve seen him



on a regular basis for years and it still carries a lot of meaning to see the respect in his eyes for what you’ve done as a person and in your work.”

Chancy took up coaching gymnastics (despite having never competed at the sport), and served as the Bruin boys head coach from 1976-88. His gymnasts captured two State championships, in 1983 and 1988, and placed in the top-3 three other times.

In 1983, Capital outscored runner-up Helena High 252.65-246.10, and in 1988, they bested Helena 263.80-236.15.

As a Capital assistant boys track & field coach from 1978-2000 – mentoring the pole vault before switching to the sprints and relays – Chancy was part of two more CHS State championships, in 1998-99.

He guided two individual State track titlists to three crowns; Scott McFarland in the 100 and 200 meter dashes in 1986, and Jake Eldridge in the 400 run in 1999. Chancy also directed three 1,600 relay AA champions, in 1997, 1999 and 2000.

All-told, Chancy coached nine Divisional and six State individual/relay combined track championships.

“Great coaches are also good teachers, and Walt was very patient with his sprinters,” related Tom Pedersen, CHS head track coach from 1978-2003. “He got them in shape and then emphasized quality. Those sprinters were a huge part of our championship teams.

“Walt worked well with the other coaches and his calm demeanor helped to focus all of us. And he is a tremendous role model too, he crafted a great bonding and respect with his athletes.”

Taylor (Liz) Meyer Contemporary Athlete

By Curt Symmess



At Capital High from 1999-2001, Taylor (Liz) Meyer played basketball and softball all four years for the Lady Bruins. But the 5-foot-3 athlete’s best sport was fastpitch softball.

Meyers was chosen as Capital’s Offensive MVP for three straight years, and was selected an All-Conference outfielder three times, and was a two-time All-Stater.

Meyers started playing Tee-ball at 5 years of age, and girls fastpitch in the ASA summer leagues at 12.

As a junior for CHS, the left-handed hitting centerfielder posted an astronomical .549 OBP, which ranked No. 3 on the program’s records list at the time. And the final season, Meyer batted a lofty .412, which was then the Lady Bruins’ fourth-highest.

Among the best games during that final campaign was a 6 for 8 effort in a doubleheader sweep over Bozeman.

At the 2001 State Tournament, in an elimination contest versus crosstown Helena High, Meyer went 2 for 4 in the 5-2 win over the Lady Bengals, and also shined in the field, making a nice running catch in the fifth inning and robbing Melissa Brooks of an extra-base hit.

Meyer left the school with three top-4 career rankings, including No. 3 with a lifetime .371 batting average and .517 on base percentage, and No. 4 with 78 hits.

With eyes like an eagle and a proclivity for contact at the plate, in 249 prep at bats Meyer struck out only 14 times.

“I would describe (Meyer) as a hard-nosed softball player, (who) worked very hard to (become) a great player,” CHS coach Mike Miller related. “A great teammate, very competitive and pushed (the Bruin) teammates to be the same; always putting the team ahead of individual success.

“(Meyer) led by example and made everyone around better through the efforts (given) on a daily basis.”

A walk-on freshman at Seattle University, Meyer went on to become a three-time All-Great Northern Athletic Conference selection.

In 2004, the Lady Redhawks junior centerfielder was moved to leadoff batter, and responded by pacing Seattle in several offensive categories, including a .374 batting average (52-for-139), 34 runs scored (in 46 games) and a .463 on-base percentage.

Meyer was also the GNAC’s leader in OBP, and was second in runs scored and fourth in hitting.

Meyer played some defense as well, committing only one error, for a sparkling .984 fielding percentage.

“(Meyer) covers ground and gets a good jump on the ball – it’s instincts,” SU coach Dan Powers told the Seattle.edu web site in 2004. ‘Good centerfielders aren’t made. You either have it or you don’t.’

Meyer finished the end of her junior year as the GNAC’s career leader in OBP at .420.

As a senior, Meyer served as the 2005 team captain and was “one of the main reasons the Redhawks are finding success,” according to the SU Web site.

At one point late in the season, the Seattle sparkplug was leading the team in doubles, walks, and stolen bases; and was second in on base percentage and runs.

“(Meyer) leads by example – always hustling, always enthusiastic, always working hard,” coach Powers said.

Meyer finished a collegiate softball career ranked No. 10 on SU’s batting list, with a .317 lifetime average. Among the softballers most important stats were 100 runs scored in 158 games, 25 doubles, five triples and 19 stolen bases. Meyer finished with 139 hits and 73 bases on balls, as well.

Meyer graduated Seattle with a BA in English, before earning a Masters Degree in Education and Counseling. Taylor is presently employed at Mount Tacoma High, as a counselor and the head softball coach.

1990 Capital High Girls Cross Country Contemporary Team

By Loren Oelkers

By definition, cross country running is a sport in which teams and individuals run a race over an open-air course. The performance of each team member ultimately determines the overall team score. It is a sport where the team members are individually performing the exact same task at the same time trying to achieve the same goal – of winning the race or finishing as close to the top as possible.

It takes hard work from every team member to win a State harrier championship, and determination to keep pushing and running even harder when your mind and body is screaming to back off. It also takes a little bit of luck to stay healthy throughout the lone grueling season, and a mindset that you must run many miles before, during and after the season so that you are ready for the next meet. And it's knowing that you are not likely to get as much recognition as your fellow student athletes in the more popular sports. But most of all it takes a total effort every race knowing that your team is counting on you.

The Capital High girls cross country team won the State Championship in 1990 in what Bruin Coach Gil Wooten described “a total team effort.” It was the Bruin girls second State championship in school history, the first coming in 1974.

At the Stat Meet, the Lady Bruins placed three individuals in the top 15 and finished with a total of 73 points, outdistancing the runner-up Flathead Bravettes at 96 points. Beating Flathead was significant as they had captured the previous four State championships. After the race Coach Wooten commented “We just happened to run a better race today than they did.”

The top performer for the Bruins was Wendy Lutgen. The senior harrier placed fourth overall with a time of 19:14. It was the third time in Wendy's career that she finished fourth at State, having also turned the trick her freshman and sophomore years. Perhaps the biggest and most pleasant surprise was the performance of Lady Bruin freshmen Tiffany Bebich and Amy Berger. Bebich placed sixth with a time of 19:33, followed closely by Berger in ninth place at 19:40. Both posted remarkable times for freshman competing in their first State Meet and really solidified the championship for CHS. Senior Geni Steffins (19:55) finished 17th followed by junior Lucy Hanson finishing a respectful 37th at 21:06. Senior Nicole Pierre (21:26) was the team's sixth runner placing 44th. Rounding out the squad were Kristy Wetterling, Shauna Brandt and Anna Rau.

A chilly and blustery race day ended with warm smiles, long hugs, a few tears and a very happy group of young ladies and their fans. When the Lady Bruins hoisted the State Championship trophy high over their heads, they had reason to be proud. All the hours of training, mental preparations and hard work had paid off.



1991 Helena High Boys Basketball Contemporary Teams

By Tim Garrett

“Hey, this is it, we're in the championship game,” Helena High boys basketball coach Jim Gross told his team during the championship game against Flathead High. “Let's start playing like it.”

The Bengals had not won a state championship for 20 years and the 1991 team was loaded. Gross said, that his team continued to improve all season, but had not played a complete game perfectly yet.

The year before, the Bengals entered the tournament with a 15-6 record and were eliminated from the 1990 tournament on Friday. In 1991, they brought a 17-4 record in the Class AA tourney, along with impressive size, experience, and heart. And Gross was able to go eight and nine players deep, which was a real plus.

The team opened the tournament battling Billings West. The Bears had a team similar in size to HHS and possessed a real good inside game, as well.

During the first quarter the Bengals showed they were there to win. In the face of two West defenders, Chris Spoja, a 6-foot-5 post, “had a two-handed, from behind the neck, backboard rocking slam dunk and showed that the Bengals meant business,” the IR reported. They came away winning 55-50.

Darin Zinnecker and John Briney were everywhere in the next game against the Bozeman Hawks. They picked up the pace and made it clear the Bengals were a force. HHS won in a heart-stopping, exciting contest, 68-64.

In the chipper versus Flathead, Helena fell into an early hole and trailed 10-0 in the first 2:33 of the contest. But the Bengals showed their heart, poise, character, discipline, talent, depth, and intensity, as they came back to win 65-55.

Chad Schneiter, Darin Zinnecker, Josh Cool, Joe Sicotte, John Briney, Josh Anderson, Todd Redd, Benji Robinson, Chris Spoja, Aaron Hanson, Kevyn Wetzel, and Brad Cleaves, were the Helena High Bengals. They were a team, they were the champions.

“This team represents what a Bengal is, full of heart,” coach Gross said.

HHS placed four players on the All-Tournament Team, seniors Darin Zinnecker, Todd Redd, and John Briney and junior Chris Spoja.

Spoja was the club's leading scorer at 16.54 points per game, and was selected to the 1991 All-State team. Briney, at 13.3 ppg, and Zinnecker, with 13.8 ppg, were named second team All-Conference, while an honorable mention citation went to Todd Redd (11.5 ppg).

Helena skipper Jim Gross became the first coach to win the AA title in both boy's and girls' basketball, having previously guided the 1984 Lady Bengals to the mountain top.

Chris Spoja went on to start all four years with the University of Montana Grizzlies, while John Briney and Todd Redd played for nationally ranked MSU-Northern.

Jim Gross went on to coach at Carroll College.



1992 Helena High Boys Track & Field Contemporary Team

By Curt Synness

In 1992, the Helena High boys track and field repeated as State champions, outdistancing runner-up Butte High, 80-64.

Helena had captured its' third straight Western AA Meet title the week before in Kalispell, tallying 118 points, 30 ahead of the Bulldogs' 88. The Bengals garnered six event crowns, while qualifying 11 tracksters in 14 events.

HHS head coach Bill Gilbert's titlists included triple winner Matt Sandholm, in the 100 meter dash in 11.50, the 200 in 22.59, and the 400 relay (with Jim Walker, Justin Olsen and Chris Spoja) with a 43.59. Other champions included Joe Roberts in the 3,200 run in 9:48.76; Lance Dandliker in the shot put with a heave of 54-3½; and Barrett Adams in the 1,600 run in 4:27.79.

Placing runner-up was Dandliker in the discus with a toss of 155-11. Versatile Chris Spoja qualified in five events, placing third in the long jump and 110 hurdles, fourth in the high jump, the winning short relay, and third-place 1,600 relay (with Kevyn Wetzel, Chad Opitz and Sandholm).

HHS' other third place tracksters were Roberts in the 1,600, Barrett Adams in the 800, Spoja in the long jump and 110 hurdles, pole vaulter John Hilton.

Finishing fourth were Spoja in the high jump and Walker in the 100. HHS added 4-5 placings in the vault, were Justin Covey and Bill Hurford.

At the Class AA Meet in Billings, the red-and-white scored in 12 of the 13 events it had entrants in, for a 16-point spread over the second-place Bulldogs.

Three Bengal seniors earned championships, led by Joe Roberts' third straight triumph in the 3,200, with a 9:33.2 clocking. Matt Sandholm won the honor of the state's fastest man, running the 100 dash in 11.06, while Lance Dandliker captured the shot on his very first throw, at 57-4.

“Everybody expected me to win, and the stress was very high,” Roberts said after his three-peat.

Sandholm took second in the 200 as well, in 22.29, and was part of the third-place 1,600 relay (with Spoja, Wetzel and Adams) in 3:25.85, and the 400 relay (with Walker, Olsen and Spoja).

Chris Spoja placed in all five of his events, finishing runner-up in the long jump at 22-2¼, third in the 110 hurdles in 15.19, a 6-2 high jump for fourth place, and both relays.

Covey and Hurford tied for second in pole vault, at 14-0. Barrett Adams, who cracked the 2-minute barrier (1:59.3) in the 800 but failed to medal, took fourth in the 1,600 with a PR of 4:26.40.

Dandliker added a fourth in the discus at 152-8

“I feel I've always had more success in cross country, but I've never had back to back State titles there,” said coach Gilbert, after claiming the program's fourth championship. “This senior group is track talented ... they love to compete.”



1993 Capital High Football

Contemporary Teams

By Tom Stuber

Of all the state titles Capital High has won in football the 1993 season is perhaps the most remarkable.

The Bruins were hit hard by graduation the previous season and entered the campaign expected to finish in the middle of the AA field and miss the playoffs. Toward the end of the season they found out that legendary head coach Jim Tuss was diagnosed with cancer.

Offensive coordinator Walt Chancy filled in for Tuss after his surgery in the playoffs, although the head coach returned to Vigilante Stadium sidelines for the title tilt. Unfazed, the Bruins marched onward and found themselves holding the championship trophy with a 34-7 win over Missoula Big Sky.

“In many ways this was one of the more rewarding seasons of all,” Chancy said. “This team was undersized and predicted to finish sixth. Jim was so open about his illness with the players. He was just a strong guy and battled through.”

The Bruins would lose both of their running backs (Nick Radley and Benji Cosgrove) in the semi-final playoff win over Billings Skyview. Radley would come back to play sparingly against Big Sky in the championship.

“Jim made it fun for the kids and the kids have fun in turn,” Chancy added. “That was the season that the Mohawk haircut tradition started. Offensive lineman Matt Kuntz got everyone to shave their hair into a Mohawk before the championship game and it’s continued on ever since. It was also the season that we started the Hit-Hustle-Heart theme.”

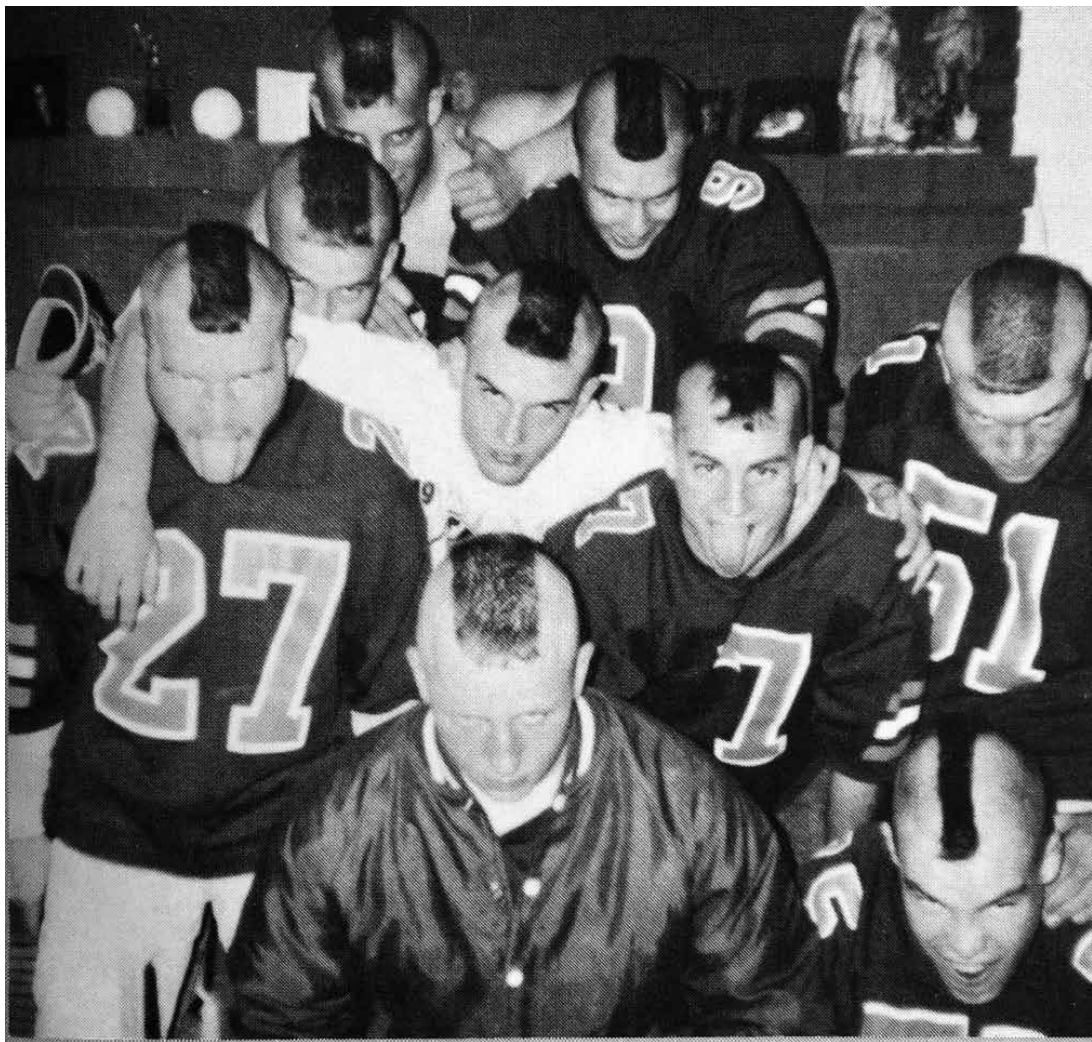
Tuss went to his bag of trick often that year and they seemingly were perfectly time on each occasion.

“We ran the fumblerooski every game and every game it worked,” Chancy said. “The other team knew we had it, but never knew when he’d run it.”

In the playoffs the Bruins played their best football of the season rolling to a 21-3 halftime lead over Skyview and closing out with a 27-3 win. The title game saw Alec Larson return the opening kickoff 98 yards for a touchdown. Byron Molyneaux connected with Brian Mellen on the next drive to put the Bruins up 14-0.

Big Sky was able to counter with a touchdown pass right before halftime to cut the lead in half, but a Treavor Smith TD run from 16 yards out and a long TD pass from Molyneaux to Larson all but put the Eagles away. Mike Berry would cap off the scoring with an 18 yard touchdown run.

Capital finished the year at 11-1, and placed seven players as first team All-Staters, led by 1993 Class AA Offensive and Defensive Players of the Year, QB Byron Molyneaux and LB Treavor Smith. Also making the squad were defensive lineman Steve Windle, defensive back Brian Mellen, offensive tackle Lee Tyson, offensive guard Matt Kuntz, and receiver Alec Larsen



1996, 1997 Capital High

Girls Track & Field

Contemporary Teams

By Carrie Damschen

Track & Field is generally known as an individual sport. Yes, there are team scores at the end of the meet, but it’s the individual events and performances that typically shine during a meet and a season.

This was not the case for the 1996 and 1997 Capital High School Track & Field championship teams. Led by Coach Shirley Chesterfield, these teams will go down in history as some of the most balanced and deep teams AA girls track and field has seen, and a group of individuals more committed to the team’s success than their own.

The 1996 Lady Bruins went into the Divisional track meet undefeated. The Divisional meet was no different, where Capital beat 5-time defending champion Flathead High by a 30-point margin and qualified an unprecedented 19 athletes in 32 events.

The team’s incredible depth in the number of athletes qualifying was compounded by the depth of the individuals, with Laura Bennett qualifying in 6 events, Suzanne Krings in 5 events, her older sister Betsy in 4 events, the distance duo of Christine Ricker and Michelle Pilcher in 2 events each, and the Nikki Dixon/Dannai Clayborne throwing duo in 2 events each.

The State meet proved to be an epic battle of Capital’s depth versus Flathead’s superpower sprinter/hurdler Sommer Whitehead and strong distance crew. Capital only achieved one gold medal on the first day of competition in the 4x100 relay with Holly Gabber, Jamie Armbruster, Carrie Damschen, and Bennett. But there was no need for all firsts that day, as Capital placed in every single event, the majority with several placers.

While Whitehead won the 300 hurdles, Capital went 2-5 in the race with Coach Robin Hutton’s powerful hurdling crew of Betsy Krings, Katie McCarvel, Damschen, and Gabbert. When Ricker went down in the 1,600 with an asthma attack, sophomore Pilcher stepped up with a fourth place finish amongst the Flathead distance team. Bennet placed in 4 events that day, while Clayborne and Dixon placed second and third in the discus.

Day 2 was more of the same, with Capital finding every nook and cranny to score valuable points, and equally important, take points away from Flathead. Clayborne stepped up and won the shot put despite injury. With the score tied at 87 points, Betsy pulled away with a major upset victory over Whitehead in the 100 hurdles.

Solid performances by Suzanne Krings, Dixon, Bennett, and Ricker all kept the margin over Flathead.

One of the most important races of the day was the 3,200 meters, where Pilcher held off all Kalispell runners with a third place finish.

As Pilcher was quoted that day, “We made a pact at the beginning of the day... The team agreed if we saw Flathead uniform in front of us in a race, we’d do the best of our ability to catch them.”

The pact worked, as did the depth and team spirit, and Capital won it’s very first Girls Track & Field title by a narrow margin of 16 points.

The 1997 season was the same theme for Capital, as the team again went undefeated in the season and used its incredible depth to again gain the State title. While a solid crew of seniors had left the team in ’96, the younger athletes began blossoming and showing their dominance on both the track and field.

At the Divisional meet, Capital landed 29 spots, securing a ride to state in every event but discus. The big winners of the meet were Bennett, bringing home gold in the 100, 200, 400, 4x100 relay and second in the long jump.

Following Bennett were Damschen qualifying in the 100 hurdles, 300 hurdles, 100, 200, 400, and both relays; and Suzanne Krings taking first in the long, triple, and high jump, and second in pole vault. The distance crew brought 3 runners out of Divisionals fighting the perennial stronghold of Flathead.



At the hot and windy State meet in Billings, Capital wasted no time showing their dominance with an incredible first day that ended with Capital in the lead over Flathead 73-30. CHS opened the day with back to back gold medals in the 4x100 relay and the 300 hurdles by Damschen. The dominance continued with a win in the 400 by Bennett, 3 placing in the 100, and a 1-2-6 place in the long jump by Krings, Bennett, and Heather Davis.

Day 2 was no different for the Bruins, starting the day with gold in the javelin by Sarah McMillian, gold for Krings in the high jump, and gold for Bennett in the 200. The distance crew held strong with fourth from Ricker in the 800 and fourth from Pilcher in the 3200. The 4x400 relay team finished the day in style with a commanding 3-second lead for the win.

When the day was done, the Bruins beat Great Falls High 133-69, scoring more points in the first day than the final points of the second place team. Bennett finished with 6 metals, 4 gold; Damschen with 7 metals, 3 gold; and Krings with double golds.

The 1997 State title will go down as one of the greatest victories in Bruin school history.

1968 Helena Senators

Golden Teams



By Curt Synmes

In between the 1967 Boston Red Sox “Impossible Dream” and the 1969 New York “Miracle Mets,” the 1968 Helena Senators performed a similar magical achievement.

Previously known simply as Helena Legion, the local AA baseball team was playing with a new name: “Senators.” Head coach Dick Muffick’s club started slow, and by the end of June of 1968, Helena stood at 8-10 overall.

But then they started to gel, and finished second in the Eastern Division with a 13-8 conference mark. The local nine defeated Class B Havre 24-8 in a challenge game to qualify for the state tournament.

Huge underdogs entering the State Tournament in Helena, coach Muffick’s diamonds surprised the Great Falls Electrics 6-5 in 11 innings in the tourney’s lid-lifter.

Catcher Reggie Voiles spearheaded the offense with a 3-run homer, while shortstop Kirk Johnson’s third hit of the game plated third baseman Bob Knudson with the winning run in the 11th. Southpaw Paul Hopkins pitched eight strong innings, before being relieved by then Jerry Rickman. In the semis, Helena met the top-seeded Billings Royals juggernaut — winners of the previous 14-consecutive State titles and a dazzling 19-1 in conference play that year.

Bill Hedge scattered 11 hits in the complete game 5-4 win for his second victory (a rare feat in those days) over coach Eddy Baines’ powerful Magic City crew. Second baseman Kyle Johnson, singled in right fielder Dennis Nebel with the deciding run in the fourth.

The scrappy Senators then bested the Electrics again in the finals, 5-2, for the program’s first State championship since Legion ball was instituted in Helena in 1932.

Voiles started the scoring in the opening inning when he crashed a double, bringing home Kyle. When first baseman Joe Spoja’s single plated Voiles for the third run of the inning, it was then up to starter Rickman to hold the lead. And that the right hander did, with a gutsy six-hitter. The Senators twice killed rallies with double plays.

“The key to their championship was defense,” reported the IR.

Voiles, Johnson, Hedge and centerfielder Bob Marcinek were selected for the All-Tournament Team.

Rounding out the rest of the 1968 Senators’ 13-man roster were left fielder Pat Hurley, outfielder Jim Hendrickson and pitcher Brad Luck. Cecil Deming served as assistant coach, while the batboy was Rande Muffick, the coach’s son.

Kirk Johnson, who was generally considered the best shortstop in the state, led the team in hitting for the third straight year with a lofty .373 batting average. Big Joe Spoja cracked a club-high five home runs. Rickman paced the pitchers with a 1.83 earned run average, and Hedge’s 9 wins were tops.

Helena then entered the Region 7 Tournament in Lewiston, Idaho, with a 23-18 overall record, where they lost to host Lewiston and Yakima (Wash.).

“The ‘68 team was special to my dad as State champions, but he was equally proud of their overall toughness,” said Rande Muffick, speaking for his late father. “They never gave an inch out there. To him, they set the tone for Senators baseball to come.”

“And it’s so neat to see it’s still carried on, all these years later.”



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