

Larry Sullivan's

SPORT SIDE

Coaching Loses A Good One

Touching All The Bases: When serving for 10 seasons as a Mooresville Senior High's football coach, nine of them as the head man, Perry Pearson had a knack for bringing out the best in his players. A case in point.

Team members Larry Cook and Phil Alexander were called to the office one morning and were met there by a concerned Pearson, his arms crossed in a familiar manner. "Boys," he drawled in that familiar voice tone, "rumor has it that you two might know something about the team jerseys that are missing."

"Well, coach," one of them responded, "rumor has it that you might be right."

"Tell you what," the coach many players referred to more as a friend than a mentor stated, "see to it that they're returned, and no more will be said about it."

So off Cook and Alexander went, retracing steps they had taken when dispersing the "borrowed" team jerseys.

Upon returning them, Pearson, as always, was glad he got more than expected from his players. Almost 10 more, in fact.

For in their attempts to take heed of their coach's words, Alexander and Cook actually rounded up 10 more jerseys than were originally noted missing.

Today, Cook, a Mooresville Tribune cameraman, and Alexander, who helps manage matters at John's Exxon, both insist that more of those missing jerseys are still float-

ing around. But they did their best to see to it that every one they had anything to do with — and more, as it turned out — were returned.

It's an indication of just what kind of pull and association Pearson had and enjoyed, respectively, with his student-athletes during his sideline tenure here. Still today, every football season, stories unfold about some of Mooresville's best teams. And nearly all of them are attributed not so much to the players but to the ability of the coach — more times than not Pearson — to bring out the best in them.

Pearson arrived in Mooresville after beginning his coaching career as an assistant at Roberson High School in Rockingham. He first ventured into head coaching at Franklin High School in Franklin, Va. He came to Mooresville in 1963 first as an assistant to Ray Boyles for a season before being bumped up to the head coach the following fall. He served the next nine years as both head football coach and athletic director.

It was a solid relationship for both. During his tenure, Pearson guided seven teams with winning seasons and captured the North Piedmont Conference several times. His final team, in 1972, put together one of the best showings of any Mooresville team, finishing as runners-up for the Western North Carolina High School Athletic Association title.

Pearson decided around Easter of 1973 to resign his post here to assume similar duties as AD and head football coach at Canton Pishgah. He stayed there for two seasons before moving on to East Forsyth in 1975. Earlier this spring, in an open ceremony, Pearson surrendered 32 years of football coaching when tending his official resignation from the sport.

Though he will remain a teaching member of the East Forsyth faculty, Pearson will no longer coach football.

He leaves the game after reaching one of his final goals, that of serving as a coach for the North Carolina Shrine Bowl team. Pearson was its head coach during last December's game, won, fittingly enough, by the Tar Heel State squad.

During his stints here, at Pishgah and, finally, at East Forsyth, Pearson accumulated 334 career wins, ranking him among the top five in the state in that department.

Come this fall, football across the state will come to realize what folks in these parts came to know in the early 1970's, that the game won't be the same without Perry Pearson around.

Pivoting On A Double Play: The baseball card craze is on. On the heels of Billie Joe Gregory's rare find a week ago, when a simple purchase of a 50-cent pack of 15 cards was rewarded with the finding of a \$1,000 autographed Mickey Mantle card among the bunch, others are also discovering valuable cards via unroutine paths.

Take Matthew Warnock, for instance. Matthew was attending the Card Shop's weekly youth trade night Friday and wound up as the owner of a Mickey Mantle card worth an estimated \$600. It came about during wheelings and dealings at the newly-opened Card Shop on Plaza Drive. Every Friday night, card enthusiasts, most of them youngsters, gather to show off cards and make deals for dealers. Warnock wound up as one of last Friday's shrewdest dealers.

See, it can happen to anyone.

Pivoting On A Double Play: The word is out. Though Mooresville enters this Southern District of Area III American Legion baseball team as the team everyone wants to beat, the Moors may not be the division's team to beat. Confused? Bear with me.

Post 66 christens SD-Area III play at Concord tomorrow after four exhibition games, three of them at home. The Moors enter the new season as reigning regular-season and tournament champions of the divisions and after finishing as a state quarterfinalist by making it to the finals of the Western North Carolina championship series before falling to eventual state champion Caldwell County. Mooresville engages in play after establishing the club record for wins — with 29 — in a single season.

Despite those credentials, a survey of league coaches and others in the know name Mocksville as the team to beat this summer. Mocksville was one of four teams in the division to win 20 or more games last season, and the squad returns a number of players — make it 12 — who helped make that possible.

Mooresville is mentioned among the contenders, along with Mocksville, North Wilkesboro and Kannapolis. Among those, Post 66 will first see K-Town there June 3 and entertain North Wilkesboro June 5. The first of two meetings with Mocksville will take place at home June 11.

Mooresville heads into the official portion of its season with all its players except those from Statesville. The Greyhounds, regular-season champions of the Footfalls Athletic Conference, advanced through the first and second rounds of statewide postseason play last week and are still engaged in the prep playoffs. Odds are, the Moors will go into tomorrow's season-opener at Concord also without those Statesville players.

Mooresville Senior High was the team's other drawing pool which was involved in the state playoffs. The Devils lost a first-round game at Swannanoa Owen to end their season last week.

Cleaning Out The Locker: Members of the Carolina fight are still in the process of piling up finances to help cover the cost of expenses when playing in next month's AAU National Championships. There are ways many of us can help, but here's a word of caution.

Team member Gretchen Hollifield is trying to line up pledges by offering to shoot 100 free throws and securing a set fee for each shot made. Sounds simple, but beware: Hollifield is a basketball shark, and free throws are among her specialties. She sank two of the charity shots with no time left to keep her team alive during this past season's state playoffs. Her official statistician claims 80 out of 100 is the worst she'll do, and he's not putting it past her to sink all 100.

So be careful out there.

'Dismal' Ending Caps Devils Baseball Season

Mooresville limped into the state 2A playoffs last week. And the Devils were left without a leg to stand on once getting there.

Despite losing their last three games, four of their last five and winning just one of their final seven regular season games, Senior High still earned the right to represent the Southern District Seven Conference's as its number to seed in the state playoffs last week.

Once there, though, the trend continued, as, despite a welcome highlight of back-to-back solo home runs, Mooresville suffered a 7-4 loss to host Swannanoa Owen in first-round play last Tuesday evening.

"It was really a dismal way for us to end the season," shrugged Joe Pinyan, who with it brought a close to his first season as Mooresville's head coach. "We started out with some real promise, but we sure sunk it up there late in the year. We were lucky to make it to the playoffs at all. We were hoping that would light a fire under us, but it just didn't happen."

With the loss, Mooresville capped its season with a break-even, 12-12 overall record to go along with a 9-7 mark posted against SD-7 opponents. Of those seven league losses, five were handed down during the second half of league play.

"The loss of Deomba (Conner, who broke a hand early in the season's second half and was lost for the remainder of the season) was something we really never player shouldn't make that much difference, but I guess he did. We never really got the confidence we needed to be a good team. We had our moments, but we couldn't maintain them."

A couple of those moments came in the top of the second inning of last week's playoff opener. Already trailing, 2-0, as result of two first-inning runs scored by the hosts, the Devils managed to knot matters when first catcher Ricky Greene and then second baseman Otis Cowan clubbed back-to-back, bases-empty home runs to tie the game at 2-2.

"We kind of felt like we were right back in it then," confirmed Pinyan. "That's the way it's been going for us. We get the big hits, but there's nobody on base."

Swannanoa Owen, like Mooresville a number-two seed from its conference, regained the lead for good with three runs in the bottom of the third inning.

The guests pulled to within a run with two more scratches in the top of the fourth, scoring the first run on passed ball and the other on the front end of a double steal.

Swan Owen then padded its lead with single runs in the fourth and fifth, holding the visitors scoreless the final three frames. The results made a loser out of Mooresville senior pitcher Roy Frye, making his final appearance on the hill for the Devils.

Frye went the distance and fell to 8-3 overall, allowing the seven runs — only two of which were earned — on five hits with three strikeouts.

Nathan White, also a senior, clubbed two hits, one of them a double, to share top batting honors with Cowan, who also added a single after his second-inning dinger.

Rod Bowers and Brad Cozart each joined Greene in picking up a base hit each.

The loss brings a close to Mooresville's baseball season, marking the team's fourth straight appearance in postseason play.

Moors Covering All Their Bases During Early Legion Exhibitions

Mooresville's Post 66 American Legion baseball Moors covered all the bases during the early stages of their season last week. In a span of five days that featured the playing of three non-league exhibition games, the defending Area III champion Moors chalked up one win, suffered one loss and battled to one break-even draw as they continue to prepare to begin defending their Southern Division championship later this week.

The victory came in the team's initial pre-season outing last Wednesday evening in Denver, where the Moors whacked out an 8-5 victory over host East Lincoln.

The loss came at home Saturday night, as visiting Alexander County jumped off the bus hitting and clubbed its way to a 14-9 triumph.

And the tie came this past Sunday afternoon, in a return match against East Lincoln, when the hosts squandered a four-run lead entering the top of the ninth and then failed to score in the bottom of the inning to finish in a 8-8 tie with their visitors.

As a result, Mooresville, on the heels of a record-setting, 29-win campaign a summer ago, now takes its unofficial, 1-1-1 record into this (Wednesday) evening's final exhibition tune-up affair before beginning SD-Area III Play tomorrow.

At home Sunday, the Moors carried an 8-4 lead into the top of the ninth, only to allow four runs by the guests to push the contest into a tie.

Mooresville coach Whitely Meadows and East's Bruce Bolick both agreed to end the game after the regulation nine innings of play, even though the score remained tied.

West Rowan's Ezra Cowan worked the final inning on the mound for Post 66, hurling after previous stints by Ryan Douglas of South Iredell, Rod Bowers of Mooresville, and starter Jason Harkey of West Rowan.

At the plate, Cowan collected five hits, one of them a double, and drove home a run, while Toby Tomlin and Bill McLaughlin each picked up a pair of safeties, with the latter also adding a runner. Tracy Shinn, with two runs batted in, Roy Frye, Jon Walker and Bowers all added a base hit each.

East grabbed the early lead with three runs in the first inning

Moors enters the season after posting a club record 29 wins a year ago, during which it won both the regular season and tournament titles within the Southern District and went on to become the first Post 66 squad to advance as far as the N.C. Western finals before bowing to eventual state champion West Caldwell.

As a result, Mooresville enters the 1991 season mentioned alongside the likes of Mocksville, Kannapolis and North Wilkesboro as pre-season favorites to contend this season.

The Moors enter tonight's final exhibition game with a 1-1-1 record, having covered all the bases in its first three pre-season contests with a win over East Lincoln, a loss to Taylorsville and a tie to East Lincoln.

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Post 66 currently features players hailing from Mooresville, South Iredell, North Iredell and West Rowan high schools.

While one of the team's four exhibition contests was played in the afternoon, all of Post 66's division games will feature 7:45 p.m. starting times.

All of Mooresville's home games will be played on the Senior High field.

Beginning with tomorrow night's SD-Area III opener at Concord, the complete Mooresville Post 66 Gresham-Baker American Legion baseball schedule, with home games in all caps, follows:

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Then, beginning tomorrow night on the road, Gresham-Baker Post 66 officially begins defend-

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regular-season play at Concord. Tomorrow night's affair kicks off a 16-game SD-Area III cam-

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Shinn added two hits, including a two-run homer in the third frame, while McLaughlin, Walker and Chris Church all collected a base hit.

Mooresville is scheduled to finish its exhibition schedule when hosting Kernersville tonight before embarking on SD-Area III play when traveling to Concord tomorrow night.

The Moors will return home to host Statesville Friday before meeting host Rowan County Saturday. Post 66 concludes its busy schedule of first-week play when playing at Kannapolis Monday night.

All remaining games feature 7:45 p.m. starting times, with the team's home games being played in the Mooresville Senior High diamond.

Moorsville scored once in the first and twice in the second for a 3-0 lead before East squared matters with three runs in the bottom of the second.

The guests plated two more runs in the third, as East answered with a single run in the last of the frame. Post 66 responded with another run in the fourth.

After East scored once in the sixth, the guests closed out the scoring with single runs in the seventh and ninth.

Cowan picked up three hits, and drove home two runs, but Tomlin headlined efforts at the plate as he cracked a pair of safeties, home runs, according to the home team, in the seventh and ninth and finished with three runs batted in.

The Moors tried to stay close with a run in the first, another in the fourth, four in the fifth and three more in the sixth.

Frye was the starting and losing pitcher. Tomlin spanked a home run, a three-run job in the sixth, for one of his two hits and finished with four runs batted in. Frye aided his cause with a three-for-three performance, and plated two teammates. Tim Kopley added two hits, while McLaughlin, Shinn and Matt McConnell each collected a base hit.

Mooresville gloved its first win of the new season at East Lincoln last Wednesday night, never failing to finish as 8-5 winners. McConnell was the starting and

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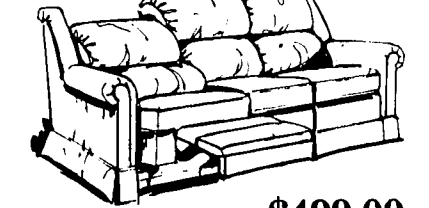


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