

Van Horne

on

Sports



By **BILL VAN HORNE**
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Who will be the Ohio Valley Athletic Conference coach of the year?

Press, radio, and TV chroniclers of the area sports scene will soon receive ballots from Sam Mumley, executive secretary of the OVAC, asking them to submit their choices for the annual coaching award, which will be presented by the News-Register at the conference's spring dinner meeting at Glessner Auditorium on the night of May 15.

Certainly the voters will not lack outstanding candidates as they sit down to ponder nominations for the honor, which went to Frank Baxter of Bridgeport in 1969, Henry Lazasz of Warren consolidated in 1970, Chuck Watt of Steubenville in '71, and Tom Korab of Steubenville Catholic Central in '72.

Korab, whose squad was undefeated, untied and ranked by the press services as Ohio's top Class AA grid power in the fall of '71, was the first football coach to break through what had, up to then, been a basketball mentors' monopoly.

The Ohio side of the river has swept the deck clean in the first four years since the establishment of the coveted prize back in '69 but there is a definite possibility that a coach from a West Virginia school will be the selection this time. Certainly several of the very worthy contenders are from the Mountain state.

In speculating upon the choice, let us view the credentials of some of the men who appear likely to be in the running. There may be other appropriate choices but it is probable that the race will be among these coaches:

MARTIN FLANNERY, River High School. The only head football coach River has ever had, until his recent retirement, this Wheeling High and West Liberty product has been doing business at the same stand for 16 years. He climaxed his coaching career in grand style as his gridders won 19 out of 20 in the last two years and enjoyed the school's first perfect season last fall. Champions of the OVAC double-A division in '71, the Pilots just missed repeating last autumn but were regional champs in Ohio's computer ratings—although they were deprived of a chance to appear in the OHSAA playoffs because of an error by a computer "expert" in Columbus.

LOU NOCIDA, Magnolia High School. Directed his Blue Eagles right down to the state titular game in both football and basketball. His gridders were OVAC double-A kingpins and went to the finals of the West Virginia state playoffs. His basketballers advanced to the finals of the state double-A tourney. The former Wheeling Ironmen pro will direct West Virginia in upcoming OVAC all-star grid game, while Flannery will guide the Ohio forces.

JOHN NESE, Steubenville Catholic Central. Like Flannery, he's retiring from coaching. Has coached his cagers to the regional plateau in Ohio double-A tourney play for three straight years. This time his club lost to state champ Bishop Ready by only two points. His Crusaders finished at 22-2 and won OVAC triple-A crown. Respected strategist was picked as one of coaches of U.S. Stars in Roundball Classic at Pittsburgh.

BOB BURTON, Paden City. His Wildcats won the West Virginia state Class A tournament title, after being runners-up last year, and did it the hard way as they came from 11 back in the semi-finals and 12 down in the last five minutes of the titular game.

BILL HINEGARDNER, John Marshall. Has been major success in something which is much more than a minor sport. His wrestling teams have been OVAC, Mountaineer League, regional and state champions two years in a row. The Monarchs were undefeated last season.

SAM ANDY, Wheeling High. His basketballers were 20-4 and

went to the West Virginia state triple-A tourney. The Wildcats were Mountaineer League, city, sectional and regional titlists, which ain't bad.

BOB SMITH, Buckeye West. His basketball team was only perfect record club in valley during pre-tourney campaigning and won 20 straight before district tourney loss to Zanesville Rosecrans.

BOB KETTLEWELL, Wintersville. His total record may be without parallel in Ohio Valley sports. In 17 years as head coach, his football teams have won 127, lost 27 and tied 10. His charges have won five OVAC titles, the last three in succession, and his 1972 club was unbeaten in what was supposed to be a rebuilding year.

WARREN PUGH, Linsly Institute. His swimming teams have won, believe it or not, 27 straight conference championships.

Of course, there may also be support for two other Linsly coaches, whose teams captured conference single-A crowns, Jim Hawkins in football and Don Woodward in basketball, and for River's basketball mentor, Dick Potts, whose team was the OVAC double-A kingpin. Jack Berger, whose Shadyside Tigers have monopolized the Inter-State League title and OVAC double-A track laurels, is another possibility.

Some of you out there undoubtedly have your own favorites. However, from the list which has been presented here, you can readily see that job of the selection committee is going to be a difficult one. I'm sure that the voters will not take their responsibility lightly.

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OVAC COACH OF THE YEAR

LOU NOCIDA

MAGNOLIA HIGH SCHOOL

PLACED BOTH HIS FOOTBALL AND BASKETBALL

TEAMS IN THE WEST VA.

STATE TOURNAMENTS