

Grid Fame Gives City

TWO BELLAIRE boys named All-Americans in 1929 sparked another Bellaire boy writing sports for the New York Daily News that same year to refer to his home town as the "All-American town."

It seems altogether fitting and proper that Bellaire should be named "The All-American Town" by Francis Wallace, a native and writer of 15 sports novels.

However, the name would have long since died if Bellaire boys hadn't kept it alive by playing football and all the other sports in the All-American tradition.

In 1929, the sports editor of the New York Daily News gave young Francis Wallace as assignment for the Sunday edition. His story was about Oliver "Mike" Miles, Fullback for Princeton, and John "Butch" Niemiec, halfback for Notre Dame, both All-Americans.

It seemed to Wallace that the two All-Americans came from an All-American town and he said so. Bellaire was named.

In 1928, when Knute Rockne walked into the Yankee Stadium locker room and said five words to a sad Notre Dame football team, "Win this one for the Gipper", it was "Butch" Niemiec that threw the pass to Johnny "One-Play" O'brian to beat Army in the dying moments of the fourth quarter.

Bellaire's John Niemiec accomplished three things that year. He won that game against Army for George Gipp, a teammate that died of pneumonia earlier; gave another teammate, Johnny O'brian a fleeting taste of stardom and won the All-American award for himself.

A few years later Wallace left the New York Daily News to write sports for the New York Daily Mirror under the editorship of Dan Parker.

Parker had received some complaints about Bellaire getting the name of "The All-American Town" when other towns felt they deserved the name.

Parker's sense of humor was sharp enough to see a good sports gag in the whole "All-American town" business. He later wrote that he made a thorough investigation and that

Munjas, quarterback for the University of Pittsburgh; Katz Kadlic, quarterback for Princeton; Hart Morris, center and team captain for Pitt and Stan Oleojicznak, lineman for Pitt gave Wallace all the reason he needed to solidify the "All American" town name that day.

Among the great legends with a Bellaire background is that of Johnny "Bull" Poliskey. In 1927, while playing guard with Notre Dame, Poliskey stopped Minnesota's All American Fullback Herb Joesting four straight times at the ND one yard line.

The feat was never before or never before afterwards

duplicated on Joesting, who has to be regarded as one of the greatest fullbacks of all time.

Mike Basrak, now coaching at Niles, Ill., in the Chicago area, was named All American in 1936 after completing a great career as a center at Duquesne University.

Bellaire has had one of its local boys receive the All American award as recently as 1963. Mike Ingram, received the award after a fantastic year defending the Ohio State University goal as middle linebacker.

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Wallace's sense of humor was sharp enough to take Parker's remark and bridle them to put Bellaire on the map as a sports town. But, the town's sports, without a doubt, has kept it on the map.

"I have always felt that we should not confine the All American spirit to sports," said Wallace recently. "We should expand it to mean an overall recognition."

In 1934, Wallace spoke at the first All American town dinner held on the second floor of the city building which was the headquarters for The Big Red Touchdown Club, at that time.

That year ten Bellaire area boys were playing All American flight football in major universities throughout the country.

When Wallace spoke the 1933 football season which saw five Bellaire boys running first string on three of the best college football teams in the nation was still fresh in his mind.

Reymann "Bud" Bonar, quarterback for Notre Dame; Miller



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Shortly after while speaking at
 the Kiwanis Rose Bowl
 Luncheon in 1942, Wallace incor-
 porated Pasadena, California in-
 to the "All American Town"
 sports community.

Since then Bellaire through
 their national voice, Francis
 Wallace, has incorporated many
 cities into their "All American
 Town" sports community.

Bellaire has incorporated into
 their sports community cities
 like Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
 and New York City, New York.
 Incorporated, that is, Bellaire is
 still the "All American Town."

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