

Bippus speaker Buti tells Big Reds to savor tradition

By CAL POKAS

Highly-successful De fiance High head football coach Jerry Buti played the same fire as a speaker at Wednesday night's Bippus Banquet at Bellaire High as he did when he wore the red and black some 25 years ago.

Buti, a 17-year head coach at three different schools in the northwest part of the state, in September was inducted into Bellaire High's Wall of Fame, but was unable to attend the festivities.

However, he made good on a promise to several members of the sponsoring Bellaire Sports Foundation that he would return to his alma mater and speak at a banquet which has been a community tradition for nearly 60 years.

That promise was made at the 1997 state football championships in Massillon where Buti had planned to keep his team overnight so they could see his alma mater play in the title game the next day.

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Despite losing 28 seniors and 17 lettermen from the 1997 team

which reached the pinnacle by going 14-0 and winning the Ohio Division II crown, Buti nearly took this year's team to the playoffs, but missed by one win. The team finished 6-4, losing one game in triple overtime and another when an opposing player picked up a fumble and ran it in for the winning score.

"Despite our success at De fiance, they do not have the tradition that you do," Buti told the large, by invitation-only audience. "What you have is strong and special," he added as he pointed to the Big Red gridlers. "You will respect that later on."

Buti mentioned that the Big Reds in his senior year also lost to Martins Ferry. "It's always tough to lose your last game, but you can always use that as a motivation to not allow it to happen again."

The former Big Red, who was presented with several gifts, including a miniature Bellaire helmet, said he had not had the opportunity to see his alma mater play football until several years ago when he took two members of his staff to Zanesville to watch the Big Reds defeat Orrville in a playoff game.

"They got a taste of hard-nosed football," Buti said. "People in De fiance and that area of the state regard me as hard-nosed, but down here, I'm just ordinary. We may not always win, but I won't allow anyone to outwork us."

Raised in the south part of town,

Buti emphasized the need for role models. "We don't have enough of them. My dad was my role model. He raised us after our mother died when I was very young. Don't use professional athletes as role models. But look to high school athletes who play for the honor of their high school."

Buti said he first had ideas of going into coaching because of his freshman coach, the late John Pollock, who promised his father that "he'd look out for me." The speaker then mentioned some of his other high school coaches, such as Jake Olsavsky, Terry Snively and Ty Fleming and their influence on him.

Buti praised highly-successful Bellaire coach John Magistro. "He is one of the most respected coaches in the state and he had done a remarkable job here. I agree with him that you players have a right to be disappointed, but no one else but you should because it was you who worked in the weight room and sweated through the practices."

Magistro introduced his staff, support people and his gridlers by class and urged that they not dwell on the negatives.

"We had players who took their talent to a new level, and we had players who may not have been very talented but contributed very much to our success," he said. "We're not feeling sorry for ourselves. We'll be back next season and we'll give it a shot."



T-L Photo/CAL POKAS
ed for the Big Reds, De fiance High head football coach Jerry Buti Wednesday night to speak at the annual Bippus Banquet. Buti was met by former teammate, attorney Dave Liberati, who served as a grid mentor John Magistro.

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A QUARTER of a century after he played for the Big Reds, Defiance High head football coach Jerry Buti, right, returned to Bellaire High Wednesday night to speak at the annual Bippus Banquet. Buti was presented with a miniature Bellaire helmet by former teammate, attorney Dave Liberati, who served as toastmaster. Looking on is Bellaire High grid mentor John Magistro.

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