

## **Herbert Mols: Coach Extraordinaire**

Herb Mols built a comprehensive athletic program for Park School in the 1940's when I was a student there. He was a demanding task-master but a caring one. When you screwed up his standard comment was, "Geezle-peeze!" – and it wasn't sotto voce. As an aspiring but modestly talented sportsman, I came to respect his tireless determination to make everyone who entered his orbit an accomplished athlete. When he discovered my "natural speed," he found a way to use it in six-man football and basketball, and when I struck out as a baseball catcher because I couldn't peg the ball to third base, he decided to launch a track team.

As a coach Herb had an uncanny ability to mold a group of ragtag individuals into a successful team. We went undefeated in football during my junior and senior years, and excelled at basketball in the Conference of Upstate Private Schools (CUPS) league, a group that Herb founded to provide us with the challenge of statewide competition. Probably my proudest moment as a Park athlete was when Herb took a half-dozen of us to Nichols in the spring of my senior year and beat their track team. I went on to a college track career that included competing against Oxford and Cambridge in London's White City Stadium, tying the Harvard record in the 100 yard dash, and beating Yale's 9.7 sprinter in a meet we won when Yale was favored by 50 points. None of that would have happened without Herb Mols.

Herb would have deplored the notion of a Park "Athletic Hall of Fame" because he believed more in the team than in the prowess of any individual athlete. He stuck to that view, and played every member of the team, even when it might have cost him a win. Winning was never Herb's primary objective, although he consistently fielded winning teams. My classmate, Jim Hufford, who quarterbacked our successful football team, confirmed my assessment of Herb in the many phone conversations we had during the year or two before Jim died. Jim was a far better athlete than I even though he had been born with a club foot and suffered all his life from circulation problems that eventually cost him his legs. He loved Herb, because Herb respected not only his natural skill, but valued his intelligent grasp of the strategy of the game – outwitting the opponent by analyzing his weaknesses. In Jim's case, coach and athlete collaborated to create a winning strategy.

These brief examples of my experiences with Herb Mols sum up for me his essence as a coach: deeply aware of the unique skills of his athletes, able to combine those skills into an effective team, valuing the experience of each player over the imperative to "win at all costs," working to create the best possible competitive opportunities for his teams, and incorporating the athletic experience for all students into the larger fabric of the school. For Herb the goal of developing the complete individual, and cultivating the team experience as the ultimate achievement in sports, made him the perfect Athletic Director for Park School. If we had a "team" hall of fame, Herb would be a passionate advocate. As for the present version, I can hear him now: "Geezle peeze!"

Peter Dow, '50