

BUFFALO EVENING NEWS

Sports

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Herb Mols—Nerve Center Of Area Amateur Sports

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By DICK JOHNSTON

The nerve center of amateur sports in an area from here to Syracuse and Binghamton is in an office converted from an apartment above a drug store on Harlem Road in Snyder.

In the center of the nerve center is Herb Mols, one-time Cornell football player, one-time forester, Navy radar expert in the Pacific during World War II, former high school coach and science teacher.

Mols runs the Niagara District of the Amateur Athletic Union. He is the first fulltime paid executive director the Niagara AAU has had. And fulltime is the proper word. Herb seems to be on the job all the time.

And he is talking amateur sports practically every waking minute.

Weekdays, Mols usually can be found in NAAU headquarters — six rooms (including what once was a kitchen) in which the walls are covered with charts, calendars, maps, penants, schedules and pictures. There are desks and tables

everywhere, on top of which are record books, pamphlets, entry blanks, manila folders, loose-leaf notebooks, clipboards and miscellaneous papers.

On weekends, Herb is attending meets of one kind or another.

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WHEN HE was athletic director at Park School and running the AAU district (as president or secretary) from his home as a sideline, Herb used

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to think, "If I could give up one of these jobs, it won't be so tough."

"So I did give up one," he noted, "and now I work longer hours than ever. The work seems to keep multiplying."

One thing, though; Herb's wife, Ruth, can't say she doesn't see enough of him. Ruth

works in the AAU office with Herb.

And they still maintain a branch office, you might call it, in their home on Chateau Terrace in Snyder.

That's where Herb ran the Niagara AAU from for 15 years while he was at Park School, which is just down the street from his home.

He not only was athletic director at Park, he coached football, basketball, baseball and track and in his first eight years there (1946-54) he taught biology, chemistry and physics.

* * *

MOLS WAS instrumental in organizing the league Park plays in — the Conference of Upstate Private Schools (CUPS). Teams he coached through 28 years at the school won 39 league championships.

His days were taken up, in those times, with his job at school, so AAU work was done mostly in the evenings and on weekends. Athletes and coaches were dropping into the Mols' home at all hours and they still do.

At the same time all this was going on, the Molses were bringing up six children, all now grown and scattered around the country.

Herb's work, while unsung in many ways, certainly has its compensations, which he will readily admit.

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AS A NATIONAL AAU official, Herb has traveled to Russia, Finland, Germany, Poland, Hawaii, Puerto Rico and several countries in South America, as well as to many parts of the United States. Maybe ten times a year he journeys outside New York State.

His principal trips were as a member of the U.S. Olympic Basketball Committee. The most memorable event in Herb's long career in athletics came from his participation in the Olympics as manager of the U.S. basketball team, the team which lost to the Soviets in Munich in 1972, its first loss in eight Olympiads.

This was the famous game in

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which the Soviets won, 51-50, after hassles which resulted in — the U.S. claimed and videotapes showed — three extra seconds being played. The Russians scored the winning basket in those three seconds; after the U.S. team figured it had won the game.

Mols wrote a detailed report on that game, a report that was distributed extensively.

* * *

HERBERT J. Mols was born in Buffalo and grew up on Best Street. As a youngster he ran around the reservoir located where War Memorial Stadium now stands, and would slide down the sides on a piece of cardboard during winter snows.

He attended Fosdick-Masten High School, where he was on the cross-country, track and swimming teams. He finished high school in Tallahassee, Fla., continuing in track and playing football and basketball. He also took up tennis.

Mols entered Cornell in the class of 1936, studying forestry in the Agricultural College. He ran freshman cross-country,

played freshman and varsity basketball, freshman and varsity baseball and, in his senior year, decided to give football a try.

He weighed only 158 pounds but he did play in games. Cornell was not exactly overpowering in football that year but the freshman team included players who were to take the Big Red to national prominence.

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ONE OF the fresh players was Bud Holland, later a two-time All-American. Others went on to All-American mention and All-East honors.

After earning his master's degree, Mols went to work for the U.S. Forest Service, first working in New England, cleaning up after the hurricane of 1938, then on a flood survey around Binghamton, then in Vermont. Besides supervising timber management in the Green Mountains, Mols became involved in recreation.

He enlisted in the Navy during World War II and became a radar specialist, eventually serving on Guadalcanal, Saipan, Palau and Okinawa.

After his discharge, he ran into a friend from his service days, Tom Van Arsdale, who was on the Park School faculty. That meeting resulted in Mols' becoming athletic director, coach and science teacher at the school.

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IN 1946, Mols began officiating at track meets. Soon he became involved in the administration of amateur sports.

Herb worked with the Olympic Development program, Little League baseball and football in Amherst and for several years was on the Recreation Committee of the Town of Amherst.

Now he directs the administration of 25 sports for men, women and age groups, in 24 counties. The major event of the year is the Empire State Games in Syracuse.

The Niagara AAU last year sent about 1,000 athletes, most of any region, to the Games and won the most medals.

Mols, who will be 65 early next year, was asked if he was thinking about retirement. "Retirement," he replied, "what's that?"

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