

Coach Remembered

Dear Park,

I have heard that Herb Mols died, and I want to tell you what he meant to me.

I arrived in Buffalo in 1969 alone, adolescent and fat. I had no particular vision, image of myself or purpose, save survival — I wanted to get through my teens and downtown living. But I did love football, at least conceptually.

So when I showed up for a summer practice, I had no illusions of my potential, but I had hoped not to be an embarrassment. Well, even that hope was beyond my capabilities.

I was, without question, the worst player on the team. I was in the presence of what I perceived to be a legend. A man who invented the type of game we played, one who had won two-thirds of the league championships over twenty-plus years.

The legend was a man. A man who never derided me, never said "go play JV soccer," a man who was in my corner.

The years passed. Every summer I worked out (at some risk) in the Downtown Y for two to four hours every day. I wore five pound ankle weights every day for two years. I even wrestled (where I was even more embarrassing than in my freshman year of football). I did these things for two reasons.

I loved football, and I wanted to please Coach.

He praised me three times in four years. But over those years I had seen my playing time go from a series or two in a blow-out (not infrequent in my first two years), to being a two-way starter as a junior, to missing two plays my senior year. It's a strange truth that the more I played, the less we won (we lost all our games my senior year).

Football and Herb Mols gave me to myself. Coach would simply play those who played best. No politics, no buddies. I have been an assistant football coach at a large sophisticated public high school program in the town where I work. Seeing a team have six paid assistants, a full rate weight room, first rate equipment, and several thousand paying fans, what Herb Mols did at Park becomes almost miraculous.

The end of my playing career at Park told me more about Coach than the previous four years. The season over, the awards banquet was a week away, and my father went to the hospital for major surgery. I was distracted, but resolved

to get through the evening, knowing my heart would be elsewhere.

Coach called for me, and I went over to his jam-packed office in the campus store building. "I'll be your father tonight," he said, looking at me with an affection I had never seen. Normally verbose to a fault, I just muttered a "Thanks, Coach" and left.

That night, next to coach at the head table (I was a captain), everyone got their awards and letters one by one, save me. At the last moment, Coach said something which bonded me to him, and me to Park, as nothing else ever could. With no father to hear, he said a few words about how far I'd come and said I had "embodied the Park Pioneer spirit better than anyone (he) had coached."

That says far more about him than me.

— Duo Dickinson '73
September 1986

A Letter From Japan

Following is a letter from the Japanese AFS student in the class of '66 who came back to Park to celebrate the 20th reunion of the class last June.

"It was such an exciting and impressive experience making a sentimental journey to my old dear Buffalo home and school — which I found almost the same after twenty years!!!

"I was very pleased to see each of you, the classmates and their families, but I also feel sorry we didn't have enough time to talk to each other more!

"The one special year with you at the Park School gives me a big influence to my life. Every single memory I picked up in Buffalo has been living in my heart all the time, and still glitters as a small but beautiful diamond in the jewelry box of my life! Thank you for giving me such a wonderful memory and experience."

— Mikko Ono Nishigami '66

Thank you to the Mols family for donating a painting to Park by well-known local artist Lawrence McIntyre. The 1948 painting is of Hamlin Hall and was given in memory of their father, Herb Mols.