

A VIEW FROM THE BLEACHERS

Random Thoughts of Here & There #35

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Last week marked the fifty-fifth anniversary of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor which President Franklin D. Roosevelt said was a “day that will live in infamy.” In a ceremony in Hawaii attended by nearly 500 survivors of the attack, former newsman and author Tom Brokaw was the keynote speaker. This coming Saturday, December 16, will commemorate the fifty-second anniversary of the beginning of the Battle of the Bulge. A number of Niagara soldiers were a part of that great battle which lasted nearly a month and marked the last German major offensive of the war and took US troops by surprise when it happened. The battle took place during what is believed to have been Europe’s coldest winter of the century.

The biggest children’s event of the year in the Niagara community took place last Saturday when Stora Enso Paper Mill hosted their annual children’s Christmas party. Over five hundred children and countless adults joined in the festivities held at the school gym. The gym was colorfully decorated to reflect the holiday season, treats and other refreshments were served, and there were many games and activities available that heightened the children’s enthusiasm. There were even some Disney-costumed characters prancing around including one rather “shady” Pluto. Pluto’s antics suggested that the person in the costume may take the character far too seriously...

Both the girls and boys basketball teams have remained unbeaten as each knocked off some very good teams last week. **Brenda** and **Peter Swanson** had to be proud parents when their sons combined to score 57 points in the Badgers’ surprising 81-80 overtime over the host Peshtigo Bulldogs. Senior **John** had 35 points while junior **Mike** added 22 as each had four 3-pointers. The girls were equally impressive as they beat both M&O Conference favorites, Crivitz and Coleman, last week and senior **Ashley Aderman** had 21 points in the Coleman victory. Let’s hope both teams can continue their impressive season...

While on the subject of basketball, UW-Madison and Marquette played their only match up of the season with the Badgers earning the bragging rights as the state’s top men’s team. Both teams have been ranked in the top 10 this year and have some impressive wins so far this season. On the other hand, both the UW-Milwaukee and UW-Green Bay men’s teams are off to slow starts. For the women, UW-Madison was 9-1 as of last Friday which is their best start in many, many years. 5’8 Junior **Jolene Anderson** is the Badgers’ top player and she is remembered for breaking **Anna DeForge’s** state career scoring record three years ago at tiny South Shore High School. Like DeForge, Anderson has silenced her critics who claimed that a player from a very small high school couldn’t make it at the Division 1 level. Anderson not only has starred at UW-Madison but she was a starter on a USA team that won a World Championship title this summer in her age group. I think you will see this young lady in the WNBA in a couple

of years. The UW-Green Bay women's team returned all five starters from last year's team and last week handily beat a good Iowa team to improve to 4-3 on the season. Their three losses have been by a combined total of only 10 points to NIT champion Kansas State, nationally ranked DePaul, and Marquette and also have beaten Minnesota of the Big 10 Conference. Wisconsin plays at UW-Green Bay tonight. The #24 ranked Marquette women also are off to one of their best starts ever and last week they handily beat West Virginia, 74-50, in their Big East Conference opener to improve their record to 8-1. The Marquette and UW-Madison women's teams do not play each other this year. In what is a big surprise, Washington State, under rookie coach **Tony Bennett**, is off to an 8-1 start which is one of the best in school history. Tony, UW-Green Bay's all-time career scorer, served as his father's assistant for the last three years. **Dick Bennett** was a fantastic coach who had great years at UW-Stevens Point and UW-Green Bay. He later took UW-Madison to the Final Four and surprisingly retired after an early season game the next season. He got the urge to return three years ago and helped Washington State build the foundation for Tony's team this year. **Kyle Weaver** of Beloit is one of the Cougar starters. His father, **Lamont Weaver**, was a fine player for the Wisconsin Badgers, but is most remembered for his last-second half-court that gave the 1969 state championship to Beloit Memorial over Neenah. **Dick Bennett**, by the way, undergoes hip replacement surgery this week.

Don't miss taking in one or more of the wonderful Christmas concerts being held soon at area schools and churches...

I conclude this column with one last "Shadow Update." I'm happy to write that the little gray Persian seems to be recovering nicely from his (expensive) surgery last Tuesday and I was able to take him home the next day. The recent experience at the animal hospital gave me a renewed appreciation for the veterinarians and the staff. They are people-friendly and have to deal with some stressful situations...