



Bob Bowersox' second team at Clarion High School in 1971 finished 6-3 with six school records, including a 14-2 pole vault by sophomore Steve Alexander. Rick Slike had a hand in three others: 2:00.9 in the 880, 3:34.5 in the mile relay with Don Cotterman, Mike Collett and John George and a 1:34 in the 880 relay with Cotterman, Collett and Curt Thomas. The other records were 10:58.7 by Pete Nachtwey in the two-mile and 144-2 in the discus by Ed Guiher. Members of the team are (front row, from left): Rick Gwin, Bob Martin, Don Cotterman, Mike Collett, Ed Spindler, Tom Michael, Rick Slike, Denny Murphy, Randy Frost and Fred Montgomery; second row: Don Wilshire, Mark Bevevino, Joe Hartle, Curt Thomas, Larry Himes, Jeff Stahlman, Steve Alexander, D.J. Bevevino, Jim McCliment, George Hartle, Pete Nachtwey and Tom Lander; third row, John George, Dave Wagner, Jack Davis, Kevin Amsler, Ed Guiher, Leonard Bashline, Steve Polatty, John McGinley, Bruce Cherico, Chuck Alexander and Brent Rhoads; back row, head coach Bob Bowersox; Ron Frost; managers Andy Montana, Mike Chercio and Don Ion; Jim Kelley and assistant coach Alex Arth.

Below, coach Bob Bowersox poses with javelin thrower Mike Hartle, one of his many superstars back then.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of Clarion High School's second-place finish in the Class AA state track meet. In a season in which the Bobcats would claim their fifth



District 9 and eighth straight Clarion County League titles under coach Bob Bowersox, a Milton Hershey team comprised of two athletes would spoil their state championship dream.

A Milton Hershey sprinter would win the 100 and 200 and a thrower would take the shot and discus to account for its 40 points.

Clarion qualified nine athletes, and eight of them scored. And it might have won the championship had it not been for an injury to Mark Hartle, the would-be favorite in the pole vault and the anchor on a points-contending sprint relay.

But Clarion produced two state champs in two-miler Jack Morgan who ran a meet record 9:12.8, and high jumper Marshall Germany, who cleared 6-91/4. The two-mile and mile relays also set school records and placed, but the Bobcats fell short of the state title with 29 points.

"All four of those records have stood the test of time, remaining atop the (school) record book," Bowersox said in an email.

Bowersox is a cancer survivor who has been active in track and cross country for 54 of the last 60 years, including the last 46 as an official "with no plans of fading away until I have officiated for at least 50 seasons."

His coaching resume glitters with state champions (Dave Kiser, Steve Alexander, Kurt Lehnortt), high school All-Americans and victories. One over Moniteau in 1973 snapped the Warriors' 63-meet winning streak and extended one for Clarion - 75 straight in the CCL that was ended by Allegheny-Clarion Valley in 1981.

Among the highlights are the two 220-foot javelin throwers he had in the late '70s - Mike Hartle and Lehnortt. In May 1977, they were ranked 1-2 in the nation by Track and Field News - Hartle at 225-3 and Lehnortt at 221-5. What's more, Greg Wolfe from neighboring Clarion-Limestone, threw in the 190s, so back then Bowersox liked to muse what the two schools would do in a javelin relay if the two schools were merged.

The head and neck cancer he had in 2002 prompted the end to his 25 years as voice of Bobcats football. "Fortunately, my health has been very good after undergoing rigorous treatment," he said. Bowersox has been retired since 2000, after having been golf coach his last six years at Clarion.

Funny thing, the Westminster graduate was turned down for a job at his high school alma mater, Redbank Valley, because he hadn't earned his teaching certificate. But Clarion, which needed a track and assistant basketball coach and a social studies teacher, offered Bowersox on an interim certificate. Bowersox did have an offer from a steel corporation in Pittsburgh, but always wanted to work with young people, so he took the Clarion job.

A shot-putter in high school, Bowersox began teaching himself the intricacies of all the events, he told the New Bethlehem Leader-Vindicator in 1980. He talked to other coaches and attended clinics.

"I started reading everything I could get my hands on about track," he said back then. "I guess you

could say I became a kind of fanatic."

And good, really good. I covered Bowersox and the Bobcats' accomplishments back then, and I don't think I ever saw a coach get more out of a school than Bowersox got out of Clarion High School for track.

It seemed like if you were a student at Clarion and you could walk, Bowersox had you out for track, squeezing every drop of running/jumping/throwing ability out of you. At least that's how it seemed to me.

Every. Last. Drop.