

Meet HHS Coaches

John Sporseen

Robust? Powerful? Vigorous? Stout? Brawny? Archie Bunker?

Yea. The last one and all the others, too. That's the best way John Sporseen can be described.

Now, don't get that wrong. Sporseen isn't the bigoted or prejudiced type. It's just that

George Koffler

The guy you seldom see at varsity football games, whose name is on the roster as a coach, usually just isn't there.

That's George Koffler. In his capacity as junior varsity coach, and assistant varsity mentor, Koffler is usually on the road on Friday, scouting the team that Heppner faces the coming week.

So when coaches say one game at a time, that is a tad bit ambiguous.

Koffler eyes the opposing teams and does scouting reports, diagramming plays, picking out jersey numbers that seem to be the biggest threat.

At the JV contests, he's easily recognizable. He might be barking out orders, patting backs, smiling or frowning. More than often, he's pleading with his young Mustangs to be to do it right.

The JVs run from the same formations as the varsity, gearing them for varsity play later in their high school careers. Koffler could be called a groomer, grooming the younger, inexperienced gridgers into players that will be vying for the league title next year.

Koffler adds the subtle humor of a long time coach in his short span as a mentor. He'll chuckle about a play where one of his kids is five yards offside and the JV refs don't see it. But, he'll wrinkle an eyebrow when the ref calls pass interference and from his view, Koffler doesn't see any contact.

Koffler started coaching junior high basketball at Whitaker Junior High in Salem. One year there and then he came to Heppner. Here, he is football and baseball coach at the JV level. His JV grid squad was 3-3-1 last year. This season they are 5-1, bumping Oregon Trail this week in a double overtime clash, 18-12.

"It's a good JV club," Koffler notes, adding that his Mustangs "haven't played well, but they're still winning, so we must be good."

Koffler and his wife Debbie have one son, Ricky, age 11 months. They live in Heppner.

sometimes when he's barking on the sidelines, he takes on the definite appearance of Carroll O'Connor, star of "All in the Family."

He should take that as a compliment. O'Connor is a fine actor. But Sporseen doesn't act. He lives.

The big man who took over Heppner's Mustang gridgers two months ago has to be happy. He came here in late August, not knowing what to expect of his Mustangs or any of his Columbia Basin foes.

He won't scratch off any of the opponents as easy targets, but he's glad that the Mustangs kicked up their heels in the right spots.

Sporseen adds something that every team needs and that many lack. He adds humor, punch and wit to the Mustangs coaching roster. With Sporseen and Koffler, coupled with the sternness of Conklin, the trio is a winner.

If you don't believe it, check the records!

Sporseen isn't a joker or

buffoon, he's just Sporseen. Down the sidelines, he calls Conklin "coach," and asks questions he probably knows the answer to as soon as he asks them.

Sometimes he looks perplexed and will scratch a curly haired head. He gets excited, too. Good and bad. More than once he's thrown a clip board down in anger. And more than once, thank goodness, he's thrown the same clip board up in the air in exultation.

Sporseen came to Heppner after seven years at Scio, a school about the same size as Heppner, near Salem. There, he compiled a 35-27-1 record and tied for the league title twice.

He stepped into the lime-light here this fall and with his winning Mustangs, has won the approval and gratitude of a hungry Heppner fan club.

At the beginning of the season, Sporseen said he wanted to win every game. He's as close to that mark as he could be...right on target.

He saw good potential in early practices. And, he's rounded that potential into the conference leader. Switching men around in mid-season hasn't bothered the head mentor and with Conklin as an able assistant, the duo seems to be punching the right people into the right spots.

Sporseen, who advocates good discipline, is the kind of coach every player must want to have.

He busts you if you goof off and lets you goof off when you bust somebody.

A welcome asset to Heppner High School, John Sporseen is a winner.

That big guy with the slightly overgrown Bunker haircut? That's John Sporseen, leader of the Heppner Mustangs...the Columbia Basin Conference league leaders.

Dale Conklin

He's the man with the square jaw, shortly cropped hair that pounds up and down

the Mustang sidelines yelling encouragement to his football players.

Dale Conklin, former sports editor for a La Grande daily paper, is in his third year as varsity assistant coach. This is his first year under John Sporseen.


The duo seem to balance out nicely. Sporseen, a soft spoken, humorous fellow that usually simply talks to his players and coaches, gets involved in the game...but outwardly different than Conklin.

Conklin is obviously enthusiastic. Sometimes to fans, it may look as if Conklin is outraged at players, telling them where to play and how with loud, ear jarring orders.

But inside the man is pride and that pride is the evidence of his coaching style. He barks and sometimes even bites, but he's proud deep down, of his defensive task force. And, he has ample reason, too.


He has molded the Mustang defenders, many of whom had

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No. 64
Ken Grieb Jr.
HEPPNER 194 lbs.

Ray Boyce Insurance Agency
Heppner 676-9625




No. 60
Doug Ansotegui Sr.
150 lbs.

Gray's Repair Shop
172 W. Linden Way
Heppner 676-5541



No. 68
Sam Myers Jr.
154 lbs.

Wayne's Automotive & Diesel Repair
676-9450 Home 676-9746



No. 88
Carl Christman Sr.
162 lbs.

Lexington Lumber Yard
Lexington 989-8586