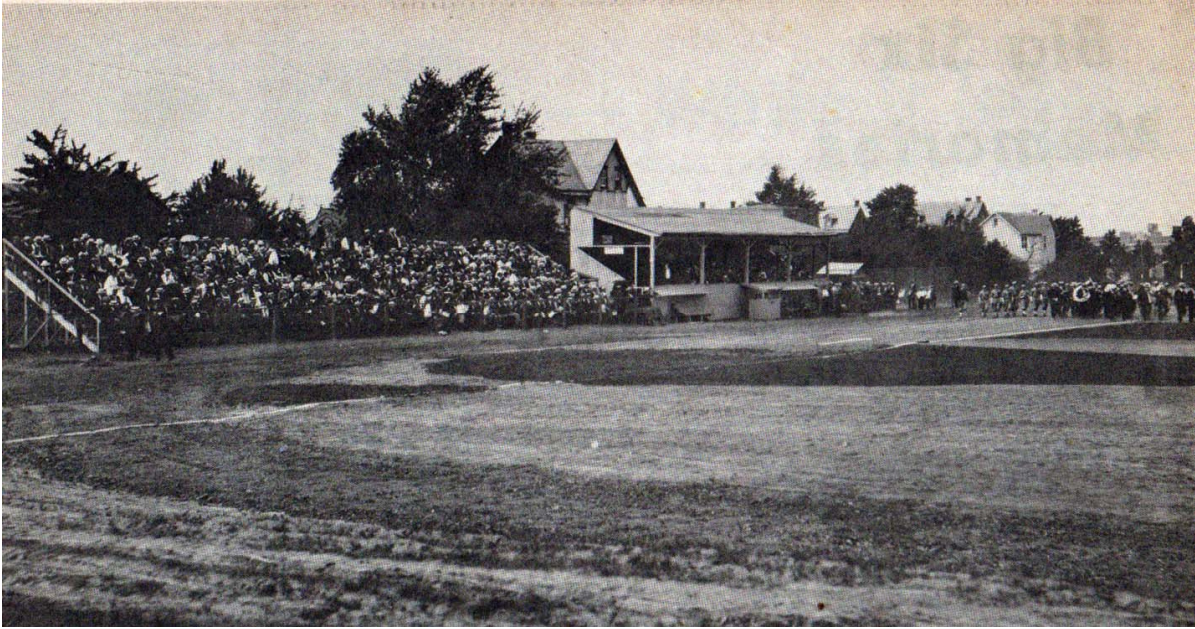


BACK IN TIME



OPENING DAY for baseball at Memorial Park in 1921, later renamed in honor of Dobbie Weaver.

TALES OF DOBBIE WEAVER

By **DICK SHEARER**

Off to the side of the grandstand at Lansdale's Memorial Park, a plaque has hung for more than a half-century. Cast against the white stucco by morning and shrouded in shadows during the afternoon, this marker is largely overlooked by baseball fans enroute to their seats.

Upon closer inspection, the plaque announces that the ball field was named in honor of Joseph K. Weaver, "Dobbie" to his contemporaries.

Dobbie Weaver played a very special part in the history of Lansdale High School. During the early decades of the 20th century - a time when interscholastic athletics were in their infancy - he was a one-man coaching staff. Not for football or basketball or baseball or track - for all of them. Girls teams as well as boys.

That's the way schools did in those days. Dal Smoot was the man at Souderton, Earl Druckenmiller at Sell-Perk. Newt Cowan at Doylestown. One coach fits all.

Each of these coaches was a legend in his community and each was remembered through the years for stories that still stand the test of time. Dobbie was

up there with the best.

Weaver, who fought in World War I, held a number of jobs during his years in Lansdale but at no time was he a teacher. He was a real estate salesman, a journalist, a public official, a and promoter; in fact, he was successful at most everything he tried.

We're not exactly certain how Dobbie got involved in coaching at Lansdale High but he quickly gained a reputation for turning out winners. Most of the teams he coached were successful and it didn't hurt that he was around at the time the Bux-Mont League was founded in the early 1920s.

Bux-Mont schools were in close proximity to one another and inter-town rivalries quickly developed. Lansdale's arch-rival was Doylestown High.

Two tales about Weaver's coaching days at Lansdale are rather amazing. The first seems almost incomprehensible but we've heard from old-timers that it is indeed true. We're not totally convinced, but it goes like this:

One of Dobbie's real-life jobs was working for the *Lansdale Republican-Review-Reporter*; there wasn't much of a secret about that. But back in those days news writers didn't get bylines on their stories. Some

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WEAVER WAS COACHING LEGEND

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times, a journalist penning a sports story would be allowed to use a pseudonym. The person writing about the Lansdale High football went by the pen name "The Insider".

The first issue of *The Reporter* after a Huskies' game came off the press the following Monday just after noon. Dobbie religiously stopped to buy a copy each week so he could take it along to practice and share The Insider's opinion of the team's play with his squad.

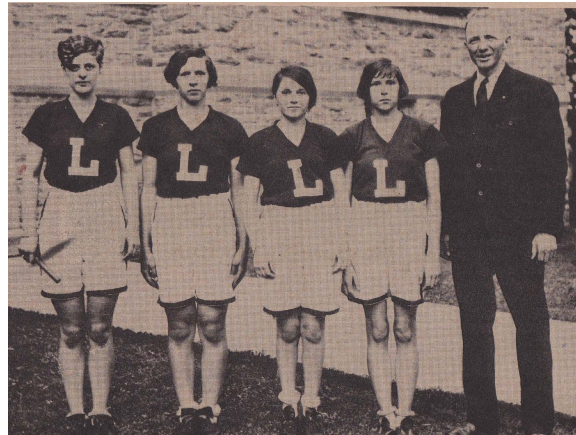
If they played well and The Insider acknowledged it, Dobbie heaped praise on his boys. If not – and The Insider didn't mince words – Weaver would berate his players, quoting chapter and verse the scribe's harsh assessment. "Just look at that", Dobbie would shout. "Are we going to take that from some hack in the stands or are we going to show him how good we are next week?"

As you might suspect by now, Dobbie Weaver was The Insider. He supposedly delivered his typewritten copy to the paper in the dead of night. The editor obviously knew what was going on and it's hard to imagine that a few others at the newspaper didn't figure it out, but they kept the secret until after Weaver left the high school coaching ranks.

That in itself is another story. In 1928, the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA) ruled that beginning with the 1929-30 school year all coaches had to be full-time members of the school faculty. Back then, teachers' pay was nothing to rave about and Weaver had too many other irons in the fire to give them up for teaching.

Ever the promoter, Dobbie and his writer friend, The Insider, cast the 1928 season as his farewell tour. The players quickly jumped on board by posting a 9-1 record going into their Thanksgiving Day showdown against Doylestown, which was having a subpar year. Get this: The Huskies outscored their opponents 280-8, losing only to Cheltenham 8-0. The other eight games were shutouts, two by 60-0. They took no prisoners.

Despite Doylestown High's mediocre record, the two towns were primed for this game. Throughout the week, kids from both communities cruised the streets of enemy territory making a lot of noise and teasing the local teen girls who seemed to enjoy the attention. Doylestown's faithful even went so far as to parade about with a coffin bearing the sign "Lansdale's Chances".



DOBBIE WEAVER with one of his championship girls' relay teams, circa 1925.

It was all in good fun until game time at Memorial Park, home field of the Huskies. Lansdale's fans showed up with their own coffin which represented the visiting team's likely demise. They paraded it in front of the grandstand which was filled to capacity along with a standing-room-only area that was roped off around the field.

Doylestown's delegation bit their lips until it became obvious their gridders were enroute to a 62-0 thrashing. As clock wound down, Doylestown's crowd broke through the ropes in hopes of capturing the coffin as a parting gift. A fight ensued – not a little one but a real donnybrook – making it impossible for Police Chief Sam Woffindin's three-man force to restore order.

The hero, of all people, was Lansdale's band director Karl "Bolly" Thompson, who cued his musicians to play the "Star Spangled Banner". Immediately, the combatants lowered their fists, removed their caps and disbanded after the final note.

With that, Dobbie Weaver's high school coaching career ended. Later, he went on to coach at what is now Delaware Valley College. Renaming the ball park "Dobbie Weaver Field" shortly after his death in 1963 was largely the work of *Reporter* columnist Edgar Williams, who was master of ceremonies at the dedication.

Decades later he was inducted into the North Penn-Souderton Area Sports Hall of Fame but by then no living relative was found to accept the honor. His plaque rests in the Lansdale Historical Society's archives.