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Highs and Lows

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A subjective summation based on a year of following North Bay sports.

Most underrated coach (boys): Roger Wilson, Analy basketball. Wilson's teams have enjoyed multiple 20-win seasons and deep NCS playoff runs over his 13-year career.

The most famous playoff victory may have been a 1999 quarterfinal against Miramonte when Robert Johnson, who would star at Oregon, floated in a last-second "Hail Mary" shot over Ken Dorsey, who was playing his final basketball game before heading to Miami on a football scholarship.

The Tigers (5-6) are notoriously slow starters, but Wilson has a knack for getting

his supremely conditioned teams to peak in February.

"There are certain elements you can't control, such as the ball going in," he said. "But you can always control your defensive intensity."

Wilson, who chairs the science department at Analy, is an anomaly in today's high school coaching climate, where many coaches are not on school faculties. He's known as a fair coach who rewards his seniors with playing time. He is as proud of his teams' consistently high grade-point averages as he is of his Sonoma County League championships.

"I've always believed this is a community-based program and should reflect those values," he said. "Ideally, there is something more we are doing than teaching kids how to win and lose."

Wilson has the distinction of having coached all three of his sons in varsity basketball. How long can he maintain the enthusiasm?

"I have a picture of every one of my teams on a wall in the family room," he said. "I have space for two more pictures."

Most underrated coach (girls): Kurt Jastrow, Petaluma softball. Jastrow is that rare coach who stays out of the way and lets the players play. The result is two Redwood Empire 3A NCS championships in the last three years.

Jastrow must contend with the reality of high-stakes high school softball -- college recruiters in the stands, zealous parents, competition from "travel" teams that recruit his players -- yet he manages to keep a sense of humor, and his teams are balanced, loose and focused.

Best game: Cardinal Newman-Rancho Cotate, NCS 3A semifinal football game on Nov. 25.

Quarterback Ryan Lingle and the Cardinals put together a finish most players can only dream about. Lingle drove the offense 94 yards in the final two minutes to tie the game 13-13 at the close of regulation. Lingle completed

eight passes on the drive, and Cardinal Newman won in double-overtime.

Best turnaround: Novato upending heavily favored Marin Catholic in the 2A NCS football title game, after losing 48-7 to the Wildcats during the regular season.

Toughest guy: David Terrell, Santa Rosa. Terrell fought in front of a worldwide pay-per-view audience last spring in an Ultimate Fighting Championship world middleweight championship match.

Best physical education teacher: Simon Lewis, Hillcrest Middle School, Sebastopol. It's not just that he gets the kids playing rugby and cricket, or that the Hillcrest student body is rated 96 percent fit (compared with about 50 percent when he came on board) -- Lewis cares, and the kids know it.

Most dedicated: Dave Cox, producer, announcer and truck driver for the Comcast cable "Game of the Week," now in its 16th year.

Best fans: Redwood, Tamalpais (tie). For the most part, these fans treat the events as the high school games they are.

Most intense fans: Casa Grande, Cardinal Newman (tie). Maybe it's because of the high standards set by both schools, but these fans are tough. "C'mon Cronin! What are you doing?" typified the banter directed from the Newman stands toward coach Paul Cronin during the Cardinals march to the 2005 3A NCS title.

Best coaching by a native son: Pete Carroll, USC, Redwood High School class of '69. Carroll is head coach and defensive coordinator of a Trojans team carrying a 34-game winning streak into the Wednesday Rose Bowl vs. Texas. Carroll joins Bobby Bowden (Florida State) and Joe Paterno (Penn State) as the only active coaches with multiple national championships.

Most embarrassing sport to watch: Soccer. The behavior of coaches and parents at soccer games has deteriorated at all levels, from "rec" to "select" to high school. Perhaps it's the low-scoring nature of the game that keeps

everyone on edge. It might be time to eliminate the offside rule -- very few players, coaches or parents fully understand the rule -- and allow players to have more success. North Bay leagues should step up and adopt a no-tolerance behavior policy: If a player or coach talks to a referee during a game, other than to request a substitution, he/she is gone.

Biggest loss: Broadcaster Bill King of Sausalito, who died Oct. 18 at age 78. King has been immortalized on NFL Films as the play-by-play voice of the Raiders, but his true greatness was in his call of the average Tuesday night, regular-season Warriors basketball game. Sometimes you'd be listening while driving, and you'd get to your destination, but then you'd have to stay in the car and listen with the engine off until King was finished.

-by Ted Gross

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