

## Press Clippings 11/3/2017

### SPORTS

---Daily Herald--- 11/3/17

## Elgin Sports Hall of Fame ready for its 38<sup>th</sup> annual gala

BY JOHN RADTKE

Jennifer Haley remembers well when girls sports got no newspaper coverage and, well, generally were an afterthought.

Haley graduated from Larkin High School in 1976, a short four years after Title IX became a federal law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender in any federally funded education program or activity.

Haley was a pioneer of sorts when it comes to female athletes in Elgin. She played four varsity sports and led her basketball and softball teams to Larkin's first Upstate Eight Conference championships for girls in those sports before she went on to play softball and volleyball on scholarship at Eastern Illinois, a precursor to what became a career of teaching, coaching and being an administrator in **Elgin Area School District U-46**, with the majority of her time spent at Streamwood High School. She coached the Sabres to sectional championships in volleyball in 1985-86 and 1988-89.

Sunday night, Haley and four other deserving individuals will be inducted to the Elgin Sports Hall of Fame when the ESHOF holds its 38th annual induction ceremony and recognition banquet at The Centre of Elgin.

Joining Haley in the induction ceremony will be 1975 Larkin grad Dave Huxtable, 1990 Elgin alum Jessie Henderson, Bob Pleticha and Bethany Goldsmith.

The 1967 Larkin football team and the 1995-96 Elgin girls basketball team will receive team recognition, Dennis DeBoer and Deryl Carter will be awarded the Vic Masi Award, nearly 30 scholarships to 2017 graduates will be awarded and myriad outstanding achievement awards will be presented at the gala, which is sold out.

"It's really exciting and it's been such a great reflective experience, a humbling experience," Haley said earlier this week. "When you're living the dream you don't realize how special it is -- competing and getting to go to college on scholarship. I'm so grateful for the opportunities I had. I never realized what Title IX meant to female athletes. It became apparent through the whole journey how lucky we were."

Haley joked during our conversation that many times through her career she wasn't identified for her athletic accomplishments as much as she was for being the daughter of legendary Larkin football coach and athletic director Ray Haley, who coached the undefeated 1967 Royals who will be recognized Sunday.

But she was also quick to point out how the ESHOF has always been an equal opportunity organization, recognizing females as equally as males.

"Female athletes from my generation owe a debt of gratitude to Ron Lange and the board of directors for being open to our stories," Haley said.

- Jessie Henderson was one of the best basketball players to ever compete on the now-gone rubber floor at Elgin High's Chesbrough Field House.

He was the leading scorer on coach Jim Harrington's 1990 Elite Eight team and he graduated as the program's fifth leading scorer with 1,111 points. He also played three years at UIC and last year was inducted to the Illinois Basketball Coaches Association Hall of Fame.

"This is the greatest feeling," Henderson, who now lives in West Dundee, said of being inducted on Sunday. "I just feel so blessed and it's a humbling experience. This is something I can pass along to my children and other children. I want to use this platform that God gave me to encourage and inspire young people. I'm so thankful."

Henderson said one of his favorite memories of playing basketball at EHS was being called up to the varsity team as a sophomore for the postseason.

"But my biggest memory," he said, "is playing for Jim Harrington and all of my teammates. Jim Harrington is the best coach I ever played for."

Dave Huxtable is being inducted for his 35-year career coaching college football.

Huxtable, who played for Ray Haley at Larkin, is currently the defensive coordinator/linebackers coach at North Carolina State. He's been there five years, the longest stint he's had in his career, a career that has taken him from being a grad assistant at Iowa State to coaching special teams, linebackers and being a defensive coordinator at, among others, Georgia Tech, East Carolina, North Carolina, Central Florida, Wisconsin and Pitt. He's coached in the Rose Bowl, the Liberty Bowl and the Peach Bowl, among others, and was named National Linebackers Coach of the Year by Football Scoop in 2011.

- Bob Pleticha is being inducted as a friend of sports and for his achievements in weightlifting. He is a four-time world weightlifting champion and a 15-time National Powerlifting Association champion. Pleticha founded the Elgin Sharks running club in 1980, an organization that has grown to over 100 participants annually with many coming from underprivileged backgrounds in Elgin and surrounding communities.

- Bethany Goldsmith, a 1944 Elgin High graduate, is being inducted as a baseball player. She played for three seasons in the all-American Girls Professional Baseball League, which was the subject of the film *A League of Their Own*.

- Dennis DeBoer will be receiving the Vic Masi Service Award posthumously. He served the ESHOF as a member of the board of directors for 32 years, including president. In addition, he coached in youth sports (including Classic Little League baseball) was an assistant football coach at St. Edward High School for many years.

- Deryl Carter is also receiving the Vic Masi Award. Carter is a longtime Elginites who created the Channing YMCA Youth Basketball League in 1984. He coached softball and baseball for many years, including leading the 1994 and 1995 Big League softball teams to the World Series. He has made a significant contribution to the families of the southwest side of Elgin, providing thousands of hours of volunteer time to the expansion of the Elgin Continental Little League. He is currently his daughter Corry's assistant

coach on the Whitney Young girls basketball team and a volunteer assistant for his son Deryn's Larkin boys basketball team.

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## **All-Area Team Captains-Flying High**

**Boys Soccer**

**BY STEVE NICHOLS**

### **Daniel Dominguez (Sr., GK) Streamwood**

The lone goalie on the all-area team, this repeat all-UEC, all-sectional keeper made his second-straight all-area team by upping his shutout total from last season's 5 to 7 this year, allowing just 16 goals with a goal allowed average of 0.78. His 6-foot-4 body frame provides length but his quickness goes a long way. "He's got the overall package and he's just so quick," said Sabres coach Matt Polovin, who also praised Dominguez's reaction time as well. "He just had another phenomenal season. He's very very tough to put the ball in the back of the net on. He takes up so much space in-between the pipes so if you're going to score on him, it has to be a goalzo or something."

### **Rafa Gil (Sr., D/MF) Streamwood**

A captain, a 4-year starter and now first time all-area selection, Gil, much like teammate Aldo Lazaro, kept maturing and getting stronger as the years went on at Streamwood. And despite just 2 goals and 3 assists for the Sabres, his ability to defend and push up when needed made him a weapon in the midfield, especially if his motor got into a second gear. "He learned to play the center back position and he's a little mini-teacher out there," said Sabres coach Matt Polovin. "He became an all-around defender/center back and really helped our team overall. But he really helped our defensive unit back there, made them so strong."

### **Aldo Lazaro (Sr., MF) Streamwood**

Last year, this 2-time all-area choice and 2-time all-stater had just 10 goals and 10 assists. This year, he provided 15 goals and 2 assists. What did Lazaro do in his senior season to boost his play? "Probably just becoming more mature on the field," Sabres coach Matt Polovin said. "Part of it is being the captain and being more mature. Being a 4-year varsity starter, showing people how to play the game the right way .... he really found a way to put it all together." Lazaro made the Sabres go offensively and again was all-UEC and all-sectional. "Everyone knew who he was," Polovin said. "Even on double teams -- he always found a way to get out of them and find his teammates. He always found a way to get himself in a goal-scoring position, beat a guy one-on-one and uses his power and finesse to put the ball in."

### **Omar Lopez (Jr., F) Elgin**

With a 60-40 finesse to power capability and good field awareness, this first time all-area and all-UEC selection had his way at times no matter what he needed to do. Lopez's 29 goals and 11 assists helped Elgin to the UEC River title and he had that instinct you can't teach according to coach Dave Borg, knowing whether to dish it off or take it himself. "He has a real tendency of being in the right place at the right time, he can play with his back to the goal or he can play straight on and he's rather elusive," Borg said.

"Even though he was double-teamed, he has a real knack of finding some open space and once he gets the ball, he had the ability to dribble to that open space."

### **Andy Zavala (Sr., D) Elgin**

When this defender was healthy, Elgin was clearly a different unit in the back. A catalyst who scored 2 goals and 3 assists, this all-UEC and first time all-area selection was a captain for Elgin, a four-year starter who helped the Maroons take home a conference title. "Zavala is a defender with the stamina and running ability of a midfielder who can take it 80 yards and make something happen," Elgin coach Dave Borg said. "When he was in there, it was nice to watch because he was a shutdown defender and when he had an open look he'd take it. It was like having an extra midfielder on the field."

### **Aleksandar Zdravkovic (So., F) Larkin**

This first-time all-area selection made his varsity debut in 2017 and did not disappoint. An all-UEC selection, Zdravkovic was a potent scorer with 26 goals. The sophomore also dished 7 assists, but that strong leg wasn't really seen until midseason when teams recognized what Larkin had at the top. "Teams knew real quick they'd have to account for him because if they didn't he was going to score a lot," said Royals coach Ken Hall, who spoke highly of Zdravkovic's ability to take people one-on-one. "He has a nose for the goal and scoring and there's been a trend players really don't know how to finish and score and when you get a player that does all that, I think that's special. He obviously helped us win a lot of games because he was able to score."

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## **All-Area Team Captains-Flying High**

### **Girls Volleyball**

BY JOHN LEMON

### **Elizabeth Vadrine South Elgin**

South Elgin set a school record with 26 wins and won the program's first two tournaments while finishing second in the Upstate Eight Valley. Vadrine made all-conference as both a junior and senior, earned a spot on Prospect's all-tournament team, and played three years of varsity volleyball. Finished with 198 kills with a .435 hitting percentage and 65 blocks. "Elizabeth was our go-to hitter," South Elgin coach Joni Plach said. "She was a big reason we had 26 wins. Elizabeth is the most skilled and versatile middle hitter to come through the South Elgin volleyball program. Any attack I needed her to hit she could run with."