

Central Mountain has...

A new home

*Keepsake
Edition*



**Tributes to
Lock Haven and
Bald Eagle Nittany**



Coach

Don Malinak

led Lock Haven

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2009

**Football
Schedule**

• **Page 2**

Coach

Walt Diehl

ran B.E.N.

• **Page 11**

CENTRAL MOUNTAIN WILDCATS 2009 FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

9/04	-	7:00 p.m.	@	Jersey Shore
9/11	-	7:00 p.m.	vs.	Williamsport
9/18	-	7:00 p.m.	@	Tyrone
9/25	-	7:00 p.m.	vs.	Bald Eagle Area
10/02	-	7:00 p.m.	vs.	DuBois *
10/09	-	7:00 p.m.	@	Hollidaysburg *
10/16	-	7:00 p.m.	@	Bellefonte *
10/23	-	7:00 p.m.	vs.	Indian Valley *
10/31	-	1:00 p.m.	@	Harrisburg
11/06	-	7:00 p.m.	vs.	Penns Valley Area

* — Conference game
Bold indicates home game



New stadium a huge, collaborative effort

By **JIM RUNKLE**
jrunkle@lockhaven.com
LOCK HAVEN —
Mark W. Traister of Lock Haven is feeling very happy these days.

That comes from a job well done.

For the past five years, Traister - helping to lead a group of volunteers - has devoted nearly every spare hour of his life on one major project — the Central Mountain High School Multi-Sports Complex.

Today, it stands ready for its first football game.

How's it feel?

"Frankly, it's a relief," Traister said. "It's been a long process."

Traister and a crew of other dedicated volunteers created an ad-hoc committee a few years back to consider the possibility of replacing the old Painter Stadium in Lock Haven with a new facility at the high school in Bald Eagle Township, which was an educational complex sorely lacking in many sports-related amenities.

That's changing, and credit for that change can be attributed in large part to Traister and the others who served on the committee.

As Traister recalls, it all started back in June of 2004.

"I went to a school board meeting, signed up to speak and asked if there was anything in the future for athletics at the new high school," he said. "I was told they were looking into that. A year later, some committees were formed and some options were examined for the middle and high school."

With the support of the Keystone Central School Board, some volunteers started coming out of the woodwork, Traister said.

"A number of people stepped up," he said. "That was the beginning. Since then, we've literally had hundreds of meetings

up to today. I think most of us had children involved with the school district ... Now, of those early committee members, only (football coach) Steve Turchetta still has grade school kids. Every other student has grown up and moved on."

The fact that the work continued even after those graduations, Traister said, is a stunning tribute to the commitment of committee members who sought to improve the school and provide a sports facility for the community's children for years to come.

As for the importance of that accomplishment, Traister had a few points to make.

"A lot of students see athletics as the activity that can get them to a college or university," he said. "It's also something that keeps them there. It doesn't matter what sport, there are plenty of surveys out there that say if you get kids involved in extracurricular activities, they tend to excel at learning."

Facilities like the one at CMHS also tend to bring "the community to the school," Traister said, "and it's important to have that relationship between the school district and community."

Despite the benefits, it was far from a certain thing, he said.

"In the first couple of years, I didn't think the stadium was going to happen," Traister admitted. "It was such a big project ... Clearly, it wasn't for (volunteers') personal benefit or just for their own kids ... The major thought was to have the high school finally completed."

"It's going to be a major attraction in our community," Traister said. "Where else can you take 2,000 to 4,000 people, put them all in one place, and allow them to watch one event? We have a uni-



BILL CROWELL/THE EXPRESS

Mark Traister speaks at the ribbon cutting ceremony for the new Central Mountain stadium.

versity a few miles away where health and education is the biggest major, and we had kids taking their physical education in the high school parking lot. Now we have a place for that type of activity."

As far as the community is concerned, Traister said people interested in locating in this area — or any area, for that matter — look to education facilities as one of the major drawing points.

"For people who are hired by Lock Haven University, or those seeking to locate here with a business, some have chosen to live in Bellefonte or Montoursville in recent years. That should not happen anymore ... This is important for Clinton County, and for those who worked to see this through. We're very proud of the result."

There are loads of people who deserve credit for the effort, he said.

They include Coach

See NEW, Page 5



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New stadium a huge, collaborative effort

Continued from Page 3

Turchetta, local residents Steve Murray, Jimmy Russo and Jimmy Hanna, all of whom played major roles, and many, many others, Traister said.

"You're putting me on the spot because there are too many people to mention, and if I try there's no way I'm going to remember them all," Traister said. "Certainly, there's Connie and Jack Peters, the school board president. Without Jack, this would not have happened. There are also many school board members, past and present, who had a vision and saw this through ... Oh my goodness, there are so many who really stuck with it. There were times when we thought ... but it got done."

Traister made special note of people who made donations, large and small, and the students who gathered together to hold fundraisers, or used the stadium as a senior project.

"People stepped up and gave money. We had big ones and small ones, \$10 or \$200,000, and it was all appreciated," he said.

Traister says that process will continue as the committee and its supporters seek additional funds to finish the related sports/athletic facilities.

"When I moved to Lock Haven from Williamsport 10 years ago, we were very pleased with the education," he said. "Since then, my business (Traister Contracting and Traister HVAC Plumbing Co. LLC, 20 N. Washington St.) has grown and I'm a big fan of Clinton County."

Raising money and planning the complex has been a huge undertaking, one Traister admits was overwhelming at times.

After all, this is about student-athletes, he said.

"Today, when you talk athletics and facilities - education is the most important aspect. Athletics plays such a positive role in creating good students. The only reason I got into Mansfield University was the opportunity to play football. I was not prepared for college, but I had to get good grades to play football ... that got me my education," he said.

Traister, 47, is a Clearfield native and graduate of Williamsport Area High School. His wife, Cathy, is chairman of the Health and Physical Education Department at Lock Haven University.

Their son just transferred to Lock Haven University from Bloomsburg,

where he played football. He made the transfer "because he wanted to be a health and physical education major and this is the place to do it," Traister said. "He plays football at LHU as a tight end and is a red shirt sophomore."

A big turning point for the project came in the form of a state grant for \$1.25 million that allowed the first pieces of the financial picture to come into focus, he said. That grant matched the \$1.25 million the district received from the city for purchase of Painter Stadium.

"It was huge, and with all the support from local politicians and others, working together, that led to us having \$2.5 million and we began to believe we had something working," said Traister.

What facilitated the financial package was an agreement between the City of Lock Haven and school district. The school board agreed to sell the old football property to the city, leading to the Susquehanna Square hotel complex. The district used the money from that agreement to match the state's grant program and kick off the major push toward construction of the new stadium.

"Now we have a beautiful hotel with more to come and a structure that wasn't being taxed as property will now be taxed," Traister said.

As sad as it was to see Painter Stadium go, Traister said, the cost of upgrading that facility would have been nearly as much as the new stadium itself.

"There's so much good history here when it comes to sports teams, especially the rivalry between Bald Eagle Nittany and Lock Haven, but the fact of the matter is, Painter was deteriorated to the point where we were looking at just how much money it might take just to make it safe ... We're seeing very few natural grass surfaces these days because of the upkeep, costs and playability in bad weather."

With the consolidation of BEN and LH, he said, the high school has a new identity and "the Central Mountain Wildcats have a new home and new identity. It's for the entire school area."

What remains to be done?

"The shells for the locker rooms are going up," Traister said. "We basically have two things to finish - the interiors of those shells and the completion of the girls' softball field and boys' baseball field."

Those matters will be accomplished, he said, as the committee and its supporters continue to raise funds.

A bygone era



THE EXPRESS FILE PHOTO

In 1959, the Lock Haven High School coaches pose for The Express. They are, kneeling in front, Bernie Myers and Don Malinak. In back are, from left, John Englert, Charles W. Hamberger, Joe Kulak and John Thomas.

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Players step up to honor Don Malinak

Stadium Dedication - THURSDAY, September 10, 2009 - 6

Imagine, it is a Friday night in 1960s Lock Haven. Merchants in town have their "Closed" signs hanging up before the sun is down.

A warming buzz is lifting from the large crowd huddled around Painter Field. The Lock Haven High School football team hears a low hum as they march toward the stadium. Like a fleet approaching a war zone, the hum grows to a rumble, then a roar.

The City of Lock Haven was the epitome of "Friday Night Lights." If you were not at the game then you were in the wrong place. The locals rallied around the perennial powerhouse Bobcats season after season.

Wins came in abundance, as did the crowds around Painter Stadium. A winning team can create this type of frenzy, but a team alone cannot create wins. There must be leadership and organization.

Luckily for the Bobcats, they had the perfect man for the job.

Don Malinak took over the Lock Haven varsity football team in 1957 and the team found out how to win relatively fast.

Malinak's Bobcats asserted themselves as an top team in the region in 1959 with a victory over Lewistown, which held a 27-game winning streak.

"There were 5,000-6,000 people at the game," recalls Ron Bowes, nose guard and 1960 graduate of Lock Haven. "People were standing around the fence of the field."

The Bobcats would finish that season with only one loss and the groundwork was laid for a journey cumulating 50 years later at Central Mountain's new home, Coach Don Malinak Stadium.

Malinak was no stranger to the game when he took over as head coach for Lock Haven. He was an All-Star defensive end at Steelton High School as a junior and senior. He pro-



Don Malinak is shown in two separate photos, at left receiving a coaching award and above at practice in 1960. He coached the Bobcats for 28 years.

ceeded to gain recognition as a solid offensive and defensive player at Penn State. During his four-year career as a Nittany Lion, Malinak led the team in receptions once (14 in his sophomore season) and was named co-captain as a senior in 1953.

After graduating with a degree in physical education in 1954, Malinak served one year in the Army, where he began coaching football and soccer.

A return to Pennsylvania saw Malinak lead Capt. Jack High School (now Mount Union) to a winning record in one season as head coach.

One of those victories happened to be over his next and most successful venture, Lock Haven High School.

Winning became a common trend for the Bobcats in the early years of the Malinak reign. In his first

five seasons, coach built a record of 38-7-2 and numerous awards including Central Counties Coach of the Year in 1961.

A common sports thought is that teams do not win on talent alone. Malinak had that knack for developing teams around the players he was given.

"He was the kind of guy who could get the most out of people. There was no room for failure, he got more than the average coach could get," said Wayne Allison, center and Class of 1962. "He instilled winning in you."

A measure of a good coach is the ability to build a team that is cohesive on and off the field. Many of the former Bobcats are still friends to this day. Those same players share a belief that their successes on the football field stemmed the bond formed with teammates and their coaches

"If you have a group

where a coach builds team unity, you tend to do a better job at winning," said Bowes.

Perfection was not out of the question when it came to practice. Malinak's method of teaching was a mixture of his playing days and his days in the Army.

"He was demanding but fair. Practice was very hard, organized, and very disciplined," said Bowes. "There was a lot of repetition."

One reason why Malinak was an effective teacher of football was the fact that most, if not all, of his players had respect for his knowledge of the game. If we gave instructions and players trusted that he knew what he was talking about.

"He knew what he was talking about. Usually if he said something he was right," said Don Kramer, halfback who played under Malinak from 1959-1961. "He was a very solid coach."

Malinak's teachings were not limited to the football field. He taught physical education at the high school during his tenure with the Bobcats. Much like his coaching, he demanded just as much effort from his students in class as he did from his team on the field.

"He dedicated his life to teaching young people. His classes were very active and physically demanding," said Bowes.

A coach's success is measured by wins, losses and championships. A teacher's successes are measured by how much students learn. Both can be measured by how many they influence.

Don Malinak ranks high in both categories. A career record of 183-90-10 tells the story on the field. Former players and coaches tell the stories off the field.

"Even though I was small in stature, he taught

me to be larger than life and gave me the confidence to accomplish anything. I admire him for that," said Pat Guerriero, who played for Malinak in the late 70s

Twenty-four years after Malinak's final game at Lock Haven, the Wildcats have replaced the Bobcats and Lock Haven is under the three-school umbrella called Central Mountain. Painter Stadium, the field that witnessed many great Lock Haven victories, is all but a memory.

However, a name synonymous with football, the purple and white Bobcats and Lock Haven will be enshrined by his former players and the city he brought much fan-fare to with the naming of Central Mountain's new Coach Don Malinak Stadium.

"It is the greatest thing

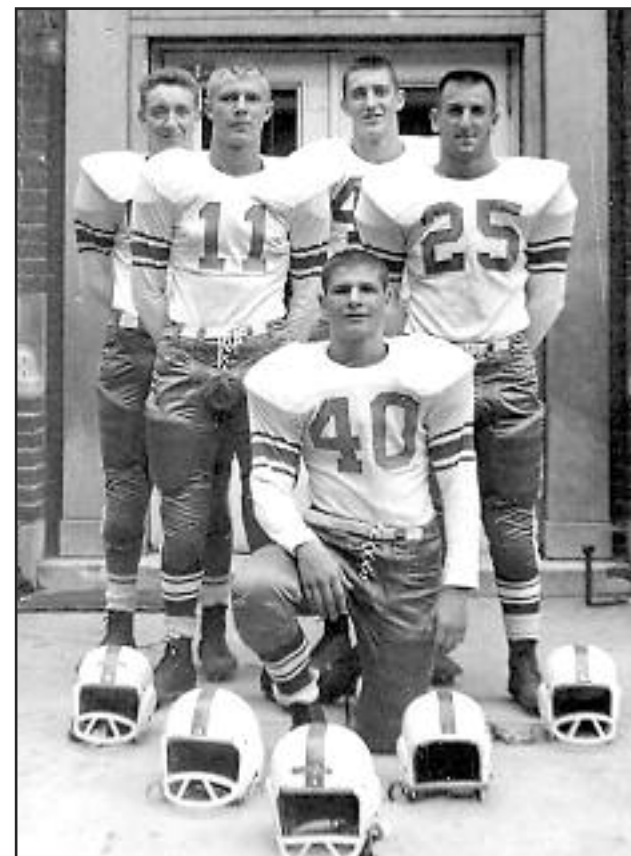
going. You couldn't ask for a better representative," said Kramer.

A new stadium bearing his name and optimism for the Wildcats may bring that nostalgic "Friday night lights" feel to the region.

"He was very good at organizing fan base and fan support," said Bowes. "We were more like the Lock Haven community team. You had that community identity."

Fifty-two years after Don Malinak first stepped on a field in Lock Haven, he is still making an impact through his players.

"The true winners are the students and future students of Central Mountain, but it is an opportunity to honor a coach who was a great influence on a lot of people here in Lock Haven," said Bowes.



EXPRESS FILE PHOTO

A quick photo outside the Lock Haven High School shows, in front, Harold Lininger, in second row, Roger Cook and Michael Vuocolo and in back, Bill Workman and Gary Cryder.

COACHES CORNER



THE EXPRESS FILE PHOTO

In photo above left, coaches from Bald Eagle Nittany take a break from preparing for the 1973 season. They are, from left at front, Charlie Bowman, Chuck Casper and Dave Gilmore. In back are Jess Long, Walt Diehl and Tom Shafer. In photo at right, Coach Don Malinak, center, jokes around with players Bill Bowes, left, and Gary Cryder.

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Scenes from past glory



THE EXPRESS FILE PHOTO

The Lock Haven High School junior varsity players of the late 1950s pose for a team photo

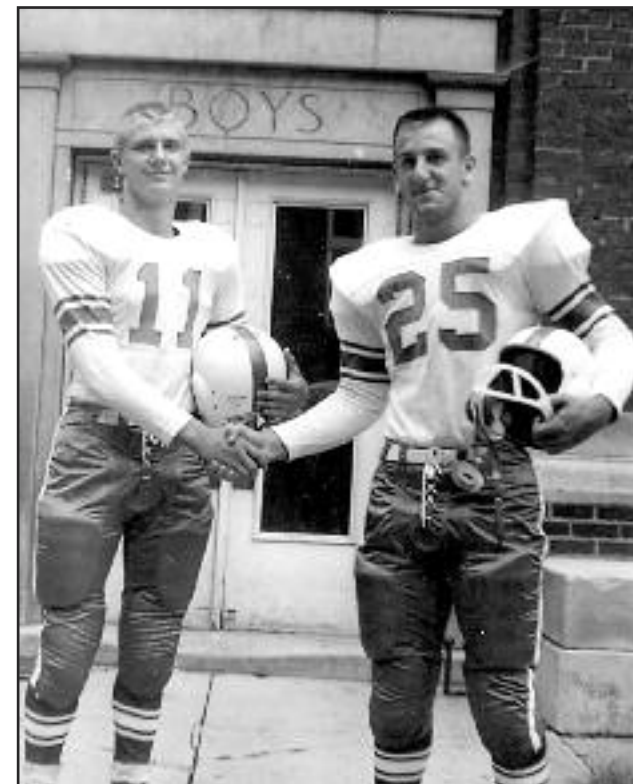
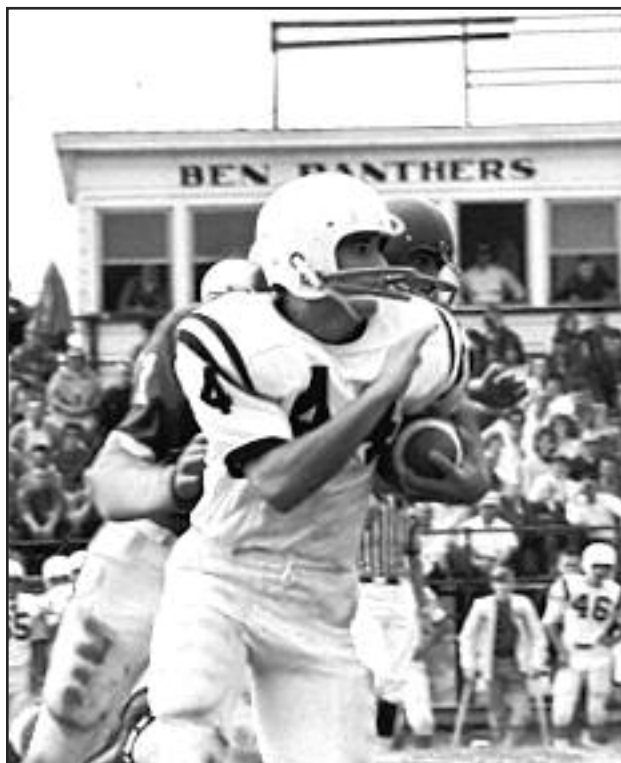


PHOTO PROVIDED

Team unity is on display outside the locker room by two Lock Haven High School Bobcats, Roger Cook and Mike Vuocolo.



THE EXPRESS FILE PHOTO

A Bald Eagle Nittany player charges down the field against South Williamsport during the 1968 season.



EXPRESS FILEPHOTO

Jeff Mapstone, in center in photo at left, receives All-State honors as an outstanding Lock Haven High School Bobcat multi-faceted player.



THE EXPRESS FILE PHOTO

The Panthers of Bald Eagle Nittany suit up for a team photo before the start of the 1958 season.

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Another coach ahead of his time:

Walt Diehl took BEN Panthers into the record books in 60s and 70s

By **ERIC PEDDIGREE**
epeddigree@lockhaven.com
Run, run, run

High school football in this region was predominately a running game in past eras. It was a rare occurrence that a football was seen traveling through the air. It was not uncommon to see a quarterback throw seven or eight times a game, and that was a good night, unless you were at a Bald Eagle-Nittany game.

Walt Diehl took over the Panther program in 1957 and it was not long before BEN fans experienced two things — winning and a passing game.

“He was ahead of his time. He incorporated the pass a lot,” said Dave Gilmore, who played for Diehl from 1962-64.

It may have been considered a risk to play that brand of football at the time but it did not take Diehl and the Panthers long to establish themselves as one of the elite teams in the region.

In his 21 years as the Bald Eagle Nittany head coach, Diehl went 165-39-5, including nine West Branch Conference Championships. During a nine-year stretch from 1962-69, BEN went 74-5 with seven conference championships (one shared).

“His record speaks for itself,” said Chuck Casper, the junior high coach at BEN from 1963-1977. “He would get kids out, even somebody who didn’t have confidence, and he would build a player out of him.”

Walt Diehl lived for the sport he coached. His passion flowed through the players, coaches and

fans every Friday night when the Panthers took the field.

“His life was 24-7 football, he was consumed,” said Casper. “When he got something in his mind he did it.”

That mindset is what made his program different and successful. He built a different team every year around the talent he saw on the field. That equation most often led to victories.

“He took the kids and fit them to the offense that best fit them,” said Gilmore.

Diehl was not only a teacher of the game but also a student, his students remember. He studied the game, different formations and different schemes. He was an encyclopedia of football that was innovative, if nothing else. A reason he was a success at implementing new ideas was that he believed it would work. When the coach shows that much confidence, the players had no choice but to believe their leader.

“Diehl always took the positive approach to anything. “When I wondered if we had a chance, if I showed doubt, he showed optimism,” said Tom Shafer, who joined the program in 1963 and took over defensive coordinator duties in the 1974 season. “The better part of the time he would win the game.”

To create team unity, the Panthers held a special, week-long camp before every season.

“He was a very dedicated coach. It was his focus, what he had to say you didn’t question. He was just that good,” said Gilmore.

Diehl was the type of coach who always thought of a way to improve his team’s chances, whether it be the weeklong camp during the summer or something more imaginative. One of his more elaborate ideas came in an important game against South Williamsport. It led to a rule change by the PIAA the following season.

The Panthers traveled to South Williamsport in a key matchup between to solid teams. Before the game, Coach Diehl rounded up any player who might be involved with a passing play. This included the receivers, running back and tight ends. When players hit the field, officials and fans saw that some Panther players had orange helmets on. Diehl had spray-painted the players’ helmets a bright orange so his quarterback could see them better as a play developed. Not against the rules. The helmets were allowed and served Diehl’s purpose.

“That was the only time I have ever seen it,” said Gilmore. “It was something.”

Needless to say, when the PIAA rulebook came out the following season there was a section that clearly covered the color of the helmets.

Diehl is considered by many to have been ahead of his time as



THE EXPRESS FILE PHOTO

Coach Walt Diehl talks football with two players during practice in 1958. Diehl compiled a 165-39-5 record in 21 seasons (1957-77) as head coach of the Bald Eagle Nittany Panthers.

a coach. Players bought into the system, their teammates and, most importantly, their coach.

“He had a knack of knowing how to put the right kids in the right position,” said Joe Walker, alum of Bald Eagle Nittany. “He knew how to match up with opponents and players especially in key situations.”

The mark of a great coach is

the ability to not only lead a team to victory but influence the players’ lives by teaching the game of football and the game of life. Diehl had the abilities to do all of those things and more.

“I learned a lot from him. An outstanding teacher ... that definitely was Walt,” said Shafer. “If he was physically able, he would be out there coaching again.”

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