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# Sapp recalls 'the glory years' of Boone baseball

By Chuck Hackenmiller  
Staff Writer

Bill Sapp was having the time of his life in Boone from 1957 to 1977.

As long as there was baseball, here was Sapp, who coached the Boone High School baseball team during 18 of those 20 years.

Sapp, a graduate of Nevada High School and Drake University, mixed his early baseball coaching career with opportunities to take the field himself. He lettered twice in baseball and basketball at Drake.

Sapp got his first high school coaching position at Hopkinton. He coached basketball and baseball

there for two years and also played semi-pro baseball as an infielder, going against powerhouse teams such as Dyersville, Cascade, Worthington and other teams in the northern Iowa semi-pro league.

Sapp continued his semi-pro baseball career while he coached high school baseball and basketball from 1952 to 1957 at Grand Junction (now East Greene).

"I played semi-pro baseball until I was 37 or 38 years old. I even played a bit for the Boone Falcons," Sapp said.

"I loved to play the game, and I loved to coach it. Baseball was our vacation. I was fortunate that my

wife (Clarice) enjoyed baseball, too," he said.

"It's a game where a person doesn't have to be a big strong guy and still can do the job.

**SAPP DIDN'T** hold back when talking about the Boone High School state championship teams of 1965 and 1967 were very good. But there were other good teams sandwiched between those years, he said.

"In 1966, we had a tremendous ball club. But to win state championships, you also need some luck and we had luck working against us that year," Sapp said.

"During those years, we had so much support from parents and the people of Boone. The kids loved the game and the kids loved to win. All I had to do was furnish the equipment and go out and work with them," he said.

Sapp said the teams' attitudes played a role in pointing the top-caliber Boone baseball teams of the 1960's and early 1970's in the right direction.

"Instead of us going to a ballgame to see if we could beat them, our attitude was that we went to the ballgame to see if they could beat us," Sapp said.

**SAPP SAID** he enjoyed the competition and coaching, and he had a lot of respect for all the opposing ball clubs, which also reflected on the ballplayers who loved to play the game more than anything else.

Disciplining the team was no problem, Sapp said, because baseball was the "calming remedy."

"Their love of the baseball game helped control the team. I just told them they couldn't play if they got

They were relaxed and kidded each other often," Sapp said.

Even at the state tournament level, people like Kelly McMullan and Steve Crandell were there to have fun. "That's what made us go. Everything just seemed to fit right. The kids were eager and ready to do something," Sapp said.

The kids didn't have to be pushed to play baseball, he said. They were there because they couldn't wait to play the game, Sapp said.

**MEMBERS OF THE** 1965 state championship team were Al Dannatt, Jack Mustapha, Mike Harris, Steve Crandell, Maraty Rinehart, Kelly McMullan, Bruce Geardes, Clyde Hovick, Don Riker, Rick Davis, Bruce Conlin, Bob Hopkins, Mike Rinehart, Rick Neely and Dan McDevitt.

Mustapha, Crandell, McMullan, Hovick and Hopkins were pitchers.

Players on the 1967 team were Jack Teagarden, Kelly McMullan, Hal Lyness, Joe Fontanini, Dick Sapp (the coach's son), Rick Neely, Ron Nunn, Gary Eckley, Tom Peterson, Denny Behn, Marty Dannatt, Denny DeLance, Joel Teagarden and Marty Cory.

A team had to play nine games to win a state championship. There were four games in sectionals, two games in districts, two substitute games and the state championship game.

**ONE OF THE** most unusual coaching years recalled by Sapp occurred in 1972. That season, the baseball team entered sectional play with a dismal 8-13 record.

"It was such an unusual group. We made it to state and took third. We

"I plan on swinging a bat myself and throwing some hitting practice. Some of the players want to skip the reunion dinner in the afternoon and take some hitting practice before the night reunion game," he said.

"We've got a few coming back who played on teams previous to 1964. There's quite a number of them coming back from the 1965 team," Sapp said.

"The last time we looked, there were 40 to 45 kids...er, young men, coming back. We'll have enough to fill two rosters at the old-timers' game that evening (June 13)," he said.

**WHEN SAPP** does some of his coaching during the reunion game, he'll wing it. After all, Sapp never was one to coach by the book.

"It all depended on what ballplayer was up and what type of hunch I had that would help us win. I liked my players running and running and we concentrated on defense — so much so that sometimes we might have neglected the offensive part of the game," said Sapp.

Sapp said he tried to keep everything simple when he was in the coaching box. "I used the same signals (for stealing, bunting), without indicator signals, all the years I was at Boone. I made sure everything was backed up and things were kept simple," he said.

Baseball, he said, is a game of skills and thinking. Sapp's teams were always looking to take the extra base. He utilized the speed of his team to the maximum, he said. "If we didn't get any offense going right away, we tried whatever we could to get a run or two," he said.

The proof is in Sapp's piles of



out of line. That did the trick," Sapp said.

The game is played different today.

Sapp said he doesn't like the designated hitter rule. "In my days, the pitchers liked to hit the ball," he said.

The opportunities to make the major leagues was not as great as it is now. "There was not any money in it back then, and ballplayers were encouraged to go to college first," Sapp said.

Winning the state high school baseball championships while coaching in 1965 and 1967 were Sapp's top memories of his 18-year career at Boone.

"Looking back and talking about it, we just had a good time back then.

finished the season one game over .500," Sapp said.

"I had to cancel my vacation that year because I didn't think we'd be making it that far," he said.

Seeing these ballplayers, and others who played under him, at the June 13 Boone High School baseball reunion means plenty to Sapp. He's looking forward to it. The reunion was something that's been talked about for years, but it never materialized.

"We wanted to start with just the 1965 and the 1967 state high school championship ball clubs, but there were many good ball clubs in there that would be missed. So we decided to get the word out to those who played from 1965 to 1972 and invite all the others to come," Sapp said.

most popular, most looked-over, items at the reunion. Former Boone ballplayers will dig back into their memory banks. "I was lucky my wife cut out many of the articles during those years I was coaching and playing baseball," Sapp said.

In 1970 and 1971 he was honored as the Iowa High School Baseball Association District Coach of the Year. In 1976 Sapp was elected to the Iowa High School Baseball Association Hall of Fame.

His career record at Boone, of 318-190, proves that simplicity does work. And love and dedication for the game of baseball can make a winner, as documented by the success of the baseball teams of the 1960's and early 1970's.

## Sapp's record shows success

Bill Sapp, Boone, coached baseball and basketball for 28 years. Before coming to Boone in 1957, he coached baseball and basketball at Hopkinton and Grand Junction high schools and was a junior varsity basketball coach at Drake University while he worked on a Masters Degree in 1951-52.

From 1957-59, Sapp coached baseball in the Boone Babe Ruth League and worked with others in the Little League program. He started up the high school baseball program, which was absent from the high school's athletic schedule for several years, in 1959.

"We were better than .500 the first year I coached, at 8-7. All the kids were good ballplayers. We just couldn't get it together and we had no good place to practice baseball," Sapp said.

But the good skin (no grass) infield, and lights, eventually became a part of the Boone baseball scene thanks to Boone volunteers and efforts of Sapp.

He coached Boone High School baseball through the 1977 season and compiled a career record of 318-190 — a .626 percentage. During that era, his teams were summer state baseball champions in 1965 and 1967, placed third in the state in 1972 and competed at the state level in 1970, 1971. The Boone high school team claimed five conference championships and was runner-up six times in conference standings.

His "glory years" were from 1964 to 1972, when his teams put together a 193-65 record that included nine sectional tournament championships, six district tournament championships, five substate tournament championships and two state tournament championships.

The conference championship was won by Boone during five of those eight years.

"I recall during those good years when we didn't lose a game a Memorial Park in Boone for five years," Sapp said.



**Crossword**

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE

VHS WREN WRA  
EION HAZE HAT

ACROSS

1 Campus area  
5 Pier

39 Goddess of earth  
40 South  
42 WWII area