

Championship team members recall Boone's first state title

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It's been 30 years ago, but to some it probably seems like yesterday.

The year was 1965. At the Major League level, the Los Angeles Dodgers and Minnesota Twins were on their way to pennants and would meet in the World Series, won by the Dodgers.

Willie Mays of the San Francisco Giants was on his way to the National League home run championship with 52 round trippers and Pittsburgh's Roberto Clemente was winning his second consecutive batting title.

In the American League, Boston's Tony Conigliaro would clout 32 home runs and Minnesota's Tony Oliva was on his way to his second consecutive batting championship.

And in an obscure community in eastern Iowa, Boone's Jack Mustapha tossed a no-hitter in leading the Toreadors to their first high school state baseball championship. Boone defeated Burlington, 2-0, in the title game at Williamsburg.

"I've been thinking about (the no-hitter) a little bit," said Mustapha, who now works with disabled veterans in Cedar Rapids.

The no-hitter was Mustapha's third straight in the postseason as he led the Toreadors to their first state baseball championship.

The victory didn't come easily for Mustapha. He and head coach Bill Sapp traveled to Des Moines the previous night where they did a live interview on the late news. And Mustapha was employed by the railroad at the time and had to go to work when the two returned to Boone.

So the Boone pitcher tired some as the championship game progressed.

"In the seventh I got pretty tired," Mustapha said. "I called time out, faking a leg injury or something like that, and asked Bill to come out (to the mound). I told him to just talk to me. I was tired, but knew I could finish. I told him to give me a little breather and I

could do it."

Current Boone High baseball coach Rick Davis was the Boone catcher at the time and remembers Mustapha just airing it out in the final innings.

"When it got to the point where we were going to win it and the no-hitter was a possibility, I didn't want to see any bloop hits," Davis said. "I was more concerned with him staying with what got us there."

Davis said he felt the timeout led Burlington hitters to believe Mustapha was injured or tired and that he'd try to finesse them.

"He came back with heat," Davis said. "I think he threw harder the last couple of hitters than he threw the whole game. My hand told me he was throwing harder."

Davis said the Boone players were aware of the no-hitter, but in staying with baseball custom, it was not discussed in the dugout.

"No one looked him in the eye and no one wanted to say anything about it," Davis said.

Sapp said he wasn't aware of the no-hitter until after the game ended.

"I was too busy trying to keep us in the game," Sapp said. "I was just trying to win the ballgame."

The Toreadors scored both their runs in the third inning, helped by doubles by Mustapha and Steve Crandell. The two-run cushion was enough for Mustapha.

"He had done it before," Sapp said. "I knew those kids pretty well. I knew what they were made of and that helped."

Crandell, who now lives and works in Ames, played despite a broken bone in his back and couldn't bend over to tie his shoes. Yet he made the plays at third base. And he was in so much pain he basically stayed to himself in the dugout.

"All I remember is I was continually yelling at the players to think ahead and think about where the ball is going and to be aware of every strike, every out," he said. "I was talking about where the ball might go, but back then you didn't have to do much if Mustapha was throwing strikes."

Mustapha said conversations in the dugout centered around Burlington hitters and game strategy.

"We talked about the game," Mustapha said. "We were all very good students of the game. Bill taught us that way. We talked about situations and hitters."

Mustapha recalls the postgame celebration was more subdued than one might expect.

"I wasn't real high. I was tired," he said.

And so the game remains a part of high school baseball. And a fond memory for the players and their coach.

"It's one of the highlights," Sapp said. "That was the first time as a coach I had ever been to state. Those young guys were such good players. I felt good that they could have some success."

"Bill was the type of guy who didn't make you do things," Mustapha said. "He made you want to do it. He's the best coach I ever saw in baseball."

Sapp led the Toreadors to another state title in 1967 and to state tournament berths in 1970, 1971 and 1972 when they placed third. Boone's last appearance in the state came in 1986.

Since Mustapha's no-hitter, two others have been thrown in state championship games. Greg Brecht tossed a no-hitter as Norway defeated Treynor, 11-0, in five innings in the Class 1A title game in 1983 and Jason Flach of Davenport Assumption threw a no-hitter as the Knights defeated Decorah, 4-0, in the Class 3A title game in 1992.