

# Looking Back on 42-Year Career Tom Kelley Treasures Memories

By PETE ZANARDI

Usually, when a man is ready to retire, they say an era has passed. This won't be the case with Manchester High's Tom Kelley. The veteran of 42 years at the high school has passed through several eras as baseball coach, football coach and athletic director.

Add to this 15 years service on the Rec Advisory Commission, a coaching stint with the now legendary semi-pro football Cubs and an outstanding record as a football official for 30 years and it becomes clear that Kelley serves not only his school but the community as well.

"It's been a rewarding career to say the least," Kelley says. "The people of Manchester have always been real fine to me and I've had some truly great athletes to work with. Forty-two years is a long time, but I treasure every one of them."

Kelley came to Manchester in March of 1926 after teaching three years in Manchester, Mass. A letter winner in football, basketball and baseball at Bates College, he took over Manchester football in the fall and baseball the following spring. He gave up the grid post to Walker Briggs in 1946 and coached his last diamond squad last spring. In 1961 he assumed the athletic director's job at Manchester.

In a very real sense, Kelley's career at Manchester is much the same as the history of Manchester High athletics. Almost all the great events had the Waterville, Maine native playing some part.

As football mentor, Kelley showed a 103-57-11 mark, winning the OCIL four times and posting undefeated seasons twice, in 1938 and 1943, each time a tie game spoiling perfection.

The dean of Connecticut high school baseball coaches, Kelley won 325, games lost, 223 with two ties at Manchester, taking the state crown twice and the OCIL nine times. In 1964 he was named Baseball Coach of the year by the Connecticut High School Coaches Association.

Three players who performed for Kelley went on to the major leagues. Tony Lupien played with the Chicago White Sox, Boston Red Sox and Philadelphia Phillies, Moe Morhardt did a stint with the Chicago Cubs and Tom Kelley is presently on the Cleveland Indians' payroll.

#### Top Players

Kelley declined to pick at Manchester High all-time, all-star team, but did select a number of players to be counted among the best. The list includes pitchers Cy Blanchard, Chick Fraser, Ron Simmons, Clyde Richard, Myles McDonough, Pete Maneggia, Tom Kelley, Fred McCurry and Marc



(Herald Photo by Ofiara)

#### Tom Kelley

Schardt; catchers Mickey Karkaveck, Nino Boggini, Dick Avery and Art Pongratz.

The infield features Dixie Dougan, Ed Brown and Joe Twaronite at first base, Chuckie Smith, Fred Mohr, Roger Macaione and Leo Cyr at second, Jim Roach and Gene Johnson at third and Ding Farr, Gus Gaudino and Alan Cole at the shortstop.

In the outfield, Kelley lists Ab Lupien, Howard Skinner, Fran Mahoney, Jack Fraher, Moe Morhardt, John Thurner, Bill Pagani, Ernie Dowd, Dick Cobb and Bob Smith.

Morhardt gets Kelley's vote as the best ever at Manchester. "He was the most natural baseball player I've ever had. He had exceptional speed and power and a truly great arm. He played the outfield here."

"His swing was his greatest asset," Kelley continued. "He

had the 'sweetest' swing, if you will, I've ever seen. You didn't have to teach him."

Morhardt batted .432 for Kelley in 1955, went on to All-American honors at UConn and reached the Cubs in 1962.

It was the 1956 squad that Kelley believes to be the best ever at Manchester. "It was the most balanced," Kelley said. "They could do everything well. We had steady hitting and excellent pitching, winning the OCIL and the state title."

Ron Simmons, who pitched the final two tournament wins, and Alan Cole, who paced the batsmen with a .340 mark, led the club which also featured Ed Wojick, Steve Cooper, Leo Cyr and Wes Feshler.

Kelley took over a football team that had won only once in three years and in another three seasons built the first of his OCIL winning squads. He went on to take league laurels in 1933, 1938 and 1943.

#### 1943 Squad Best

"I'll have to go along with the 1943 team as the best I've had," Kelley said. "That squad had great balance and potential. Only a 7-7 tie with Hartford Bulkeley kept us from being unbeaten and untied."

Leading that squad was Ray Zemanek who scored 96 points,

still a school record for six games. The rest of the backfield, Gus Gaudino, Bill Shaw and Red Degutis went on to play college ball as did linemen Bob Alvord, the captain, Tom Gorman, a standout at Yale, and Jack Robb, a UConn stalwart.

The 1943 crew ran up 137 points and allowed only 19, all six-game records.

Kelley's grid years were filled with many great players — Luddy Hansen, Ding Farr, Ernie Dowd, Bob Treat, Ray Mozzer, Dick Cobb, Hank Haefs, Cy Blanchard, Yosh Vincek, Joe Belkis, Bull Doggart, Salve Vendrillo, the Shannon brothers, Bull Spencer, Herb McKinney, Bob Turkington, Bob Alvord, the Lupien brothers, Carl Hultine, Wes Palmer and Herb Phelon."

"I'll have to name Dom Squatrito as the best football player I ever had and I believe the best athlete Manchester has ever had as well. He was the last boy to win four letters in a single season. In 1931, he was the State 100 and 220-yard dash champion, an All-Stater in basketball, a Junior All-American in football, the only Manchester gridder ever to win such an honor, and a leading hitter with the baseball team. What ability he had."

Squatrito met an unfortunate and untimely death in a traffic accident in 1931. "You know," Kelley remembers, "Fordham wanted him real bad and had things gone differently, he would have played behind the Seven Blocks of Granite."

In speaking of his duty with the Cubs, Kelley said, "We had some great football here then. Of course, there were few cars and the game provided a place to go on Sunday. The North End Majors were our bitter rivals and there were some tough contests. We'd play all over the state, using college kids under assumed names. It was quite an education."

Kelley took over the Cubs after attending the Knute Rockne school in Ohio in the summer of 1926. Using the methods of the greatest of coaches, Kelley and the Cubs racked up 18 straight wins before losing to the Hartford Blues in 1929. "I think we were a little too big for our britches in that one," Kelley laughed.

#### Major Changes

In nearly a half century of direct contact with football, Kelley believes he has seen five major changes:

1. Free substitution—"There was a day when you could only substitute once for a man in each half. In those days, you really needed ironmen."

2. Passing—"I recall when you had to be five yards behind the line of scrimmage to throw. Any incomplete pass in the end zone was a touchback and there was a five-yard penalty for the second, third and fourth incomplete passes."

3. Two-point conversion—"It's prevented a lot of ties."

4. Drop kicking—"It has disappeared and the reason is the different ball we use today. They're not using the squash we had years ago. It's a more streamlined ball now."

5. Equipment—"Nobody ever dreamed of nose guards and face masks back when I started."

Kelley can speak as a man who not only was affected by

rules, but one who also enforced them. In 30 years of officiating, Kelley worked every New England campus that played college ball as did lined football. Included in his list are the now bygone powers at Providence, Georgetown, NYU and St. Bonaventure.

He went as far as Texas and Florida as an official. Kelley worked in the Orange Bowl twice and was an alternate at the Army-Navy game twice. He worked the BC-Villanova TV contest in 1955.

For 26 years, Kelley was among the stripped shirts at either the New Britain-Bulkeley or Hartford-Weaver Thanksgiving contests.

#### Top Rating

Kelley ranked high in the 100 member Eastern Seaboard Officials Association. He is a past president of the New York Chapter of Football Officials, serves as honorary lifetime president of the Connecticut Board of Approved Football Officials and owns a lifetime gold pass from the Eastern Athletic Interscholastic Football Officials.

It was as an official that Kelley received one of his greatest thrills. "As an alternate for Albie Booth in the Army-Navy game, I was invited up to where President Truman would flip the coin," Kelley remembers. "It was the only time I ever shook hands with a president and it remains one of my greatest thrills. Mr. Truman was a very humble fellow."

Officiating also enabled Kelley to view who he believes to be the greatest athlete he's ever seen. That honor goes to the late Boston University All-American, Harry Agganis. "I saw Agganis when I worked the BU College of the Pacific game in Braves Field," Kelley said. "He did everything, kick, pass, block, fackle and intercept passes. He went on to play baseball with the Red Sox but was struck down by pneumonia. Another case of an all-two early death."

Forty two years is a long time. Kelley has every one of them carefully put away in a giant scrapbook. Few such collections can be as impressive or colorful.