

# BEST OF FRED

Retiring executive sports editor **FRED KRONER** has seen a lot in his 34 years at The News-Gazette. Each Sunday until his last day, he'll share his most memorable stories. This week:



## No. 40

# Keeping up with — and recalling — change in cross-country

Probably no high school sport has undergone more change during my years on the scene than cross-country.

It's a tough call because basketball added the three-point shot a quarter of a century ago after getting rid of jump balls in lieu of the alternating possession arrow.

Cross-country has done more than change the distance girls run from 2 miles to 2½ miles in 1998 and then to the current 3-mile standard (in 2002) that matches boys' races.

The philosophy about competition has changed.

In 1974, Mahomet-Seymour's **Mark Johnson** set the area record for dual meets won in a season by an individual (18).

A year later, Hoopeston-East Lynn established what was then the state mark for dual meets won by a team in one season (22).

Modern-day athletes don't have an opportunity to reach those standards.

This season, for example, Mahomet-Seymour did not

### On 40A ... Discovering a school mascot's origin

As a Mahomet-Seymour graduate, I often wondered when, how and why the school nickname became the Bulldogs. When another M-S graduate, **Bill Dale**, recently asked if I knew the background of Bulldogs, I decided it was time to investigate.

My wife, **Emily**, posed the query on Facebook, and we received an answer from someone in the know.

**Virgil Mahin** was a basketball player for Mahomet in 1946 — a few years before Seymour shuttered its high school and joined the consolidation — and he recalled cheerleaders such as **Virginia Bird**, **Virginia Deener** and **Scott Woodruff** taking a stuffed bulldog out to center court as teams were warming up.

They named the mascot **BEVER**, with the word coming from the first initial of the school's starting five: **Bob Herriott**, **Estal Hillman**, **Virgil Mahin**, **Ernest Moon** and **Rex Morfey**. At 5-foot-11, Morfey was the tallest starter and played center.

The mascot caught on, and school athletic teams became known as Bulldogs, a nickname that was maintained even when Seymour (whose teams were the Panthers) joined the mix.

All I can say is it's a good thing the cheerleaders didn't take a stuffed skunk out to center court.

schedule a single dual meet. The boys ran in six regular season races, all of which were major invitationals.

"I wouldn't run that many, if they'd let us," M-S coach **Neal Garrison** said.

The IHSA has a policy that, to enter the postseason series, schools must have participated in a minimum of six regular season meets.

The theory behind the

dwindling number of dual meets is that runners improve more with a consistent training program throughout the season rather than interruptions with Tuesday-Thursday dual meets, like many schools scheduled in the past.

It's not a coincidence that no boy has joined the list of single-season dual-meet wins since 1991. The all-time leader set his record (19) in

1974, the same year Johnson was piling up 18 wins for the Bulldogs.

Interestingly, the change in focus on more training has not led to improved times across the board.

Johnson's 14-minute, 41-second time for 3 miles stood as the school record for 40 years until **Alex Keeble** tied the mark earlier this season.