

Coach John Mastin will be missed by one and all in Charlestown

It all started the night of Sept. 30, 1988. It had been a month since I had started working as a part-time sports writer for *The Evening News*.

Sports editor Bryce Mayer had assigned me to the Brownstown at Charlestown football game.

That was the night that I met John Mastin.

Charlestown was successful that night as they amassed more than 200 yards rushing while holding Brownstown to under 10 in a 40-0 victory. The victory ran the Pirates' record to a perfect 6-0 on the season.

Forward to Oct. 24, 2003.

Charlestown faced Brownstown on this night also. But

this time the Braves came out on top 35-0 in the opening game of the Class 2A sectional.

What I didn't know then is that it would be my last game covering the Charlestown Pirates with Mastin at the helm. Coach Mastin, after 34 years as

an assistant or head coach at Charlestown, decided that this past season would be his last.

He had been the head coach since 1979.

Two ball-games — 15 years apart.

But those two games, and the dozens in between, there was one glaring similarity.

Win, lose or draw, coach Mastin always had time for me.

Of course the wins — and there were a lot of them —

were always easier. But even after a loss, the coach was always willing to express what happened. When his players deserved praise, he gave it.

And when they didn't, I rarely had to ask who or why.

Two things I also remember about coach Mastin. One, he is the only coach that I can remember that would strike up a conversation during the course of a game.

Getting the coach's view while the game was in progress.

That was different.

Coach Mastin also allowed me to accompany the team on a trip to Culver Academy for a game during the 1997 season.

The team flew to Chicago, then finished the trip to Culver by bus.

With *The Evening News* being my first position in journalism, this was an experience, traveling with the team and seeing everything that goes into

MIKE RILEY
SPORTS VIEW





John Mastin announced his retirement last week as Charlestown High School's head football coach. Mastin compiled a 141-114 record in his 25 years as Pirates' coach.

FILE PHOTO

the preparation for a game.

I can't say that it hasn't crossed my mind over the last few years as to when he would decide this season would be his last. While interviewing the coach for the preseason football preview section back in August, he didn't seem as excited as in the past.

Maybe it was because he was

heading into a season without longtime assistants Mike Hall and Harry Long, who each resigned following the 2002 season.

Or maybe it was because he had spent most of a hot and humid Saturday morning mowing the football field.

SEE MASTIN, PAGE B2

CONTINUED FROM PAGE B1

But again, he shut off the tractor and gave me all of the time that I needed. When coach Mastin announced his retirement during Charlestown's Fall Sports Banquet on Nov. 18, he mentioned that he could not name a favorite player or team.

A favorite player.

No.

And neither can I because there have been some great ones during my tenure.

And I'm sure there were some great ones before I knew that Charlestown High School even existed.

But a favorite team — and what I thought was his best coaching job — easily comes to mind.

If success determines success, then you go with the 1989 squad that won a regional champi-

onship and reached the Final Four.

A good team, yes.

But that team was very talented. And sometimes (unfairly) good talent is taken for granted.

But I'll never forget the 1996 team, the last Charlestown team to win a football sectional. The previous year the team had finished 3-6.

The numbers were small, only around 30 or so.

And that was before the end of two-a-day practices.

But when Friday night came around, only two things mattered — football and anything related to football.

That team ended the regular season 5-3, then defeated Tell City, North Harrison, and on a cold and nasty night in Ellettsville, Edgewood, to win the sectional championship.