

★ Spencerport's Walt Teike and his 82 sons

By HERBERT G. JACKSON JR.

Photographs by TALIS BERGMANIS

It was a Saturday in December a year ago. On the floor of the Eastridge gymnasium, the Lancers were grappling with Greece Athena wrestlers in a county league meet.

Six rows up in the bleachers on the west side, a man wearing red socks was talking inconspicuously into a portable tape recorder.

To anyone who knows him, those are two trademarks of Walt Teike of Spencerport, possibly the best high school wrestling coach in Monroe County.

Teike is noted for his red socks, red tie, red handkerchief — and for the champions he produces. Last year, his fourth at Spencerport, his team won the county title, five of his wrestlers were county champions in their respective weight classes, and four were Section 5 winners.

Teike got into the habit of always wearing something red when he was coaching football and wrestling at Bishop

Kearney High School a few years ago. In fond acknowledgment of his red tradition, some Spencerport parents presented him with a suit of long red underwear two years ago.

His 13-year-old son, Louis, better known as Butch, also wears red when he accompanies the team as uniform folder. Butch will start wrestling next year when he reaches the ninth grade.

Teike attends at least two matches a week when his team is not participating and uses the tape recorder for his scouting reports. He looks for "a particular pattern" of moves each wrestler has, plays back the tape later and types up a report on which the week's practice is based.

Teike has a couple of other trademarks: the handshake and the holler.

"I never want a boy to go out on the mat without shaking my hand, nor come off the mat without shaking my hand."

As for the holler, well, if you've ever heard him exhort



*Just watching as his
freshmen take on the
junior varsity*



Teike believes in personal contact and lots of coaching — here just before match starts.

one of his wrestlers during a match, you won't easily forget it. He thunders! And the hoarse, high-pitched sound he emits brings to mind the bellow of an enraged moose.

"I feel the hollering relieves me, and the kids know someone is interested. In the old days no one ever came to the wrestling."

Not so today. Last year, at each of two meets (with East-ridge and East Rochester), Spencerport officials were forced to turn away 500-600 persons at the door because even standing room was taken in the high school gymnasium. And, adds Teike, wrestling isn't as big at Spencerport as basketball and soccer. (Spencerport recently won the Section 5 Class B Soccer Championship.)

In 1949 Spencerport became the first school in the county to have wrestling. The first coach was Leo Bernabi, now assistant district principal who next year accedes to the superintendency. Bernabi is a popular figure at county wrestling matches having officiated at them for years.

Teike is strict on discipline and strong on the merits of wrestling:

"Wrestling does a boy more good than anything else I've ever come across. A boy is pretty much on his own.

"Wrestling is truly the most sportsmanlike activity going. Nowhere else do you see contestants shake hands, share an orange, or say hello on the street."

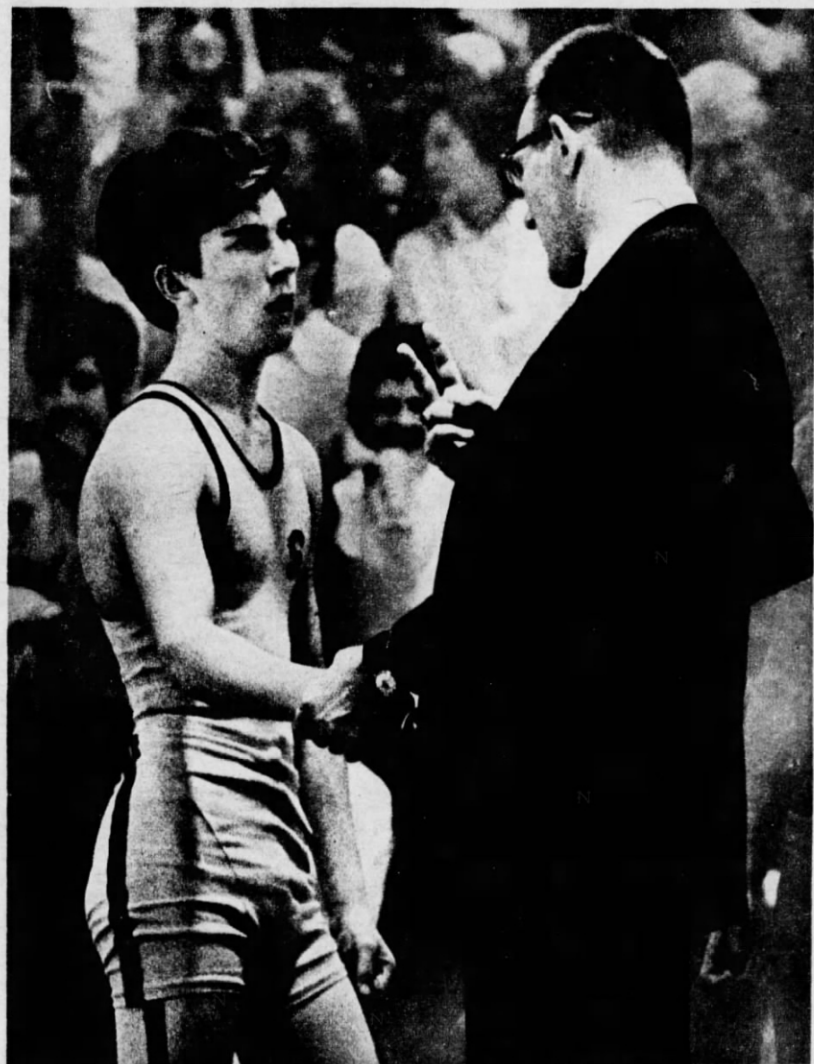
He feels a boy must develop self-discipline "as part of his education in becoming a man."

"But first he must subject himself to someone else's discipline — mine. Once he's learned that, he can have self-discipline."

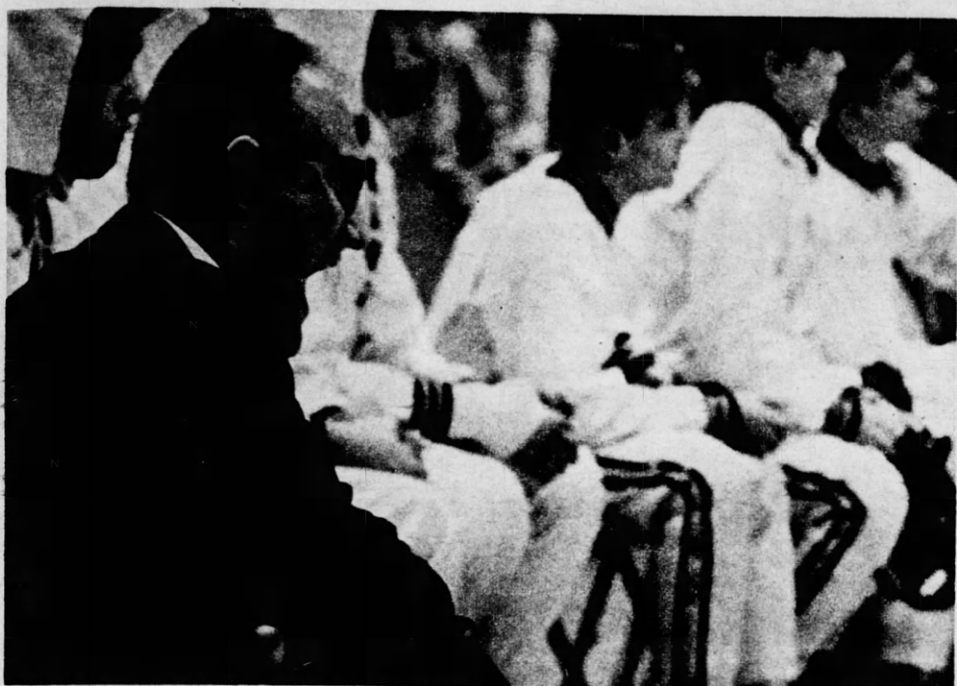
Teike says he demands a lot but is quick to add that "the boys have given a lot."

In his first year at Spencerport 30 boys turned out for wrestling. This year he has 82 on three teams (freshman, jayvee and varsity).

Continued on Page 17



Teike talks to wrestler just as he's coming off the mat, telling him his mistakes right away, and shaking his hand.



Teike gets vocal during match

WALT TEIKE

Continued from Page 15

"They're all part of one squad. We only divide them up for match purposes. The lowest freshman knows he could find himself in a varsity match at any time."

The close rapport and mutual respect which exists between Teike and his wrestlers is evident on and off the mat.

"I have always thought of them as my sons," he says.

During the season, wrestling consumes him. In the off season he has other roles. Last fall he was backfield coach for the top-rated Aquinas football team. For five years he and his wife, Barbara, served as co-directors of the Rotary Sunshine Camp at Durand-Eastman Park, guiding groups of 72 handicapped children for two-week periods during the summer.

Besides their son, the Teikes have two daughters, Darlene, 11, and Laura, 9. The family lives on Coleman Avenue in Spencerport — "right next to the school grounds."

The 37-year-old Teike is a Rochester native who attended Schools 20 and 21 before transferring to Spencerport for Grades 6 and 7 — "in this very building (the old Trowbridge School)," which is also where he first met Barbara in the sixth grade.

At Franklin High School he wrestled ("I was about a .500 wrestler.") and played football, graduating in 1952. After a two-year hitch in the Navy he went to the State University College at Brockport where he played football. After graduating in 1958 he became football coach at Mount Clemens, Mich.

Two years later he returned to Monroe County to teach driver education and coach wrestling at Pittsford High School. From 1962-65 he was head football coach, wrestling coach and athletic director at Bishop Kearney High School. The next year he went to Spencerport where he teaches physical education besides coaching wrestling.

Teike praises Spencerport parents as the "finest anywhere."

"We give out special diets to the boys. We meet with the parents and get their cooperation and the parents are awfully cooperative. This is expensive for them. But when the parents sacrifice for the boy and the boy sees this, it increases the relationship between son and parent."

Who's going to win the county championship this year? Teike talks of stronger teams in the league. Some — he cites Irondequoit and Brockport — have almost their entire squads back. East Rochester, of course, "is always tough."

And don't forget the defending champs:

Walt Teike and his 82 sons.

