

Curley soccer takes Reif Alumni Cup back from Calvert Hall

Ten years after the death of Bernie Reif, his legacy continues.

Reif, the first soccer coach at Baltimore's Archbishop Curley High School, one who guided the Friars to their first championship in 1968, seemed drawn to wherever games and practices were taking place.

He loved the game and had an impact on the entire community. Current Curley coach Barry Stitz, who played for the Friars in the mid-80's, still smiles when talking about "Mr. Bernie."

That's why any match-up with Calvert Hall College High School, where Reif's son, Chris, starred in the early 1980s, carries so much emotion. Long heated rivals, the two schools long renamed the trophy that comes from the first of their annual meetings in the Maryland Interscholastic Athletic Association A Conference the Bernie Reif Alumni Cup after he died in 2007.

That prize was at stake Sept. 27 at Curley, where the Friars took command in the second half en route to a 5-1 victory over the Cardinals.

In addition to coming back to beat Curley in last year's A Conference championship game, Calvert Hall won the Reif trophy each of the last two seasons. Ranked No. 1 in Maryland and No. 2 in the nation according to topdrawersoccer.com, the Friars wanted it back, which junior Anthony Dragisics made very clear after this game.

"It's a game that's special for me because my freshman and sophomore year (we) lost it," said Dragisics, who scored out what turned out to be the winning goal in the 39th minute. "So it's a big game for me. Within the team, we just had that extra oomph, that extra energy. It has a very big meaning for us."

Stitz's son, Ben scored the game's first goal. The Friars, who improved to 11-0 overall and 8-0 in the A Conference, also got goals from Tommy Sidleck and Bryce Woodward. Curley is anchored by Nick Richardson, who has accepted a scholarship

to play for the University of Maryland, and the younger Stitz, who will attend the University of Pennsylvania in the Ivy League.

Coach Stitz knew the elder Reif well and remembers many times he and his friends would be playing soccer games at Herring Run Park or elsewhere in the community, and they'd eventually notice him there.

"(You'd) see Mr. Bernie and ... his friends at the game," Stitz said. "(When you) see those guys down there with Mr. Bernie, you wanted to show him how good you were."

Chris Reif, Bernie's son, adds an interesting twist to the rivalry.

When asked if he rooted for the team his dad coached (Curley) or the one he played for (Calvert Hall), Reif gave a playful grin and answered that it was the latter. Still, though, watching this game with a trophy named in his father's honor clearly meant so much to him.

"It's such a great game, what it means to the schools," said Reif, who went on to star for the University of Connecticut when it was a national power. "It's good for soccer - soccer wins. My mom just turned 90, and when my dad passed, and they renamed it, it was such an honor."

The 5-1 romp gave Curley an 8-7-1 lead in the Alumni Cup series.

Calvert Hall coach Rich Zinkand loves the unique bond between the two schools, one which has grown over time. He and Stitz played college soccer together at Towson University, were in each other's weddings, and even had Chris Reif as an assistant coach in college.

Zinkand also remembers how so much goes back to the man the cup is named for now.

"Mr. Bernie used to be at every game when I was playing club ball," Zinkand said. "Just a great guy and was a big supporter of the soccer community."

Pat Richardson remembers playing for Bernie Reif on Curley's 1968 championship

team and said that bragging rights make the rivalry fun because it's about bragging rights. That's why Zinkand gave a rueful grin when realizing the Cardinals were going to give up the trophy which sat behind their bench during this contest.

"If I come over here for anything, I'll just take a look at it," he said with a smile.

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