

# Despite Towson dropping the ball, Olszewski's soccer legacy continues to grow

On May 19, Mary and I followed one of our grandsons to Germantown, where his Fewster FC won the Maryland State Youth Soccer Association U-13 title. His coach is Barry Stitz, best known as the coach of Archbishop Curley but a fine player in his own right a generation ago at Towson University.

On an adjoining field, the U-14 title went to the Baltimore Bays, who were under the guidance of Pat Healey, who was filling in for Frank Assaro while he upgraded his coaching license. Assaro played with Stitz at Towson. Healey, the Baltimore Blast star, is one of the most distinguished players ever to come out of the university. I never wrote about him there, like I did about Assaro and Stitz, but I did teach him in a Sports Media class at Towson in the spring of 2008.

That day in Germantown, I sensed the presence of Frank Olszewski before I saw him. Of course he was there, watching the good come out of guys he taught.

Olszewski coached Towson University from 1982 through last season, when the college's hierarchy eliminated a program that was producing educators and business leaders before the Tigers ever fielded a football team.

(I am a Towson grad, with multiple axes to grind on this issue. One of my brothers played for Towson and coached at Mount St. Mary's, which also dropped men's soccer after last season. We scratch our heads and ask: Nineteen years after the U.S. staged one of the most successful World Cups ever, why do the boys born in 1994 have fewer college playing options than their fathers?)



*Soccer coach Frank Olszewski, center, continues to mentor many of the men he coached at Towson University, such as Frank Assaro, left, and Rich Zinkand, who now coach at Calvert Hall.*

Towson took Olszewski's program, but it cannot remove his legacy, which keeps growing through the guys who played for him, such as Assaro, Healey, Stitz and many others coaching at the club, scholastic and collegiate level. Olszewski was not boastful that day in Germantown, either. He took the accomplishments of his protégés in his customary low-key manner.

Assaro and Stitz played at Curley. Assaro is an assistant at Calvert Hall, where the head coach is Rich Zinkand, another Towson alumnus (they flank Olszewski in the

accompanying photo). Zinkand and Healey, the Baltimore Blast star, went to Calvert Hall.

Olszewski played for Patapsco High and John Hopkins University, but his Catholic roots run just as deep. Born and raised on Fleet Street in Highlandtown, he continued to attend the old Holy Rosary School even after his family moved to Dundalk. He and his wife, Diane, moved from Our Lady of Hope Parish in Dundalk to Immaculate Conception in Towson, where their kids went to grade school, and are now parishioners of Church of the Nativity in Timonium.

"Faith," Olszewski said, "isn't something you fall back on as a quick fix when adversity comes. It's there all the time."

Stitz still considers Olszewski his mentor. Not because he won close to 300 games and went to two NCAA tournaments, but because his Tiger teams also won academic distinction and he keeps the proper perspective.

"He (Olszewski) didn't put winning ahead of his values, he always did things the right way," Stitz said. "The biggest thing I got from him, he brought his family around. He was a coach, but family came first. I want my players to see me not only as their coach, I want them to see me as a good husband, a good father. Just like Frank."

Olszewski continues to be employed at Towson, where he stayed on as an assistant in the athletic department, filling a variety of roles. He could not afford to walk away from a job and besides, going off in a huff is not his style.

While there is no Colonial Athletic Association opener to prepare for, Olszewski is getting his soccer fix with the Baltimore Bays, as the coach of their U-16 and U-18 teams. He's also the club's academy director and director of coaching, still teaching the next generation.