

Edward "Snaps" Emanuel

First architect of Altoona High sports teams

By NEIL RUDEL
Altoona Mirror

Of the first 33 inductees in the Blair County Sports Hall of Fame, Edward "Snaps" Emanuel coached nine of them.

During a 13-year span (1926-39) as head football and basketball coach at Altoona Area High School, Emanuel's teams competed for the state championship seven times, five times in football, twice in basketball.

The late Bobby Seitz used to often rave about Snaps Emanuel belonging in the Hall of Fame. "We had some good football teams in the early 1920s, but sports at Altoona really took off when Snaps got there," Harry Clarke, a 1994 inductee, said. "The teams were really good and they started to fill Mansion Park."

Along with Clarke, among the greats Emanuel coached were Tony Georgiana, Steve Lach, James "Rabbit" Ward, Maurice

"Babe" Patt, Tom Corbo, Donn Kinzle, Earl Strohm and Bill Parsons.

Clarke and Georgiana remember Emanuel as a demanding coach who had a good rapport with his players.

"He was a taskmaster who didn't stand for any foolishness," said Clarke, who went on to become an inductee into the Pennsylvania Football Coaches Hall of Fame. "He believed in hard work."

"He was a demanding coach, constantly urging you to do well, not only on the football field but in the classroom (Emanuel was a math teacher)."

Georgiana, a small-college All-American at Catawba College, said. "He was a motivator but most importantly about Snaps was his relationship

with his players. We all liked him immensely and I think that's why he got the best out of everybody."

Georgiana will present the Hall's posthumous award to Emanuel's nephew, Jack Emanuel.

"Snaps never knew a person's first name, I don't believe," Georgiana recalled, chuckling. "He always

used the first part of your last name and would add an ie. I was Georgie. We had this kid named Posiowayich and we wondered what he would come up with. He called him Soychie."

Georgiana started in the Altoona backfield for much of three seasons but said he often came out of the game early because of Emanuel's respect for opponents.

"He never ran up the score on the weaker teams," Georgiana said. "He was very considerate that way. He would substitute freely. There were teams we could have beaten 80-0 but he kept it respectable."

Georgiana said Emanuel would invite players to his home, adding he and Strohm

went fishing with their coach.

"He knew when to put his arm around you and when to give you the devil," Georgiana said.

Emanuel's football teams at Altoona posted a record of 103-27-13 while his basketball team went 175-55. He was an outstanding athlete himself, a past inductee into the Gettysburg Hall of Fame.

His best stretch at Altoona was a 29-4 run during a four-year stretch at Altoona in the late '30s.

"He was a competitor," Georgiana said. "He'd get the faster guys out there and try to run against them."

Emanuel stressed a power game and often let his quarterbacks call their own plays at the line of scrimmage, Clarke said.



Snaps (left) was known as a disciplinarian who developed a great rapport with his players.

Emanuel left Altoona in 1939 to become head football coach and athletic director at William Penn High School in York. Five years later, at age 42, he was killed when his car collided with a train.

Snaps left Altoona after York wooed him. He was a native of the Harrisburg area who starred in three sports at Gettysburg.

"Uncle Snaps always had good feelings about Altoona," Jack Emanuel, the former head coach at Biglerville High School, said. "In a lot of ways, I don't think he ever wanted to leave."

None of his former players knew how Emanuel got his nickname, but Jesse Mays of Glen Rock, Pa. writes that Emanuel once went into the stands after a fan he felt was unjustly riding him. Mays said he was told so by Reverend Aurrance Shank, a close friend who coached with Emanuel.

"Rev. Shank as well as the whole town of New Freedom (near York) considered Snaps a prince of a fellow," Mays said.

Emanuel's family endured its share of tragedy. Snaps and his wife, Mabel, buried son Edward, who

was killed in the Battle of the Bulge. Daughter Joy died four years after the train wreck as a result of injuries sustained in the accident.

Edward "Snaps" Emanuel



Sport: Football, basketball

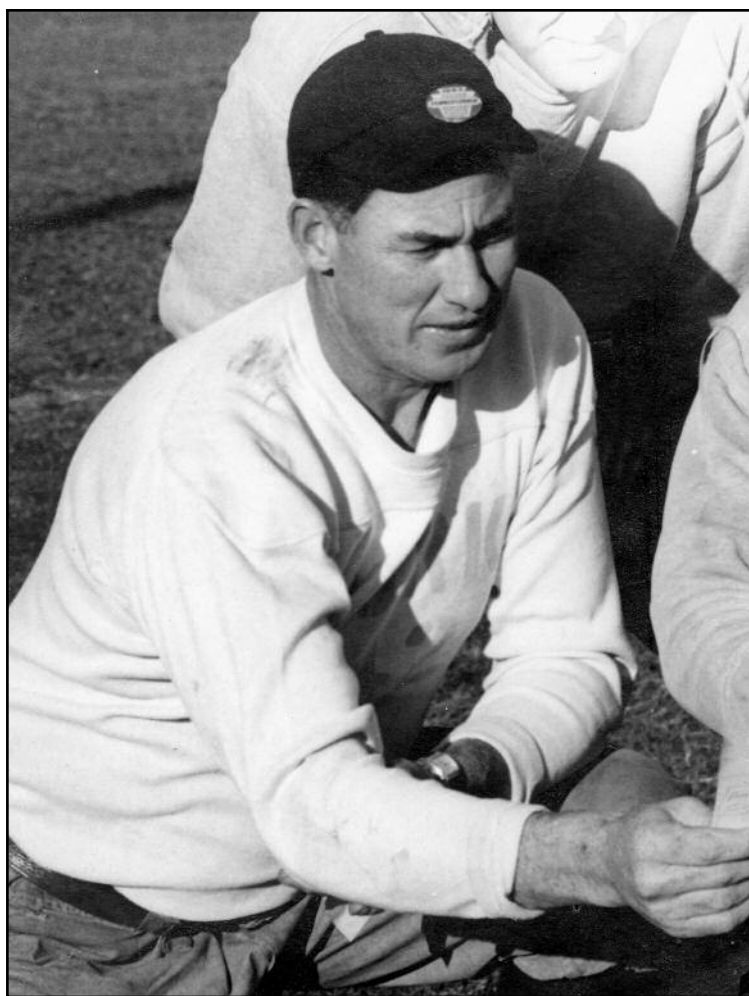
High school: Altoona Area.

College: Gettysburg

Hall of Fame achievement:

Won 103 games in 13 seasons as Altoona High football coach and 175 games as Mt. Lion basketball coach over same span; coached eight current Hall of Famers.

Current residence: Deceased.



Five years after leaving Altoona to become football coach-athletic director at William Penn High School in York, Snaps was killed in a car-train accident.

"Their whole family was wiped practically out by the train wreck," Jack, 75, said. "My aunt Mabel was quite a woman to endure."

Mabel Emanuel, also an educator, died in 1967.

Prior to the tragedies, the Emanuels had the unique experience of competing against each other. Jack played for his dad Vic at William Penn High School in Harrisburg while Eddie played for Snaps at William Penn in York.

When Jack was in the army, somebody showed him a clipping from Ripley's Believe It Or Not, portraying the game between the two high schools with the same name, coached by brothers.

"When my dad and Uncle Snaps got together, it was a always a good time," Jack said. "Uncle Snaps was always one to be horsing around and trying to pull something over."

When he went on to play at Shippensburg, Jack learned even more about his Uncle Snaps. Several teammates were from Altoona, such as Strohm and one of this year's inductees, Jack Hopper.

"I knew a lot of guys from Altoona," Jack said, "and they thought the world of him."