

Janesville sports reporting legends to be honored Friday
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JANESVILLE—"Is Wede working tonight?"

The answer was always "yes" or "yes, of course."

For almost five decades, Gazette Sports Editor Dave Wedeward was a fixture in the Gazette's newsroom. You'd find him here on game nights, in the middle of the night and on nights when all the games had been postponed because of torrential rains, icy roads or blizzard conditions.

It was the same with Al Fagerli, sports director for WCL0 and WJVL radio. He'd cover night games, get up at 2 a.m. to get ready for 5 a.m. radio programming and then, at some point in the day, "take a nap" to catch up on his sleep.

Now, Wedeward and Fagerli, who were long-time fixtures of the local sports scene, will become permanent fixtures when the press box at Monterey Stadium is named the Wedeward-Fagerli Press Box. A ceremony will be held at halftime of Friday night's Craig-Parker football game.

Fagerli called local high school games for more than 35 years before retiring in January.

Wedeward retired in 2011 after 46 years at the Gazette, 39 of those as sports editor.

Both men were humbled by the recognition.

"I never expected it," Wedeward said. "It's certainly a great honor. That press box is going to be here long after I'm gone."

For Fagerli, it was a surprise—just as the response to his retirement was a surprise.

"To be truthful, it got a little overwhelming," Fagerli said. "Everybody was saying nice things—jeez, all I did was my job."

Still, he acknowledged that it was a "heck of a run" and quipped that he was glad it wasn't the "memorial press box."

Wedeward is the kind of sports editor who can remember who threw the Hail Mary pass in 1972 that resulted the first trip to the state tournament for Small Town Wisconsin High School. Wedeward probably still knows the guy who

threw it, and his daughters who played championship softball and his grandchildren who are now running cross country.

Fagerli, not so much.

“I'm not like Dave, I don't have that photographic memory,” Fagerli said. “I'd cover one game, and then I'd have to move on to the next. Everything kind of messes together.”

But Fagerli has memories of the “old green thing” that served as a press box before the current one was built.

“The new one kept you dry,” Fagerli said.

He also remembers the storms that sent players, coaches and the crowd into nearby Wilson Elementary School for shelter. He and his broadcast partner, John Nevins, stayed on the air in the press box.

Fagerli remembers when Bart Starr came to Janesville and the great moments of the playoff games.

When Wedeward was asked to name the best Craig and Parker high school football teams during his time, he responded instantly.

“The 1974 Craig High School team went 9-0,” Wedeward said.

That was before the days of state championships.

The best for Parker? The teams that played between 2000 and 2009 that took Parker to the top of the Big Eight and kept it there.

Whatever happened, it was always about the players, the young people who went out every week and played hard.

“It was never about us,” Wedeward said. “It was always about the kids. I know Al felt that way, too.”

Both men loved their careers, the coaches and players they met and the people they worked with.

Wedeward wanted to thank WJVL/WCLO General Manager Mike O'Brien and to retired radio Sales Manager Mel Cushing, who helped organize the naming of the press box.

“Without them, it wouldn't have happened,” Wedeward said.