

## Bill Van Horne - Sports and Athletics

According to his colleague Nick Bedway, Bill Van Horne liked to joke that he always was a sports editor and was never demoted or promoted during his half-century-plus career. There were numerous opportunities for advancement, but leaving his beloved Ohio Valley sports scene was something Van Horne would never seriously consider.

Van Horne, the dean of the Ohio Valley sportswriters, served as sports editor of the Wheeling News-Register from 1966 until his death on June 11, 1995. Before that, he was sports editor of The Times-Leader of Martins Ferry for 25 years. His contemporaries called Van Horne "the most informational, motivational and influential figure in Ohio Valley athletics in the last 50 years;" "the No. 1 supporter of all sports in the Ohio Valley;" and "always positive about the people and events he wrote about. He was a great treasure to the community and especially to the Ohio Valley sports community."

His coverage and support for events like the Elby's Distance Race, (which today is the Ogden 20K Classic), the West Virginia Tennis Open and (the now defunct) Wheeling LPGA Classic helped them reach prominence. His backing also was a factor in the popularity and success enjoyed by the Wheeling Ironmen and Wheeling Blues professional football and basketball teams during their heydays. Throughout his career, Van Horne was able to build and maintain close friendships and relationships with sports greats like Joe and Phil Niekro, John Havlicek, Alex and Lou Groza, Tom Keane, Fred Bruney, Bill Mazeroski, Chuck Howley, Bobby Douglas, Lance Mehl, Woody Hayes and Lou Holtz, all with roots in the Ohio Valley. His interviews and reports could make a local sports star feel like one of the greats and could make one of the greats remember he or she was still a much loved local kid.

William F. Van Horne was born March 9, 1921, in Martins Ferry, the only child of the late James F. and Adria McGlumphly Van Horne. He graduated from Martins Ferry High School in 1939 and two years later began his career in the newspaper business. It's impossible to list all of the sports events Van Horne covered. In football, the tally on the college level alone includes two Rose Bowls, four Peach Bowls, the Gator Bowl, the Hall of Fame Bowl, the Bluebonnet Bowl, the Fiesta Bowl and dozens of Ohio State and WVU games. He attended several major league all-star games, was in the ballpark for three Major League Baseball no-hit games and covered a number of World Series games, including the one where Tiltonsville native Mazeroski won the 1960

World Championship for the Pittsburgh Pirates. Van Horne covered the Indianapolis 500 and U.S. Olympic Track and Field Trials. He was present for the dedication of the College Football Hall of Fame at King's Island near Cincinnati, for the first event held at the Hoosier Dome in Indianapolis and for the NCAA Wrestling Championships at Kent State University.

Numerous awards and honors were bestowed on Van Horne. The Upper Ohio Valley Dapper Dan Club named him Man of the Year in 1993, made him honorary chairman of the 14th annual Charity Sports Awards Banquet and gave him its R.S. McKelvey Memorial Award. He was the West Virginia Sportswriter of the Year in 1972, won the "Mr. Mat" Award presented by the Ohio Valley Wrestling Coaches Association in 1977, was presented the Gene Morehouse Memorial Award for contributions in sports writing throughout West Virginia and three times was the West Virginia Wrestling Sportswriter of the Year. He was an honorary referee for the Bellaire Relays and received the Chairman's Award from Elby's Distance Race officials and the Calvin Giffin Memorial Track Award, presented through the Ohio Valley Athletic Conference, for contributions to the sport of track and field.

He received achievement citations from the OVAC, Dapper Dan Club, the Southeastern Ohio District of the Czechoslovakian Society of America, Bellaire Relays, Martins Ferry Wrestling Boosters, Bellaire Touchdown Club, East Liverpool Board of Education and the City of Martins Ferry. He was a member and past president of the West Virginia Sports Writers Association and a member of the College Football Writers of America and the first sportswriter from West Virginia to be elected to its board of directors. He was West Virginia state chairman for the Heisman Trophy selection committee. Posthumous honors for Van Horne include having the grandstand at Wheeling Jesuit University's track named in his honor and having a scholarship established in his honor for an English student at Martins Ferry High. He has been inducted into the Minor League Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton, the Lou Holtz Upper Ohio Valley Hall of Fame in East Liverpool, the Wheeling-Oglebay Tennis Club Hall of Fame for his coverage of tennis in the Ohio Valley and the Ohio Baseball Hall of Fame for promoting baseball in Ohio.

Van Horne's survivors include his widow, Gladys, a Wheeling resident who is retired family editor of the News-Register; his daughter, Linda Ellis; a granddaughter, Tina Hasher, and two great-grandchildren, Faith and Logan; and two stepsons and their families.

Van Horne served on several Hall of Fame boards, most notably for the West Virginia Sports Writers Association and the Upper Ohio Valley Dapper Dan Club. As a charter member of its board, he had a vote concerning enshrinement of the first 65 people inducted into the Wheeling Hall of Fame, 14 in sports.

