

A Hearty Farewell Toast To The Frankford Boys Club!

BY: Dave Rygalski. Frankford BC Alumni and writer for JAY LENO- TONIGHT SHOW

First of all, no one ever suspected that beloved coach and porch-sitting codger Tom McCarthy would be the forefather of modern internet communication! You all realize that “FUF” is the original version of “BFF” or “LOL”, right?

For those who don't know me, I was a skinny, quiet kid who wasn't an exceptional athlete, but growing up in Frankford gave me an exceptional start in life for many reasons. My dad died when I was 8-years-old and my mom moved us to Frankford in 1972 **specifically because of the existence of the Boys Club**. She thought the coaches would be good surrogate fathers for my brother, Jimmy, and myself. And she was absolutely right! Tom McCarthy, Bill Johnson, Mr. Padden, Mr. Knecht, Tom McKeever, Pete Eisler, **Danny Craige**, and so many other great guys volunteered their time to coach and teach and applaud our accomplishments as well as scowl, grimace and twist our facemasks when we screwed up! I remember them fondly. Except one.. ☺

The first team I played on was the 1973 80 lb. football team coached by Bill Bodkins. Thinking about Bill reminds me of Andy Reid. Not in the sense of being an awful clock manager with 2 minutes left in a game, but because he was , lets say- a large presence... The best thing I remember about playing for him is that if a player made a nasty tackle or recovered a fumble, Bill would take the player out for a Whopper. I got the chance to start at safety at the end of the season against Moss. We lost the game, but I didn't screw up and most importantly I recovered a fumble and earned myself a Whopper!

My first year on the 115 lb team, I weighed all of 80 lbs. **Danny Craige** was one of the coaches with Tom McCarthy. We had a scrimmage against Liberty Bell and I got put in at safety. I recognized a play from watching early. The left guard and tackled pulled right and the flanker took the handoff behind them on a counter. I remembered Danny coaching us to take out the blockers first, so I ran straight into the guard and tackle as fast as I could and knocked them both backwards and into the running back knocking him down as well. Everyone was stunned. Liberty Bell's coach stopped the scrimmage and made his guard and tackle stand next to me to compare their size to mine and basically humiliated them. Man was that awesome!

My final year of being involved with the FBC, I myself was an assistant coach for Tom McCarthy's 1978 120 lb. team. I ran the scout team to prepare the first string for upcoming games. I have a small confession to make. At the Charity Bowl that year, I was the spotter for Summerdale's announcer in the booth. I'm near-sighted and forgot my glasses and I couldn't see uniform numbers so I just told the announcer my brother made most of the tackles so I could hear his name called.

I have always been proud to be a part of the Frankford Boys Club even if my contribution was mostly to get my sorry, underweight ass run over on the scrub team. You guys taught me the invaluable life lesson that I should always get up on my feet and get right back after it again no matter what. It was a lesson that I put to use to this day.

I've been working as a comedy writer in the turbulent world of Late Night talk shows for over 20 years now and nothing could have prepared me more for the ups and downs than playing for the Frankford Boys Club on that one block field of crabgrass, broken glass, and other assorted animal products!

One last thing. I mentioned that I recovered a fumble playing for the 80 lb. team in 1973 and earned myself a Whopper. Well, for some unexplained reason, I never got that Whopper. If Bill Bodkins is still alive, and anyone happens to see him, tell that Andy Reid look alike he owes me.....☺

THANKS TO ALL THE COACHES AND BOARD MEMBERS THAT GUIDED ME.