October 1 2009 9/8/09 7:08 PM Page 12

MatThoughts

Coach Ara Parseghian retired in 1974 after 11 years at the helm of the University of Notre Dame's "Fighting Irish" football team. His record at the school was 95-17-4, including two national championship teams in 1966 and 1973. During Parseghian's final year with the school, he boasted a 10-2 record and the team was ranked 6th (AP) and 4th (UPI) nationwide at the end of the season.

Had Ara Parseghian coached two more years, he would have easily surpassed Knute Rockne's record at the institution. As of today, the Akron, Ohio native is still with us, and still dearly loves the "Irish." Conceivably, he could have coached many more years.

Since Ara Parseghian's retirement from Notre Dame, however, there has always been the rumor that Notre Dame's "powers to be" did not want Coach Parseghian (or any coach) breaking Knute Rockne's record of 105 victories, prior to his untimely death in 1931.

Just for argument's sake, let's say the ongoing rumor is based on fact. With such a premise, I think I can prove to all devoted "Irish" fans that someone surpassing Coach Rockne's record will in no way diminish his "magnificent effect" on the school's football-rich tradition.

To prove my point, I conducted experiments with several of my classes over the years. When we completed reading short stories of athletes and coaches breaking records in their respective sports, I began a discussion with my students by asking the following questions.

"How many students know who 'Babe Ruth' is?"

Never have there been students in any of my classes who didn't know the "Babe," and his significance to America's past time - baseball.

My follow-up questions were very simple: *"Who broke Babe Ruth's home-run record for a single season?"*

And finally, *"Who broke Babe Ruth's lifetime home-run record?"*

Over the years, maybe four or five dedicated students of the "diamond-field sport" knew the answer to one or both of the above queries. The rest of my students had no clue whatsoever.

I am sure you understand exactly what I have just proven. Quite simply stated, nobody is ever going to forget icons of any sport, especially Notre Dame's legendary trailblazing, football mentor and humanitarian – Knute Rockne!

In sum, should the Knute Rockne "coaching-record" rumor have any validity at all, keep in mind the following quote:

"Sports records are indeed meant to be broken. If not, why keep a record of them?

– Bill Welker

2009 Iowa State High School 2A Championship Finals - 103 lb. Alex Spooner (Forest City) decisioned Dylan Peters (Denver-Tripoli) 8-4. Photo by Johnnie Johnson.