

## FOOTBALL

## Vogts Is a Father Figure to Long Island Sports



These days, Howie Vogts needs a cane to help him get around practice, but he hasn't lost a step coaching football at Bethpage for his 46th year.

By GRANT GLICKSON

Although the season opener is still a couple of weeks away, Howie Vogts, the most successful high school football coach in Long Island history, is already championing at the bit as he prepares to lead the Bethpage Golden Eagles for his 46th season.

"I seem to get rejuvenated at this time of year," said Vogts, whose once powerful legs made him a three-sport star at Sewanhaka High School but now require the use of a cane to help him get around. "I feel like I could go on forever."

Vogts, who underwent triple-bypass, open-heart surgery in the winter of 1994, has already been going on so long that he has coached the fathers of some of the members of his current team.

"If you come into this town during the football season and you go into any of the local stores or restaurants, all everybody talks about is Howie Vogts and Bethpage football," said Mike Caulfield Sr., who played quarterback for Vogts in the mid-1960's and watched both his sons, Mike Jr. and Ryan, compete on Vogts's team.

"I remember as a little kid we used to all go down to the field and watch Howie Vogts coach and that is still going on today, 44 years later," Caulfield continued. "Every kid from midget football on up wants to play for Howie Vogts."

The 66-year-old coaching legend founded Bethpage's football program when the school opened in 1952. He was only 21, the son of two German immigrants, when he organized the freshman team, moved up with his players to the junior varsity squad before making the jump to varsity.

"That first group was my favorite

because I spent so much time with them," said Vogts, a former player at Emporia State in Kansas and nearby Adelphi. "When I started with them as a freshman, I had to show some of them how to dress for football. So I grew along with them."

The 6-foot-3-inch Vogts has grown into such an imposing figure in the town of Bethpage that its high school field is now named Howard C. Vogts Field. With good reason. After all, he is the man who guided the Golden Eagles to six unbeaten seasons, 11 one-loss seasons, 13 league titles, 9 county championships and 2 Long Island championships. Last year, he led Bethpage to a Long Island-record 32-game winning streak, which started Sept. 23, 1993 and continued through Dec. 2, 1995. Garden City, the previous record holder, registered 30 victories in a row between 1990 and 1992.

Vogts, who won his first New York State Coach of the Year award in 1995, enters this year's campaign beginning with the Sept. 21 home opener against Westbury—as Long Island's career leader in victories with a 248-98-9 record. He is ranked third in the state in victories along with Vincent O'Connor of St. Francis Prep in Queens. Vogts and O'Connor are 40 victories away from overtaking the career leader, Johnny Barnes, of Canisius of Buffalo, who retired in 1973.

Vogts — with the exception of the 1966 season when he spent the year on a sabbatical at Michigan State — has missed only two Bethpage football games and a handful of practice games and a handful of practices. His excuse? He was a patient in the cardiac unit at Central General Hospital in Bethpage in October 1993. He was having heart palpitations that eventually led to surgery.



Howie Vogts coached the fathers of some of his current players.

But the heart of the man they call "Bethpage Football" would probably still be beating it, he didn't have his pulse on the development of his team's games. That is why nobody was surprised when Vogts called his assistant coaches during the Golden Eagles' 1993 game with North Shore and listened intently to their play-by-play account of Bethpage's 35-14 victory.

"I was pretty confident that the youngsters would do well with the rest of the coaches," he said. "But I still wanted to hear what was going on when it happened."

Every player who has pulled on the Golden Eagles' blue and gold uniform is still known as one of "Howie's boys." And they all adore him, especially since each one of

them is given an opportunity to compete.

"He's a fair and honest man," said Bill LaSalla Sr., a volunteer assistant coach and a former lineman from Vogts's 1961 team. LaSalla's son, Bill Jr., also played for Vogts (1986) and now serves as a nonpaid assistant coach, too. Dominic LaSalla, Bill Jr.'s son, plays on the junior varsity team. "He opens up his heart to the kids," LaSalla Sr. continued, "and he's been like that since I was a waterboy for him in 1955."

In his youthful days, every Friday before games, Vogts would hold up a bell-shaped dummy filled with sand and offer each of his players a chance to win a spot in the starting lineup.

"If you moved that dummy, you started," LaSalla Sr. recalled. "He'd put you in the game. You didn't have to be the best ballplayer. Everybody played. He was more like a father to a lot of guys than a coach."

A soft-spoken, composed man off the field, Vogts has been known to become quite loud and animated in the locker room and on the sidelines. Several former players remember one particularly stirring oration when his championship watch actually flew off his wrist across the room. Vogts never broke stride as he instructed his team: "Don't leave it here on the field. You have to run. You have to block. You have to do all the fundamental things that we practiced so hard. And when it comes to game time, you have to let it all out."

And Vogts has been doing just that for close to five decades. "He still has that same fire," Caulfield said. "He might not have the ability to run up and down the sidelines anymore. But he certainly still has that same fervor."

## New Coach Aims to End Rutgers's Losing Ways

By JACK CAVANAUGH

PISCATAWAY, N.J., Aug. 31 — Rutgers unveiled its new West Coast offense tonight — with a former Brooklyn high school quarterback at the controls — and its third head coach in 13 years as the Scarlet Knights opened their 127th season against Villanova.

Terry Shea thus kicked off his initial campaign to make the Rutgers football program, as he put it, "the pride of New Jersey." It will be a long haul to the last game on Nov. 30, and it may be a long season in the figurative sense, too. Rutgers is fielding a relatively inexperienced team, including a sophomore quarterback, Corey Valentine, who entered tonight's opener without having taken a single snap from center in a varsity contest.

If there will be considerable focus on Valentine, a graduate of Lincoln High School in Brooklyn, who spent last season on the Rutgers scout team, much attention will also be on the 50-year-old Shea. A former head coach at San Diego State and assistant to Bill Walsh at Stanford, Shea takes over with a mandate to win from no less than Rutgers's president, Francis L. Lawrence. "And not do it for one year and then fall back," Lawrence has said. "I do not want to be an also-ran."

Lawrence made those comments last fall after Coach Doug Graber was fired after notching a 29-36-1 record in six seasons, including a disappointing 4-7 mark last year. Moreover, Rutgers has had only five winning seasons over the last 16 years.

It was with this legacy of frustration and the burden of high expectations that Shea began the season; typically, he was both confident and optimistic. But he conceded that it could take several years to turn the program around.

"We have a young, inexperienced team and we're going to be playing five players out of their natural positions," Shea said. "And we've had injuries to some key players. If the defense — "plays strong, it could be a major key on how we do this season. But we start out here with a good scheme, both offensively and defensively, and I'd like to see some definite strides by the third year."

Shea has done his share of winning. As the head coach at San Jose State in 1990 and '91, he led his teams to a 35-6-2 record, winning one Big West championship outright and sharing another, before moving on to become Walsh's offensive coordinator at Stanford. "I have coached with great success and have coached what it means to coach in big-time competition," Shea said. "And I know that self-esteem is shattered by losing. Over the years I've developed a sense for personnel, and I know that I'm able to capture the minds and attitudes of young players."

Shea sees the situation at Rutgers as analogous to the one he faced at San Jose State. "When I took over there, they were down and out and

there was doom and gloom, with all kinds of turmoil. But I managed to turn the program around big-time."

Certainly, the Rutgers offense, which returned only three starters from last year's veteran team — none of them in the backfield — needs that kind of overhaul. After all, the 5-foot-9-inch, 160-pound senior halfback Chad Bosch, who averaged a team-best 5 yards per carry in 1995, cannot do it alone.

Wearing two hats as head coach and offensive coordinator, Shea calls the plays in his West Coast offense, which involves two running backs most of the time and up to three or four wide receivers. The wide-outs, as Shea draws it up, "not only can catch the ball but do something with it after they have."

"You'll see our backs coming out of the backfield often to catch passes," said Shea, a former quarterback at Oregon. "Bill Walsh was the architect of this offense, although I've used some of what Don Coryell used with the San Diego Chargers, plus some stuff I've incorporated myself."

To succeed, the West Coast offense also requires a "rhythm passing game," in which the quarterback takes five steps back and throws to a pair of three quarterbacks — Valentine, the junior Ralph Sacca, a classic drop-back passer, and the senior Mike Stephens — were in the running for the Rutgers starting job before Shea settled on the sophomore from Brooklyn.

"I picked Corey because he's a little more athletic and a little more mobile," Shea said of the left-handed Valentine. "He has a catlike release and is very quick on his feet."



The new Rutgers coach, Terry Shea, on the practice field.

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