

Orrville's Bolyard BJ Player of Year

By Milan Zban

Beacon Journal staff writer

Versatility in athletics is admired, but there are drawbacks. No one knows it more than Orrville's Tom Bolyard.

There is a loneliness attached to honing several different skills related to the same game. The individual attention given to each facet of a sport requires daily polish, and much of it must be done after the team practice is over.

Thus, the athlete who wants to pass, punt and kick, must devote the extra work after his teammates have departed the practice field.

Generally, he is alone, more often only a few teammates, perhaps a center or a holder for field goals, remains to assist.

Bolyard is such an athlete, a throwback to the 60-minute man, and as such was selected as the Beacon Journal's 1984 Player of the Year.

Bolyard, the first Beacon Jour-

nal Player of the Year from Wayne County, will be honored along with other all-stars from Summit, Stark, Wayne, Medina and Portage counties tonight at 6:30 at the Touchdown Club banquet at the University of Akron's Gardner Student Center. Northwestern coach Dennis Green will be the speaker.

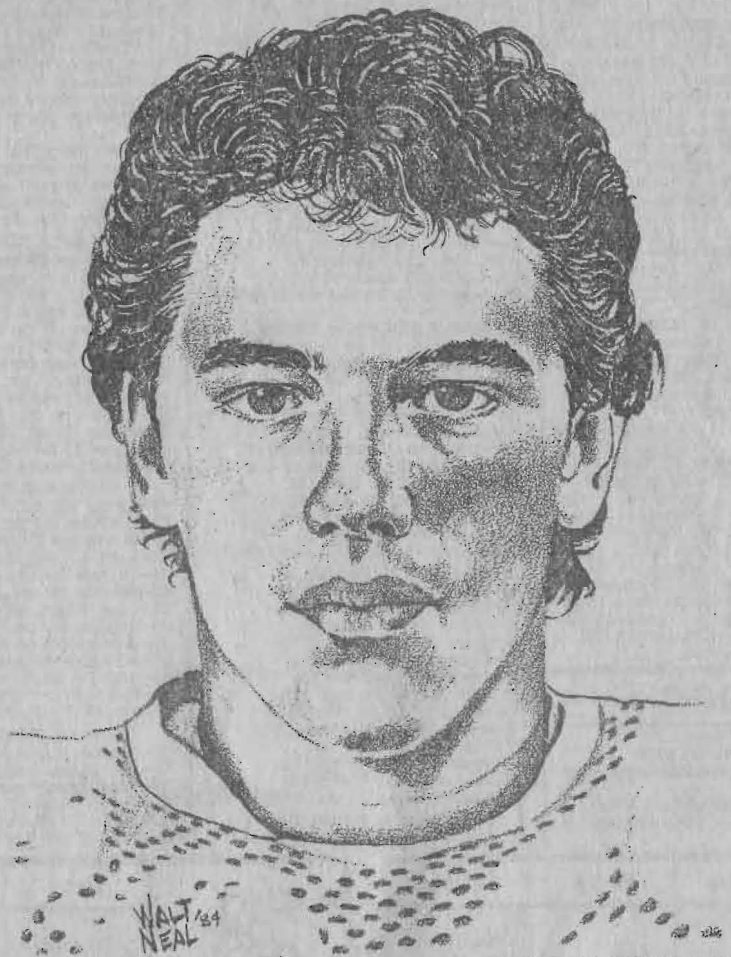
"Even though it took extra time and there were nights when I had to walk home alone, I wouldn't have done anything differently," Bolyard said.

Bolyard, 6-foot-3 and 195 pounds, hasn't been too lonesome lately, not with recruiters from Ohio State, Michigan State, Wisconsin, Penn State, West Virginia, Southern California, UCLA and Michigan among others, tying up traffic on Ohio 57, Orrville's main drag.

He's the biggest thing in Orrville since Smucker's combined peanut butter and jelly.

And pity the poor, round-should-

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Beacon Journal/Walt Neal

'84 Beacon Journal Player of the Year Tom Bolyard

Bolyard named BJ Player of Year

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ferred mailman who has to deliver all of Bolyard's mail to the school.

It got so bad last year, coach Mo Tipton developed a special Tom Bolyard highlight film to save recruiters time and energy.

"They still don't know where they want to use him," said Tipton, "as a quarterback, defensive back, a punter or kicker."

Bolyard says he likes to do it all and always has, but it was as a kicker that he developed early.

"Kicking takes a lot of extra practice. You have to develop the timing, learn to drop the ball exactly right. You want to work on kicking out of bounds. Place-kicking takes timing with three people, and that means more work. But it really paid off."

What he accomplished this season was to lead Orrville to an 11-1 record, completing 70 of 127 passes to seven receivers for 1,092 yards and 14 touchdowns. He ran for 363 yards and three more scores, passed for five 2-point conversions and ran for a sixth.

He kicked three field goals, the longest 47 yards, and punted for a 42.1-yard average.

That was on offense.

On defense, Bolyard intercepted five passes and, as the team's safety, was the most savage tackler on the team.

As a junior, Bolyard led the Red Riders to last year's state Division IV playoff final only to lose to Columbus Ready.

Despite the pressure of repeating, Bolyard led Orrville back into the playoffs, this time in Division III, but his missed conversion and errant field-goal try led to a 14-13 defeat in the semifinals to eventual state champion Elryia Catholic.

"I was kind of woozy on the missed extra point after taking a good hit," said Bolyard, "but I was clear-headed on the field-goal try. I just missed it, that's all."

"I felt badly about it until my

father put it in perspective for me. He said: 'When people asked you what happened, just tell them you're human and you missed it.'

"I still think about it because I guess I try to be a perfectionist. They say you learn more from a loss than a win, but I know the next time I line up for a 29-yard field goal, it's going to bring back a lot of memories.

"I know I'm going to try my darnedest to make it, even if it's just to prove to myself that I can do it," he said.

"I got interested in kicking the football when I was about 7 or 8 years old," said Bolyard. "I used to like watching Ray Guy (Oakland Raiders punter) on television and tried to imitate his style in my backyard," he added.

"My grandfather, Jim Webb, is from Tennessee and he played for USC in two Rose Bowls. Whenever he visited us, he'd take me out in the backyard and we'd throw the football and he'd encourage me.

"I entered the punt, pass and kick competition, and one year I made it to the national finals at the Houston Astrodome, but I didn't do all that well there.

"The year before I lost out in the regional finals in Cleveland and the guy who beat me was Andy Logan."

Logan, another prime example of versatility, went on to star for North Canton High and aided the Vikings' drive to the state Division I title game this season. That bid fell short when Toledo St. Francis scored a 17-14 victory on a field goal as time expired.

"When I was a freshman at Orrville, Coach Tipton and quarterback and kicking coach Jeff Gype worked with me a lot," said Bolyard.

"Coach Gype took me to several kicking camps and that also helped. He also taught me how to throw the football properly. I used to throw sidearm. This year, they also taught me how to pass rolling out. That gave me a new

dimension."

Bolyard's versatility goes even beyond football. He also was named to the Beacon Journal's All-District basketball team as a junior after averaging 21.9 points and nine rebounds. And he is a shortstop on the Orrville baseball team, batting over .300 the past two seasons.

"But I still throw the baseball

like I do a football, and that's something I've got to correct," he said.

There is speculation that the long-legged Bolyard might have developed into an outstanding quarter-miler, but it would have been asking too much, even for the most versatile athlete, to compete in two sports within the same season.