



Paul Pozega

October 2, 1929 - February 2, 2023

Paul Pozega, whose decades of coaching and mentorship had a positive influence on countless students and athletes in the Lansing region, died Thursday, Feb. 2. He was 93.

Paul grew up in Bessemer, Mich., and was proud to be the son of hard-working Croatian immigrant parents. Born on Oct. 2, 1929, he was the fifth of eight children born to Paul and Anna (Magdich) Pozega. His father, an iron ore miner, died when young Paul was just 10 years old, and so he developed a sense of purpose at an early age, working and supporting his family.

That sense of pride and purpose carried over to Paul's service in the Marine Corps during the Korean War. He served two tours of combat duty and was among the survivors of the brutal Chosin Reservoir campaign – the Chosin Few, as they have since been known – as a sergeant and member of the First Marine Division, 7th Infantry Regiment. He spoke always with respect and a deep understanding of the commitment he shared with his Marine colleagues, and was honored to have served his country in this way.

Paul married Marlys Maki, also of Bessemer, on September 5, 1953. They had four children: David, who passed away as an infant; Joan Magness; Debra Osburn (Chaz); and Paul (Julie); and were blessed with eight grandchildren: Lindsay, Alison, Cherie (Nick), Jaclyn (Ryan), Krista, Anna,

Jenna, and David. They shared many wonderful family moments together: at holidays and during the summer, often in their beloved Upper Peninsula, and also day-to-day whenever Paul and Marlys could be with their grandkids; he never missed a chance to brag about them. Paul and Marlys were married for 65 years before she passed away in 2018, and he has missed her gentle presence every day since.

As a young man, Paul was a determined and talented athlete. He excelled in basketball and football for the Bessemer High School Speedboys, playing in the UP Football All-Star Game in 1947, and being named captain of the 1946-47 basketball team that won the UP State Championship. He also played semipro baseball for the 1947 Bessemer Steelers baseball team.

Through the support of the GI Bill, Paul attended Michigan State University, earning his bachelor's degree in 1956 and later earning his master's degree at MSU. He began his teaching and coaching career at Lansing St. Mary's High School, where, in addition to coaching football and basketball, he formed the school's first track team, outfitting the squad in castoff basketball uniforms and, as was always the case, expecting only the best from them despite their humble start. Just a few years later, in 1962, the team won the Class C state championship. He went on to teach and coach at O'Rafferty High School before joining the staff at Lansing's J.W. Sexton High. He coached the Big Reds boys' track team to State Class A championships in 1986 and '87, and they were runners-up in 1991. Many of his athletes were individual conference, regional, and state champs as well.

Paul was twice named Michigan Interscholastic Track Coaches Association (MITCA) Class A Coach of the Year, was named National Track Coach of the Year, and was inducted into the Greater Lansing Area Sports Hall of Fame in 2009. He was one of the founders of the Honor Roll Meet of Champions, which annually brings together the top track and field athletes from throughout

mid-Michigan, and received the Eddy Award in 1993 for his leadership in the sports community.

Paul later joined the coaching staff at Michigan State University, coaching sprinters and hurdlers for the Spartan track team. He appreciated the many athletes who stayed in touch with him over the years.

Paul was preceded in death by his siblings John, Rose, Mary, Katherine, and Robert.

Visitation is scheduled for Friday, Feb. 10, from 2 to 4 p.m. and from 6 to 8 p.m., at Holihan-Atkin-Barclay Funeral Home, 406 N. Bridge St., Grand Ledge. Interment with military honors will be later this spring at Hillcrest Cemetery in Bessemer, Mich.

Cemetery Details

Hillcrest Cemetery

550 E. Cinnebar St.
Bessemer, MI 49911

Previous Events

Visitation

FEB 10. 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM (ET)

Holihan-Atkin-Barclay Funeral Home & Cremation Services
406 N. Bridge Street
Grand Ledge, MI 48837
(517) 627-2531
jasonbarclay@holihanatkin.com
<https://www.holihanatkin.com>

Visitation

FEB 10. 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM (CT)

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Tribute Wall

AN

“ Deepest sympathy from Ardythe (Budnik) Niemela, a Bessemer High School class of '47 classmate. Paul was deeply admired and the tribute written for him proves what an outstanding person he was. May his family & friends find comfort in all the wonderful memories they shared with him.

Ardythe Niemela - February 17, 2023 at 10:00 AM

JD

“ Rest in Peace Uncle Paul
-Joe DiUlio

Joe DiUlio - February 12, 2023 at 11:18 AM

Y'

“ Your "boys" at St. Mary's '61. purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Paul Pozega.



Your "boys" at St. Mary's '61. - February 08, 2023 at 12:13 PM

MM

“ Thank you Coach for all you gave us - on the practice field, in games, in the gym, in the classroom and throughout our lives. You taught us so much - how to win with grace and lose with dignity, how to conduct ourselves, the importance of hope and determination, and most importantly, how to value each other and work together in pursuit of a common goal - even pushing the team bus until it started!

And somehow, you managed to also teach us a good deal about History.

Later, we had the pleasure of growing older with you and sharing such good memories and more than a few laughs - maybe even one or two at your expense.

We are so grateful to you, your wife, and all of your children for the many sacrifices you and they made for our benefit.

Rest easy.

Your boys from St. Mary's '61: Pat Stump, Jim Diamond, Mike Logan, Sam Hall, Jim LaForgia, Jerry Bower, Jim Andros, and Mike Madden

Mike Madden - February 08, 2023 at 11:54 AM

JB

“ Janet & Bobby purchased the Sacred Duty Spray for the family of Paul Pozega.



Janet & Bobby - February 08, 2023 at 09:09 AM

CE

“ *A very good & great man .. ditto, his family .. /C.A. Chien, ex-LSJ*

C.A. Chien, ex-LSJ - February 08, 2023 at 07:51 AM



“ *Sweet Tenderness was purchased for the family of Paul Pozega.*



February 07, 2023 at 10:19 AM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Paul Pozega.*



February 06, 2023 at 01:36 PM

SH

“ *So sorry to hear of Paul's passing. My condolences to the family. Paul was my coach and teacher at Lansing St. Mary High School. The group of athletes from 1961 met with Paul on an annual basis for dinner and reminiscing. His compadre, Len Lapka, also joined us until his passing a few years ago. Paul had a positive effect on my adult life. May he Rest In Peace.*

Sam Hall - February 05, 2023 at 11:55 AM

TM

“ Paul touched alot of peoples lives and everyone of us was so happy he did . Condolences to his entire family . He will be missed . The Majdeski family

Tom Majdeski - February 05, 2023 at 08:58 AM

TM

“ Paul Pozega was one of the fairest coaches that it was ever my privilege to referee for. Strict but always willing to hear the official's side of the play. He will be greatly missed by all in the high school athletic community! Condolences to his family.

Tom Minter

Tom Minter - February 05, 2023 at 08:40 AM

PM

“ Coach Pozega had a great influence on me as a coach. I can recall, as if it were yesterday watching, really studying, him working with hurdler Roget Ware for hours after everyone else was done with practice. Paul's dedication to his athletes was simply amazing and the coaching lessons I garnered from working on his staff at Sexton have been, and continue to be, tremendously useful in my coaching career.

Pat Murray - February 04, 2023 at 08:48 PM

AS

“ My brothers adored him, he came to my brother Pat's funeral gathering and we were honored to have him there. Pat always spoke fondly of him. May the Angels welcome him to Paradise. Anne Stump and Family

Anne H Stump - February 04, 2023 at 10:29 AM

BB

“ *A life well lived... Semper Fi*

Bruce Bentley - February 04, 2023 at 10:05 AM

JM

“ *A valued friend! A true HERO! A highly respected educator and coach! Enjoyed many visits with him. Condolences to the family.*

Joseph Matrella - February 03, 2023 at 09:38 PM



“ *1 file added to the album Paul*



Holihan-Atkin-Barclay Funeral Home - February 03, 2023 at 04:52 PM

CL

May us in peace My mentor and my coach

Curtis long - February 04, 2023 at 05:07 PM

SR

Paul Jr. & Deb, Very sorry to learn of your fathers passing. What a great man! Respected by anyone who knew him and many who knew of him. My thoughts and prayers are with both of you and your families during this difficult time.

Scott Redman - February 05, 2023 at 06:58 AM

JM

Rest In Peace, coach. Say hello to my mom and dad when you get to heaven.

john metts - February 05, 2023 at 09:09 AM

BC

Remembering my Sexton running backs coach fondly. I am honored to have had him as my coach.

Bob Chouinard - February 05, 2023 at 01:05 PM

BB

He will be eternally in some frozen hunting ground with Bob....laughing themselves silly. His smile is what I remember fondly. B. Nolan Briley

bj brilry - February 06, 2023 at 07:20 PM