

BENEATH THE

CENTENNIAL



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Walking through the doors of Ellicott Mills or Dunloggin Middle Schools for the first time, sixth graders may be shocked to find that they are instantly labeled based on what high school they are districted to.

The Centennial/ Mount Hebron rivalry goes back generations, and it's ingrained into many children's minds from a young age. According to Michael Siegert, Centennial's calculus teacher who has taught at the school since its opening in 1977, the rivalry goes back to the beginning.

When Centennial opened, only the class of 1979 was given the option to stay at Hebron or go to Centennial. No busses were provided for the Centennial half of Route 40, so in order to stay, students had to be able to provide their own transportation for their junior and senior year.

Teri Kastner was part of that class and chose to stay at Hebron, where her four older sisters had attended, but her two younger sisters were sent to the newly opened Centennial. She

recalled that, "In the beginning, the rivalry was low key and basically forced upon us as our class of 1979- who had all grown up together since first grade- was torn apart."

Siegert described Centennial as a "volatile blend of juniors [from Hebron and Wilde Lake] who wanted to be at their old schools." He added that in 1977, principals had a lot of say in who was hired, so the original staff was handpicked. Between the principal's dynamic personality and the high caliber staff, the juniors began to accept their new school.

Both Siegert and Kastner agree that much of the rivalry stemmed from friendship. Best friends who were once on a team were now competing, and each student wanted to be successful against their friends.

As Siegert said, "Athletes never want to look bad, especially against their



Jennifer McKechnie played sports at Mt. Hebron and is now a guidance counselor at Centennial. Photo provided by: The Mason Family.

friends, and that translates into a rivalry."

In addition, when most schools opened, they started with just underclassmen, according to Siegert, so when Centennial opened with a class of juniors, they had immediate success in sports which often sets the tone for the school. However, at the time, Hebron was the school to beat, and that, too, put fuel in the fire since one must beat the best to be the best.

When Hebron's first Color day came around, the school decided to have the

upperclassmen wear school colors and the underclassmen wear the colors of the opponent. It just happened that the opponent was Centennial. The next year arrived, and they found that the students wanted to stick to making underclassmen wear Centennial colors.

No matter the sport, whenever it comes time for the schools to face off, students fill the stands with red and black to support their teams. Last year, when Centennial played Hebron in basketball at home, there were so many fans that no room was left in the stands. The staff had to open the doors so students could watch from the hallways.

Scott Ruehl, the principal of Mount Hebron, graduated from Hebron in 1987 and became the principal seven years ago. He remembers that the rivalry was always intense. He said, "Centennial has always been the team we want to beat

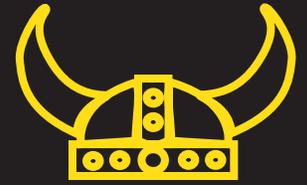


Teri Kastner (center) played sports for Mt. Hebron, and now she has children (left and right) who have been on Centennial teams. Photos provided by: The Kastner Family.

Design: Sammy Kastner.

RIVALRY

Mount Hebron



Shannon Hamshey played on the Hebron volleyball team, and now her daughters are a part of the Centennial volleyball program. Photo provided by: The Hamshey family.

more than other schools.”

However, as intense and aggressive as the rivalry is, the two schools have a tightly knit community. Centennial and Hebron are located very close to each other, and so are some of the neighborhoods that feed into them.

The neighborhoods by Long Gate shopping center are within five minutes of each other and share Long Gate, China Village, KyKy’s, Ellicott Mills and Dunloggin. In old Ellicott City, one side of Frederick Road belongs to the Vikings, while the neighbors across the street are Eagles.

And then there’s route 40. On the one side are Centennial neighborhoods, on the other are Hebron neighborhoods, and they all meet at Qdoba.

“One of the things that I love [about the rivalry] is that there are so many

friends,” said Ruehl. “In the stands, we cheer against each other, and then the game ends and we intermingle with each other. It’s a strong rivalry, but it’s a friendly thing. The students don’t lose sight of the friendship.”

It is also extremely common for teachers and coaches to have divided loyalties. As they search for jobs, they may find themselves teaching at one school



Bobby Macheel, Mt. Hebron graduate, returned to work for his school and also coaches for Centennial. Photo: Caroline Oppenheimer.

and coaching for the other, like Centennial’s girls’ varsity basketball coach, Robert Macheel. Macheel not only teaches at Mt. Hebron, but he also was a student who played sports there.

“The last five years coaching at Centennial have been great, and I really enjoy having a chance to be a part of the great games over the years,” Macheel said. “I have considered this rivalry to be a friendly one because many of my friends went to Centennial.”

Kastner, a Hebron alumna, is now the mother of a Centennial graduate and a future graduate. Both of her children played sports, so Kastner is still experiencing the rivalry first hand. She said, “The fun and excitement of the games between the two schools becomes a type of celebration — bringing students closer and helping many kids stay friends and connected with other kids they played rec with.”

However, Kastner has also seen the other side of it. She added, “The rivalry can get out of hand and become violent encounters since kids don’t understand what rivalries mean and are intended to create.”

Siegert coached football and lacrosse for many years at Centennial and believes that, “The differences are where sports have become

so important to people, everything has become an excuse for a riot.

They see the college kids and imitate them. In sports, when athletes are under a lot of stress, they don’t always react well.” However, Siegert adds that it provides a chance to teach life lessons. “If you win, have good sportsmanship; if you lose, be a good loser. Life won’t always work out the way you want it to.”

However, Siegert believes, along with many others, the Centennial- Mount Hebron rivalry is unique. “There is mutual admiration between the teams, especially between the coaches. The rivalry’s a big one at the high school level because the communities and skills [of the schools] are similar and comparable.”

To this day, the Hebron and Centennial classes of 1979 remember that they come from the same community, and they celebrate a joint reunion. According to Kastner, “No other schools are as close knitted as Mount Hebron and Centennial.”

“There is no comparison between the Mount Hebron/Centennial matchup and other games, no matter what the records are,” Macheel concluded. “The noise, crowd, and atmosphere makes these games tough, but also fun.”

Design: Sammy Kastner.