



**Celebrating Fran Bositis:  
50 Years of Coaching FHS Boys Soccer  
October 14, 2020**

Many coaches come and go; Fran came and stayed.

- |                              |                                   |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>1. Welcome</b>            | <b>Lou Verrochi</b>               |
| <b>2. History</b>            | <b>Rich Frongillo</b>             |
| <b>3. 1970s</b>              | <b>Kirk Simon</b>                 |
| <b>4. 1980s</b>              | <b>Joe Gruseck</b>                |
| <b>5. 1990s</b>              | <b>Joe Griffith</b>               |
| <b>6. 2000s</b>              | <b>Chris Schmidt</b>              |
| <b>7. 2010s</b>              | <b>Freddie Beckmann</b>           |
| <b>8. Tributes From Afar</b> | <b>Lou Moccia</b>                 |
| <b>9. FHS Award</b>          | <b>Tom Angelo</b>                 |
| <b>10. School Committee</b>  | <b>Anne Bergen</b>                |
| <b>11. Looking Forward</b>   | <b>2020 Varsity Team Captains</b> |

Thursday, October 15, 2020 (Boston Globe Article)

FRANKLIN — Neither a loss to Hockomock League rival King Philip nor the need for social distancing could dampen Wednesday night's celebration marking 50 seasons for Fran Bositis as the varsity boys' soccer team at Franklin High.

"It's an incredible surprise party," Bositis said. "I only wish we could've won today . . . I had no idea [of the ceremony]. My wife [Christine] is really good, and so is everybody else, at keeping secrets."

Bositis was honored by the Franklin soccer community at Pisini Stadium after the Panthers' dropped a 4-1 decision to KP.



Fran Bositis said he was genuinely surprised when he was honored Wednesday for 50th year as Franklin High's boys' varsity soccer coach. "My wife [Christine, left] is really good, and so is everyone else, at keeping secrets," he said. Barry Chin/Globe Staff

In turn, he deflected attention away from himself and toward multiple generations of players to come through his program since he arrived in town in the fall of 1971 as a physical education major out of the University of Massachusetts, where he had played lacrosse. In high school, the Worcester native was a football/lacrosse standout at St. John's Shrewsbury.



Franklin boys' soccer coach Fran Bositis was recognized for instilling a sense of accountability, dedication, and commitment in all his players. Barry Chin/Globe Staff

While the ongoing coronavirus pandemic limited turnout, the ceremony was still well-attended by Franklin boys' soccer alumni from every era of Bositis' half century as coach.

Kirk Simon, a 1976 graduate of Franklin High and a member of the lone squad Bositis coached to an Eastern Mass. title, noted that he and about 15 of his teammates went on to play soccer in college thanks in part to inspiration Bositis provided them.

“You should be proud of the success you’ve had on the field, and even more proud of the success you’ve had in helping to mold and inspire these people along the way,” Simon said.

Joe Gruseck, a 1984 Franklin grad and the current head coach of the Dover-Sherborn boys' soccer team, said Bositis instilled a sense of accountability, dedication, and commitment. Gruseck also noted the sense of camaraderie among Panthers of all ages, many of whom continue to play soccer with one another. “It didn’t matter what decade you played in, if you went to Franklin, you knew the style,” Gruseck said.



Franklin players from almost every decade of Fran Bositis' coaching career came out to honor their coach in Wednesday night's game vs. King Philip. Barry Chin/Globe Staff

Joe Griffith, whose son, Aidan, is on the current team at Franklin, spoke on behalf of the 1990s alumni. Chris Schmidt, an assistant under Bositis for 12 years before becoming athletic director at Nipmuc Regional, represented the 2000s, while Freddie Beckmann, a 2018 graduate-turned-assistant coach, represented the 2010s.

"Seeing him coach, from a players' perspective, I actually thought he was crazy at some points with some of the things he'd say or do," said Beckmann, a goalie at Regis College in Weston the last two seasons. "Now, being his assistant, I see there's a method to his madness and it shows results."

Ben Moccia, Tyler Powderly and Terry O'Neill, captains of the 2020 team, also spoke at the event in honor of Bositis, who retired from teaching physical education in Franklin in 2009.

"I know from personal experience he treats every practice and every game with a clear passion that rubs off on all of his players," O'Neill said.

Talking earlier this fall about his tenure at Franklin, Bositis said, "It's a privilege to coach here, there is tremendous support from the community," Bositis said. "We have *great* kids, and great youth programs."





October 16, 2020 (MetroWest Daily News)

## **Franklin's half-century man: Longtime Panthers boys soccer coach Fran Bositis celebrated in 50th year at helm**

---

Fran Bositis' team may have just lost to King Philip, but what followed was the ultimate mood-lifter: a socially distanced ceremony put on by members of the Franklin boys soccer community to honor their coach, now in his 50th year coaching the Panthers.

FRANKLIN – While wrapping up his post-game duties, Fran Bositis had his back turned for several minutes, unaware that a crowd of people was gathering behind him on Pisini Field.

Donning salmon-colored shorts and a dark blue Franklin Soccer pullover sweatshirt, the Franklin boys soccer coach eventually turned around and made his way out to midfield. Taking his place in the middle of the crowd, Bositis was greeted there by his wife, Christine.

Bositis' team may have just lost, 4-1, to King Philip, but what followed was the ultimate mood-lifter: an hour-plus long socially distanced ceremony put on by members of the Franklin boys soccer community to honor their coach, now in his 50th year coaching the Panthers.

“I had no idea at all (this was going to happen),” said Bositis. “So my wife and everybody else were really good about keeping secrets. It’s an incredible surprise party. I only wish we could’ve won today. But I’m truly blessed having spent so many years here. It’s been a great experience.”

Franklin boys lacrosse coach Lou Verrochi opened the event by welcoming everybody and sharing some kind words. Verrochi has known Bositis for 45 years and coached alongside him in both soccer and lacrosse.

“I could go on forever about what this man – one of my closest friends – has meant to so many athletes, coaches, and myself over the past 50 years,” said Verrochi. “He runs his program with integrity and complete dedication to his athletes. He embodies the meaning of the word ‘Coach.’ ”

Rich Frongillo – a member of the Panthers’ first Hockomock championship team in 1983 – then gave some history of Bositis and the program. He mentioned how Gordon McClay started the youth program in town and how he was the first Franklin head coach in 1970 – choosing only to do so for a year to allow time to find a new coach.

Bositis took over the following year after arriving in town in 1971 as a physical education major out of UMass-Amherst, where he played lacrosse. With former Dean College coach TJ Williams instrumental in helping him learn and love the game, 50 years later, Bositis has 490 career wins (according to Frongillo) that included an Eastern Mass. championship in 1976 and nine league titles.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Bositis’ career as a soccer coach is that he actually wanted to coach football. He knew very little about soccer when first offered the job by former Franklin athletic director and football coach Jerry Leone.

“Franklin was in the middle of a 32-game winning streak,” said Bositis. “Jerry told me he didn’t have any openings on his staff, but he said ‘What I do need is a soccer coach. What do you know about soccer?’ I said ‘Not a heck of a lot.’ He said ‘If you want the job, it’s yours.’ So, I took it.”

With plenty of boys soccer alumni in attendance, one former player or co-worker from each of the five decades – 1970s (Kirk Simon), 1980s (Joe Gruseck), 1990s (Joe Griffith), 2000s (Chris Schmidt), and 2010s (Freddie Beckmann) – proceeded to speak.

Gruseck is a 1984 Franklin grad who played on the first league title team and is the current boys coach at Dover-Sherborn. He discussed how Bositis continuously preached commitment, dedication, and accountability. Gruseck also touched on the bond of past players – no matter the age – and how many still continue to play together to this day.

“I think that’s a tribute to (Fran) and the program,” said Gruseck. “It didn’t matter what decade you came through. If you played at Franklin, you knew the style and you were able to play with everybody else.”

After Griffith, whose son, Aidan, is currently a senior on the team, spoke, it was Schmidt’s turn.

Schmidt – now the athletic director at Nipmuc – never played for Bositis, but was his assistant for 12 years. The two have remained close, as Bositis attended Schmidt’s wedding and was there for the birth of his son.

“I always joked that you’re like a second father to me,” said Schmidt. “I’m sort of the outsider here in that I didn’t play for you, but the funny thing is all I’ve ever called you is ‘Coach.’ In my house, you’re ‘Coach’. You have that impact on more than just your players. It’s been a privilege to learn under you and take so much from you, and ultimately watch our friendship grow over the last 20 years.”

Beckmann, a 2018 Franklin grad who is now an assistant coach and goalie at Regis College, then took his turn at the podium to share some thoughts.



“Seeing him coach, from a players’ perspective, I actually thought he was crazy at some points with some of the things he would say or do,” said Beckmann. “But, now, being able to be his assistant, I see there’s a method to his madness and it shows in the results.”

Bositis’ other assistant is Lou Moccia, whose son, Ben, is a senior captain. Moccia spoke before it was presentation time.

First, Franklin athletic director Tom Angelo presented Bositis with a commemorative keepsake that reads, ‘Coach Fran Bositis, in appreciation for 50 years of outstanding dedication to the Franklin High School boys soccer program.’

“Coach, thank you for all you’ve done, all you continue to do, and I hope you’re still around for the next 50 years,” said Angelo.

Anne Bergen, who worked with Bositis at the Horace Mann Middle School, then presented Bositis with a plaque on behalf of the Franklin Public Schools Committee.

On it is the following quote: “A good coach can change a game; a great coach can change a life.”

Ben Moccia and fellow captains Tyler Powderly and Terry O’Neill followed with a few words of their own. They also gave Bositis several small gifts, including celebratory balloons, and handed his wife some flowers.

Before the event wrapped up, Bositis shared some thoughts on what the event and coaching at Franklin has meant to him.

“A big ‘Thank you’ to everybody,” he said. “I can’t really believe this. It’s been an incredible 50 years. I consider it a privilege to coach at Franklin High School. I feel like the luckiest man in the world that I’ve had the opportunity to work with so many wonderful people and outstanding athletes. I’m a man of few words. I don’t have much to say. I’m just blown away.”