

Bill Santilli, Head Coach of the 2007 Division 8 Michigan State Champion Forest Park Trojans, will be the guest speaker at tonight's All-Star Banquet.

It is fitting that we call tonight a night of All-Stars, because there are many in the room. We have current all-star players and coaches and we have past all-star players and coaches. We also have many players who would surely have been all-star players had this game been around when they played.

However, no matter what kind of all-star player or coach you are or were, or what your accomplishments have been, they are measured against Bill Santilli's. Current all-star players, pay attention to these numbers, because they are staggering. As a high school player for Crystal Falls, he led them to the 1975 Class D State Championship. Despite the fact that football is team sport, we often say that a certain player led his team to this victory or that, but in Bill's case, we need not look any further than the numbers to know that was absolutely true. In 1975, he set a single season scoring record for Michigan with 226 points. In Crystal's 67-0 state semifinal victory he scored 44 points and in the state final game, which Crystal Falls won 50-0, he rushed for 179 yards and scored 24 points. In that season, he also set a state record with 1965 yards rushing. Bill also became the first Class D player in Michigan history to be named to the Detroit Free Press All-State Dream Team. In his career, he rushed for 3953 yards and scored 402 points. That would be enough for anyone, but those are just his stats as a player.

As a coach, he also has set the bar very high. In 18 years as the head coach for Forest Park, he amassed a record of 171 wins and only 46 losses. Included in all of those wins his Trojan teams had 17 consecutive playoff appearances, 13 conference championships, 11 district titles, 9 regional titles, U.P. team of the year 6 times, 6 state final appearances and a state championship in 2007. He retired as the head coach for Forest Park after this past season, and has left a legacy that will be remembered forever. Because of the strength of his program, I'm sure there were many U.P. coaches that would gladly accept an invite to Bill's retirement party knowing they would not see him on an opposing sideline next year.

For Coach Santilli's many accomplishments, he was inducted into the U.P. Sports Hall of Fame in 2005.

In addition to his varsity athletic accomplishments, Coach Santilli also has coached the 7th grade boys basketball team for the last 24 years, and has been involved with little league baseball and elementary basketball as well. He was also named Crystal Falls Co-Citizen of the Year, along with his long-time Defensive Coordinator Dave Graff.

In addition, Bill was the first West All-Star Head Coach, and I am forever grateful for his acceptance of that position, when nobody up here knew anything about this game, or why some guy from Wisconsin would want to take it on. Thanks for taking a chance on me.

Bill's family includes his wife (Sally), Son (Tony), daughter-in-law (Lacy), granddaughter (Kenedy), Son (Scott) and daughter-in-law (Kristina).

He will surely be missed by many Forest Park fans, but we have him for ourselves tonight, so please help me welcome my good friend Bill Santilli as our guest speaker.

