



The Golf Chronicles

The story of golf at Reading Country Club and in Berks County



Number 39 • March 17, 2016

Celebrating the Great Bill Reedy

Who's your Varipapa?

Much of the information in *The Golf Chronicles* is based on articles printed in the *Reading Eagle*. Thankfully the *Eagle's* sports staff covered not only golf, but the wide world of sports. To coin a phrase. They were ga-ga over baseball (they scrutinized every move of the Reading Aces and the Keystones—everybody called them the Keys—of the International League) and football: professional, college (remember the Schuylkill Seminary College Parsons?) and high school. Does anybody recall the nick-name of West Reading High School's teams? What were the Wilson teams before they became the Bulldogs?

The *Eagle's* sports reporters provided in-depth coverage of local golf, both amateur and professional. And make no mistake, professional golf thrived in Berks County with the Central Pennsylvania Open in the 1920s, '30s and early '40s; the Reading Open, a PGA Tour event played in 1947 through 1951; the PGA Ryder Cup Challenge played at Reading Country Club in 1953; the LPGA Betsy King Classic played at Berkleigh Country Club from 1996 to 2004 (winners include **Annika Sorenstam**, **Se Ri Pak** and **Lorena Ochoa**), and numerous exhibitions that brought the world's greatest golfers to Berks County fairways.

And where there was golf, there was a *Reading Eagle* sports writer. Or two. The results and the color of golf in Berks County lives on because of their efforts.

In this issue of *The Golf Chronicles*, we take a look at Reading's greatest sports scribe, **Bill Reedy**.

Andy who? Didja ever hear of **Andy Varipapa**? Bill Reedy did. And he wrote about him. Count yourself of a certain age—or consider yourself a sports trivia barn owl—if you can name Varipapa's sport. Know for certain that **Max Klinger** mentioned him in an episode of M*A*S*H.

Bill Reedy wrote about Andy Varipapa in his column of August 11, 1957, appearing on page 23 of the *Reading Eagle*. He wrote about so much more. He covered the basics of American sport. Baseball. Football. Basketball. Golf. Boxing. He also commented on what the mavens of college athletics laughingly call "non-revenue" sports. Swimming. Track and field. Wrestling. Tennis. Volleyball. Soccer.

He wrote about auto racing when the only event that penetrated the national news was the Indy 500. Bill was partial to Berks County native **Tommy Hinnerschitz**, who raced against the era's biggest stars from **Louie Meyer** to **A.J. Foyt**. This was long before Nascar was born and even longer before it escaped the South.

He wrote about trap shooting. Did you know that in 1954, Berks Countians **Bob** and **Frank Diefenderfer** broke 390 out of 400 clays in the Grand American tournament to win the national father-son championship? That the South End Gun Club, located on Lorane Road in Exeter Township, is the oldest in the land?

How about **Aurelio "Ray" Fabiani**. Ever hear of him? If you were a boy in the Philly area in the '60s, you quite likely watched Fabiani's Mat Time on tv. Reedy described Fabiani as a 'wrestling maestro' in his column of June 7, 1939. Fabiani promoted numerous rasslin' shows at the Reading Armory.

Bill Reedy knew all that stuff and he wrote about it.

By 1931, Reedy's photo accompanied his by-lined articles. This is from his May 2 article about the Reading Keys 8-4 victory over the Toronto Leafs at Lauer's Park.



William T. Reedy.

The Reedys of Reading were a Writin' Family

Three Reedy brothers joined the ranks of the ink-stained wretches of the fourth estate.

Bill Reedy was a sports journalist for 46 years, including 40 as sports editor at the *Reading Eagle*. Except for his time in the service, it's the only job he ever had.

Tom Reedy also wrote for the *Eagle*. His credits include a golf column, "From Tee to Green", in the 1930s. In 1945, he joined the Associated Press as a foreign correspondent posted in Germany, Czechoslovakia and Sweden. He was later named chief of the AP's Scandinavian bureau. Tom covered sporting events for the AP, including the British Open, golf's World Cup and the Walker Cup team competition between U.S. and British amateur golfers.

Ruth Reedy, Tom's wife, also wrote the occasional article for the AP.

Bob Reedy was assistant county editor for the *Reading Times* at the time of Bill's death in 1958. Bob also wrote a column called "Barks from Berks". It was about dogs, not trees.



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Reedy's column, began August 15, 1931, featured this artwork. That column included commentary on **Gene Venzke**, "the little Oley flyer", and his failed attempt to make the U.S. Olympic team as a miler; **Art Gable's** loss in the final match for the Riverside Golf Club championship, a rarity because Gable was a southpaw; a 75-yard foot race between **Buck Newsome**, a pitcher for the Albany Senators, and **Vince Barton**, the Reading Keys' former slugger, staged as an attraction before a game in Albany (won by Newsom, described by Reedy as "an awkward, rangy lad of well over six feet"; and Reading's **Frances Bettinger**, who was the sole Berks entry in the national trapshooting championship to be contested in Dayton, Ohio.

Learn from the Master

Here is **Bill Reedy's** writing advice, related by **Bob Riegner**, *Eagle* sports writer, three days after Reedy's death: "Always avoid repeating yourself. Keep your columns lively and as up to date as possible. If you must use things from the past, make certain you tie them up with something timely and that you can keep your reader interested. You must make things as easy to read as you can. Don't clutter up your stories and make things confusing for the reader."

A teen editor. And who was Bill Reedy? He was a genius. He was the mainstay of the *Reading Eagle* sports pages from 1913 until his death in 1958, a span of 46 years. His first newspaper job was as a copy boy for the *Reading Telegram*. He joined the *Eagle* in 1912 and was promoted to sports editor a year later at age 17. He stayed on for more than 40 years. His only time away from the newspaper was in 1917-18 when he served in the army during World War 1 when Second Lieutenant Reedy was posted to France.

His early work was done without recognition. In the 1910s, the *Eagle's* sports reporting was limited to about 2/3rds of a page. The news was mostly wire service reports of baseball games, fights, horse racing and the like. Reedy the editor most likely did re-writes from the news wires. If nothing else, he learned how to pack as much interest and information as possible into limited space.

One of his earliest by-lined articles appeared on January 22, 1923, under the name **William T. Reedy**, although he was not identified as sports editor. The article focused on International League baseball. He also added a paragraph about and the Reading Independents, a basketball team made up of players formerly with the Reading Bears of the Eastern Basketball League, which had ceased operation the previous week. Among the reasons cited for the league's demise was exorbitant player salaries.

In 1924, his byline included the tag, Sports Editor of The Eagle.

His column, Sports of all Sorts, was in place by October 1931. His by-line identified him as Bill Reedy, sports editor. The column claimed the upper left corner of the first sports page.

His columns are what sports columns should be. Witty. Succinct. The first article you want to read when the paper hits your doorstep. Or your in-box. However you receive news. His associates estimated that Reedy wrote hundreds of thousands of words. For many years, his sports column appeared seven days per week. He had no trouble pounding out 900 or so words, relying on his long memory and a large file of newspaper clippings and statistics.

Reedy was as much a part of the Berks sports scene as bats, balls and gloves. He was as omnipresent as air. He cared about and reported the results—games are played, after all, to determine a winner—but he cared more about the people who played. He wrote about their lives. Their successes and failures. He hailed the winners and suffered with the losers.

A Reading native, Reedy was a member of St. Margaret's Roman Catholic Church. He was also an honorary member of the Reading Jewish Community Center, which says something about the man.

Game ball. Of the many awards he received, his most prized was the game ball used in Reading High's victory over Pottsville in the 1952 Thanksgiving Day game. Here's the lead in the game story from the *Eagle*, November 28: "Capitalizing on enemy fumbles, Reading High's gridiron warriors closed their 1952 books yesterday with a 19-0 win over their traditional Turkey Day rival, Pottsville High, before 6,800 persons at Albright College stadium." That is sports reporting at its best.

Even after stepping down as sports editor in 1954 because of ill health, he continued to write columns and reported to his desk almost daily. **Paul Lukas** replaced Reedy as sports editor, a position he held for 27 years. Lukas died on May 10, 1993, at age 80. According to a story in the *Eagle* on May 12, 1993, Lukas learned he had been promoted to sports editor while recovering from hemorrhoid surgery. For some reason, that's funny.

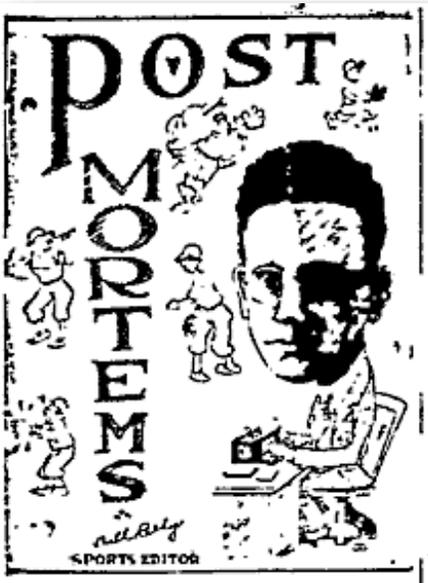


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Here is more Reedy column art, this from April 15, 1932, an article about the Keys 1-0 victory over the Montreal Royals.

All About Bill

Reedy's encounter at an oldtimers' banquet with the legendary slugger Frank "Home Run" Baker was described in a column written by Jerry Korbin on February 3, 1950:

"On their way back to the Abe Lincoln, Reedy was startled when Baker suggested a drink before retiring. Reedy accepted, and speculated that Demon Rum had opened a chink in The Hero's virtuous armor. 'Good,' said Baker, leading the dazed sports scribe into the drug store. 'I'm dying for an ice-cream soda.'"

Reedy's column that day previewed the upcoming PIAA basketball play-offs.

Above the fold. Bill Reedy died at St. Joseph's Hospital on September 22, 1958, at age 62. He had been at his desk just three days prior. His death was front page news, above the fold, sandwiched amongst articles about a budding conflict between the United States and China over the island of Formosa, school integration in Arkansas, and the rumored resignation of **Sherman Adams**, a top aide to **President Eisenhower**.

And why shouldn't his passing receive such treatment? His time at the Eagle spanned the era stretching from **Babe Ruth** to **Hank Aaron**. He had a lot to write about.

Oh, and Andy Varipapa? Professional bowler with a specialty in trick shots. West Reading was the Cowboys before the merger with the Wyomissing Warriors in 1969. Students at the new Wyomissing Area School District chose Spartans for their school nickname. Before 1960, fans cheered for the Wilson Presidents, who were sometimes referred to as the Prexies. You can look it up.



Reedy's column artwork change on August 28, 1936. This style would adorn Reedy's columns until September 17, 1958. That was his last entry and you can read it on the next page.

Reading stayed in the International League just long enough to give local fans an eyeful of a player who, today, is credited with being a major factor in the rise of the New York Giants to first place in the National League race. I refer to Jimmy Ripple, starring in his freshman year in the majors for Bill Terry to share some of the Gotham spotlight with Joe DiMaggio, the Yankees' phenomenal yearling . . . Hitting consistently for an average of around .330, with a chance to crowd Mel Ott out of the batting laurels on Terry's streaking club, Ripple has finally captured the fancy of New York enthusiasts and writers Jimmy, however, was just as sensational when he first appeared at Lauer's Park with the Montreal Royals in 1932, the year Clarence Rowland moved the local franchise to Albany.

This column from 1936 also included comments on the upcoming Berks County open track and field championships at George Field; Berks County Amateur golf champion **Bob Dinsmore's** failure to qualify for the U.S. amateur at Merion Cricket Club; Reading High's new head football coach, **Harold Rock**; and several Berks competitors in the Lancaster County tennis championships.

Reading opened the 1932 campaign with Montreal at home and in the third game of the inaugural series Ripple made one of the greatest fielding plays in local history . . . Here's how this column described that play at the time: "We have seen catches and more catches, but none more crazy and disheartening to the home people than the one Jimmy Ripple pulled down on Bramhall's long fly. Out of position when Bramhall smacked the ball into the far reaches of left center, Ripple scampered across the garden in Paddock fashion with his gloved hand hoisted high over his head. Then, with a final, almost superhuman lunge, he speared the ball and robbed Bramhall of at least a double. No Haines, Gilhooly or Goebel ever ripped off a more amazing catch than this one."

That wasn't all the Montreal rookie accomplished in the same contest . . . Replacing the veteran and injured Tom Gulley in the Royals' outfield, he drove in four tallies with a home run, double and single . . . For the balance of the season the name of Ripple was poison to Reading pitchers and hitters with his distance clouting and spectacular fielding . . . In the very last International League contest played at Lauer's Park on August 3, the day of the transfer of the Reading Keys, Jimmy walloped George Milstead and Whitey Campbell for four safe belts . . . With the passing of the Keys from the baseball picture there was one consolation . . . We didn't have to watch Jimmy's hitting, fielding, throwing and base running play any further havoc . . . It has always been a mystery to me why it took Ripple four years to get up to the big leagues.



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On September 22, 1958, the Reading Eagle printed this tribute to Bill Reedy on the editorial page.

William T. Reedy

Every now and then there comes along a man who writes a brilliant page of achievement in the field to which he has chosen to dedicate his life.

Such a man was William T. (Bill) Reedy, veteran sports columnist of The Reading Eagle.

For 46 years the name of Bill Reedy was synonymous with the sports department of The Eagle. He started his career at The Eagle in 1912 as a youth of 16 and became sports editor in 1913.

Bill Reedy literally got in on the ground floor of sports writing and grew up with the profession as it expanded from a limited sphere to the vast field it encompasses today.

He loved his work. He grew steadily in journalistic stature as he took advantage of the many challenges presented by the changing picture in the field of sports writing. He was a trail blazer in many phases of his profession.

The thousands of words written by Reedy during his long career with The Eagle represent a history of sports in the Reading area over a period of more than four decades. He had a tremendous amount of information at his finger tips about persons and events in the sports world.

Bill Reedy the man made just as much of a mark on the world in which he lived as Bill Reedy the sports writer, editor and columnist. He was admired and respected by those with whom he worked and by a legion of friends and acquaintances in this community and outside its borders.

Death has stilled Bill Reedy's typewriter but his many fine qualities assure that he will continue to live on in the memories of those who knew him.

Bill Reedy's final column appeared in the traditional top-left position on September 17, 1958, five days before he died.



Bill Reedy:

★ ★ ★
Colarito on Way to Greatness,
Even as Pitcher If Necessary

Rocco Domenico Colavito, fully established as a major league slugging star at 25 years of age, goes into Cleveland's remaining nine games with a fighting chance at the American League home run crown but speculation on a possible pitching career for him still carries on in some quarters. Joe Gordon, his manager, does not imply any plan to reduce Rocky's out-fielding assignments for work on the mound but in an interview with Ed Rumill of the Christian Science Monitor he raves about both his potentialities as a pitcher and as a hitter. "I honestly think Colavito could be a 20-game winner if he acquired control," Gordon is quoted by Rumill. "He's as fast, maybe faster, than Bob Turley. In fact, my catchers tell me that on the sidelines, warming up, he's as fast as Herb Score. And he looks like a pitcher. He wouldn't embarrass you. But Rocky is still young and green at bat. I mean, he figures to be much better than he is today. He has more confidence than I ever saw in a hitter. I mean that. He has more than all of them, including the DiMaggios and the Williamses. He thinks he's going to hit one over everything on each trip up there. He plays a good right field and that arm can make up for many a mistake."

In my personal opinion, it would be a pity to even seriously consider transforming Colavito into a regular pitcher because he has proved to be an invaluable hitter this season. Only a few moundsmen ever get to be 20-game winners but Rocky is apt to win that many contests year after year with his mighty willow and arm. Green as he is, to use the language of Manager Gordon, Colavito entered last night's game with a batting average of .302. At no time in seven previous years of service in Organized Baseball has Temple's transplanted citizen from the Bronx ever approached this figure over a full season. The best approach was .276 for 101 games he played with the Tribe as a rookie in 1936.

If Rocky Colavito was a Yankee, he probably would win the American League's most valuable player award of 1938 hands down but this is a very difficult honor to attain when performing with a team not in the pennant race. As of yesterday, he was breathing down the necks of both Mickey Mantle and Roy Sievers for home run laurels on his 37 circuit clouts, three less than that of the Yankees' pacesetter. The top total in his career was 38 he smashed for Indianapolis in the American Assn. in 1934. He has surpassed even his own predictions after having promised Bobby Bragan he would hit 35 homers if played regularly. Later, he remarked he probably made a mistake, that he should have figured on 30 because he had missed a number of games. With 105 runs-batted-in, he trails only Boston's Jackie Jensen who had 10 more than he yesterday. Rocky's all-time high is 121 he logged with Reading in 1953.

The impressive feature of Colavito's truly glorious year in his third season as a major leaguer is a vast over-all improvement, especially in hitting safely with more consistency. It is reported that Joe Gordon told a luncheon group and in Rocky's presence "This boy is on his way to becoming the best hitter in baseball." The report emanated from the typewriter of Cleveland's Hal Lebovitz in a dispatch to the Sporting News. In the same yarn, Cookie Lavagetto, Washington manager, was quoted as having declared that "Rocky has got to be the American League's All-Star rightfielder for the next 10 years. He can't miss." Cookie ignored the fact that the managers, coaches and players passed up Cleveland's siege gun for the 1958 All-Star classic in Baltimore. They gave the nod to Jackie Jensen who is also enjoying a wonderful season, probably his peak for he is in his 32nd year of life. So Cookie could be right about the future. As to Manager Gordon's appraisal of Rocky's confidence, it comes as no surprise. He has never been without it, even in the throes of deep slumps. In the spring of 1953 when Colavito was hitting under .200 and fanning so often, Red Ruffing visited the Reading squad as Hank Greenberg's personal ambassador. He chided players who were not producing and they took it with lowered heads, but not Colavito. "Don't worry about me," answered Rocky with chin high. "I'll get going." And he did to lead the Eastern League in homers and RBIs. The faith of this youth in himself is of an incredibly high standard and Joe Gordon wasn't kidding when he rated it over that of Joe DiMaggio and Ted Williams.

Cleveland's search for a first baseman of Ruthian power and fielding agility as well may have been lighted with the right torch at the Municipal Stadium during the second half of the past Eastern League season. I have seen but very few men hit a ball harder or longer than Harry Messick, who came here from the campus of the University of Arizona in June. Not even Williamsport's Dale Bennetch from Newmanstown showed greater power. Yes, he looked bad at times against curve balls with a resultant low batting average but who looked worse against curves than Rocky Colavito here in the spring of 1953? And Rocky had the advantage of spring training, also two full seasons of minor league play behind him. Watch the future of Messick! He's my choice as Reading's newest top prospect. And what a live, thinking ball player at first base!

Sports Fan Fare

By Paul Lukas

Eagle Sports Editor

15th Anniversary of Undefeated Gridders

Fifteen years ago Shillington High (now a part of the Gov. Mifflin Jointure) had its first and only undefeated football season . . . Under Coach Bill Firing the Speedboys finished with a record of 7 wins and 1 tie (with Boyertown) Due honor will be made to the team at the Gov. Mifflin-Wilson High grid contest Friday night, Oct. 10 at Albright Stadium

Shillington's starters in the 20-0 win over Lititz in the finale included Ike Hassler and Bill Harding, ends; Bob Homan and Pierce Leshner, tackles; Dick Fister, co-captain, and Grant White, guards; Johnny Roberts, center; Gene Frymoyer, quarterback; Kenny Kohl and Lloyd Gehman, halfbacks, and Bill Einsele, fullback . . . Hassler, flashy end from Adams-town, scored three touchdowns and two extra points in the final game of the campaign . . . The Speedboys in 1943 rolled up wins over Lititz, twice; Nazareth, Royersford, Elizabethtown, Ephrata and Reading High Jayvees . . . The 13-13 stalemate with Boyertown not only kept the Speedboys from an unbeaten, untied season, but forced them to share the mythical Berks County scholastic championship with the Bears.



PAUL LUKAS

HALFTIME CEREMONY — J. Allen Richards, Gov. Mifflin athletic director, who was an assistant coach of Shillington grid forces in 1943, plans to invite (by letter) members of that team to attend the Oct. 10 event . . . They will be introduced at halftime . . . Last week Gov. Mifflin celebrated Parents Day as the Mustangs defeated Nazareth, 13-7, at Albright Stadium.

HOW THEY FINISHED — Jesse Levan, veteran infielder with Chattanooga in the Southern Assn., had a .292 batting average with 163 hits in 558 times at bat, together with 90 runs batted in, 26 homers, 4 triples and 15 doubles . . . Ronnie Weidenhammer, infielder for Olean, N.Y., in the Class D New York-Pennsylvania League, finished with a .287 mark

BILL REEDY'S SPORTS COLUMN IS OMITTED BECAUSE OF ILLNESS

based on 102 hits in 356 attempts . . . Infielder Robert Smith had a .176 average with Duluth, Minn., in the Class C Northern League, 78 hits in 443 tries . . . The battling leader among Reading-Berks products in the minors was Paul Price, former Fleetwood High and Moravian College athlete, who led the New York-Pennsylvania League with a .336 batting mark . . . Price played the infield for Olean . . . Among the pitchers, Morris Feick, Birdsboro, had a 3-3 record for McCook, Neb., in the Nebraska State Class D League, and John Weiss, Boyertown, posted a 2-3 mark for Wytheville, Va., in the Class D Appalachian League . . . Feick fanned 49 and walked 31 in 37 innings, while Weiss struck out 35 and walked 19 in 54 frames.

SHORT, SHORT SPORTS — When Muhlenberg High meets Whitehall tonight at the Albright Stadium, many Muhl football followers will see Harold Steff, new Muhlenberg coach, in action for the first time . . . Steff came down from Minersville to succeed John White who advanced to director of athletics at Kutztown State Teachers College . . . The Muhls lost their opener to Emmaus, 16-13, last week at Emmaus . . . Vanderbilt at Missouri is the NCAA national TV game tomorrow afternoon . . . Dan Devine, who piloted Arizona State (Tempe) to an undefeated season in 1957, has installed his multiple offense at Missouri . . . Many Pennsylvanians, including the Jankans brothers, John and Bart, played under Coach Devine at Arizona State.

Reedy's absence was noted in this column from Paul Lukas, sports editor, on September 19, 1958.