

SAVAGE Pacer



PLHS stadium named for Dan Patch

Erika Wittekind, staff writer, Savage Pacer & Prior Lake American, Tuesday, December 14, 2004

Prior Lake-Savage Area School Board members discarded the three names suggested for the new high school stadium and went for a shorter version they agreed brings to mind high levels of local achievement: Dan Patch Stadium.

The committee in charge of making recommendations for the stadium name presented the three frontrunners to the board in November: Laker Track and Field at Dan Patch Stadium, Laker Stadium, or Laker Track and Field at Competition Stadium.

On Monday, Superintendent Tom Westerhaus, who led the committee, said the main reason the committee liked the name of Dan Patch was that the famous racehorse with ties to Savage exemplified a champion.

Dan Patch belonged to Marion Willis Savage, for whom the city of Savage was named. In 1906, the beloved racehorse broke a world record at the Minnesota State Fair by completing the mile in one minute and 55 seconds, a record that stood for 54 years.

“The key was, did we want to be world-class in everything we do? And Dan Patch was,” Westerhaus said.

Several board members said they didn’t like the longer names and had not intended to give the track and field a separate name. Board Member Michael Murray suggested the first name be shortened to just Dan Patch Stadium, a choice the board later supported unanimously.

Board Member Dick Booth agreed, saying two of the options were too long, and it was unnecessary to name the track and field.

“Dan Patch Stadium says a lot about where the school is located, and it says a lot for the Savage/Dan Patch contribution to the district. I think that might be the right thing to do,” Booth said. He added, “Laker Stadium at Prior Lake High School is almost redundant.”

Besides the affiliation with a world champion, Westerhaus said the name fulfilled the board’s desire to promote unity, and it didn’t hurt that the stadium has a horseshoe shape. He also responded to criticism he has heard that the stadium name suggestions were a slap in the face to Savage residents who wanted their city included in the name of the high school.

“I cannot emphasize enough ... we did want to honor the unity issue and also wanted to deal with the issue of high expectations,” Westerhaus said. “It was not throwing a bone to a group that we were trying to placate.”

He added that Savage had broad representation on the stadium naming committee. In addition to administrators and staff members, the committee included two community members from Savage and three from Prior Lake.

Before the vote, Board Member Sue Bruns expressed some concerns about community participation in the process. The committee received 23 suggestions with 17 distinct names, and board members said they hadn’t received much feedback from the community since the finalists were named.

“The committee was disappointed in the number of responses. The committee couldn’t come to a consensus. I’m not feeling a strong feeling,” Bruns said. “I’m very surprised. This was a very important issue at one point. I have no idea how to choose.”

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