

OCTOBER 08

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Participation Survey

Record number competes in high school sports

Cheerleading

Recent injury reports misleading

Legal Issues

Athlete behavior policies challenged in courts

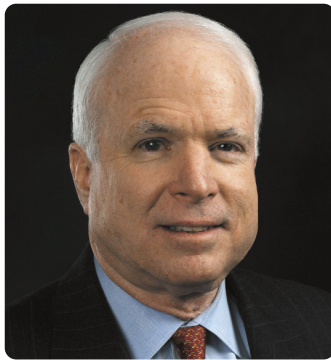
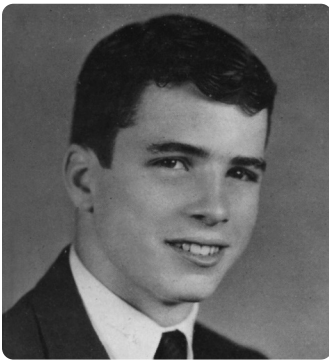
Presidential Candidates

Roads to Leadership Started in High School Sports



Presidential Candidates Benefited From High School Sports

BY BILL BOYLE



In the halls of high schools across the country, two wonderful sports share the winter season: basketball and wrestling. Both require a unique set of skills. While they are very different from one another, both are a test of character and athletic skill. Mastery of both sports requires patience, hard work and more than a little talent.

Be careful how you answer the question – are you a wrestler or a basketball player? The answer to that simple question may say more about you than you realize.

Basketball is a uniquely American sport, a relative newcomer in the world of athletic competition. Despite its short history, basketball has swept the earth. It requires teamwork, precision, endurance and anticipation.

Wrestling has been contested for a much longer period of time, a sport identified by the Greeks and Romans as a test of character and athletic skill. It requires strength, tenacity, leverage and endurance.

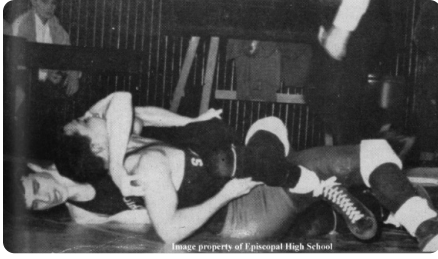
The national debate that will culminate in the November 4 presidential election is between a former high school wrestler (John McCain) and a former high school basketball player (Barack Obama).

While both men have achieved great accomplishments since their days in high school, both trace the core principles that drive their lives to the lessons learned in the classrooms and playing fields of their youth.

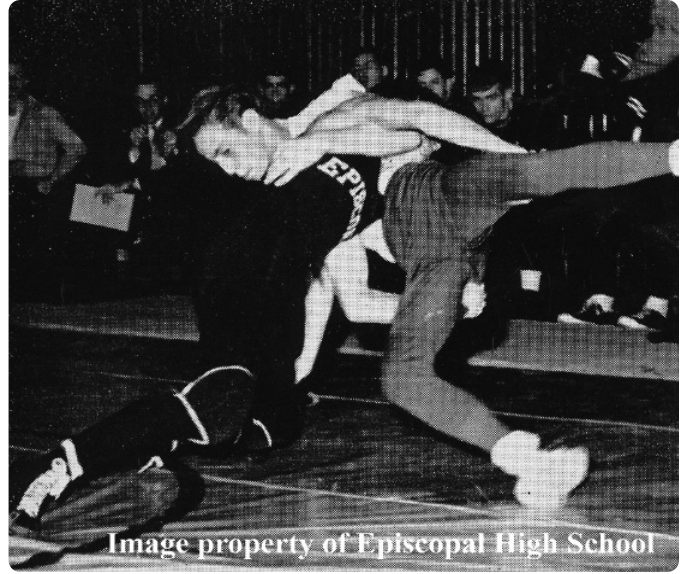
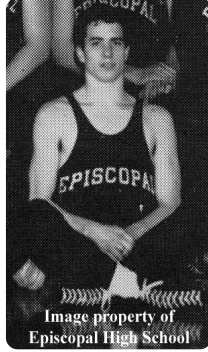
John McCain entered Episcopal High School in Alexandria, Virginia in 1951. As the son and grandson of Navy Admirals, McCain had been raised in the military and, as a result, had moved more than a dozen times. In his early years, McCain attended many schools in many areas, but he was able to spend his entire high school years at Episcopal High School.

At the time, Episcopal High School was a male-only boarding school that was known as a strict and stark institution. “The High School,” as it was known, was started by the Episcopal Church in 1839. Except for being closed for five years during the Civil War (when some buildings were used as hospitals for Union troops), the school has been in operation for the subsequent 169 years.

McCain was involved in a large number of activities at the school, both athletic and academic. He participated on the Maroon football, wrestling and tennis teams, where he earned a reputation for toughness and the willingness to get into a fight.



John McCain
EPISCOPAL
HIGH SCHOOL



It was on the Episcopal High School wrestling team that McCain had the most success. He made a quick early impression, setting the school record for fastest pin in his sophomore year. He was known by a number of nicknames at the school, including "McNasty" and "The Punk." As a senior, McCain tipped the scales in the 129-pound weight class.

The future senator also participated in a number of additional activities throughout his high school years, including the yearbook and newspaper clubs.

The high school yearbook entry for McCain says, "It was three fateful years ago that the 'Punk' first crossed the threshold of The High School. In this time he has become infamous as one of our top-flight wrestlers, lettering for two seasons. His magnetic personality has won for him many lifelong friends. But, as magnets must also repel, some have found him hard to get along with. John is remarkable for the amount of gray hair he has; this may come from his cramming for Annapolis or from his nocturnal perambulations. The Naval Academy is his future abode – we hope he will prosper there."

The lessons of discipline, self-control and endurance that are inherent in the sport of wrestling were put to use several years later, when McCain was shot down over Vietnam and spent several years in the North Vietnamese prisoner of war camp known as the "Hanoi Hilton."

McCain refused offers of early release that were made because his father was the commander of all U.S. forces in Vietnam. He ended up languishing for 5½ years as a prisoner of war.

In addition to the wounds he suffered when he was shot down, McCain was tortured and mistreated during his time in the prison camp. To this day, the wounds he suffered in North Vietnam leave him unable to raise his arms above his head.

He returned to the United States a changed man and later at-

tributed the strength he developed in the prison camp to the lessons learned at Episcopal High School.

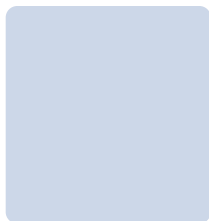
In an April 2008 visit to Episcopal High School, McCain mentioned the school's honor code. "If there is any reason for my success in life, it is because of what I learned at The High School, much of it through the Honor Code. I learned that character is what you are in the dark ... I have been in the dark, not just in prison but also in my public life, and during those times and throughout my life, the principles of the Honor Code are the compass that I've tried to follow."

McCain also mentioned an Episcopal High School English teacher, William Ravenel, as an important influence on his life. McCain referred to Ravenel as "one of the best men I have known" and added, "His influence in my life was more important and more benevolent than that of any person outside my family."

Several years later, and on the opposite side of the sprawling nation, a young Barack Obama entered Punahou School in Honolulu, Hawaii as a fifth-grade student. Obama was born in Honolulu in 1961, and after his parents' divorce, had spent several years in Indonesia with his mother and stepfather. He moved back to Hawaii and lived with his grandparents until he graduated from the school in 1979. He was known as Barry Obama in his years at Punahou.

Punahou School is a private school that was founded in 1841 by missionaries for the Congregational Church. With more than 3,700 students from kindergarten through the 12th grade, Punahou is the largest independent school in the United States.

Punahou is renowned for its academic excellence and its athletic teams. In fact, Sports Illustrated recently named Punahou as having the top-rated high school athletic program in the United States. The Buff 'n Blue at Punahou claimed 16 Hawaii state titles in the past school year alone.



Barack Obama PUNAHOU SCHOOL



Barack Obama photos reprinted with permission of Punahou School, Honolulu, Hawaii.

Despite the fact that Punahou boasts a diverse and multi-cultural student body, Obama writes that he experienced some racial prejudice at the school. In fact, teasing on his first day at Punahou may have resulted in Barack deciding to be known as Barry at the school.

Obama was a reserve on the state championship Punahou boys basketball team in 1979. The forward was known for his dedication to the sport of basketball and earned the nickname "Barry O'Bomber" on the court. Now, nearly 30 years after graduation, Obama is still an enthusiastic fan and participant of basketball.

In addition to basketball, Obama was involved in many activities at Punahou, including the Literary Club.

In an essay for the *Punahou Bulletin*, published in 1999, two decades after his high school graduation, Obama wrote, "The opportunity that Hawaii offered – to experience a variety of cultures in a climate of mutual respect – became an integral part of my world view, and a basis for the values that I hold most dear."

After graduation, Obama left the islands to pursue higher education. He still returns to Hawaii to visit family and friends. In August 2008, in the final days leading up to the Democratic National Convention, Obama vacationed for a week in Hawaii.

On August 12, he met a number of high school friends for a 90-minute game of basketball at Punahou. Afterwards, while meeting with faculty and friends at the school, he discussed the important impact on his life of two teachers at the school: Paula Kurashige and Eric Kusunoki.

Kurashige was the dean of the Punahou Class of 1979 and supervised the education of the 420 graduates of the class. She is set to retire this year after more than 40 years of service to the school and its students.

Kurashige has fond memories of Obama at the school, re-

membering that he was outgoing, had a wonderful smile, and was genuine and good-spirited. She said that the Punahou School is "wedded to the idea of community service" and is proud that Obama's life has personified that concept.

"Our school president has a mantra that he repeats over and over, 'To whom much is given much is expected,'" explains Kurashige. "I was delighted when Barry returned to the school several years ago and said basically the same thing to the students."

Of Kusunoki, Obama has said, "Everything good I've done is because of Eric – everything bad – it's because I didn't listen to him."

Kusunoki was Obama's homeroom teacher during his four years at Punahou. He remembers Obama as wonderfully personable and well-liked. Kusunoki said he immediately recognized Obama when he returned to the school in August, "He has the same walk, the same smile and the same charisma that he had in high school," Kusunoki said.

"It is hard to look at a child in high school and say he will be president," Kusunoki said. "But I knew that he would be a success."

Kusunoki recently started his 35th year of teaching at Punahou. He said that as a child at the school, he got up very early one morning to watch the inauguration of President John F. Kennedy and his Irish-Catholic teacher, Bernadette Manning, told the class, "One of you may become the President of the United States."

"I've always remembered that experience, and I've shared it with my students through the years," Kusunoki recounts. "Who knows – that experience may happen to one of my students!" ●

Bill Boyle is editor and publisher of the San Juan Record in Monticello, Utah. He is also a member of the boards of the San Juan School District and the Utah High School Activities Association, and the High School Today Publications Committee.