

A night to remember



Photo by Jennifer Banas

Football team honors its heroes

By Gary Weckselblatt

When Ashton Herd woke up Saturday morning, he wasn't feeling too great. The Quakertown Community High School lineman and his Panthers had lost their first game, a physical contest, 17-14, to Cheltenham, dropping their record to 4-1.

But then Ashton turned on his laptop and clicked on Facebook. He soon remembered that no matter what the scoreboard said, his football team produced a winning effort before the game even began.

On the Quakertown Panther Football page, a message stated:

"Thank you for honoring my son last night and thank you to #74 for making my son feel so special!"

"That made my day," said Ashton, number 74. "I'm happy we could give them a night to remember."

Friday was Childhood Cancer Night



Photo by Jennifer Banas

The young people standing with their families include Liam Brennan, Oliver Brooks, Wyatt Rotenberger, Braden Sell and Cameron Wakeley.

at Alumni Field, and the stands were filled with black and gold to raise awareness for pediatric cancer. The football team honored five young people either currently battling the dreaded disease or have beaten it into remission. The heroes are:

- Liam Brennan, fourth grade, Quakertown
- Oliver Brooks, first grade, Trumbauersville
- Wyatt Rotenberger, seventh grade, Strayer

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HEROES

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- Braden Sell, seventh grade, Strayer
- Cameron Wakeley, first grade, homeschooled

The little guys were part of the team huddle, led the Panthers onto the field, and walked with the team captains to midfield for the coin toss. Ashton and his fellow captains -- Brad Bryan, Nick Levinski and Michael Terra -- held hands with the young warriors and escorted them to midfield and back to the sidelines.

"It was very humbling," said Ashton, who appreciated the post from Cameron's mom. "They're struggling to win their battles everyday. No matter what battles we have, they don't compare to their fight. We tried to involve them in the pregame routine and make them feel part of the team. Family is something we emphasize, and we wanted them to feel like part of our team family."

The football team began holding this special evening six years ago. Head coach George Banas lost his nephew, Parker Lutz, 10 years ago from neuroblastoma. Parker and Banas's son Logan, a junior on the football team, were best friends. On Friday night, the back of Banas' shirt read "Parker Power Forever."

"This is something that the community has really gotten behind," Banas said. "You can see the cheerleaders, the student body, they're really into it. They realize what it means to these families."

Last week the wrestling team put out a video in support of young Cam, a neighbor of sophomore wrestler Domenic DeFalco. On Cam's Corner, a Facebook page put together by the Wakeley family, is a photo of the girls volleyball team holding up signs in support of the youngster, including "Cam Can," and Cam, You Got This!"

Banas said his players have bought into the importance of the event. "They were excited to find those



Ashton Herd, 74, and Michael Terra, 21, applaud the youngsters at midfield.



Head Coach George Banas' shirt honors his nephew Parker Lutz, who died from neuroblastoma.

five kids waiting for them at the fence," he said. "Every captain wanted to have a hand walking out to the coin toss.

"They understand that these kids may never be able to step onto a

playing field. Everyday for them is a gift. They don't know if tomorrow is going to come."

During the coin toss, public address announcer Dave Fosbenner had a difficult time getting the words out as he asked for a moment of silence for Harrison Willing, who celebrated with the team during last year's event but lost his battle in the last year.

Banas noticed. "The moment of silence was long," he said. "No one said a word. They were respectful."

Ashton said he began "to tear up. I'm just happy the kids had a great time. They seemed truly happy to be with us."

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