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Behind the scenes: Good help for high school coaches is hard to find

By **Tommy R. Atkinson**

Staff writer

Roger McVicker is a man for all seasons.

The 65-year-old retiree has been lending a helping hand to St. Albans High School's sports programs for the past 20 years.

McVicker is the statistician for the boys basketball team in the winter and an assistant coach and scorekeeper for the baseball team in the spring.

He also cuts grass in the spring, summer and fall for the school's baseball, soccer and softball teams.

"He works on sprinkler systems, cuts trees, you name it, he does it," said St. Albans athletic director and baseball coach Rick Whitman. "I'm talking thousands of hours over the years. He's a big part of the reason our fields have improved so much.

"He's not just the guy on the tractor. He's helped different kids that nobody knows about. He's a guy the kids love to be around and joke with. They're appreciative of the things he does. He's definitely an integral part [of the program]."

McVicker's goodwill reaches far beyond St. Albans. He has been a fixture in college and youth sports in the Kanawha Valley for the past 40 years.

McVicker just completed his 34th season as a high school football official this past fall. He also spent 36 years as an umpire for prep baseball and 34 years as a high school boys basketball official before bad knees caught up with him.

For the past several years, McVicker has been the official statistician for the Hoops Classic, a weeklong boys and girls basketball fest at the Civic Center in early December.

McVicker also aided West Virginia State women's basketball coach Gill Heasley for five years as a bus driver and statistician, then helped the University of Charleston for three years after it revived its football program, filming games and hauling equipment.

"I've been around kids since 1962 when I was coaching American Legion baseball for Charleston West," said McVicker. "I like being around kids.

"I noticed some of the kids don't like to talk to the coaches if they have a problem at home or something like that. They'll come up and talk to me."

McVicker said sports have always been a big part of his life since participating in baseball, basketball and football at South Charleston High School in the late 1950s.

"It's always been in my blood," he said. "My wife understands. She says, 'What are you going to do today, cut grass?' I like to help all the coaches when they need help. It keeps me out of the house."

Whitman said he probably wouldn't be coaching if it wasn't for McVicker's touch.

"I doubt I'd be coaching if I didn't have somebody like Roger," Whitman said.

"If you don't have those kinds of people, it makes it harder on the coaches.

"He alleviates a lot of it. He doesn't want patted on the back, doesn't want recognized for things. Those guys are hard to find."

To contact staff writer Tommy R. Atkinson, use e-mail or call 348-4811.

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