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## Championship

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showed his appreciation.

"I remember when he kissed us at halftime," Jim Burton said. "I wish he hadn't done that."

Today, O'Hara still has nothing but kind words for his former players.

"It was just a group of great young men, and I'm finding out now that they're a group of great older men," he said. "None of them have changed much. They still have good values, good character and most of them are fairly successful. They were a special group of kids."

"They had pretty good soccer talent, but it wasn't the greatest soccer talent in the world. But they were all for one and one for all."

The returning teammates met before Friday's game at the Portuguese-American Citizens Club in Portsmouth and, according to Goulart, it was just like old times.

"It's amazing. You don't see guys for 30 years, and we're right back at it," Goulart said. "Once you get over the gray hair, we just kind of blend together the way we used to as a team."

In 1978, that team blended at the right time, Goulart said it wasn't so much the final game that he remembers most, but the whole run the Patriots went on to win the title.

"We sort of gained a lot of momentum toward the end of the season, kind of being long shots," he said.

The '78 Patriots, which finished the season 14-3-2, likely will be long shots again today when they scrimmage an under-14 Portsmouth Pirates youth team that Goulart coaches. For that game, O'Hara isn't necessarily optimistic about his team's chances.

"I think for the first five or 10 minutes, they will really be dominant," O'Hara said. "But as time goes on, the 14 team will have an edge. The further they get into the game, the more of an edge they'll have."

"When they brought the idea up, I laughed. I told them jokingly, 'I can still coach. I don't know if you guys can still play.' But they told me they can. Some of them are still pretty fit."

In that category is Jim Burton, who donned his letterman jacket for the halftime ceremony and didn't look too constricted.

"I think I was 130 (pounds) even. I don't know I was 140," Jim Burton said.

"I don't think either of us was," his brother replied.

Despite their relative lack of size, though, the Patriots were a pretty physical team, according to Jim Burton.

"We never really played the skill game. We just kind of beat the crap out of the other team," he said. "John and I just stood out on the wings and waited for them to pass us the ball."

Clearly, that was enough. And, as their coach says, the game isn't all about skill.

"They had desire, determination, all the intangible things," O'Hara said. "Skill is great, but you can't win in any sport with just the best players. You have to have the best team, and that year, we had the best team."

Of the 23 players on that team, 14 were in attendance on Friday. A moment of silence was observed for two of the players — Steve Proctor and David White — who have passed away.

Tri-captains Todd Chaplin (midfielder/defender), Jim Melvin (midfielder/defender) and Steve Souza (midfielder) all were there.

"A lot of them still stay in close contact," assistant coach Ray Sabourin said. "So whatever friendships they formed, they kept."

# That CHAMPIONSHIP feeling



Jacqueline Marque ♦ Daily News staff

Pete O'Hara, coach of the 1978 Portsmouth High School boys soccer team, shakes hands with his players on Friday during a reunion at halftime of the current team's game. Fourteen of the team's 23 members attended.

## 'You don't see guys for 30 years, and we're right back at it.'

Mark Goulart, forward on the 1978 Portsmouth High School state championship team

Members of the 1978 Portsmouth High School boys soccer team reunite to celebrate the school's first state championship.

By Josh Krueger  
Daily News staff

ANYONE who's played high school sports can probably remember a coach saying, particularly before, during or after a championship, something along the lines of, "You'll remember this for the rest of your life."

Turns out, it's true. Just ask any of the members of the 1978 Portsmouth boys soccer team, which won the state title.

Most of that team reunited Friday night and was honored at halftime of the 2008 team's win over Mount Hope.

Coach Pete O'Hara told that to his players on the way to the championship game in '78. Listening to some of the players talking about their dream



Daily News file photo

Team members take a victory lap around the field after defeating Westerly 3-2 in Cumberland in 1978.

season, you might never know it was 30 years ago.

"I still remember it. I could kind of give play-by-play if you pushed me," said Jim Burton, a 1980 Portsmouth graduate and junior on the championship team.

He had no trouble reciting a play-by-play of his game-winning goal in the 3-2 win over Westerly in the title game.

"Steve Midas cleared it, just sent it long, and I beat the full back to the ball," he said. "I remember just taking it

straight at the goal. The goalie came out and I got lucky. I just shot it by him."

After the game, he told Daily News sportswriter Rick McGowan, "The ball came down and hit me on the right side of my stomach. Then it went down to my right foot."

Forward Mark Goulart was on the field during that goal, but his excitement apparently clouded his short-term memory of the moment.

"Someone said I touched it and then Jim got it," he said in '78. "I'm not sure what happened."

What happened was a Portsmouth goal with 4:27 left in the game that gave the Patriots their first state championship in any sport.

"I remember O'Hara telling us on the bus, 'You'll never forget this,'" said John Burton, Jim's younger brother and a 1982 graduate, who was a freshman on the team and scored a goal in the final. "As a 14-year-old kid, I'm like, 'Oh, yeah.'"

Portsmouth took a 2-0 lead in the first half of that game and, at halftime, the coach