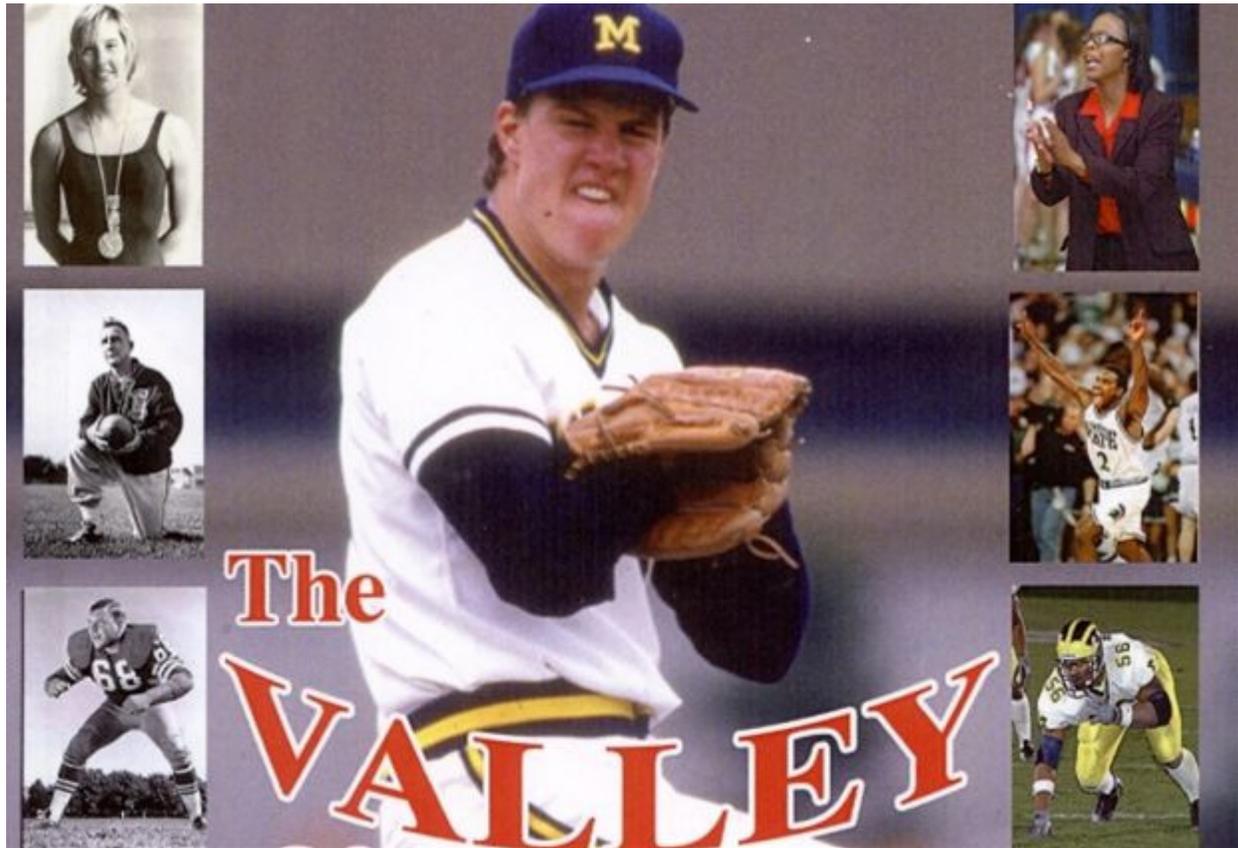


# Book Review: The Valley of Athletes by Rick Sigsby

Tuesday, April 06, 2010 - Posted by [Peter Karoly](#)



## **The Valley of Athletes**

**By Rick Sigsby**

**Dreambuilder Publications, 2009**

**Reviewed by Peter Karoly**

We will work twice as hard to find out something we have a passion about than for something that we are actually being paid for in which we have no interest. We do this because, for whatever reason, we love what we are doing.

Having been a newspaper reporter for many years and now teaching writing in high school for many more, I know the importance and difficulty of doing research. It can be the most rewarding, frustrating, thankful, thankless job on the face of the earth, especially if no one knows quite what you are doing and why you are doing it.

That is one of the reasons why I admire Rick Sigsby and his new book, *The Valley of Athletes*. It is a pretty comprehensive look at "athletic greats of the Saginaw Valley Conference, 1904 to 2009," and I can only imagine how much time and effort it took to find the information and get it to fit in a 241-page book. My friend Jack B. Taney wrote a history of Saginaw County sports (shameless plug!) and it took him years of pouring over old newspapers and microfilm. I'm sure that most schools don't have a file cabinet in the athletic office all neatly labeled and cross-referenced, so Sigsby probably has had a similar experience. My hat, helmet and golf visor are off to him for this colossal research endeavor.

That is not the half of it, though. Not only does it cover probably all of the major athletes from SVL schools past and present, it does so in an entertaining and informative manner, and it is accurate. Not once am I mentioned and I shouldn't be (that's part of the accuracy), but quite a few athletes I competed with and against in my four years at Bay City Handy are. I played baseball many years with John Northrup and once hit a home run that was called foul off Dan Pohl (probably the only time anyone has been able to outdistance him). I also raced against Reggie Jones and fondly recall introducing ourselves and shaking hands at the start of the 100-yard dash. After the gun was fired, I only recall what the bottom of his spikes looked like, a sight that many other competitors got to see, too.

There are also plenty of recognizable names that I didn't know were valley athletes. Olympic champion Micki King of Pontiac Central, pitcher Jim Kern of Midland High, and catcher Ron Pruitt of Flint Central are just a few that I found on these pages. I've been collecting bubble gum cards of some of these people for years and didn't even know they were from the valley. That just goes to show you can learn something every day and, if you like local sports, this is the place to start.

Are there mistakes and omissions? I didn't find any, but I am sure there are a few of them there. You don't do something of this magnitude, especially on a small budget with a small staff, without making a couple of goofs. That is excusable and correctable. We should be happy that somebody actually took the time to put all of this together in a convenient, easy-to-use form.

The book is organized by school, which is really not a problem, but an index would have been helpful. Actually, what the lack of an index does is force me to look through the book, which turns what should have been a two-minute search into a two-hour leisurely look through the whole book.

The price tag may seem a bit much, with the book listing at \$19.99, but I imagine it is a small run, published by Dreambuilder Publications of Coleman (home of Vern Ruhle), and you really can't pay someone enough to provide you with information you don't have the time, energy or ambition to find on your own. Now, I suppose you could look most of this up on the Internet and quickly find what you are looking for. That may be quick, it might even be accurate, but it really isn't that much fun.

Give me a good book (*The Valley of Athletes*), enough time (summer is coming), and half an idea of what I am looking for (I need help on that one), and I will end up finding a lot more information about many more things than I originally intended. How much fun is that? In this case, I don't think Wikipedia has the answer, but *The Valley of Athletes* does.

© Peter Karoly, 2010

Labels: [Rick Sigsby](#), [Valley of Athletes](#), [book review](#), [Saginaw](#), [Flint](#), [SVL](#), [Bay City](#), [Midland](#), [Saginaw Valley Conference](#), [Bay City Handy](#), [Flint Central](#), [Pontiac Central](#), [Midland High](#), [Jim Kern](#), [Micki King](#), [Reggie Jones](#), [Dan Pohl](#), [Jack Taney](#), [Ron Pruitt](#), [Dreambuilder Publications](#), [Coleman](#), [Verne Ruhle](#)