



## Joyce has Leo boxing producing winning kids

By SETH SCHWARTZ

Leo president Robert Foster put together a powerful boxing program in the 1970s that featured former middleweight champion John Collins.

The school dropped boxing in 1983. Five years ago, when Foster decided to bring the sport back as an after-school activity, he knew just the right man for the job—Leo alum Mike Joyce.

Joyce, a 1986 graduate, was a 5-11, 175-pound football center who fought in the Golden Gloves and professionally. Two years ago he became director of the States Attorney Youth Initiative Program, which develops after-school activities for teenagers. There are 5,000 coaches and 50,000 athletes in Cook County who are signed on to the program to serve as role models to influence other students from negative activity.

"Mike is a great Leo guy," Foster said. "He's loyal and has exceptional character. He has a gift for

working with kids. Mike loves the sport, and the kids can feel that."

The Leo program is thriving under Joyce's direction, with 30 boys involved in boxing.

The Leo students have some of the top teachers in the trade. Eddie Perkins is in charge of defensive strategy. Herman Mills handles all the different styles, and Luther Rowlings works with the upper weights. All have extensive professional experience as fighters and trainers.



"These guys all have a passion for the game, and they're glad to share their knowledge," Joyce said. "You won't find better character men. It's an excellent opportunity for our kids to work with great role models."

With kids in 12 weight classes, the skill level varies. There are a number of fighters with plenty of promise.

Thomas Hayes, a 1999 graduate and 2001 Golden Gloves heavyweight champion, is training at the Catskills in New York with Kevin Rooney.

On Wednesday, Leo held a Boxing Night at the Lexington House in Hickory Hills. In the main event, Leo graduate Marvin Carey lost to Buffalo Grove's Tom Zbikowski in the heavyweight divi-

sion. Zbikowski, a Notre Dame-bound defensive back, was the 2002 Chicago Sun-Times Player of the Year in football.

Carey, who is in the Illinois National Guard, is going to be activated and expects to be sent to Iraq sometime next month.

Two other Leo students, Fred Hollins (139) and Jason Riley (125), were crowned champions in the Golden Gloves novice division on Friday.

"We have a real family atmosphere here," said Riley, who is the junior class president. "This is a contact sport, and you have to work very hard. Our coaches are the best; you always feel like you're learning something new here."