Maine Sports with John McKernan for March 29, 1949
ANNOUNCER: WLBZ presents Maine Sports with John McKernan. And now, here is John McKernan with his news and views of Maine Sports.

MCKERNAN: Good evening, everyone. The headlines in the Maine sports world have lost their punch during this so called off season in athletics, but there still are events that call for big black streamers in the hearts of thousands of sportsmen. The big event of the year for a lot of people arrives this Friday morning, the first day of April. That’s the day when sportsmen will be up before dawn and on their way with their fishing gear to get an early start on the 1949 fishing season. Many of them will be going to Bangor’s famed salmon pool which is steeped in fishing tradition. The customary opening day breakfast will be served at 7 a.m. Friday morning for club members, and throughout the morning the men and women to whom there is no greater thrill will be trying to net the prized first salmon. Traditionally, the first salmon goes to the President of the United States as a gift from local sportsmen. That’s the big one to catch. But in recent years the number of salmon taken from the pool has dropped so sharply that every salmon caught there now is a real prize and the occasion for a celebration. The fishing season officially opens in ten counties on Friday. They are Washington, Waldo, York, Hancock, Lincoln, Kennebec, Knox, Cumberland, Androscoggin and Sagadahoc. All waters except those which may have special regulation are covered by the definite opening dates in those counties. On April 15, fishing in lakes and ponds will be legal in Penobscot, Aroostook, Franklin, Piscataquis and Oxford. Somerset County is governed by the ice out regulations.

So, the fisherman are beaming happily, but they aren’t the only ones who are smiling. The boxing fans are beginning to awaken, too. Locally, here in Bangor, the rebirth of the fight business after a long silence during the winter months is continuing with the announcement of a card which has eastern Maine fans ready to storm the box office windows. The Bangor Boxing Club reports that Hermie Freeman, fondly known as the Eagle Lake Assassin, will be in a City Hall ring a week from Friday against Tommy “Red” Wells of Manchester, New Hampshire. That’s a really promising bout. Freeman always has been a crowd pleaser. He’s a leather throwing type of a fighter who keeps the fans on the edge of their seats all the way. And Wells is the same kind of a boy. It was Wells who made his debut in Bangor in an exciting manner two years ago, fighting under another name at that time, the New Hampshire red-head was figured to be an easy target for Leo [Massat?] of Canada who was Bangor’s fair-haired boy. But Wells exploded a right hand to the chin and [Massat?] was out for the night. In a return bout, Wells proved it was no fluke by winning again easily. Wells has fought Maine bouts in Boston. He has a good
record including a win over clever Buddy Hays, New England champion, and he just recently knocked out Barry Woods in a Bangor ring, and it was Woods who fought Freeman almost evenly for ten rounds. Eastern Maine fans will keep their fingers crossed tonight and Thursday hoping that Wells and Freeman don’t suffer injuries that will prevent them from keeping their Bangor dates. [Record skips over some words] of Sherbrooke, Quebec, tonight at Lewiston in an eight round bout. Wells should win, but you never can tell what will happen in a boxing ring. In the other eight round bout of Lewiston, young [?] of Boston will meet Big Young of Biddeford and [Walker?] of Hallowell will go against [Al?] Tanguay of Lewiston. On Thursday night, Raymond will be in the main bout at Portland where the Eagle Lake native is the top drawing card for promoter Chick Hayes. His opponent will be Arbie Bowie of Pittsburg who is rated as the type of fighter that Hermie has the greatest trouble with. Bowie is fast and clever, a will-of-the-wisp lad who is hard to hit. Freeman doesn’t like that kind of a fighter because he’d rather stand up there and slug it out. Barry Woods, by the way, will be in the semi-final of that Portland card against Willie Leo of Portland. And to wind up the Maine fight schedule for the week, Bob Stecker of Portland will tangle with Jimmy Dinardo of Berlin, New Hampshire, at Rumford Friday night. Another eight rounder on the card will have Roland Richards of Portland in there against Bernie Murray of Waterville.

ANNOUNCER: And now, the salute of the week, to the man of the week.

MCKERNAN: The salute tonight is more than a weekly honoring of a person who has done something outstanding over the past seven days. It is a salute to the high school athlete who has been chosen by the vote of coaches and officials at the three schools as the outstanding athlete of the past year at Bangor, John Bapst and Brewer High Schools. To him tonight, and to his school, we are presenting the Bill Stern flag for outstanding athletic achievement. This lad is a strapping six-footer, weighing 200 pounds. He’s used that size to terrific advantage as a football tackle, who has been devastating both on offense and defense. Two years ago he received honorable mention on the All-State Team. This past year he was an All-State tackle. Twice he has been on the All-Eastern Maine team. He’s a basketball player, too, and his performance this past winter, particularly as a backboard man, was outstanding. In baseball, he’s a catcher, and that isn’t all. He won his letter in track last year, too, taking second place in the javelin throw at the state meet. But he’s more than an athlete. He is a sound American boy with broad interests and a real affinity for things which are not connected with athletics. His principal says he is an excellent student. His is president of his student council. He is vice-president of his class. He won honorable mention in the Sewall (?) prize speaking. He represented his school as a speaker at Memorial Day exercises. He was an Eagle Scout at Fort (?). He was a delegate to the student legislature at Augusta last year. His accomplishments truly have been outstanding. And so, for being selected as the winner of the Bill Sterns Outstanding Athlete plaque, the Salute of the Week goes to Raymond Arnold Cox, who is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Raymond J. Cox of Odlin Road, let’s listen to a transcribed message from Bill Sterns.

RECORDED VOICE OF STERNS: This is Bill Sterns speaking. I’m sorry I can’t be with you in person at the presentation of the Bill Stern Athlete of the Year Award which I’m offering each year on behalf of Colgate’s Shaving Cream to the outstanding student athlete in this area. My heartiest congratulations to this year’s winner for an excellent record and my heartfelt thanks to you judges for cooperating and
making the selection. I’m sure that the plaque will be an inspiration to all the young men in this community. It represents public recognition of achievement in the field of sports.

MCKERNAN: Now I’m going to ask a couple of men who have known Ray well as an athlete to say a few words about him. First, Norman Cy Perkins, athletic director and head coach of football and track at Bangor High School. Cy.

PERKINS: Thank you, John. We’re very pleased to have Ray get this recognition and have Bill Stern and you acknowledge his ability in this way. We know there are many fine athletes in the neighboring schools and naturally it is very pleasing to us to have Ray picked for this honor. We do feel that he has outstanding athletic ability in all sports as you have suggested. I want to tell one or two things about his football background if I may at this time. When Ray came up as a sophomore he was one of the two sophomores to earn his letter in that year. He was not a regular in the line but I used him as a substitute chiefly on defense and wherever I had a weak spot in the line and needed to put him in, he filled that spot very well, and in that way he was actually more valuable than if he were tied down to one position. His second year he played more as a guard and then this last year moved out to tackle and with his third year of experience he certainly turned out to be, in my mind, the outstanding lineman in the state. To further prove this, he was picked to be on practically every all-state team and when you have that opinion from other coaches in all areas of the state in my mind that is real recognition. He’s also won state awards and renown in track. In our dual meets in the last couple of years, he has been the best one of our [weight throwers?]. And last year in meets such as the base relay and in the state meet he made his presence very well known. To this day he is second in the javelin in the state meet and he has come very close to placing in the shot in many of these big meets. All this is, has been more difficult for him, because he’s been playing baseball at the same time. He has been practicing baseball two miles away from our track so he hasn’t been able to get up to practice a great deal. We hope that that will be changed a little bit on our new [?] field this year and if that change does come about so that we are able to practice football, baseball, and track together, we hope that he’ll be able to practice a little more at track. We feel he has outstanding ability in that sport and we hope he will be able to go to even greater heights this spring.

MCKERNAN: Thank you, Cy Perkins. And now, Fred “Red” Barry, head coach of basketball and baseball at Bangor High School. Red.

BARRY: Thank you, Jack. First, I want to congratulate Ray Cox on his winning of the Bill Stern Award for the outstanding athlete in this area. It is a great honor for Ray, and one that justly deserved for his untiring efforts on the field of play. He is outstanding in four sports, football, baseball, basketball and track. By being outstanding, I’m not talking just of physical ability, of which he has plenty, but of other qualities which makes an athlete the exceptional type. An athlete first must have courage, determination, fight, the will to win, the ability to meet situations quickly, keen judgement. He must be a good sport, and also, he must be a leader. All of these attributes go along with the personality of Ray Cox. I will also add here that in all my playing and coaching days I have seen two players who could rival Ray Cox in these qualities. One thing that has impressed me greatly about this boy is that he always
plays to win, whether it be just a little scrimmage game, or one of our regularly scheduled contests. He’s shown confidence in himself at all times, and for this, he is looked up to by his teammates. He plays with his teammates just as hard as he does rival competition. This fact alone has strengthened many of our teams. I would like to clarify this point through a little story. A year ago, our basketball team was tops in the section and Ray was a member of that team. Because he was not a regular, very few people realized his value to the team. While I have always given due credit to Ray for helping that team’s success. In every practice he gave his all, but never let up. This factor kept his teammates alert and helped us to a very successful season. You might say that he was the man behind the team. I personally have worked with Ray in three sports. I’m very sorry that he won’t be with me another year. We will miss him very much, but I’m sure that our loss will be his next coach’s gain. If all athletes were like Ray, we coaches would have few worries. Mr. Perkins, myself, your parents, your teammates and your school, we’re all proud of you tonight, Ray.

MCKERNAN: Thank you, Red Barry. And now, on behalf of Bill Sterns, I am happy to present to Raymond Cox for Bangor High School this plaque which designates him as the Outstanding Athlete of the Year in Bangor and Brewer and for your possession Ray, a reproduction of that plaque. Congratulations, Ray.

COX: Thank you, Mr. McKernan. I appreciate this award very much, and I also want to thank two fine coaches, Mr. Barry, and Mr. Perkins, and I also want to thank all the support I have received from all my teammates.

MCKERNAN: Ray, there are a couple of questions that I’d like to ask you. First, do you plan to go to college?

COX: Yes, Mr. McKernan, I do.

MCKERNAN: And what do you plan to study, Ray?

COX: I plan to take up a law course.

MCKERNAN: Well, Ray, here’s the big 64 dollar question, at least in the minds of the gentlemen who coach football at the colleges. What colleges, or rather what college, will you enter next fall?

COX: I’m trying to get into University of Maine, Mr. McKernan.

MCKERNAN: Well, I’m sure that Dave Nelson, the new football coach at the University of Maine will be very happy to see you there, Ray. Ray, I’m sure that all the fans who have seen you in your fine career at Bangor High School will agree that you’ll be a great credit to your college both academically and in athletics. Good luck to you and congratulations once again as the winner of the Bill Stern Outstanding Athlete Award. And now, this is John McKernan saying goodnight everyone, and be a booster for good Maine sports.
ANNOUNCER: Each Monday evening at 7:30, WLBZ, the Maine station for Maine people, presents Maine Sports with John McKernan.

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