

Class sports boost woodworker's business

By **Max Showalter**
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BATTLE GROUND – Don't count Skip Sturgeon among the Hoosiers who are critical of the Indiana High School Athletic Association for dividing the state's football and basketball programs into class structures.

The large increase in championship winners has meant more sales for one portion of Woodland Woodworking, a business that began as a hobby and part-time enterprise.

The company offers customized wooden sports plaques that can be used to display medals, rings, texts and photos of sports teams and individuals.

"I officially started Woodland Woodworking in 1996 for extra income," said Sturgeon. "However, in 1999 when our third child was born, I quit my day job, became a stay-at-home dad and woodworking became my only income.

"I build custom furniture such as bookcases, dressers, beds and various cabinets. Custom furniture is still the main portion of my business, and the Indiana shaped plaque is a recent focus."

Question: Where did the idea for the sports plaques come from?

Answer: I came up with the idea of the Indiana-shaped plaque in 1992 when Harrison won the state championship in football. My brother was on that team. He came home with a medal, a ring and a photo. The photo went in an album and the medal and ring ended up in a drawer. His Little League participation trophies were displayed on a shelf in his room, and the rewards of a state championship were hidden in a drawer. To me this was not acceptable, so that Christmas I made him the first state championship plaque.

Q: While many Hoosiers despise the IHSAA's decision to create five classes for high school football and four for basketball, you must love the opportunities for an increased customer base?

A: It was not until the creation of class sports that I saw the opportunity to market and sell these statewide. Even if I did not have a stake in the class system, I still think it is a good idea. With over 400 high schools in Indiana there are plenty of state championships to go around. I don't think a Class A athlete is any less excited to win a state championship than a Class 5A athlete. Making great memories is what high school sports is all about, and preserving those memories is what my plaque is all about. This year I created plaques for sectional, regional and conference champions too. All-conference, all-area and all-state are some of the individual honors that can also be displayed using these plaques.



(By Michael Heinz/Journal and Courier)
Skip Sturgeon, owner of Woodland Woodworking, holds one of the plaques that he makes at his company.

Q&A with Skip Sturgeon

Occupation: Owner, Woodland Woodworking

Years on the job: 6

Education: Graduate of Harrison High School

Hometown: Battle Ground

Family: Wife, Amy. Four children, Evan, 9; J. Dan [cq], 8; Adam, 6; and Allison, 5