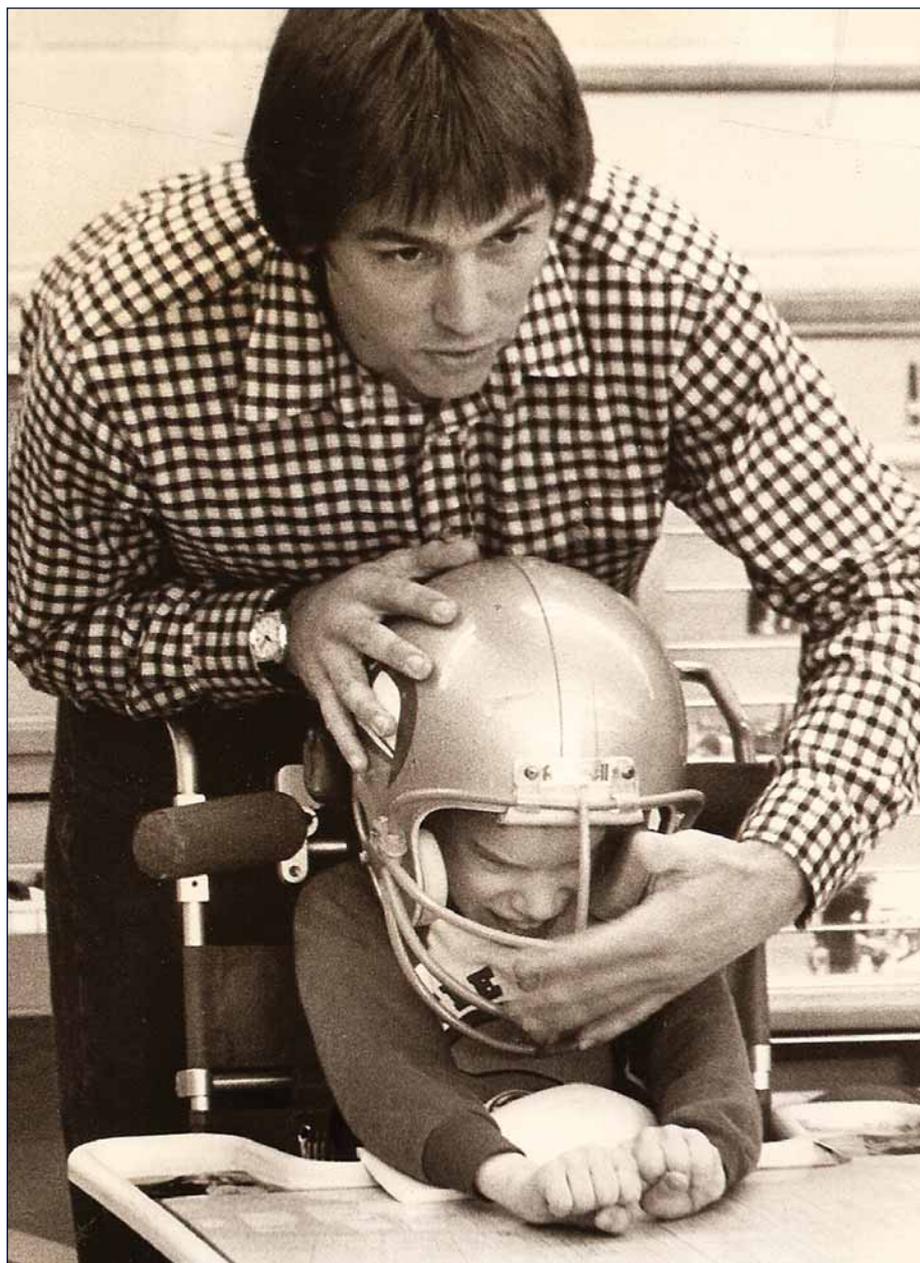


# THE DAY JIM ZORN CAME TO MAPLEWOOD SCHOOL



## By Steve Harper – Lifelong Seahawks Fan

It was in 1979 and I was 11 years old.

For years I had been struggling to figure out how I could physically use a communication board with my right hand that is barely functional. Ideally, I was supposed to be able to use my hand with the pointer in my right hand to point out the alphabet on one side of the communication board. And if I did it properly, then the basic words would show up on the other said.

However in reality, I could barely use my hand to point at anything. It was very difficult for me to carry out and a very slow means of communication for me.

But I was determined to write a letter to Seahawks quarterback Jim Zorn at the time to see if he would come out to the Maplewood School (school for the disabled). And my speech therapist decided to dictate the letter and it was up to me to write it – using my rarely used communication board. I wasn't sure I could pull it off.

Nevertheless, I struggled my way through writing the letter on the board, and eventually finished it. My therapist wasted no time and mailed it right away. There was no way of knowing what would happen or if he would actually get the letter.

Obviously he did because about two weeks later, Jim Zorn walked into our fourth grade class. It was almost hard to believe. He brought all of the Seahawks gear. He put an actual Seahawks helmet on me. And he didn't stop there. He put shoulder pads on another classmate of mine as we all gathered around him to ask him questions.

To put it mildly, my classmates and I just had the time of our lives that day.

So did Zorn, who has vivid memories to this day.

"Yeah, (you) almost vibrated out of the chair," Zorn recalled. "When (you) get excited, you get so fired up about it. You probably get sore after you're done thinking about the Seahawks. What's interesting is the way you don't just think about the Seahawks, you understand the roster and both what we're trying to do on offense and defense.

"A lot of fans are just about, 'Man, I really like Matt Hasselbeck.' It makes a big difference to me when I see somebody actually have an understanding of the team, who's in, who's out and what it means."

Because it's a school for the handicapped, we didn't participate in any sports. However Jim Zorn made us feel real special and I won't forget that day for as long as I live. And Zorn isn't about to forget either. Keep in mind, this

experience was more almost 30 years ago, when he was still playing quarterback for the Seahawks.

To make an impact on a child's life, not only raises the consciousness of NFL players, it further emphasizes how fortunate they are to live the lives they lead.

"It means even more to me," Zorn said. "When I meet disadvantaged kids – or adults for that matter – that are functional out of a wheelchair and overcome so much it means a lot. Just like players take advantage of their talents, obviously (you) do too.

"That's a motivating factor to everybody when you see people take their abilities to the next level, and it's why going to Maplewood is a day I'll never forget."

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