



'53-'54 St. Joe's Hammers Basketball Team



The 1953-54 St. Joseph's Hammers from Mauch Chunk had an outstanding CYO season, which culminated in the Championship Game for the Mid-Atlantic Title, played against Sacred Heart (Washington D.C.) in Philadelphia.

The accomplishments of the squad earned them the honor of induction into the Jim Thorpe Area Sports Hall of Fame at its 13th annual banquet on Saturday, Sept. 14 at Jim Thorpe Memorial Hall.

Coach by Mickey Hodor, who was assisted by Walter "Smokey" Moser and Francis "Bob" Wilhelm, the team, which was playing its first season in the league, won the Panther Valley CYO Championship Title with a record of 16-1. The only league loss was to St. Peter & Paul's by a score of 35-32 after which, the team won 20 consecutive games in the playoffs, the Hammers faced stiff opposition against teams from Port Carbon, McAdoo (St. Cunegunda's), Allentown (Our Lady Help of Christians).

Philadelphia (St. Agatha's), and Baltimore (St. Anthony's) and defeated them all. In the process, they won the District 2 CYO Championship, the Upstate CYO Title, The Philadelphia Diocesan Tournament, and the semifinals of the Middle Atlantic Championship. In the Middle Atlantic Championship Title game, the Hammers, despite a valiant effort, lost by a score of 33-26 to undefeated and returning champion, Sacred Heart of Washington, D.C. (March 3, 1954)

The team finished the season with an outstanding 21-2 record. More impressive than their record was the quality and diversity of the competition that they faced. They were Champs of the entire state of Pennsylvania, and took second place in the tournament, which also included the state of Maryland and the District of Columbia.

The Hammers' starting five included Joe "Yogi" Duffy, John Slapcinsky, Joe Engler, Joe Micale, and Captain, William Gmitter. Duffy was the team's leading scorer with an average of 21 points per game and in the Up-State Title Game, he scored 50 points in a 77-50 victory over the Our Lady Help of Christians (Allentown). Other team members were William Bechtold, Philip Radar, Joe Brown, John Engler, William Hinger, Donald Smith, James Boyle, George Duffy, Stephen Yuhas, John Sebelin, Thomas Klitsch, Joe Wilhelm, Donald Crowley, Michael Mormack, and Joseph Herman.

Cheering on the Champs were cheerleaders, Josephine Butchko, Judy Conroy Jeanne Huber, Cecil Mundy, Susan Hodor, Teresa Sully, Rose Marie Sully, and Claire Schweibenz.





Ron Mronzinski



Ron Mrozinski, a 1948 graduate of White Haven High School, became a Mauch Chunk legend when he led the Mauch Chunk Legion Junior Team to the Tri-County League Championship.

Subsequently, he went on to play professional baseball for 13 years. In 1948 the legion team Mrozinski was a member of accumulated a record of 21-32, won the league championship and advanced to the state tournament. During that season, Mrozinski was the leading pitcher in the league with a record of 7-0, and had an overall mark of 10-1. He averaged 15 strikeouts a game and was named to the Tri-County League All-Star team.

After graduation, he signed a professional contract with the Philadelphia Phillies and began Minor League play with the Carbondale Pioneers.

In 1952 he was the top pitcher in the Eastern League, striking out 148 batters. He played in the minors until 1954 when he became a major league player with the Phillies. In 1954 and 1955 he pitched in 37 games for the Phillies; his record (as a starter) was 10-3 including 4-2 victory over the World Series champion New York Giants.

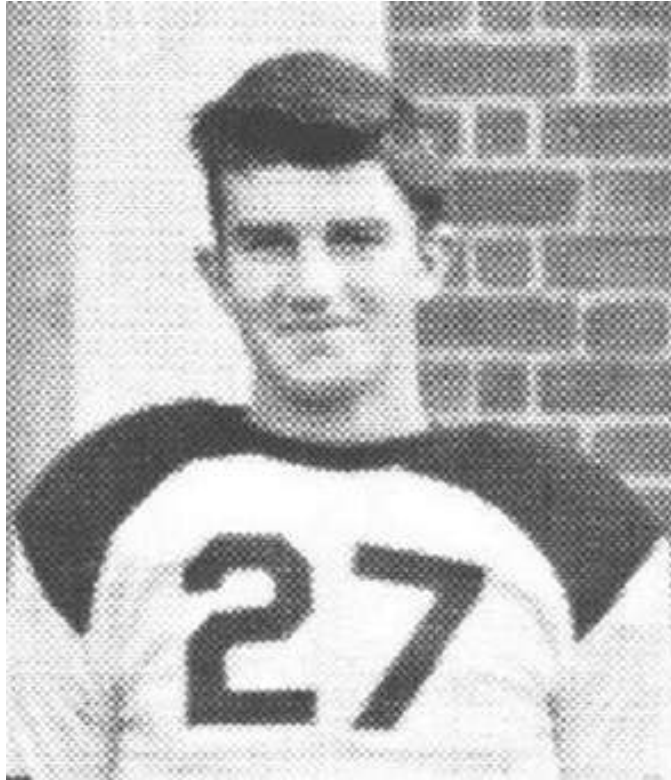
Over the next eight years he continued his minor league career, leading his teams to two league championships (Birmingham and Chattanooga) and pitching in two All-Star games (1958 and 1959). In his minor league career, he pitched in 382 games. His record was 119-106 and his ERA was around 3.50. In his career he had nine winning seasons.

Mr. Mrozinski worked for 31 years as a production mechanic for the American Can Company. He and his wife, Barbara, reside in Washington, N.J. They have four children, Ronald, Marty, Mark and Maryann.





Joe “Junie” Gallagher



A 1937 graduate of Mauch Chunk Catholic High School. Joe “Junie” Gallagher had an outstanding career in football and basketball. On the Gridiron, he played numerous positions: end halfback, and fullback. During his career (1935 to 1937), he was deemed the “most versatile back in the Lower Anthracite Region” because of his strong running, accurate passing and superlative kicking. From 40 to 50 yard jaunts, punts of up to 75 yards, passes of up to 40 yards or greater, to outstanding defensive play, Gallagher often dominated the field. Over his three years playing football, his teams had a record of 21 wins, four losses, and two ties. The 1935 contingent had a record of eight wins and 2 losses (both by 6 to 0 scores), and outscored its opponents 206 to 45.

In 1936 Gallagher captained the team; the 1937 team was so dominant that they often had difficulty finding willing opponents.

He also played American Legion baseball for four years (Catholic High dropped baseball in his freshman year) and played varsity basketball in 1935 and 1936.

In 1933-1939, he attended Deerfield Academy, where he played football (halfback), basketball (guard), and baseball (catcher). He matriculated to Gettysburg College in 1939-40 and played halfback on the freshman football team before suffering a knee injury that prevented him from full participation. He also played on the freshman basketball team.

In 1941, he enlisted in the Air Corps and his athletic career continued. Despite never entering a boxing ring prior to his enlistment, he became the undisputed light-heavy weight champion of the Hondo Army Airfield, Texas. He also played “touch-football and scored one of his teams two touchdowns in a 14-0 victory in the 18th flight Championship game.

Mr. Gallagher resides in Belle Chasse, LA. He was married to Frances Moreaux in 1944 and has four children (Claire, Joseph, Michael and Ann) and ten grandchildren.





Ed "Coogie" Rontz



A 1945 graduate of Mauch Chunk High School, Ed "Coogie" Rontz left his imprint on thousands of local youth in general and inspiring athletes, in particular, through the years, earning him induction into the 2002 class of the Jim Thorpe Area Sports Hall of Fame on Saturday, Sept. 14 at Jim Thorpe Memorial Hall.

From 1954 to 1982, he was the physical education director of the local YMCA and taught gymnastics, basketball, baseball, softball, volleyball, and football to legions of eager youngsters.

His impact was felt most particularly on the hardwood, where his instruction of the fundamentals of basketball was a significant factor in the development of many outstanding, local basketball teams in the 1950's, 1960's and 1970's. For many years, he conducted a Saturday morning basketball league, which consisted of a six to seven teams.

As a certified American Red Cross Instructor, he taught swimming lesson to approximately 25 youths per year and instructed lifeguard certification classes to about 18 youths per year. During the summertime

he organized outdoor activities at Kemmerer Park and led hikes to Glen Onoko, Mount Pisgah, the Switchback, etc.

In 1967 he founded the Jim Thorpe Olympian Booster Club and served as its treasurer for many years. In the first year of the club's existence, in order to purchase equipment for the Knee-Hi Football Program, he and his wife mortgaged their home to obtain a loan for the required funds. He also served as treasure of the Jim Thorpe Touchdown Club for several years.

His other community involvement has been equally impressive. He's been a member of the Dolon-Jones-Martino Post for 58 years, during which, he has served terms as Commander as well as numerous other positions. He served as commander of the Carbon County American Legion for two years. A member of St. John's Church, he has taught Sunday School for 41 years and has served as a choir member for 20 years. Other activities include: Treasurer of the Diligent Fire Company for 52 years; Treasurer of the Mauch Chunk Fireman's Relief Fund for 30 years; Boy Scout Leader for 30 years; and a volunteer for Meals-on-Wheels for 12 years.

Achievements and Honors bestowed have been numerous and include: being one of the first Eagle Scouts in Mauch Chunk; Jim Thorpe American Legion Post "Man of the Year" in 1994; a Mauch Chunk Trust Company Community Hero in 2000; and, namesake of the Jim Thorpe Olympian Booster Club Edward Rontz Award, presented every year to one athlete from each sponsored sport.

Mr. Rontz resides in Jim Thorpe and is married to the former Marilyn Parry. They have three children (Doug Rontz, Mary Ann Hazel, and Trisha Higgins) and six grandchildren.





Jake Llewellyn



An outstanding athlete, who graduated from Jim Thorpe High School in 1968, Jake Llewellyn has established himself as one of the premier wrestling officials in the country. While at Jim Thorpe, he lettered in football, wrestling and baseball. Llewellyn attended East Stroudsburg State College, where he was a member of the varsity wrestling squad for three years. After graduating with a BS in Health/Physical Education (minor in Political Science) in 1972, Llewellyn began his teaching, coaching and officiating careers at Jim Thorpe High School.

In 1972-73, Llewellyn instructed Health/Physical Education at Jim Thorpe Area Schools. From 1973 to the present, he has been affiliated with the Bethlehem Area Schools, where he taught Health/Physical Education and Driver Education until 1999. Since 1999, he has served as the Assistant Principal of the East Hills Middle School.

His coaching career also began in 1972 when he became the Assistant Wrestling Coach of East Stroudsburg College. He served in the same capacity at Freedom High School from 1973 to 1980 and Liberty High School in 1982. He assumed the Head Coaching position at Jim Thorpe High School in 1981 and Freedom High School from 1985 to 1989. In his career, Llewellyn has coached four PIAA State Champions, six Northeast Regional Champions and 15 District 11 Champions.

Llewellyn became certified as a PIAA Wrestling Official in 1971 and, since that time, his success has been phenomenal. As noted previously, Llewellyn currently recognized as one of the premier wrestling officials in the country. He began as a high school official and has refereed 12 District 11 Tournaments, 10 Northeast PIAA Regional Tournaments and four EWL Championships. In the Past five Eastern Tournaments, Llewellyn has been named the top official twice, tied for first place once and selected second place twice. He refereed the NCAA Wrestling Championship in 2001.

Mr. Llewellyn has been a television commentator on wrestling for Service Electric TV 2, Comcast Sports Network and PCN. He was inducted into the Pennsylvania District 11 Wrestling Hall of Fame in 2000, the Jim Thorpe Area Sports Hall of Fame (as a member of the undefeated 1966 football team) in 1991 and is featured on the Pennsylvania Legends Sports Cards.





Joe Micko



Having been inducted as a member of the 1966 Championship Football Team and 1969-70 Championship Wrestling Team, Joe Micko is a familiar name to the membership of the Jim Thorpe Area Sports Hall of Fame.

A 1970 graduate of Jim Thorpe Area High School, he played football and wrestled all four years. He was a member of three Championship Football Teams (1966-67-69) which compiled a record of 21 wins and three losses. He was a starting offensive guard for three years and starting nosetackle on defense for three years. It was on defense that he excelled: during his senior season he anchored an aggressive defensive line, personally causing 15 fumbles, blocking two punts, and scoring two defensive touchdowns. In the opinion of the

coaching staff, Joe was the toughest lineman of his era at Jim Thorpe.

He also excelled on the mats, secondary to his speed agility and strength (320 pound bench-press). Wrestling at 165 pounds, he compiled a record of 20 wins and two losses. During his senior season his record was 9-1, losing his only match while wrestling with a broken hand.

After high school, Joe attended Bloomsburg University and continued his athletic career. He earned a varsity letter in wrestling as a freshman and played freshman football. Concentrating on football his last three years, he earned three varsity letters as a defensive lineman and was noted as an outstanding defensive player in the 1973 Street and Smith's College Annual. In the opinion of his teammates and coaches, Joe was the "hardest hitter" on the team.

Mr. Micko graduated from Bloomsburg in 1974 with a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration.

