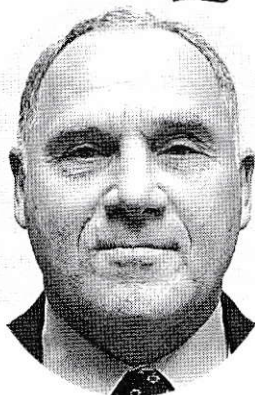


Bill Granata



By the time he was done playing and coaching, Bill Granata had left his mark in three different sports.

But there's no question which sport the Norwalk native made his biggest impact in, especially while growing up in his former hometown.

During the 1960s, Granata established himself as one of the top baseball players and best power hitters in the area. He began his baseball career in the American Little League as an all-star pitcher, catcher and first baseman in 1958 and '59, and played the same three positions and again made the all-star team when he moved up to Pony League in 1960 and '61.

By the summer of 1962, Granata was playing with the Norwalk American Legion baseball team, and the following spring he earned a spot on the Norwalk High School team as a sophomore. It wasn't long before the name Bill Granata became well known in baseball circles all around the state.

He played first base and outfield with the American Legion from 1962-65, helping the team win a zone championship, while at NHS the power-hitting catcher/first baseman carved out an outstanding career from 1963-65 for coach Jack Cronin.

In fact, Granata's career was so impressive, in 1971 when The Hour Newspaper selected its 100th anniversary "Dream Team" in baseball, representing the best nine high school players in city history, Granata was selected as the catcher.

Granata went on to star in baseball at Fairfield University from 1967-69, playing first base, catcher and outfielder for the Stags while serving a captain in '68 and '69. He also earned All-New England recognition, and received the ECAC Scholar-Athlete Award.

Following his collegiate baseball career, Granata was invited by the Boston Red Sox to a tryout and hit three home runs despite a sprained ankle. He was also offered a minor-league contract by the San Diego Padres, but rejected it to get married instead. He did play semi-pro baseball with the Ridgefield Cubs in the Housatonic League.

In addition, he played first base for the Laurel A.C. baseball team from 1965-69, helping it win championships in both the Norwalk and Stamford twilight leagues, and capturing an individual batting crown one season in the Stamford Twilight League.

But while baseball was Granata's best sport, he also lettered in football and basketball at Norwalk High, playing three years of both. As a senior in 1965, he was a teammate of future NBA all-star and Hall of Famer Calvin Murphy on the NHS basketball team that went 21-3 and advanced to the state semifinals.

Granata also played football while at Fairfield University, which had a club team at the time. A starting lineman on offense and middle linebacker on defense, Granata was named captain of the team as a senior and selected to the Club Football All-American Team.

The two-sport collegiate standout was the recipient of the William Wallin Award as a senior in 1969, and in 1984 Granata was part of the inaugural class to be inducted into the Fairfield University Hall of Fame, a feat he calls his greatest achievement in sports.

A decade after his athletic days were over, Granata embarked on a successful coaching career that would last nearly two decades. A resident of New Milford, Granata coached the girls basketball team at Rogers Park Junior High School in Danbury for eight seasons, from 1979-87.

He spent the next couple of seasons coaching the junior varsity girls basketball team at Immaculate High in Danbury before taking over as varsity coach for three years. His best season was 1991 when he guided the Mustangs to the Class S state finals, where they lost to New Fairfield and future UConn star Jen Rizzotti.

Granata then took over as head boys basketball coach at New Milford High for the next seven years, compiling a record of 86-67, including 20-5 in 1993 when it lost by only four points to eventual state champion Hartford Public and future UMass and NBA star Marcus Camby. It was also during this time Granata had the opportunity to coach his sons Bill and Nick.

In addition, Granata coached football and baseball at Rogers Park Junior High for several years, was an assistant football coach at Danbury High School for three years and at New Milford High for one season. Granata was also a member of the New Milford Jaycees from 1981-88, and served on the organization's Board of Directors and as its membership vice president.

The 56-year-old Granata taught in the Danbury School System for 34 years before retiring. He and his wife, the former Kathleen Errico, also a Norwalk native, have three children and two grandsons.