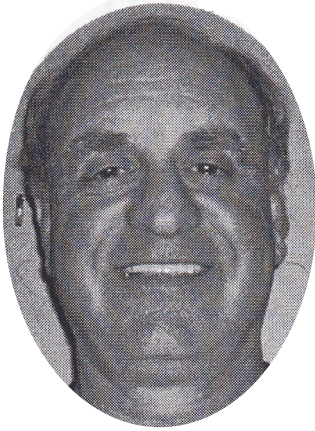


Terry Blitz



Norwalk has produced its share of outstanding baseball pitchers over the last century.

But the name Terry Blitz certainly has to rank near the top of that list, and maybe even at the very top.

Indeed, in 1971 the Norwalk Hour Newspaper, in a poll it conducted, Terry Blitz was selected as not only the best pitcher, but the No. 1 baseball player of the century on its 100-year anniversary 'Dream Team.'

It's easy to see why, too. Blitz put together perhaps the most dominating two-year stretch of pitching the city of Norwalk has ever seen.

Born in Norwalk, Blitz grew up in Silvermine and attended Broad River Elementary School, Ponus Ridge Junior High, and Brien McMahon High School. He developed a passion for baseball and particularly pitching at an early age, playing three years in the Norwalk National Little League and later the Norwalk Babe Ruth League and Colt League, as well as three years at Ponus Ridge.

But it was at Brien McMahon that Blitz really established himself as a force on the mound. As a sophomore in 1965, he was only 1-1 in limited action, but showed a glimpse of what was to come by recording 15 strikeouts in 19 innings while fashioning a 1.65 ERA.

Even with impressive numbers like those, however, no one could have ever predicted what Blitz would do the next two years. As a junior, he compiled a sparkling record of 11-1, including a perfect 4-0 in the state tournament as he led the Senators to the 1966 Class A state championship, which is still the only

high school state title in baseball in city history.

Blitz went 7-1 during the regular season, but it wasn't planned for him to pitch in all four state tourney games. He started and hurled a complete game in the opening round as the Senators beat Maloney 19-1. Then in the quarterfinals, he came on in relief in the fifth inning and struck out eight batters in five and two-thirds innings to get the win in McMahon's 10-inning victory over Sacred Heart.

The Senators faced Fairfield Prep in the state semifinals and Blitz wasn't even supposed to pick up a baseball, instead resting his arm for a possible start in the state finals. But when Robin White, McMahon's No. 2 pitcher, suffered a freak injury just prior to boarding the team bus, coach Frank Morgan was left scrambling to find a starting pitcher.

But Blitz stepped up and told his coach he could pitch on short rest, and all he did that day was go out and fire a two-hit shutout while striking out nine as McMahon blanked Fairfield Prep 4-0 to earn a berth in the state finals.

Blitz again took the mound, this time on two days rest, and he proceeded to pitch a five-hit shutout with 10 strikeouts as McMahon beat Rippowam 4-0 to claim the state crown. One of Blitz's strikeout victims that afternoon was Bobby Valentine, the FCIAC batting champion that year, who had struck out only one other time all season. He went 0-for-4 against Blitz that day.

In addition to his 11-1 record, Blitz had an ERA of 0.81 that season with 110 strikeouts in 91 innings pitched, and was named All-FCIAC first team..

Then as a senior in 1967, he went 12-3, including pitching back to back no-hitters, and recorded an amazing 163 strikeouts in 110 innings to go with an ERA of 0.62 as he led the Senators back to the state finals where they lost 2-1 to West Haven. He was also named to the All-FCIAC first team for the second year in a row.

Blitz finished with 24 career victories, which is still a city record, and had 288 strikeouts, another city record, in 220 innings with a career ERA of 0.83. His 12 wins and 163 strikeouts are both single-season records.

But Blitz's high school career only begins to tell the story of his outstanding career. In the summer following both his junior and seniors years, he pitched for the Norwalk American Legion Post 12 team, compiling a two-year record of 20-2 with an ERA of 0.86 and 181 strikeouts in 137 innings pitched. In fact, in the summer of 1967, he was named the Norwalk American Legion outstanding pitcher and team MVP.

Counting high school and Legion ball, Blitz went a combined 45-7 in 1966 and '67.

Also in 1967, Blitz was drafted by the Cleveland Indians, but instead decided to go to Arizona State University, where he went a perfect 10-0 as a freshman in his only season at ASU, striking out 112 batters in 101 innings with a 1.94 ERA. He went on to pitch in the Atlantic Collegiate Baseball League the next two years where he went a combined 12-3 with a 1.03 ERA and fanned 111 batters in only 91 innings. He was named the league's outstanding pitcher both years.

Blitz signed with the New York Mets organization in 1970 and won 33 games with a 3.43 ERA during a four-year minor league career. He advanced as far as Triple-A Tidewater, one step away from the majors, before an arm injury forced him to retire.

But Blitz remained involved with baseball, returning to Norwalk and coaching in the Norwalk Senior Babe Ruth League and later at Norwalk Community College. He eventually moved to Arizona, and was the varsity baseball coach at Apache Junction High School for 20 years, winning 13 conference championships and back to back state titles in 1976 and '77.

He retired from coaching in 1995, but has continued teaching is currently in his 34th year in the Apache Junction School District. He also served as athletic director at Apache Junction Jr. High for four years, and was the District Junior High School Athletic Director for another four years.

And after a decade away, Blitz, now 57, returned to the baseball field this year to coach the varsity pitchers on the Apache Junction HS team.

Blitz and his wife, Laurie, of 29 years have three sons, Travis, 27, Jared, 24, and Brandon, 20. Jared, who just graduated from Arizona State, played tennis in junior college and placed in the top 10 nationally twice. Brandon is currently a junior at ASU and is an assistant varsity basketball coach at Mesa High School, who he helped lead to a state title in 2004.