

## *M. Jeffrey Spahr*



Very few athletes at Norwalk High School in the early 1970s shined as brightly as **Jeff Spahr**. The 1974 NHS graduate was a three-sport athlete who quarterbacked the Bears to one of their biggest wins in years in the fall of '73, his senior year.

Spahr was also a member of the swim team in the winter, but his signature sport was no doubt baseball. The pitcher-outfielder led the team in home runs and was the only NHS player named to The Hour's 1974 All-City Baseball Team. He also received All-FCIAC Honorable Mention.

Spahr was not only one of the top baseball players in the city during that time, but also one of the busiest. He was one of the original players in the newly formed Norwalk Senior Babe Ruth League in the summer of 1973, and made the first two all-star teams in '73 and '74. Those same two summers he played for Sterling Furniture in the Norwalk City Twilight League.

From 1975-'80 Spahr played simultaneously for a number of area teams in the Norwalk City League, Connecticut Collegiate Summer Baseball League, and the Stamford Twilight League.

"I would play six, seven, sometimes eight games in a week," he said.

It was while pitching for the Redding Rockets in the Collegiate League that Spahr struck out 17 Weston batters in a seven-inning game, a feat he calls his greatest sports moment.

Spahr actually played four sports while at Norwalk High, earning a spot on the Bears' varsity soccer team as a sophomore in the fall of 1971. The following year, however, he decided to go out for the football team as a receiver and not only made the varsity but caught two passes in the season opener.

His junior year, Spahr wanted to try his hand at quarterback, a position he had never played before, but figured his skills as a pitcher would help. He was right, and after playing the position in some games with the JV team, he became the varsity starting QB near the end of the season.

That set him up for a big senior year, including that memorable Saturday afternoon when he threw two second-half touchdown passes and led the Bears to a stunning 19-7 win over undefeated city rival Brien McMahon. The win snapped the Senators' five-game winning streak in the intra-city rivalry and gave first-year head coach (and former McMahon assistant) Sam Testa what would be one his biggest wins.

That game was played at the gridiron behind the old NHS, which is now Malmquist Field at City Hall, where, ironically, Spahr has worked for the last 32 years for the City of Norwalk Law Department.

During his high school career, Spahr had the distinction of playing for five head coaches who were future Norwalk Old Timers honorees: Tom Scarso during his one year of soccer, Carl Paight and Sam Testa in football, Jack Cronin in baseball, and Pat Spinola with the swim team. And Mike DiDio, Spahr's senior Babe Ruth coach, and Danny Letizia, his manager with Sterling Furniture, makes it a total of seven future Old Timers honorees he played for.

Spahr continued playing both sports at the College of Holy Cross, and even served as an assistant coach with the UConn-Stamford men's basketball team while earning his MBA.

When his baseball and football days were over, Spahr transitioned to softball and touch football, achieving success in both. He played with a number of rec softball teams, including Cotaling's Auto Body, for over a decade. He also suited up for Sandbar Restaurant and later helped the Legends win five straight Sunday Morning Senior Wood Bat League championships.

Spahr was part of several more title-winning teams in the Norwalk Adult Touch Football League while playing with Oaks Tavern. He also took up the game of squash and became an accomplished player on a national level.

Spahr has served as Norwalk's Deputy Corporation Counsel since 1987 and in between his sports and law career, the lifelong Norwalk resident has been active with several civic organizations.