

Lewis Marino



A number of young athletes in Norwalk were able to play sports a half century ago thanks in large part to the efforts of people like Lew Marino.

Before there were organized leagues for young adults, Marino was instrumental in organizing several local baseball teams and even played a key role in running some of the leagues those teams played in.

In fact, Marino was only 15 when he took a group of neighborhood kids from the Whistleville section of town and formed the Blue Beetles, who he also managed and played catcher for during the summers of 1953 and '54 in the Norwalk Recreation League.

The following year, he managed and caught for the Hawks, who won the Rec League championship, and in 1956 Marino got the Laurel Athletic Club to loan the team their baseball uniforms as they won the Intermediate League title. He also caught and played center field that season for the Athletics in the City League.

That would turn out to be the only time Marino would have to "borrow" the Laurels uniforms. That's because that same year, 1956, as many of the Laurel AC members reached non-playable ages, it was Marino who was the catalyst for re-establishing the club's active members to participate in baseball.

From that, the Laurels were re-born and Marino, a member of the club's sports committee, managed the team from 1957 to 1971, doubling as a player/manager through the 1964 season. In addition, his father, Joseph Marino, a 1970 Norwalk Old Timers honoree, coached the team through 1963.

Marino, a catcher and third baseman, batted .308 in 1959 as he helped the Laurels win the city championship, defeating Hat Corporation in the finals. In 1961, the Laurels lost in the City League finals to the Hilltops 3-2, while in '64 they fell to Strawberry Hill in the championship game, again by a 3-2 margin. In 1962, while the Laurels didn't make it to the finals, Marino batted a career-high .360 that season.

From 1964 to '71, the Laurels played in both the Norwalk City League and Stamford Twilight League. While the '64 season was Marino's last as an active player, he continued to manage the team as the Laurels won both league titles in 1967 with a combined record of 30-5. They added another Norwalk City championship in 1970.

Marino's organization skills weren't restricted to just baseball teams, however. In 1952, he entered the Blue Beetles in the local Recreation Basketball League. Marino also played some basketball himself, competing in the Norwalk High School intramural tournaments from 1953-55, and winning the title in 1954 with his junior class and again in '55 as a senior.

He also played CYO basketball with the St. Joseph team from 1954-56, finishing runner-up to St. Mary one season. He then played for St. Mary's in 1957, starting at point guard and serving as team captain as they reached the league final, only to lose to his former team, St. Joe's, by one point.

Even as he got older, Marino remained active in sports throughout the years. At the age of 40 and until he was 44, he played second base for The Golden Oldies in the Wilton Men's Softball League. He also began playing paddle tennis at the age of 33 and played socially until he was 60.

And he was 45 years-old when he first picked up tennis and just one year later he finished runner-up in the Class B singles championship at Shore & Country Club. He is still active in the S&CC inter-club league.

He has also been very active over the years with the Laurel Athletic Club, where he is a 45-year member and has served in several capacities. He has also been a board member with the Norwalk Old Timers Athletic Association the past few years, and is currently the organization's recording secretary.

Now a resident of Wilton, Marino and his wife Nancy of 43 years have five children and nine grandchildren.