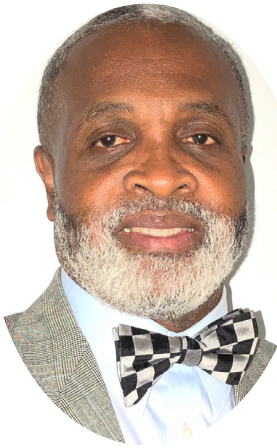


## Harry Welfare



Nearly 45 years after he scored his last touchdown, recorded his final wrestling victory, and won an FCIAC championship in the 100 yard dash, **Harry Welfare** is still every bit of the leader he was at Brien McMahon High School.

Only now the former three-sport captain has a different kind of leadership role as the assistant principal at the Augusta Lewis Troup School in New Haven.

It's been quite a journey for McMahon's 1975 Career Athlete who grew up on Chapel Street and was nicknamed "Bozo" as a kid by his neighborhood friends. That affectionate moniker would follow him throughout his sports career and by high school everyone knew him as Harry "Bozo" Welfare.

"My friends gave me the name, but Jack Casagrande popularized it," Welfare said of his former coach in all three of his sports. "He always called me that, even in newspaper articles."

"I think 'Bozo' was Jack's favorite athlete of all time," Ralph King, another former McMahon coach, noted.

Welfare didn't play organized football until he was a freshman, but by his senior year he had become one of the best running backs in the FCIAC, scoring 13 touchdowns and 12 two-point conversions for a total of 90 points. That was also Casagrande's first year as head coach and Welfare and the Senators went 9-1 and were ranked third in the state.

Although Welfare loved basketball growing up and played in middle school, his winter sport at McMahon became wrestling . . . with a little help from Casagrande.

"I was going to try out for basketball," he recalled, "but Jack yelled at me, 'Bozo you can't go out for basketball. Get in that wrestling room.'"

As a freshman Welfare wrestled a handful of varsity matches for the 1972 FCIAC champions. One of his teammates that season was fellow 2019 Old Timers honoree Tim Wagner.

Welfare became a full-time starter his sophomore year, helping McMahon to a second consecutive Western Division title. As a junior in 1974 he captured the District I championship at 126 pounds while the Senators won the district crown. Welfare closed out his impressive career his senior year by finishing runner-up at the Class L state championships at 132 pounds and placing second again at the first-ever State Open.

Welfare earned more accolades in the spring as a member of Casagrande's track team. As a junior he won the CIAC Class L Western Sectional championship in the 100 yard dash while placing sixth in the 220. He was also a member of the 440 relay team, which finished fourth and set a school record. In addition, he finished third in both the 100 and 220 at the FCIAC Championships that year.

Then as a senior, Welfare won the FCIAC championship in the 100 with a time of 10 seconds flat. He also placed fourth in the 220 and third in the 440 relay. A pulled muscle, however, hindered him at the state meets.

Welfare took his running talents to Southern Connecticut State College (as it was known then) where he became one of the top sprinters on the Owls' track team. He graduated with a degree in Physical Education and became a teacher in the New Haven school system. Welfare later became an administrator, which eventually led to being named assistant principal at Troup School, a public elementary school in New Haven's inner city with over 500 students.

He says he still applies many of the valuable lessons he learned from sports to his current position. "Playing sports definitely helped me," he noted. "It helped me learn how to be part of a team, how to be fair, and how to delegate."

Welfare never lost his love for track. He returned to Southern Connecticut as an assistant coach with the women's track team for eight years, and was also a coach with the New Haven Age Group Track Club for 12 years. In addition, he served 24 years in the Army, mostly with the National Guard.

Just another example of the leadership qualities Harry "Bozo" Welfare first displayed playing sports.