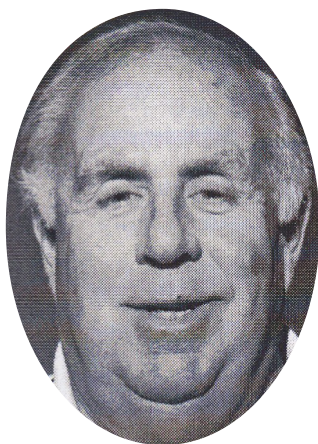


Dick Zakhar



As an athlete and later as a coach, the words Dick Zakhar and championships always seem to go hand in hand.

Growing up in East Norwalk, Zakhar began his successful run in local sports in the International Little League where he was a third baseman and pitcher for the Elks from 1954-57 and a part of three championship teams. He also made the all-star team as a 12-year-old.

During that time, he also played basketball in the Norwalk Biddy League as a sharp-shooting forward with Hat Corporation and where he was a member of another championship team and all-star squad.

The titles continued to accumulate for Zakhar over the next couple of years, including one with DeVito's Market in the Norwalk PONY League and another in the Babe Ruth League with the Fire Department team, pitching and playing third base for both teams. He was also selected for the all-star team in both leagues, and helped the 1958 Norwalk PONY League all-stars win their first district championship ever.

Zakhar also played one season of CYO basketball for St. Thomas, as well as three seasons of basketball and baseball for Nathan Hale Junior High School, where he added a city championship in each

sport.

In 1959, Zakhar arrived at Norwalk High School where he played both basketball and baseball all three years. He was a starting forward on the basketball team for one full season and part of another, while as a junior in the spring of 1961 he was a starter on the pitching staff that helped lead the NHS baseball team to the County Conference championship in the final season of the league before the FCIAC was born that following fall.

Among Zakhar's teammates on that '61 team was Frank Vigilante, another one of tonight's Norwalk Old Timers honorees. They thus become the seventh and eighth players from the 1961 Norwalk High championship team to be honored by the Norwalk Old Timers.

The following year as a senior, Zakhar became the ace of the 1962 NHS pitching staff and had the distinction of throwing a no-hitter against Rippowam. In fact, head coach Jack Cronin credited him with pitching a second no-hitter that same season in a game Norwalk lost to Andrew Warde 1-0 on a couple of errors.

When his baseball days were over, Zakhar turned to slow-pitch softball where he carved out a long and successful career as a player and coach from 1966-84. He began playing with the late Sonny DeMattio and the Sportsmen of Westport, a precursor to the powerful Sonny's of Westport teams.

Zakhar eventually started his own team, Risilo Paving Company, which eventually merged with Singewald Buick, a local powerhouse which captured a handful of city championships and several sectional titles, twice finishing as high as third in the state. Zakhar was a player/coach the last few seasons Singewald Buick existed before it became T's Construction. He then spent two seasons with T's as strictly a coach and helped lead them to a berth in the national tournament.

It was shortly after his slow-pitch softball days were behind him that Zakhar became involved in coaching youth softball and baseball with his own children. He was an assistant coach in the Norwalk Athletic Association girls softball league for seven years at various age levels while his daughter Kimberly, a future softball player at Brien McMahon, played.

During most of those years, Zakhar also served as an assistant coach with his son Jason's teams in the Norwalk Small Fry, West Norwalk Bambino, and Norwalk Babe Ruth leagues. The elder Zakhar was also named an assistant coach on the Bambino all-star team that won three straight state championships, captured the New England Regional crown as 11 and 12 year-olds, and went to the 12-year-old World Series in Kentucky in 1996.

Zakhar was also an assistant coach on three straight Babe Ruth all-star teams that won the district and state titles all three years, captured the New England Regional as 14 and 15 year-olds, and advanced to the Babe Ruth 15-year-old World Series in Louisiana in 1999.

All told, Zakhar was an assistant coach on all-star teams that won six straight district and state titles, four regional championships, and twice went to national tournaments.

Zakhar, who is married to the former Diana Camarota, is currently owner and partner with L&L Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning.