

Louis Cundari Sr.



The name "Cundari" has been synonymous with sports in Norwalk for more than half a century, especially when it comes to Little League baseball and adult softball.

And tonight, Lou Cundari, the youngest of the five Cundari brothers, joins Dominick and Charlie as Norwalk Old Timers honorees.

Following in the footsteps of his older siblings, it didn't take Lou very long to burst on the local sports scene himself. In the early 1950s, he was an all-star second baseman for the Elks team that won three straight International Little League championships.

Known for his power at the plate, Cundari once hit two home runs in an all-star game against Westport.

He moved to third base and played three more years of baseball at both Ben Franklin Junior High and with 7-Up in the Junior Babe Ruth League, again making the all-star team and collecting three hits in a game against Bronx, N.Y. Cundari also played basketball for three years at Franklin and two years with the St. Joseph CYO team.

It wasn't long, however, before Lou would join his four older brothers, Dom, Charlie, Rocky and Jim, on the softball diamond with O'Brien Press, which won five fast-pitch city championships and finished runner-up five other times. A pitcher and third baseman, Lou once hit two home runs against the Yankee Clippers off Jesse Reed, considered one of the premier fast-pitch softball pitchers at the time.

Cundari also played with Branson Instruments in the Stamford Industrial League for three seasons and helped them win the Stamford city championship all three years. One season he batted over .300 while leading the league in home runs and RBIs, once belting three homers in one game.

On the mound, Cundari was known as "Louie the Riser" for the way his ball moved, and he once pitched both ends of a doubleheader at Scalzi Park, winning the opening game 4-1 with 10 strikeouts and fanning 11 in a 3-0 victory in the nightcap. On another occasion, Cundari tossed back to back no-hitters and hit three more homers in a double-header sweep of the Adirondack Bat Company, 3-0 and 4-0, in Peekskill, N.Y.

When fast-pitch softball phased out and slow pitch became popular in Norwalk, Cundari played in the Sunday Morning Old Timers League with the Pastimes, where two of his teammates were brothers Dom and Rocky.

The Cundaris also excelled off the baseball and softball diamonds, forming a bowling team called – what else? – the "Brothers 5" that won the Wednesday Night Friendship League championship.

Even after his athletic days were over, Lou Cundari remained very much involved with local sports, spending over a decade in the American Little League as a coach, manager, Cap League coordinator and eventually league president. In fact, he won another championship as a coach with the Monker Grotto team, and was also one of the organizers of the first Kinlock Tournament in 1975.

More recently, Cundari has managed to stay close to youth sports by coaching girls softball in Westport and working with high school softball players in Norwalk.

A lifelong Norwalk resident, the 63-year-old Cundari and his wife, the former Susan Murphy, have one son and two grandchildren.