

John Kuczo



The success of what is arguably the best high school athletic conference in the entire state of Connecticut can be traced to the city of Norwalk and John Kuczo.

The longtime commissioner of the Fairfield County Interscholastic Athletic Conference was born and raised in Stamford, played sports at Stamford High School, later taught and coached in Stamford public schools, and ended his professional career as an administrator in his native town.

But for the last 46 years, John Kuczo has called Norwalk home, and for the last 40 of those years he has been the driving force behind the growth of the FCIAC.

Kuczo's association with the conference goes back even farther, however, all the way back to 1961 when the FCIAC was formed and he established the cross country, and indoor and outdoor track programs at Rippowam High School in Stamford.

It didn't take Kuczo long, either, to establish the Warriors as a league and state powerhouse in all three sports. His cross country teams won three of the first five FCIAC championships, capturing consecutive crowns in 1963, '64 and '65.

But it was in track and field that Kuczo really made his mark as a coach. A former distance runner at New Haven State Teachers College, Kuczo compiled a remarkable dual-meet record of 202-33 in outdoor track, winning seven division championships, six FCIAC titles, one state crown and four more state runner-up finishes in his 10 years. In 1966, he was selected as the Connecticut track coach of the year.

Kuczo added six more FCIAC championships and another three state titles and one runner-up finish in indoor track. All told, he won 15 FCIAC championships in the three sports he coached.

It was in the midst of his coaching career, in 1968, that Kuczo first became involved with the FCIAC administration as secretary-treasurer, a position he held for the next 10 years. Then in 1978, he assumed the newly named position of Executive Secretary, and has been the FCIAC commissioner ever since. Under his leadership, the conference has grown to 19 member schools, developed a Web site (www.FCIAC.net) and newsletter, and more than quadrupled its general financial fund.

In fact, this school year marks Kuczo's 30th anniversary as commissioner and his 40th year overall as an FCIAC officer. In addition, he is one of only a handful of people who have been involved with the conference all 48 years of its existence.

A History teacher from 1959-65 and guidance counselor from 1965-71, Kuczo became the assistant principal of Rippowam High School in the fall of 1971. Then when Rippowam closed its doors, he became assistant principal of his alma mater, Stamford High School.

Kuczo returned to the sports arena in 1988 when he was appointed athletic director of Westhill and Stamford high schools, and coordinator of Health and Physical Education. He retired from the Stamford School System in 1994, although he did return as a consultant for two and a half years, and also served as interim athletic director at Fairfield High School in 2001.

His valuable contributions to the conference have not gone unnoticed. In addition to being inducted into the FCIAC Hall of Fame, Kuczo has been honored by the Fairfield County Basketball Officials IAABO #9, the Fairfield County Football Officials Association, and the Ralph DeSantis Fairfield County Chapter of the National Football Foundation and Hall of Fame.

He is also highly respected throughout the state, and in 1993 was inducted into the Connecticut High School Coaches Association Hall of Fame, making him and his father, the legendary Paul Kuczo, only the second set of father-son CHSCA hall of famers. Then in 2006, John Kuczo received the Thomas R. Monahan CHSCA Honor Award, the Coaches Association's highest award to professional educators.

And tonight marks the second time Kuczo has been honored by an Old Timers organization, having previously been recognized by the Stamford Old Timers.

When he's not busy with the FCIAC, Kuczo is a volunteer at St. Jerome's Church, where he is the former chairperson of the Parish Council, a member of the finance committee, and responsible for building and grounds maintenance. He is also a Eucharistic Minister and altar server, and for the past 12 years has run the annual church car raffle, one of St. Jerome's most successful fund raises.

Kuczo and his wife, the former Leonora Ferrone, have four children – all former Norwalk High School athletes – and 12 grandchildren. And years after coaching track and cross country at Rippowam, Kuczo actually made a "coaching comeback" of sorts when coached his sons in the Cranbury Baseball League in Norwalk for six years.