

Gary O'Malley



Gary O'Malley will always have a special place in Norwalk sports history. The East Norwalk native was a member of the starting five on the 1966 state champion Norwalk High School basketball team, which won the city's first CIAC state crown ever in basketball.

Of course, what made that season even more memorable was the fact it was the final season of Calvin Murphy's remarkable career at NHS and he led New England with 40.3 points a game.

Half a century later, local sports fans who were around then still talk about that magical season.

They may also remember that the other starting guard in the backcourt playing alongside the future NBA Hall of Famer was a 5-foot-10 junior guard named Gary O'Malley.

But he was more than just a footnote on that 23-1 Class L state championship squad. O'Malley was a valuable role player who led the Green Wave in assists, was known as a defensive specialist, and received All-FCIAC Honorable Mention. And

while opposing teams doubled and sometimes tripled teamed Murphy, it was O'Malley who often brought the ball up and got it to his backcourt mate in position to score.

The following season, with Murphy off playing in college, O'Malley took over as the lead guard and averaged 9.1 points. He scored a career-high 22 points against Stamford and 19 versus Danbury as he helped lead NHS to a 17-6 record, a second consecutive Eastern Division title, and a trip to the state quarterfinals. He also repeated as an All-FCIAC Honorable Mention.

Basketball wasn't O'Malley's only sport at Norwalk High. The 1967 graduate and three-sport athlete was the starting quarterback on the football team as a sophomore and junior before switching to defensive back as a senior. The versatile O'Malley not only made a smooth transition, but he was named to the all-conference team on defense in that fall of '66 after leading the Green Wave with 11 interceptions, including four in one game against city rival Central Catholic.

In addition, O'Malley played three years of varsity baseball as an outfielder/pitcher and was named captain his senior year. He also played baseball for the Norwalk American Legion and after graduating he played recreation softball for the Saints and local powerhouse Chatham Oaks.

But O'Malley's introduction to organized sports came in the local youth leagues. In fact, he and Calvin Murphy were teammates on the Norwalk Ramblers Pop Warner Football team and on the Biddy Basketball League all-stars. They even guarded one another when O'Malley played basketball at Nathan Hale Junior High and Murphy was at West Rocks.

O'Malley also played in the Norwalk International Little League and Norwalk Babe Ruth League, compiling an 8-0 pitching record with two no-hitters.

One of his best sports growing up, however, was springboard diving on the Norwalk YMCA swim team. As a 13 year old in 1962, he placed third in the state to qualify for the New England Diving Championships in Springfield, Mass., where he also finished third.

After his graduation from Norwalk High in 1967, O'Malley made the swim team at Central Connecticut State College and was a four-year diver. He also continued playing football, basketball, and baseball on the intramural level as well as competitive badminton.

O'Malley now lives in the Atlanta area with his wife, Dr. Kathryn O'Malley, and he is currently a leadership and productivity specialist, training more than 300,000 people in 900 various organizations in North America, Europe, and Africa.

Tonight, however, he becomes a Norwalk Old Timer.