

## John Keogh



The name **John Keogh** has been synonymous with the sport of tennis for more than four decades in the state, in Fairfield County, and especially in the city of Norwalk, where he is well known on both sides of town.

The Norwalk native is one of a select few individuals who served as a head varsity coach at both high schools in town, directing the boys tennis programs at Norwalk High and Brien McMahon.

Growing up in East Norwalk, Keogh attended Marvin School through sixth grade before moving to Puerto Rico. He returned to the area for his senior year of high school at Fairfield Prep before attending the University of Notre Dame.

It was shortly after his graduation in 1970 that Keogh landed his first teaching and coaching job at Brien McMahon, joining the Math department and the boys tennis program on Highland Avenue as an assistant under his close friend Don Wilson, a 2008 Norwalk Old Timers honoree. After spending the 1971 and '72 seasons with the Senators, Keogh moved across town when the new Norwalk High School opened.

He was the assistant coach for the Bears' boys tennis team for one season before taking over as head coach in the spring of 1974. He won only three of 25 matches his first two seasons, but what many didn't know was he was slowly building the foundation for a perennial FCIAC and state power. In fact, it was the freshmen class in his third year that formed the nucleus of Keogh's 1979 NHS team that won the FCIAC championship — the first in school history — and finished runner-up at the Class LL state tournament.

The Bears didn't have to wait very long to win their second FCIAC crown. They repeated as conference champs in 1980, the same year Keogh led the program to its first state championship. And Norwalk would win the second of its back-to-back Class LL state titles in 1981, while sharing the State Open championship with New Canaan and Glastonbury.

During those three championship seasons, the Bears went 16-0 in 1979 and 15-0 in '80 and '81. Counting the final match of the 1978 season and first three in '82, the Norwalk High boys tennis program put together a 50-match winning streak. The Bears also won five straight FCIAC West Division titles from 1979–83. Under Keogh's guidance, the Bears would also finish runners-up in the state in 1983, '84, and '89, and third in 1982. Counting the second-place showing in 1979, Norwalk High placed among the top three teams in Class LL six straight years and seven times in an 11-year span. Keogh would also lead the Bears to another third-place finish in 1997.

That would be Keogh's 24<sup>th</sup> and final season as the head tennis coach at NHS, and, at the time, he thought it was his last season period after he returned to McMahon to become chairman of the Math department, replacing Wilson, who retired.

But as the spring sports season approached and the Senators were still without a coach, the boys tennis season was in jeopardy of being canceled. Rather than see that happen, Keogh decided to step up and take the head coaching position. He not only saved the BMHS program, but stayed on for seven seasons, finally retiring for good after the 2004 season.

Keogh's association with high school tennis was far from over, however. He continues to serve as the FCIAC chairman for boys tennis, a position he's held since 1992. In addition, he was a divisional director for the CIAC state tournament from 1986–2008, before taking over as the overall chairman of the CIAC boys tennis committee, which he continues to be. He was also Connecticut's representative on the national high school tennis committee.

His dedication and contribution to the sport hasn't gone unnoticed. In 1988, Keogh was named *Coach of the Year* by the Connecticut High School Coaches Association, while in 1994 he was a finalist for the *National Coach of the Year*, and in 2011 he was inducted into the FCIAC Hall of Fame.

Like coaching, Keogh retired from teaching, but like tennis, he is still very much involved, currently serving as an educational consultant in math. He spent seven years on the board of directors of the Connecticut Council of Leaders of Mathematics, and 18 years as either chairman or assistant chairman of visiting committees for the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. He was also co-founder and head of the CES High School Math Council.

Since 1977, Keogh has been a volunteer at the Notre Dame Convalescent Home in Norwalk. He and his wife Georgia reside in Fairfield and have two children and four grandchildren.