

Mike Lombardi



Mike Lombardi, one of the many great athletes from the Laurel Athletic Club, is among those being honored at the annual Norwalk Old Timers banquet.

Lombardi, with the help of Joe Palumbo and Ralph Caruso, organized the Laurels many years ago, a club they first called the Laura Street Giants.

During the late '20s and early '30s, Mike Lombardi was an outstanding performer on what was to become the Laurel Athletic Club football and baseball teams. In baseball, he played second base and, during his career, had no peers. He hit for average and with power.

Mike was unusually strong and used an exceptionally heavy bat. For years after he retired, the Laurel teams kept the bat to loosen up with before taking their turns at bat.

His favorite major league baseball player was Tony Lazzari, and Mike brought to his game the same characteristics that made Lazzari so famous as a smart player. He wasn't fast, but he was a heady baseball runner and was clearly the leader on the field.

Later, Lombardi played with the Laurel Elmwoods, a team of Laurel AC members who played in the Norwalk Twilight League. A teammate was Joe Kulscar, honored earlier by the Norwalk Old Timers for his baseball exploits. In football, Lombardi was an excellent defensive end. His exploits against the Pastimes, a traditional rival, were many, especially in his rivalry with Clyde Joyal, a famed Pastimes runner.

A great athlete in his own right, Mike derives much more pleasure in talking about his fellow performers. He loved them all. Mike still holds a special reverence for his football coach, Louis "Duke" Yoczik. All one need do is mention some names like Joe Marino, Joe Saverine, Mutt Fiore, Jeff Cimminelli, "Carp" Downey, and Joe Beres and his eyes light up.

Mike has worked all his life as a stone mason. Occasionally he still works when called upon. He still lives in the same house at 12 Laura Street where he started the Laura Street Giants.