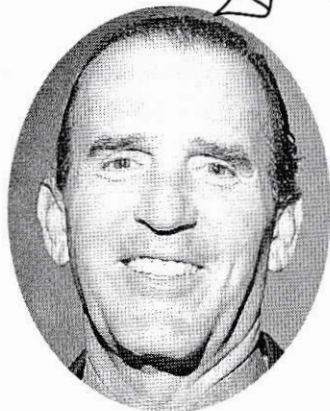


Jerry Fishman



He's been called by many the greatest football player to ever come out of Norwalk.

And Jerry Fishman may very well have been that when he played running back and linebacker for Norwalk High School from 1958-60.

Fishman was certainly one of the greatest running backs this city has ever produced, earning first-team all-state honors as a senior and being named the Most Valuable Player in the annual Nutmeg Bowl between the East and West Connecticut all-stars.

But perhaps Fishman will always be remembered by local fans for the remarkable game he had in the annual Norwalk High-Danbury Thanksgiving Day game in 1960. Norwalk came into the game with only one win, while Danbury had lost only once and was in the running for the state title.

But the Green and White stunned the heavily favored Hatters 30-14 behind Fishman, who scored 22 of Norwalk's 30 points and carried the ball an amazing 50 times for 342 yards rushing, a city record that still stands 44 years later.

Besides scoring three touchdowns that day, Fishman completed several passes, handled the kicking, and played the whole game on defense. Hall of Fame coach Jack Casagrande, a young assistant coach with Norwalk High at the time, still calls it the greatest individual performance he's seen by a high school football player. Many would agree.

As outstanding an effort as that was, however, Fishman had a similar game the following year as a member of the freshmen football team at the University of Maryland. Playing against George Washington University, Fishman scored three touchdown runs of 50 yards or more and finished with 292 yards rushing on 22 carries, which is still a single-game rushing record for a freshman at Maryland.

Fishman would go on to make his mark with the Terrapins' varsity football team as well, being named first-team All-Atlantic Coast Conference and receiving All-America Honorable Mention in 1964. That same season, he was named to the First-Team All-ACC Academic Team.

In fact, Fishman was impressive enough in college to earn tryouts with both the Baltimore Colts and Denver Broncos in 1965, and with the Washington Redskins in '66. He ended up playing semi-pro football as a linebacker with the Hartford Charter Oaks of the Continental Football League in 1965, and with the Virginia Sailors of the North American Football League in 1966.

But while Fishman made his mark in football, he also excelled in other sports. He was a first baseman for the Norwalk High baseball team for three seasons, including the 1961 team that won the County Conference championship under coach Jack Cronin.

Fishman began playing baseball in the National Little League as a catcher for the Pastimes from 1950-54. The team won the league championship under coach George Buschbaum, who Fishman calls "the first and finest coach in my life." Fishman went on to play at Nathan Hale Junior High and in the Norwalk Babe Ruth League, helping Style Footwear to the league title.

He also played basketball growing up in the YMCA Bidy League and at Nathan Hale, before joining the Norwalk High basketball team in 1960 and '61.

Before he was done, Fishman would play four varsity sports at NHS, and it was in track and field where, next to football, he would enjoy his most success. He was the County champion in the shot put in 1960, and in both the shot put and javelin in 1961, the same season he helped lead Norwalk to the County Conference championship. He also qualified for the New England meet in the shot put in 1961.

And as a senior, Fishman set a new school record in the shot put with a throw of 54 feet, 11 inches, which still stands today, more than four decades later.

It seemed there was no sport the versatile Fishman wasn't good at. He also played hockey in the early 1980s in the National Novice Hockey League, finishing second on his team in scoring and helping it win the league title. He got certified as a teaching professional in tennis and worked as a part-time tennis instructor from 1975-80. He was an intramural wrestling and weight lifting champion at Norwalk High, as well as the University of Maryland Football Team weight lifting champ from 1961-64. In 1964, he set new school weight-lifting records at Maryland in the bench press, military press, clean and jerk, squat, leg press, and dead lift.

And if that wasn't enough, Fishman also ran and completed the Washington D.C. Marathon in 1978, and the New York City Marathon in '79.

Following his graduation from the University of Maryland in 1965, Fishman attended the University of Baltimore Law School, graduating in 1968 and becoming a successful attorney. He eventually moved and lived in Israel, where he still owns a house and goes back to visit once a year.

Now retired and back in Norwalk, Fishman and his wife, the former Amalya Barzali, have five children and one grandson.