

*Mike Errico Award
The Aces Softball Team*

For nearly half a century, the Aces have proudly lived up to their adopted motto "Not Just Softball, But a Lifestyle."

The Aces are even more than that, however. They are a sports institution in Norwalk.

Owners of countless victories and numerous championships, tonight the Aces can add one more line to their tradition-rich resume when they receive the 2011 Mike Errico Award from the Norwalk Old Timers Athletic Association.

It all began in the summer of 1964 when some Norwalk High School teammates and their friends from Central Catholic decided to start a local softball team and call themselves the Aces. Among the original organizers were people like Jon Myers, Bill Smith, Gerry Shanahan, Rich MacDonald and Milt Peckham.

So why the name Aces?

Many of those early team members played football at NHS in the fall of 1963 and coach Carl Paight used to reward defensive standouts with a star on their helmets every time they picked off an interception or recovered a fumble or made some other key defensive play. When a player accumulated six of those stars on his helmet, Paight would make him a member of an exclusive club he called the "Aces."

A few months later, in the spring of '64, they formed their new softball team and the name Aces was a natural fit.

And last month the Aces completed their 48th season with a runner-up finish in the city tournament. In fact, they returned to winners' bracket final and were one win away from repeating as Norwalk city champs.

The 2010 crown was just the latest championship the Aces have won over the years, including numerous tournaments, city titles and Fairfield County sectionals. The high point came in the mid-1970s when they won the winners' bracket at the state tournament and eventually finished second. The 2010 Aces captured third place in the state.

During their storied history, the Aces have played in the Norwalk Recreation League, the Stamford Shoreline League, the Stratford Open League and the highly competitive Sunday morning Independent League, which Rich MacDonald, then an Aces coach, helped start and operate along with Chick Ciccarelli.

But while they were known for their softball exploits, the Aces participated in other sports as well, particularly in their early years. From 1964-70 they played in the Intercity Touch Football League and led the league in fewest points allowed nearly every season. They also played in the Norwalk Recreation Touch Football League from 1970-72.

The Aces even competed in the Norwalk Rec Basketball League from 1964 to the early '70s.

And twice a year, anywhere from 18 to 24 former and current Aces still journey to Westerly, R.I., for their own three-day golf tournament.

Over the years, second generation Aces have continued the team's tradition in softball. At its peak, there were eight sons playing with their fathers, and four sets of father-and-son are still playing.

The Aces began the year after the Norwalk Old Timers Athletic Association was formed in 1963. Through 2010, a total of 14 Aces have been honored by the Norwalk Old Timers.

Tonight, the Old Timers salute everyone who's ever been associated with that Norwalk sports institution known as the Aces.