

## *Gerald Anastasia*



**Y**ou can't talk about the success of summer baseball in Norwalk without mentioning the name **Gerald Anastasia**. In fact, his name should come up pretty close to the beginning of that conversation.

Anastasia spent more than two decades carving out a successful coaching career in the Norwalk Babe Ruth and Norwalk American Legion programs. It's no coincidence, either, that his 21 years of coaching, from 1996–2016, also happened to be the period Norwalk began to establish itself as a baseball power throughout the state and region.

And if you go back to his days as a football and baseball coach at Central Catholic High School, his alma mater, the 58-year-old Norwalk native coached Norwalk athletes for more than three decades.

Before catching the coaching bug, Anastasia played local sports himself in the early 1970s. He started playing baseball in the Cranbury League as a nine-year-old and later played football and baseball at West Rocks Middle School and basketball for St. Phillip's in the Norwalk Church League.

Anastasia continued his athletic career at three different high schools. He played freshmen football and baseball at Norwalk High before transferring to Central Catholic where he played both sports for three years. One of the assistants who coached him at CCHS was Don Christopher, another 2018 Norwalk Old Timers honoree.

Then following his graduation in 1978, Anastasia played another year of football as a post-graduate at St. Luke's.

It was the fall of '79 when he began coaching, returning to Central Catholic as the freshmen football coach, and in the spring the Cavaliers' JV baseball coach. He was also an assistant coach with the CCHS girls basketball team for several seasons and a fulltime substitute teacher in the school.

In 1981 Anastasia was named Central's new head baseball coach, a position he held for six seasons. That same year, he was promoted to assistant varsity football coach and in 1985 was named the Cavaliers' head football coach. After three seasons, he became head baseball coach at Norwalk Community College in 1988 and '89.

Anastasia briefly left the sports world to pursue business interests in the private sector, including moves to California and Florida, but returned to Norwalk a couple of years later and in 1993 assumed his current position as athletic supervisor for the Norwalk Recreation and Parks Department. Now in his 26<sup>th</sup> year, Anastasia is in charge of all adult softball and volleyball leagues in the city as well as the department's youth basketball leagues. His responsibilities also include running the city's popular Summer Concert Series.

The move back to Norwalk allowed Anastasia to return to the coaching sidelines and from 1996–2004 he led Norwalk Babe Ruth all-star teams to six district titles, three state championships, and a pair of New England regional crowns in 1998 and '99. His 1999 squad went to the 15-year-old Babe Ruth World Series and finished seventh in the country.

In 2005 Anastasia switched to the Norwalk American Legion program and led the brand new Junior Legion team to a 29–1 record, the Zone 4 championship, and a No. 1 ranking in the state. They were knocked off in the state tournament, but the following year Anastasia guided Post 12 to a 26–4 mark, a second straight zone title, and the 2006 state championship. He capped off the season by being named the Connecticut Junior American Legion Coach of the Year.

He returned to Babe Ruth Baseball in 2007 and guided the Norwalk Senior (16–18) Babe Ruth all-stars to a state runner-up finish. Anastasia then led the 13-year-old all-stars to a district title in 2008, coached most of the same players a year later to the 14-year-old district crown and state runner-up finish, and in 2010 led them to a state championship as 15-year-olds.

He then returned as Junior American Legion coach from 2011–2013, winning two more zone championships, before leading the 2014 Senior Legion team to the state tournament.

All told, Anastasia's Babe Ruth teams won eight district titles, five state championships, two New England Regionals, and made one World Series appearance. Meanwhile, his American Legion teams won four Zone 4 championships and one state title.

And from 1995–2014, he organized winter trips for local ballplayers to the Bucky Dent Baseball School in Florida during February school vacation, further enhancing the quality of baseball in Norwalk.

Anastasia is being honored 34 years after his father, Larry Anastasia, was honored by the Norwalk Old Timers in 1984.