

Doug Peoples



For more than three decades, the name Doug Peoples and the word “karate” have been practically joined at the hip in Norwalk.

But the truth is Peoples’ connection to local sports goes back a half-century, all the way to 1961 when he played Pop Warner Football as an eight-year-old running back for the Norwalk Ramblers and one of his coaches was Bobby Callahan, the former Boston College standout and future Connecticut Supreme Court Chief Justice.

A year later, 1962, Peoples was a catcher for 7-Up in the Norwalk National Little League, where he played four years for coach Antoine Zakhar before moving up to the PONY League and then the Norwalk Babe Ruth League.

Growing up in Colonial Village, Peoples attended McGrath Elementary School, West Rocks Junior High – where he played for the Trojans in the Norwalk Recreation Football League – and Norwalk High School.

Peoples played three years of football at NHS for coach Carl Paight, displaying his skills on both sides of the ball at running back and defensive back. He was also a point guard on the basketball team for coach Ed Cerulli, a 1992 Old Timers honoree, and ran the hurdles on the track team for three years for Hall of Fame coach Tom Scarso.

Two of his teammates in high school were fellow 2011 Old Timers honorees Paul Krasnavage in football and Dave Raila in basketball and track.

After graduating in 1971, Peoples went to Graceland College in Iowa where he played defensive back on the football team, but transferred after one year to Central Connecticut State University and played DB for the Blue Devils.

It was while he was at CCSU that Peoples first picked up karate as a way of staying in shape in the offseason. And with that, a 40-year love affair with the sport as both a participant and coach began.

Today, the 58-year-old Peoples is an 8th degree Black Belt in Tang Soo Do karate, a Korean martial art. He has been a member of the U.S. Team with the highlight of his career coming when he won a national karate championship in San Jose, Calif.

But competing is only part of Peoples’ impressive resume. In 1978, shortly after returning to Norwalk, the late Richard Fuller, executive director of the George Washington Carver Foundation, asked Peoples to teach a karate class at the Carver Center in town.

Seeing the success of that program, one year later the Norwalk Recreation and Parks Department recruited Peoples and he recently began his 32nd year teaching youth and adult classes.

He also organized and coached a Norwalk team that competed in five World Kick Boxing Association championships, including two in which he participated in the over-35 class and won a silver medal in Kentucky and a bronze medal at the 1999 Worlds in Hanover, Germany.

It wasn’t until he was in his early 40s that Peoples stopped competing and coaching. But fortunately for the city of Norwalk, he has continued to teach karate classes and attributes his longevity to one mission: “Getting as many kids off the streets and into college as I can,” he says. To that end, he has helped numerous high school boys and girls at both Norwalk and Brien McMahon realize their goal of attending college.

In between karate classes and competitions, Peoples also found time to be a basketball referee for over 30 years.

For the past 31 years, Peoples has worked for Cablevision of Connecticut and is currently a sales executive with the Norwalk company. For more than two decades, he ran a popular karate tournament called the ‘Carver Classic’ in Norwalk, which was sponsored by Cablevision and drew participants from all over the state. A portion of the proceeds went toward assisting local boys and girls in their college funding.