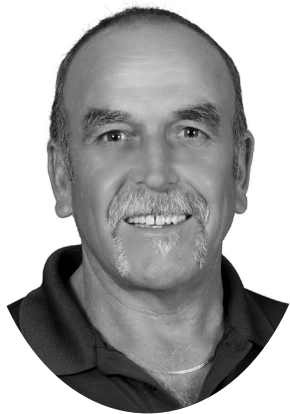


## *Jerry Tavella*



One of the best compliments you can give a defensive football player is to say he “has a nose for the football.”

That said, **Jerry Tavella** definitely had a nose for the football when he played his favorite sport.

Even going all the way to his Pop Warner Football days when he was 12 years old and played linebacker on the Norwalk Ramblers, defense was always Jerry Tavella’s calling card.

That reputation followed him to Central Catholic High School where Tavella was a three-year starting linebacker for the Cavaliers, who boasted one of the best defenses in the state.

In fact, Tavella capped off his outstanding scholastic career as a senior in the fall of 1971 by being one of only 22 players — and one of only 11 defensive standouts — voted by coaches to the New Haven Register all-state football team.

Tavella also started at fullback on offense his last two seasons at CCHS and rarely came off the field.

“The only time I came off the field was when the punt return team came on, and that was just so the coaches could talk to me,” Tavella said in a 2011 interview with *The Hour*. “I called all the defensive formations and once in a while the coaches took me off the field so they could talk to me.”

It was on the defensive side of the ball, however, where he earned the reputation as a tough, tenacious, hardnosed player as he helped Central Catholic go 8–1–1 his senior year and win a Western Connecticut Conference division title.

Besides making the all-state team, the senior tri-captain was named All-WCC and he was selected to the Norwalk Hour’s second All-City football team. While 11 offensive players from the three local high schools were chosen, back then only one defensive player was selected from each school. On a team that boasted several outstanding players on defense, Tavella was Central Catholic’s representative.

After his high school days, Tavella continued his elite defensive play in both the Norwalk Recreation Adult Touch Football League and the Inter-City Touch Football League. In fact, one year he had the distinction of leading both local leagues in sacks.

He was the Norwalk Rec League sack leader a total of eight times during his two decades in that league while helping his teams win 13 city championships. Most of those came with DRJ Builders, a team sponsored by his father’s construction company and was named after the three Tavella children: Diane, Robert and Jerry. Robert Tavella eventually took over the company and now Jerry and his nephew run it.

For nearly a decade, Tavella also played in the Inter-City League before a knee injury convinced him to cut back to just one game on Sundays. He continued playing in the Rec League 14 more years before finally calling it a career at the age of 42.

Tavella won a few more league and city championships during a 14–year career playing slowpitch softball. Then when he was done playing his sports, the father of three began coaching baseball and girls softball for 15 years. He was part of the coaching staff for his daughter’s 12 and under softball team that won the state championship, and he was even a bench coach on his son’s Mid-Fairfield Youth Hockey team for several years.

Tavella also served as a commissioner in the Norwalk Small Fry Baseball League for five years. He later helped start the Cranbury T-Ball League, which grew from 60 players to over 200 in just two years under his watch.