

Don Christopher



A sports career that has spanned nearly seven decades and encompassed everything from an athlete to a coach to a celebrated football official has earned **Don Christopher** a well-deserved place on the Norwalk Old Timers Honor Roll.

The 69-year-old Norwalk native began his athletic journey in 1960 as one of the original players in the new Cranbury Baseball League in town. A catcher throughout his baseball days, Christopher later played in the Norwalk PONY and Babe Ruth leagues as well as at West Rocks Junior High and one season at Norwalk High School.

The versatile athlete also played youth hockey growing up, soccer at West Rocks, and was a member of the track team in high school.

But it was in football where Don Christopher really made his mark, starting at West Rocks as a linebacker and fullback in the Norwalk Recreation Junior High League. He would go on to play three years of varsity football at Norwalk High, where the 1967 graduate was a two-way performer at safety and running back and served as a senior captain on the '66 team. His head coach that season was the late Carl Paight, another 2018 Norwalk Old Timers honoree.

Christopher's involvement in local sports continued some years later as a youth league coach in five different sports. He spent four years coaching Pop Warner Football, winning the championship one season. He won two more titles as a coach in the International Little League for four years, followed by three years as a PONY League coach. Another four years coaching in the Norwalk Biddy Basketball League produced two more league crowns.

In addition, Christopher coached four years in the Norwalk Jr. Soccer Association, spent 12 years as manager of the Cedar Point softball team, and won yet another championship as a softball coach at King School in Stamford.

Christopher was also an assistant football coach at Central Catholic High School from 1973-'80, where one of his players was Gerald Anastasia, another fellow 2018 Old Timers honoree.

When he wasn't coaching, Christopher was forging a third successful career as an official. He refereed middle school basketball for 22 years and was a member of the Greater Fairfield County Softball Umpires Association for 28 seasons, working several state tournament games during that time.

But just like his athletic career, Christopher's best work came on the gridiron as part of the Fairfield County Football Officials Association. He quickly earned a reputation as one of the most respected high school football officials around and in 2016 was named the *Football Official of the Year* by the National Football Foundation Fairfield County Ralph DeSantis/Jerry McDougall Chapter.

During his more than a quarter of a century, Christopher has officiated three state championship games — including the 2012 Class M final at Rentschler Field — 10 state quarterfinal and semifinal contests, and three FCIAC championship games. He's also worked 20 "Turkey Bowls" between longtime rivals New Canaan and Darien, one of the state's premier Thanksgiving Day games.

Christopher is the seventh member of his family to be honored by the Norwalk Old Timers, including his father Dom in 1985 and brother Dennis in 2006.

Don Christopher, who retired from Pitney Bowes in 2014 after 39 years, now works part-time for the Norwalk Recreation and Parks Department. He and his wife Sherry have been married 40 years and have one son and two grandchildren.