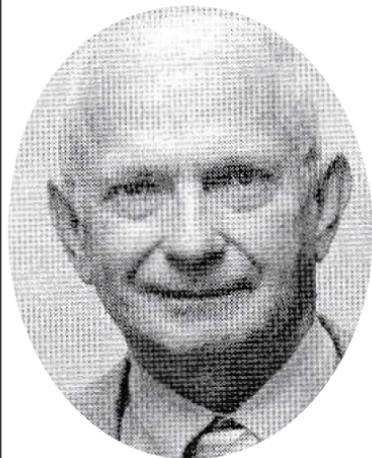


Al Boczer



When it came to running the offense in football, Al 'Butch' Boczer was a popular choice in Norwalk during the 1940s.

Boczer spent most of that decade quarterbacking first the Norwalk High School football team and later the famed Spring Hill Tigers.

The Norwalk native grew up in the Woodward Avenue section of South Norwalk and attended Lincoln Elementary School, Benjamin Franklin Junior High, and Norwalk High School, from which he graduated in 1947. It was during his days with the Green and White that Boczer first earned his reputation as a smart and dependable signal caller who helped direct the NHS offense during the 1945 and '46 seasons for legendary coach Ike Kern.

"Butch Boczer was an exceptional player," Old Timers committee member Al Palumbo, a standout halfback on those Norwalk High teams, said of his former teammate and fellow graduate. "He was a hard nosed kid and an indestructible kid who never got hurt."

That goes for defense too, where Boczer played and excelled when he wasn't running the offense.

"He had a nose for the football," Palumbo noted. "And no matter how hard he hit you or how hard he got hit, he was always the first one up. He was one tough kid."

Boczer continued to display that toughness following his high school playing days as a member of the highly touted Spring Hill team the next three years for head coach Ralph Venezia.

In fact, the versatile Boczer played both quarterback and halfback for the Tigers in 1947, '48, and '49. He shared the quarterback duties with Ed Connery in 1948 as they helped lead Spring Hill to the last of their city championships in the Senior Recreation League.

Then in 1949, in what would be the final season of play for the Spring Hill Tigers, Boczer split time at QB with Ed's brother, Bill Connery, another member of the Class of 2002 Norwalk Old Timers honorees being honored tonight.

Boczer played with several future Old Timers honorees. Another one of his former teammates with Spring Hill was Bob 'Rivets' Miller, a 1990 Old Timers inductee who played on three NFL championship teams with the Detroit Lions. His brother, Fred 'Moose' Miller, a 1999 honoree, also played with Boczer, as did Rollie D'Avanzo, one of last year's Old Timers award winners.

But Boczer's athletic involvement wasn't restricted to just the gridiron, especially during the '40s. From 1943-'48 he was a solid pitcher for the 7-Up baseball team in Norwalk, while from 1947-'50 he played both softball and basketball with Nash Engineering. For three of those four seasons, 1947-'49, he also played basketball with the YMCA 'B' team. Then from 1953-'63, Boczer capped off his local career playing softball for Roy Bros. Heating, where he was employed as a sheet metal mechanic, installing and servicing heating and air conditioning systems. He later worked with L.J. Denner & Sons.

"He was very underrated, but he always got the job done," Palumbo said. "It didn't matter if it was football, baseball, softball, or basketball, Butch Boczer always got the job done."

Boczer also coached briefly during the early years of the Norwalk Senior Babe Ruth League for 16 to 18 year-old players. He served as an assistant with the Laurels in 1973 and '74, the first two seasons of the league, before taking over as head coach of *The Hour* team for one season in 1975.

The 73-year-old Boczer and his wife, the former Doris Gagnon, have three children and seven grandchildren. In fact, during the mid 1970s, Boczer was also a regular in the stands at Central Catholic High School football games, where his son Keith was a quarterback.

It must have been in the genes.