

John Paladino



During its proud three decade-long existence in Norwalk, Central Catholic High School produced its share of outstanding athletes. Somewhere near the top of that list is the name **JOHN PALADINO**.

The 1972 CCHS graduate was a two-sport star for the Cavaliers, making his mark in basketball and baseball. In fact, the Norwalk native made some local history during his days on the hill at West Rocks Road as the first athlete from the city's three high schools to be selected to three All-City teams. In 1971 Paladino was named to *The Hour's* first-ever All-City baseball team as a junior. Then as a senior the following school year, he made the 1972 All-City basketball team while a few months later he repeated as an All-City selection in baseball.

Paladino's athletic journey began a few years earlier as a 10 year-old in the Norwalk National Little League, where he was a two-time all-star, and from there went on to become an all-star in the local Babe Ruth League.

His next stop was Central Catholic, where Paladino played JV basketball as a sophomore for a young and up-and-coming coach named Ray Barry, then a varsity assistant and head JV coach. Paladino also saw some varsity action for head coach Lou Orlando.

As a junior, Paladino was the Cavaliers' sixth man off the bench, mostly because of his versatility and ability to play four positions as needed. He was on the court at the end of every game and it was his buzzer-beating basket in the state tournament that gave Central a dramatic upset win over Masuk as the Norwalkers rallied from seven points down in the final minute. The following season Paladino was named a senior captain and starter as he led that 1971-72 team in scoring with 19.1 points a game, finishing second in the city scoring race behind only All-City MVP and future Old Timers honoree Sammy Miller of Norwalk High. Paladino, who joined Miller on the five-man All-City team, was the only CCHS selection.

In the spring, Paladino was a two-year captain on the baseball team for coach Lorin Beresnyak, who, like Ray Barry, has been honored by the Norwalk Old Timers. Paladino shined on the diamond for the Cavs as both a junior and senior, earning All-City honors both years. In the spring of 1971, the junior shortstop and pitcher finished second in the city with a .385 batting average, while as a senior in '72 he led city pitchers with a 2.32 ERA and was in the top three in strikeouts and innings pitched. Paladino capped off his impressive high school career by being named Central Catholic's 'Best Male Athlete.'

After graduation, Paladino took his basketball talents to Storrs where he was the starting point guard for the Huskies' sub-varsity team in 1973-74. He would later serve as a Graduate Student assistant coach for the UConn women's basketball team in 1977-78 and a fulltime assistant the following season under head coach Wanda Flora.

Then after a 13-yr hiatus, Paladino returned to the hardwood as an assistant coach and later associate head coach with the Fairfield University women's basketball program from 1993 to 2007. He was the associate head coach of the 2000-01 Lady Stags, who went 26-5 and received the program's first-ever NCAA at-large bid. That team, including Paladino and the rest of the

coaching staff, was inducted into the Fairfield University Hall of Fame in 2018. During Paladino's time on the coaching staff, Fairfield also went to the NCAA tourney in 1998.

Following his coaching stint, Paladino continued his involvement in the Fairfield University Department of Athletics as first

the associate director and later Director of Recreation from 2007-2019. He retired in 2019 after a 25-year association with the Stags as a coach and athletic administrator. He was honored by the Friends of Fairfield Rugby Alumni Association with a dedicated lifetime locker in the university's recreation complex.