

Alison Kuczo Laney



ALISON KUCZO LANEY made Norwalk sports history in 1978 when she became the city's first state champion in high school girls gymnastics.

Four and a half decades later she's making history again as the first gymnast to be honored by the *Norwalk Old Timers Athletic Association*.

The Norwalk High School girls gymnastics program was in only its second year during that 1977-78 winter sports season when Kuczo, a 14 year-old freshman, captured the floor exercise event at the Class L state championship meet. It would be the start of an outstanding scholastic career by the Lady Bears' talented all-around gymnast.

Alison also won the FCIAC championship in the floor event as a freshman, and as a sophomore missed by just a half-point of repeating as state champ. She was named first-team All-FCIAC as a freshman, sophomore, and junior—the first three-time gymnast in conference history—and she likely would have been the first four-time all-league selection if not for an ankle injury that sidelined her most of her senior year.

The 1981 NHS grad had planned to continue her gymnastics career at William & Mary College in Virginia, but that same ankle injury curtailed what would have been a promising collegiate career. But as one door closed, another opened as one of Alison's college coaches asked her to help teach gymnastics in a local youth program the coach ran.

That experience came in handy a few years after graduating college when Alison and her family moved from Virginia Beach to Westport and she taught gymnastics at the Westport YMCA. She took a break after having her third child, but Allison's passion for the sport resurfaced some years later when the late Ro Carlucci, the head gymnastics coach at Westhill High School, told her there was a shortage of gymnastics judges in the state and convinced her to give it a try. So in 2000 Alison officially became a gymnastics judge and quickly rose through the ranks. As she gets ready to embark on her 25th season as a judge, she is now regarded as a top-level judge and one of the best in the FCIAC and state.

"She's absolutely one of the best and still is after all these years," said Wilton High School coach Gary Chadwick, who's won numerous FCIAC and state titles in his three decades as a coach. "She really knows the sport and coaches are happy when they see Alison sitting at the table judging their meets."

And as a tribute to her friend and mentor, Alison replaced Carlucci as the "assigner" of judges for all FCIAC gymnastic meets.

Now known as Alison Laney, the mother of three is the daughter of former longtime FCIAC commissioner John Kuczo, a 2008 *Norwalk Old Timers* honoree, while her grandfather, the late Paul Kuczo, a legendary coach at Stamford High, was one of the founders of the FCIAC in 1961. ■